Classic Poetry Series

Sir William Davenant

- poems -

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Aubade

THE lark now leaves his wat'ry nest,
   And climbing shakes his dewy wings.
He takes this window for the East,
   And to implore your light he sings--
Awake, awake! the morn will never rise
Till she can dress her beauty at your eyes.

The merchant bows unto the seaman's star,
   The ploughman from the sun his season takes,
But still the lover wonders what they are
   Who look for day before his mistress wakes.
Awake, awake! break thro' your veils of lawn!
Then draw your curtains, and begin the dawn!

Sir William Davenant

Ladies In Arms

LET us live, live! for, being dead,
The pretty spots,
Ribbons and knots,
And the fine French dress for the head,
No lady wears upon her
In the cold, cold bed of honour.
Beat down our grottos, and hew down our bowers,
Dig up our arbours, and root up our flowers;
Our gardens are bulwarks and bastions become;
Then hang up our lute, we must sing to the drum.

Our patches and our curls,
So exact in each station,
Our powders and our purls,
Are now out of fashion.
Hence with our needles, and give us your spades;
We, that were ladies, grow coarse as our maids.
Our coaches have driven us to balls at the court,
We now must drive barrows to earth up the fort.

Sir William Davenant

Praise and Prayer

PRAISE is devotion fit for mighty minds,
  The diff'ring world's agreeing sacrifice;
Where Heaven divided faiths united finds:
  But Prayer in various discord upward flies.

For Prayer the ocean is where diversely
  Men steer their course, each to a sev'ral coast;
Where all our interests so discordant be
  That half beg winds by which the rest are lost.

By Penitence when we ourselves forsake,
'Tis but in wise design on piteous Heaven;
In Praise we nobly give what God may take,
  And are, without a beggar's blush, forgiven.

Sir William Davenant

The Coquet

TIS, in good truth, a most wonderful thing
(I am even ashamed to relate it)
That love so many vexations should bring,
And yet few have the wit to hate it.

Love's weather in maids should seldom hold fair:
Like April's mine shall quickly alter;
I'll give him to-night a lock of my hair,
To whom next day I'll send a halter.

I cannot abide these malapert males,
Pirates of love, who know no duty;
Yet love with a storm can take down their sales,
And they must strike to Admiral Beauty.

Farewell to that maid who will be undone,
Who in markets of men (where plenty
Is cried up and down) will die for even one;
I will live to make fools of twenty.

Sir William Davenant

To a Mistress Dying

Lover. YOUR beauty, ripe and calm and fresh
  As eastern summers are,
Must now, forsaking time and flesh,
  Add light to some small star.

Philosopher. Whilst she yet lives, were stars decay'd,
  Their light by hers relief might find;
But Death will lead her to a shade
  Where Love is cold and Beauty blind.

Lover. Lovers, whose priests all poets are,
  Think every mistress, when she dies,
Is changed at least into a star:
  And who dares doubt the poets wise?

Philosopher. But ask not bodies doom'd to die
  To what abode they go;
Since Knowledge is but Sorrow's spy,
  It is not safe to know.

Sir William Davenant

Weep No More For What Is Past

WEEP no more for what is past,
For time in motion makes such haste
He hath no leisure to descry
Those errors which he passeth by.
If we consider accident,
And how repugnant unto sense
It pays desert with bad event,
We shall disparage Providence.

Sir William Davenant