

Classic Poetry Series

Thomas Randolph
- poems -

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Thomas Randolph(1605-1635)

Thomas Randolph (born 15 June 1605, Newnham-cum-Badby, Northamptonshire, England died March 1635, Blatherwycke, Northamptonshire) was an English poet and dramatist. He was born near Daventry in Northamptonshire, and was baptized on 18 June 1605. He was the uncle of colonist William Randolph.

He was educated at Westminster and at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was awarded his B.A. degree in 1628, then M.A. in 1632, and became a major fellow of his college in the same year. He soon gave promise as a writer of comedy. Ben Jonson, not an easily satisfied critic, adopted him as one of his "sons." He addressed three poems to Jonson, one on the occasion of his formal "adoption," another on the failure of *The New Inn*, and the third an eclogue, describing his own studies at Cambridge. He lived with his father at Little Houghton in Northamptonshire for some time, and afterwards with William Stafford of Blatherwycke, at whose house he died before completing his thirtieth year. He was buried in Blatherwycke church on 17 March 1635 and his epitaph was written by Peter Hausted, the author of *The Rival Friends*.

Randolph's reputation as a wit is attested by the verses addressed to him by his contemporaries and by the stories attached to his name. His earliest printed work is *Aristippus, Or, The Joviall Philosopher*. Presented in a private shew, To which is added, *The Conceited Pedlar* (1630). It is a gay interlude burlesquing a lecture in philosophy, the whole piece being an argument to support the claims of sack against small beer. *The Conceited Pedlar* is an amusing monologue delivered by the pedlar, who defines himself as an "individuum vagum, or the primum mobile of tradesmen, a walking-burse or movable exchange, a Socratical citizen of the vast universe, or a peripatetical journeyman, that, like another Atlas, carries his heavenly shop on shoulders." He then proceeds to display his wares with a running satirical comment.

The drama, *The Jealous Lovers*, was presented by the students of Trinity College, Cambridge, before the king and queen in 1632. *The Muse's Looking-Glass* is hardly a drama. *Roscius* presents the extremes of virtue and vice in pairs, and last of all the "golden mediocrity" who announces herself as the mother of all the virtues. *Amyntas, or The Impossible Dowry*, a pastoral printed in 1638, with a number of miscellaneous Latin and English poems, completes the list of Randolph's authenticated work. *Hey for Honesty, down with Knavery*, a comedy, is doubtfully assigned to him. Randolph has been proposed as the author of the anonymous manuscript play, *The Fairy Knight*, though the attribution has not

won much approval from critics.

His works were edited by WC Hazlitt in 1875.

A Devout Lover

I have a mistress, for perfections rare
In every eye, but in my thoughts most fair.
Like tapers on the altar shine her eyes;
Her breath is the perfume of sacrifice;
And wheresoe'er my fancy would begin,
Still her perfection lets religion in.
We sit and talk, and kiss away the hours
As chastely as the morning dews kiss flowers:
I touch her, like my beads, with devout care,
And come unto my courtship as my prayer.

Thomas Randolph

An Ode To Master Anthony Stafford, To Hasten Him Into The Country

1 Come, spur away!
2 I have no patience for a longer stay;
3 But must go down,
4 And leave the chargeable noise of this great town.
5 I will the country see,
6 Where old simplicity,
7 Though hid in gray,
8 Doth look more gay
9 Than foppery in plush and scarlet clad.
10 Farewell, you city-wits that are
11 Almost at civil war;
12 'Tis time that I grow wise, when all the world grows mad.

13 More of my days
14 I will not spend to gain an idiot's praise;
15 Or to make sport
16 For some slight puny of the Inns of Court.
17 Then, worthy Stafford, say,
18 How shall we spend the day?
19 With what delights
20 Shorten the nights?
21 When from this tumult we are got secure,
22 Where mirth with all her freedom goes,
23 Yet shall no finger lose;
24 Where every word is thought, and every thought is pure.

25 There from the tree
26 We'll cherries pluck; and pick the strawberry;
27 And every day
28 Go see the wholesome country girls make hay,
29 Whose brown hath lovelier grace
30 Than any painted face
31 That I do know
32 Hyde Park can show.
33 Where I had rather gain a kiss, than meet
34 (Though some of them in greater state
35 Might court my love with plate)

36 The beauties of the Cheap, and wives of Lombard Street.

37 But think upon

38 Some other pleasures; these to me are none.

39 Why do I prate

40 Of women, that are things against my fate?

41 I never mean to wed,

42 That torture to my bed:

43 My Muse is she

44 My Love shall be.

45 Let clowns get wealth, and heirs; when I am gone,

46 And the great bugbear, grisly Death,

47 Shall take this idle breath,

48 If I a poem leave, that poem is my son.

49 Of this, no more;

50 We'll rather taste the bright Pomona's store.

51 No fruit shall 'scape

52 Our palates, from the damson to the grape.

53 Then, full, we'll seek a shade,

54 And hear what music's made:

55 How Philomel

56 Her tale doth tell;

57 And how the other birds do fill the quire;

58 The thrush and blackbird lend their throats,

59 Warbling melodious notes;

60 We will all sports enjoy, which others but desire.

61 Ours is the sky,

62 Where at what fowl we please our hawk shall fly;

63 Nor will we spare

64 To hunt the crafty fox, or timorous hare;

65 But let our hounds run loose

66 In any ground they'll choose;

67 The buck shall fall,

68 The stag, and all.

69 Our pleasures must from their own warrants be,

70 For to my Muse, if not to me,

71 I'm sure all game is free;

72 Heaven, earth, are all but parts of her great royalty.

73 And when we mean

74 To taste of Bacchus' blessings now and then,
75 And drink by stealth
76 A cup or two to noble Berkeley's health:
77 I'll take my pipe and try
78 The Phrygian melody,
79 Which he that hears,
80 Lets through his ears
81 A madness to distemper all the brain.
82 Then I another pipe will take
83 And Doric music make,
84 To civilize with graver notes our wits again.

Thomas Randolph

Fairy Song

We the fairies blithe and antic,
Of Dimensions not gigantic,
Though the moonshine mostly keep us,
Oft in orchards frisk and peep us,

Stolen sweets are always sweeter;
Stolen kisses much completer;
Stolen looks are nice in chapels;
Stolen, stolen be your apples.

When to bed the world are bobbing,
Then's the time to go orchard robbing;
Yet the fruit were scarce worth peeling
Were it not for stealing, stealing.

Thomas Randolph

On Six Cambridge Lasses Bathing Themselves

1 When bashfull daylight now was gone
2 And night, that hides a blush, came on.
3 Sixe Pretty Nymphes to wash away
4 The sweatinge of a Summers daye
5 In Chams fair streames did gently swim
6 And naked bathd each curious limbe.
7 O Who had this blist sight but seene
8 Would thinke they all had Cl{oe}lia=s beene.
9 A Scholer that a walke did take
10 Perchance for Meditation sake.
11 This blessed Obiect chan'cd to find
12 Straight all thinges else went out of mind
13 No Study=s better in this life
14 For Practicke or Contemplatiue:
15 Who thought Poore soule these hee had seene,
16 Fair Dian and her Nymphes had beene.
17 And therefore thought in piteous feare
18 Act{ae}ons fortune was too neere.
19 Or that the Water=Nymphes they were
20 Together met to sport 'um there
21 And that to him such loue they bore
22 As to Iolas once before.
23 What could hee thinke but that his eye
24 Sixe Venusses at once did spie
25 Rise from the waues, or that perchance
26 Fresh=Water Syrens came to dance
27 Vpon our streames, with songes and lookes
28 To tempt Poore Scholers from their bookes.
29 Hee cannot thinke they Graces are
30 Vnlesse their number doubled were.
31 Nor can hee thinke they muses bee
32 Bicause alasse they wanted three.
33 I should haue rather guess'd that here
34 Another brood of Helens were
35 Begot by Ioue upon |y+e+| playnes
36 Watchd by some L{ae}da of the Swans.
37 The maydes betrayd were in a fright
38 And blush'd (but twas not seene ith night.)
39 At last all by |y+e+| banke did stand

40 And hee, good harte lent them his hand.
41 Where twas his blisse to feele all ore
42 Soft Paps, smooth thighes and somethinge more.
43 But Enuious Night masqued from his eyes
44 The place where loue and pleasure lyes.
45 Guesse Louers guesse, o you |y+t+| dare
46 What then might bee this Scholers praier
47 That hee were but a Cat to spye
48 Or had but now Tyberius eyes.
49 Yet since this hope was all in Vaine
50 Hee helpes 'um don there cloths agayne.
51 Makes Promise thye shall none bee shent
52 So with them to the Tauerne went.
53 Where how hee then might sport or play
54 Pardon mee Muse I must not say
55 Guesse you that haue a mind to knowe
56 Whither hee were a Foole of no.

Thomas Randolph

Upon His Picture

When age hath made me what I am not now,
And every wrinkle tells me where the plow
Of time hath furrowed; when an ice shall flow
Through every vein, and all my head wear snow;
When death displays his coldness in my cheek,
And I myself in my own picture seek,
Not finding what I am, but what I was,
In doubt which to believe, this or my glass:
Yet though I alter, this remains the same
As it was drawn, retains the primitive frame
And first complexion; here will still be seen
Blood on the cheek, and down upon the chin;
Here the smooth brow will stay, the lively eye,
The ruddy lip, and hair of youthful dye.
Behold what frailty we in man may see,
Whose shadow is less given to change than he!

Thomas Randolph