

Classic Poetry Series

George Gascoigne
- poems -

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George Gascoigne(1535 – 7 October 1577)

George Gascoigne was an English poet, soldier, artist, and unsuccessful courtier. He is considered the most important poet of the early Elizabethan era, following Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and leading to the emergence of Philip Sidney. He was the first poet to deify Queen Elizabeth I, in effect establishing her cult as a virgin goddess married to her kingdom and subjects. His most noted works include *A Discourse of the Adventures of Master FJ* (1573), an account of courtly sexual intrigue and one of the earliest English prose fictions; *The Supposes*, (performed in 1566, printed in 1573), an early translation of Ariosto and the first comedy written in English prose, which was used by Shakespeare as a source for *The Taming of the Shrew*; the frequently anthologised short poem "Gascoignes wodmanship" (1573); and "Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English" (1575), the first essay on English versification.

Early Life

He was the eldest son of Sir John Gascoigne of Cardington, Bedfordshire and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and on leaving the university is supposed to have joined the Middle Temple. He became a member of Gray's Inn in 1555. He has been identified without much show of evidence with a lawyer named Gastone who was in prison in 1548 under very discreditable circumstances. There is no doubt that his escapades were notorious, and that he was imprisoned for debt. George Whetstone says that Sir John Gascoigne disinherited his son on account of his follies, but by his own account he was obliged to sell his patrimony to pay the debts contracted at court. He was M.P. for Bedford in 1557-1558 and 1558-1559, but when he presented himself in 1572 for election at Midhurst he was refused on the charges of being "a defamed person and noted for manslaughter," "a common Rymer and a deviser of slaunderous Pasquelles," "a notorious rufilanne," and a constantly indebted atheist.

His poems, with the exception of some commendatory verses, were not published before 1572, but they may have circulated in manuscript before that date. He tells us that his friends at Gray's Inn importuned him to write on Latin themes set by them, and there two of his plays were acted. He repaired his fortunes by marrying the wealthy widow of William Breton, thus becoming stepfather to the poet, Nicholas Breton. In 1568 an inquiry into the disposition of William Breton's property with a view to the protection of the children's rights was instituted before the Lord Mayor, but the matter was probably settled in a friendly manner, for Gascoigne continued to hold the Walthamstow estate, which

he had from his wife, until his death.

Plays at Grays Inn

Gascoigne translated two plays performed in 1566 at Grays Inn, the most aristocratic of the Renaissance London Inns of Court: the prose comedy *Supposes* based on Ariosto's *Suppositi*, and *Jocasta*, a tragedy in blank verse which is said to have derived from Euripides's *Phoenissae*, but appears more directly as a translation from the Italian of Lodovico Dolce's *Giocasta*.

Hundredth Sundry Flowres (1573) and Posies of Gascoigne (1575)

Gascoigne's most well known and controversial work was originally published in 1573 under the title *A Hundredth Sundry Flowres bound up in one small Posie*. Gathered partly (by translation) in the fyne outlandish Gardens of Euripides, Ovid, Petrarch, Aristotle and others; and partly by Invention out of our owne fruitfull Orchardes in Englande, Yelding Sundrie Savours of tragical, comical and moral discourse, bothe pleasaunt and profitable, to the well-smelling name, by London printer Richarde Smith. The book purports to be an anthology of courtly poets, gathered and edited by Gascoigne and two other editors known only by the initials "H.W." and "G.T." The book's content is throughout suggestive of courtly scandal, and the aura of scandal is skillfully elaborated through the effective use of initials and posies—Latin or English tags supposed to denote particular authors—in place of the real names of actual or alleged authors.

For reasons that are still unclear, the book was republished, with certain additions and deletions, two years later under the alternative title, *The Posies of George Gascoigne, Esquire*. The new edition contains three new dedicatory epistles, signed by Gascoigne, which apologize for some offense that the original edition had caused and effect to transfer sole responsibility for the book's content to Gascoigne himself.

At War in the Netherlands

He sailed through as a soldier of fortune to the Low Countries in 1572, and was driven by stress of weather to Brielle, which luckily for him had just fallen into the hands of the Dutch. He obtained a captain's commission, and took an active part in the campaigns of the next two years, during which he acquired a profound dislike of the Dutch, and a great admiration for William of Orange, who had personally intervened on his behalf in a quarrel with his colonel, and secured him against the suspicion caused by his clandestine visits to a lady at the Hague.

Taken prisoner after the evacuation of Valkenburg by the English troops, he was sent to England in the autumn of 1574. He dedicated to Lord Grey de Wilton the story of his adventures, *The Fruits of Warres* (printed in the edition of 1575) and *Gascoigne's Voyage into Hollande*. In 1575 he had a share in devising the masques, published in the next year as *The Princely Pleasures at the Courte at Kenelworth*, which celebrated the queen's visit to the Earl of Leicester. At Woodstock in 1575 he delivered a prose speech before Elizabeth, and was present at a reading of the *Pleasant Tale of Hemetes the Hermit*, a brief romance, probably written by the queen's host, Sir Henry Lee. At the queen's annual gift exchange with members of her court the following New Year's, Gascoigne gave her a manuscript of *Hemetes* which he had translated into Latin, Italian, and French. Its frontispiece shows the Queen rewarding the kneeling poet with an accolade and a purse; its motto, "Tam Marti, quam Mercurio," indicates that he will serve her as a soldier, as a scholar-poet, or as both. He also drew three emblems, with accompanying text in the three other languages.

Later Writings and Influences

Most of his works were published during the last years of his life after his return from the wars. He died 7 October 1577 at Barnack, near Stamford, where he was the guest of George Whetstone. Whetstone wrote a long poem in honour of his friend, entitled "A Remembrance of the wel-employed life and godly end of George Gaskoigne, Esquire."

Gascoigne's theory of metrical composition is explained in a short critical treatise, "Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English, written at the request of Master Edouardo Donati," prefixed to his *Posies* (1575). He acknowledged Chaucer as his master, and differed from the earlier poets of the school of Surrey and Wyatt chiefly in the added smoothness and sweetness of his verse.

And If I Did, What Then?

1 'And if I did, what then?
2 Are you aggriev'd therefore?
3 The sea hath fish for every man,
4 And what would you have more?'

5 Thus did my mistress once,
6 Amaze my mind with doubt;
7 And popp'd a question for the nonce
8 To beat my brains about.

9 Whereto I thus replied:
10 'Each fisherman can wish
11 That all the seas at every tide
12 Were his alone to fish.

13 'And so did I (in vain)
14 But since it may not be,
15 Let such fish there as find the gain,
16 And leave the loss for me.

17 'And with such luck and loss
18 I will content myself,
19 Till tides of turning time may toss
20 Such fishers on the shelf.

21 'And when they stick on sands,
22 That every man may see,
23 Then will I laugh and clap my hands,
24 As they do now at me.'

George Gascoigne

At Beauty's Bar As I Did Stand

AT Beauty's bar as I did stand,
When False Suspect accused,
``George," quod the judge, ``hold up thy hand;
Thou art arraigned of flattery.
Tell therefore how thou wilt be tried.
Whose judgment here wilt thou abide?"

``My lord," quod I, ``this lady here,
Whom I esteem above the rest,
Doth know my guilt, if any were,
Wherefore her doom shall please me best;
Let her be judge and juror both,
To try me, guiltless by mine oath."

Quod Beauty, ``No, it fitteth not,
A Prince herself to judge the cause;
Will is our Justice, well you wot,
Appointed to discuss our laws;
If you will guiltless seem to go,
God and your country quit you so."

Then Craft, the crier, called a quest,
Of whom was Falsehood foremost fere;
A pack of pickthanks were the rest,
Which came fale witness for to bear;
The jury such, the judge unjust,
Sentence was said I should be trussed.

Jealous, the jailer, bound me fast,
To hear the verdict of the bill;
``George," quod the judge, ``now thou art cast,
Thou must go hence to Heavy Hill,
And there be hanged, all but the head;
God rest thy soul when thou art dead."

Down fell I thn upon my knee,
All flat before Dame Beauty's face,
And cried, ``Good Lady, pardon me,
Which here appeal unto your Grace;

You know if I have been untrue,
It was in too much praising you.

``And though this judge do make such haste
To shed with shame my guiltless blood,
Yet let your pity first be placed,
To save the man that meant you good;
So shall you show yourself a queen,
And I may be your servant seen."

Quod Beauty, ``Well; because I guess
What thou dost mean henceforth to be,
Although thy faults deserve no less
Than Justice here hath judged thee,
Wilt thou be bound to stint all strife,
And be true prisoner all thy life?"

``Yea, madam," quod I, ``that I shall;
Lo, Faith and Truth, my sureties."
``Why, then," quod she, ``come when I call,
I ask no better warrantise."
Thus am I Beauty's bounden thrall,
At her command when she doth call.

George Gascoigne

Fie, Pleasure, Fie!

1 Fie pleasure, fie! thou cloyest me with delight,
2 Thou fill'st my mouth with sweetmeats overmuch;
3 I wallow still in joy both day and night:
4 I deem, I dream, I do, I taste, I touch,
5 No thing but all that smells of perfect bliss;
6 Fie pleasure, fie! I cannot like of this.

7 To taste (sometimes) a bait of bitter gall,
8 To drink a draught of so{'u}r ale (some season)
9 To eat brown bread with homely hands in hall,
10 Doth much increase men's appetites, by reason,
11 And makes the sweet more sugar'd that ensues,
12 Since minds of men do still seek after news.

13 The pamper'd horse is seldom seen in breath,
14 Whose manger makes his grace (oftimes) to melt;
15 The crammed fowl comes quickly to his death;
16 Such colds they catch in hottest haps that swelt;
17 And I (much like) in pleasure scawled still,
18 Do fear to starve although I feed my fill.

19 It might suffice that Love hath built his bower
20 Between my lady's lively shining eyes;
21 It were enough that beauty's fading flower
22 Grows ever fresh with her in heavenly wise;
23 It had been well that she were fair of face,
24 And yet not rob all other dames of grace.

25 To muse in mind, how wise, how fair, how good,
26 How brave, how frank, how courteous, and how true
27 My lady is, doth but inflame my blood
28 With humours such as bid my health adieu;
29 Since hap always when it is clomb on high,
30 Doth fall full low, though erst it reach'd the sky.

31 Lo, pleasure, lo! lo thus I lead a life
32 That laughs for joy, and trembleth oft for dread;
33 Thy pangs are such as call for change's knife
34 To cut the twist, or else to stretch the thread,

- 35 Which holds yfeer the bundle of my bliss:
36 Fie, pleasure, fie! I dare not trust to this.

George Gascoigne

For That He Looked Not Upon Her

YOU must not wonder, though you think it strange,
To see me hold my louring head so low;
And that mine eyes take no delight to range
About the gleams which on your face do grow.
The mouse which once hath broken out of trap,
Is seldom 'ticed with the trustless bait,
But lies aloof for fear of more mishap,
And feedeth still in doubt of deep deceit.
The scorched fly, which once hath 'scaped the flame,
Will hardly come again to play with fire:
Whereby I learn that grievous is the game
Which follows fancy dazzled by desire:
So that I wink or else hold down my head,
Because your blazing eyes my bale* have bred.

George Gascoigne

Gascoigne's Lullaby

1 Sing lullaby, as women do,
2 Wherewith they bring their babes to rest;
3 And lullaby can I sing to,
4 As womanly as can the best.
5 With lullaby they still the child,
6 And if I be not much beguil'd,
7 Full many wanton babes have I,
8 Which must be still'd with lullaby.

9 First, lullaby my youthful years,
10 It is now time to go to bed;
11 For crooked age and hoary hairs
12 Have won the haven within my head.
13 With lullaby, then, youth be still,
14 With lullaby, content thy will,
15 Since courage quails and comes behind,
16 Go sleep, and so beguile thy mind.

17 Next, lullaby my gazing eyes,
18 Which wonted were to glance apace;
19 For every glass may now suffice
20 To show the furrows in my face.
21 With lullaby, then, wink awhile,
22 With lullaby, your looks beguile,
23 Let no fair face nor beauty bright
24 Entice you eft with vain delight.

25 And lullaby my wanton will,
26 Let reason's rule now reign thy thought,
27 Since all too late I find by skill
28 How dear I have thy fancies bought.
29 With lullaby, now take thine ease,
30 With lullaby, thy doubts appease,
31 For trust to this, if thou be still,
32 My body shall obey thy will.

33 Eke, lullaby my loving boy,
34 My little Robin, take thy rest;
35 Since age is cold and nothing coy,

36 Keep close thy coin, for so is best.
37 With lullaby, be thou content,
38 With lullaby, thy lusts relent,
39 Let others pay which have mo pence,
40 Thou art too poor for such expense.

41 Thus lullaby, my youth, mine eyes,
42 My will, my ware, and all that was!
43 I can no mo delays devise,
44 But welcome pain, let pleasure pass.
45 With lullaby, now take your leave,
46 With lullaby, your dreams deceive,
47 And when you rise with waking eye,
48 Remember Gascoigne's lullaby.

George Gascoigne

Inscription In A Garden

IF any flower that here is grown
Or any herb may ease your pain,
Take and account it as your own,
But recompense the like again;
For some and some is honest play,
And so my wife taught me to say.

If here to walk you take delight,
Why, come and welcome, when you will;
If I bid you sup here this night,
Bid me another time, and still
Think some and some is honest play,
For so my wife taught me to say.

Thus if you sup or dine with me,
If you walk here or sit at ease,
If you desire the thing you see,
And have the same your mind to please,
Think some and some is honest play,
And so my wife taught me to say.

George Gascoigne

Praise Of The Fair Bridges, Afterwards Lady Sandes, On Her Having A Scar In Her Forehead

In court whoso demaundes
What dame doth most excell;
For my conceit I must needes say,
Faire Bridges beares the bel.

Upon whose lively cheeke,
To prove my judgement true,
The rose and lillie seeme to strive
For equall change of hewe.

And therewithall so well
Hir graces all agree,
No frowning chere dare once presume
In hir sweet face to bee.

Although some lavishe lippes,
Which like some other best,
Will say the blemishe on hir browe
Disgracefull all the rest.

Thereto I thus replie:
God wotte, they little knowe
The hidden cause of that mishap,
Nor how the harm did growe;

For when Dame Nature first
Had framde hir heavenly face,
And thoroughly bedecked it
With goodly gleames of grace;

It lyked hir so well:
'Lo here,' quod she, 'a peece
For perfect shape that passeth all
Appelles' worke in Greec.e

'This bayt may chauce to catche
The greatest god of love,

Or mightie thundring Jove himself,
That rules the roast above.'

But out, alas! those words
Were vaunted all in vayne;
And some unseen were present there,
Pore Bridges, to thy pain.

For Cupide, crafty boy,
Close in a corner stoode,
Not blyndfold then, to gaze on hir:
I gesse it did him good.

Yet when he felte the flame
Gan kindle in his brest,
And herd Dame Nature boast by hir
To break him of his rest,

His hot newe-chosen love
He chaunged into hate,
And sodenlye with mightie mace
Gan rap hir on the pate.

It greeved Nature muche
To see the cruell deede:
Mee seemes I see hir, how she wept
To see hir dearling bleede.

'Wel yet,' quod she, 'this hurt
Shal have some helpe I trowe;'
And quick with skin she covered it,
That whiter is than snowe.

Wherwith Dan Cupide fled,
For feare of further flame,
When angel-like he saw hir shine,
Whome he had smit with shame.

Lo, thus was Bridges hurt
In cradel of hir kind.
The coward Cupide brake hir browe
To wreke his wounded mynd.

The skar still there remains;
No force, there let it bee:
There is no cloude that can eclipse
So bright a sunne as she.

George Gascoigne

Sonnet I

IN haste, post haste, when first my wandering mind
Beheld the glistening Court with gazing eye,
Such deep delights I seemed therein to find,
As might beguile a graver guest than I.
The stately pomp of Princes and their peers
Did seem to swim in floods of beaten gold;
The wanton world of young delightful year
Was not unlike a heaven for to behold,
Wherein did swarm (for every saint) a Dame
So fair of hue, so fresh of their attire,
As might excel Dame Cynthia for Fame,
Or conquer Cupid with his own desire.
These and such like baits that blazed still
Before mine eye, to feed my greedy will.

George Gascoigne

Sonnet II

Before mine eye, to feed my greedy will,
'Gan muster eke mine old acquainted mates,
Who helped the dish (of vain delight) to fill
My empty mouth with dainty delicates;
And foolish boldness took the whip in hand
To lash my life into this trustless trace,
Till all in haste I leapt a loof from land
And hoist up sail to catch a Courtly grace.
Each lingering day did seem a world of woe,
Till in that hapless haven my head was brought;
Waves of wanhope so tossed me to and fro
In deep despair to drown my dreadful thought;
Each hour a day, each day a year, did seem
And every year a world my will did deem.

George Gascoigne

Sonnet Iii

And every year a world my will did deem,
Till lo! at last, to Court now am I come,
A seemly swain that might the place beseem,
A gladsome guest embraced by all and some.
Not there content with common dignity,
My wandering eye in haste (yea post post haste)
Beheld the blazing badge of bravery,
For want whereof I thought myself disgraced.
Then peevish pride puffed up my swelling heart,
To further forth so hot an enterprise;
And comely cost began to play his part
In praising patterns of mine own devise.
Thus all was good and might be got in haste,
To prink me up, and make me higher placed.

George Gascoigne

Sonnet Iv

To prink me up, and make me higher placed,
All came too late that tarried any time;
Piles of provision pleased not my taste,
They made my heels too heavy for to climb.
Methought it best that boughs of boistrous oak
Should first be shread to make my feathers gay,
Till at the last a deadly dinting stroke
Brought down the bulk with edgetools of decay.
Of every farm I then let fly a leaf
To feed the purse that paid for peevishnesss,
Till rent and all were fallen in such disease,
As scarce could serve to maintain cleanliness;
They bought the body, fine, farm, leaf, and land;
All were too little for the merchant's hand.

George Gascoigne

Sonnet V

All were too little for the merchant's hand,
And yet my bravery bigger than his book;
But when this hot account was coldly scanned,
I thought high time about me for to look.
With heavenly cheer I cast my head aback
To see the fountain of my furious race,
Compared my loss, my living, and my lack
In equal balance with my jolly grace,
And saw expenses grating on the ground
Like lumps of lead to press my purse full oft,
When light reward and recompense were found,
Fleeting like feathers in the wind aloft.
These thus compared, I left the Court at large,
For why the gains doth seldom quit the charge.

George Gascoigne

Sonnet Vi

For why the gains doth seldom quit the charge:
And so say I by proof too dearly bought,
My haste made waste; my brave and brainsick barge
Did float too fast to catch a thing of naught.
With leisure, measure, mean, and many moe
I mought have kept a chair of quiet state.
But hasty heads cannot be settled so,
Till crooked Fortune gave a crabbed mate.
As busy brains must beat on tickle toys,
As rash invention breeds a raw devise,
So sudden falls do hinder hasty joys;
And as swift baits do fleetest fish entice,
So haste makes waste, and therefore now I say,
No haste but good, where wisdom makes the way.

George Gascoigne

Sonnet VII

No haste but good, where wisdom makes the way,
For proof whereof behold the simple snail
(Who sees the soldier's carcass cast away,
With hot assault the Castle to assail)
By line and leisure climbs the wall,
And wins the turret's top more cunningly
Than doughty Dick, who lost his life and all
With hoisting up his head so hastily.
The swiftest bitch brings forth the blindest whelps;
The hottest Fevers coldest cramps ensue;
The nakedest need hath ever latest helps.
With Nevil then I find this proverb true,
That Haste makes waste, and therefore still I say,
No haste but good, where wisdom makes the way.

George Gascoigne

The Green Knight's Farewell To Fancy

Fancy (quoth he) farewell, whose badge I long did bear,
And in my hat full harebrainedly, thy flowers did I wear:
Too late I find (at last), thy fruits are nothing worth,
Thy blossoms fall and fade full fast, though bravery bring them forth.
By thee I hoped always, in deep delights to dwell,
But since I find thy fickleness, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

Thou mad'st me live in love, which wisdom bids me hate,
Thou bleared'st mine eyes and mad'st me think, that faith was mine by fate:
By thee those bitter sweets, did please my taste alway,
By thee I thought that love was light, and pain was but a play:
I thought that beauty's blaze, was meet to bear the bell,
And since I find myself deceived, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

The gloss of gorgeous courts, by thee did please mine eye,
A stately sight me thought it was, to see the brave go by:
To see their feathers flaunt, to mark their strange device,
To lie along in ladies' laps, to lisp and make it nice:
To fawn and flatter both, I liked sometime well,
But since I see how vain it is, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

When court had cast me off, I toiled at the plough
My fancy stood in strange conceits, to thrive I wot not how:
By mills, by making malt, by sheep and eke by swine,
By duck and drake, by pig and goose, by calves and keeping kine:
By feeding bullocks fat, when price at markets fell,
But since my swains eat up the gains, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

In hunting of the deer, my fancy took delight,
All forests knew, my folly still, the moonshine was my light:
In frosts I felt no cold, a sunburnt hue was best,
I sweat and was in temper still, my watching seemed to rest:
What dangers deep I passed, it folly were to tell,
And since I sigh to think thereon, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

A fancy fed me once, to write in verse and rhyme,
To wray my grief, to crave reward, to cover still my crime:
To frame a long discourse, on stirring of a straw,
To rumble rhyme in raff and ruff, yet all not worth a haw:

To hear it said there goeth, the man that writes so well,
But since I see, what poets be, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

At music's sacred sound, my fancies eft begun,
In concords, discords, notes and clefs, in tunes of unison:
In Hierarchies and strains, in rests, in rule and space,
In monochords and moving modes, in Burdens underbass:
In descants and in chants, I strained many a yell,
But since musicians be so mad, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

To plant strange country fruits, to sow such seeds likewise,
To dig and delve for new found roots, where old might well suffice:
To prune the water boughs, to pick the mossy trees,
(Oh how it pleased my fancy once) to kneel upon my knees,
To griff a pippin stock, when sap begins to swell:
But since the gains scarce quit the cost, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

Fancy (quoth he) farewell, which made me follow drums,
Where powdered bullets serves for sauce, to every dish that comes,
Where treason lurks in trust, where Hope all hearts beguiles,
Where mischief lieth still in wait, when fortune friendly smiles:
Where one day's prison proves, that all such heavens are hell,
And such I feel the fruits thereof, Fancy (quoth he) farewell.

If reason rule my thoughts, and God vouchsafe me grace,
Then comfort of philosophy, shall make me change my race,
And fond I shall it find, that Fancy sets to show,
For weakly stands that building still, which lacketh grace by low:
But since I must accept, my fortunes as they fell,
I say God send me better speed, and Fancy now farewell.

George Gascoigne

The Looks Of A Lover Enamoured

THOU, with thy looks, on whom I look full oft,
And find therein great cause of deep delight,
Thy face is fair, thy skin is smooth and soft,
Thy lips are sweet, thine eyes are clear and bright,
And every part seems pleasant in my sight;
Yet wote thou well, those looks have wrought my woe,
Because I love to look upon them so.

For first those looks allured mine eye to look,
And straight mine eye stirred up my heart to love;
And cruel love, with deep deceitful hook,
Choked up my mind, whom fancy cannot move,
Nor hope relieve, nor other help behoove
But still to look; and though I look too much,
Needs must I look because I see none such.

Thus in thy looks my love and life have hold;
And with such life my death draws on apace:
And for such death no med'cine can be told
But looking still upon thy lovely face,
Wherein are painted pity, peace, and grace.
Then though thy looks should cause me for to die,
Needs must I look, because I live thereby.

Since then thy looks my life have so in thrall
As I can like none other looks but thine,
Lo, here I yield my life, my love, and all
Into thy hands, and all things else resign
But liberty to gaze upon thine eyes:
Which when I do, then think it were thy part
To look again, and link with me in heart.

George Gascoigne

The Steel Glass

...

O knights, O squires, O gentle bloods yborn,
You were not born all only for yourselves:
Your country claims some part of all your pains.
There should you live, and therein should you toil
To hold up right and banish cruel wrong,
To help the poor, to bridle back the rich,
To punish vice, and virtue to advance,
To see God serv'd and Belzebub suppress'd.
You should not trust lieutenants in your room,
And let them sway the sceptre of your charge,
Whiles you, meanwhile, know scarcely what is done,
Nor yet can yield accompt if you were call'd.
The stately lord, which wonted was to keep
A court at home, is now come up to court,
And leaves the country for a common prey
To pilling, polling, bribing, and deceit
(All which his presence might have pacified,
Or else have made offenders smell the smoke).
And now the youth which might have served him
In comely wise, with country clothes yclad,
And yet thereby been able to prefer
Unto the prince, and there to seek advance,
Is fain to sell his lands for courtly clouts,
Or else sits still, and liveth like a lout
(Yet of these two the last fault is the less).
And so those imps which might in time have sprung
Aloft, good lord, and serv'd to shield the state,
Are either nipp'd with such untimely frosts,
Or else grow crook'd, because they be not proynd.

...

EPILOGUS

Alas, my lord, my haste was all too hot,
I shut my glass before you gaz'd your fill,
And, at a glimpse, my silly self have spied
A stranger troop than any yet were seen.

Behold, my lord, what monsters muster here,
With angel's face, and harmful hellish hearts,
With smiling looks, and deep deceitful thoughts,
With tender skins, and stony cruel minds,
With stealing steps, yet forward feet to fraud.
Behold, behold, they never stand content,
With God, with kind, with any help of art,
But curl their locks with bodkins and with braids,
But dye their hair with sundry subtle sleights,
But paint and slick till fairest face be foul,
But bumbast, bolster, frizzle, and perfume.
They mar with musk the balm which nature made
And dig for death in delicatest dishes.
The younger sort come piping on apace,
In whistles made of fine enticing wood,
Till they have caught the birds for whom they birded.
The elder sort go stately stalking on,
And on their backs they bear both land and fee,
Castles and towers, revenues and receipts,
Lordships and manors, fines, yea, farms and all.
What should these be? Speak you, my lovely lord.
They be not men: for why? they have no beards.
They be no boys, which wear such side long gowns.
They be no gods, for all their gallant gloss.
They be no devils, I trow, which seem so saintish.
What be they? women? masking in men's weeds?
With Dutchkin doublets, and with jerkins jagg'd?
With Spanish spangs, and ruffs fet out of France,
With high-copp'd hats, and feathers flaunt-a-flaunt?
They be so sure, even wo to men indeed.
Nay then, my lord, let shut the glass apace,
High time it were for my poor muse to wink,
Since all the hands, all paper, pen, and ink,
Which ever yet this wretched world possess'd
Cannot describe this sex in colours due!
No, no, my lord, we gazed have enough;
And I too much, God pardon me therefore.
Better look off, than look an ace too far;
And better mum, than meddle overmuch.
But if my glass do like my lovely lord,
We will espy, some sunny summer's day,
To look again, and see some seemly sights.

Meanwhile, my Muse right humbly doth beseech,
That my good lord accept this vent'rous verse,
Until my brains may better stuff devise.

George Gascoigne

When Thou Hast Spent The Linging Day

WHEN thou hast spent the lingering day in pleasure and delight,
Or after toil and weary way, dost seek to rest at night,
Unto thy pains or pleasures past, add this one labor yet:
Ere sleep close up thine eye too fast, do not thy God forget,
But search within thy secret thoughts, what deeds did thee befall;
And if thou find amiss in aught, to God for mercy call.
Yea, though thou find nothing amiss which thou canst call to mind,
Yet evermore remmeber this: there is the more behind;
And think how well so ever it be that thou hast spent the day,
It came of God, and not of thee, so to direct thy way.
Thus if thou try thy daily deeds and pleasure in this pain,
Thy life shall cleanse thy corn from weeds, and thine shall be the gain;
But if thy sinful, sluggish eye will venture for to wink,
Before thy wading will may try how far thy soul may sink,
Beware and wake; for else, thy bed, which soft and smooth is made,
May heap more harm upon thy head than blows of en'my's blade.
Thus if this pain procure thine ease, in bed as thou dost lie,
Perhaps it shall not God displease to sing thus, soberly:

`` I see that sleep is lent me here to ease my weary bones,
As death at last shall eke appear, to ease my grievous groans.
My daily sports, my paunch full fed, have caused my drowsy eye,
As careless life, in quiet led, might cause my soul to die.
The stretching arms, the yawning breath, which I to bedward use,
Are patterns of the pangs of death, when life will me refuse.
And of my bed each sundry part in shadows doth resemble
The sundry shapes of death, whose dart shall make my flesh to tremble.
My bed itself is like the grave, my sheets the winding sheet,
My clothes the mold which I must have to cover me most meet;
The hungry fleas, which frisk so fresh, to worms I can compare,
Which greedily shall gnaw my flesh and leave the bones full bare.
The waking cock, that early crows to wear the night away
Puts in my mind the trump that blows before the Latter Day.
And as I rise up lustily when sluggish sleep is past,
So hope I to rise joyfully to Judgment at the last.
Thus will I wake, thus will I sleep, thus will I hope to rise,
Thus will I neither wail nor weep, but sing in godly wise;
My bones shall in this bed remain, my soul in God shall trust,
By whom I hope to rise again from death and earthly dust."

George Gascoigne

Woodmanship

My worthy Lord, I pray you wonder not
To see your woodman shoot so oft awry,
Nor that he stands amazèd like a sot,
And lets the harmless deer unhurt go by.
Or if he strike a doe which is but carren,
Laugh not good Lord, but favor such a fault,
Take will in worth, he would fain hit the barren,
But though his heart be good, his hap is naught.
And therefore now I crave your Lordship's leave,
To tell you plain what is the cause of this.
First, if it please your honor to perceive
What makes your woodman shoot so oft amiss.
Believe me, Lord, the case is nothing strange:
He shoots awry almost at every mark,
His eyes have been so usèd for to range,
That now God knows they be both dim and dark.
For proof he bears the note of folly now,
Who shot sometimes to hit Philosophy,
And ask you why? forsooth I make avow,
Because his wanton wits went all awry.
Next that, he shot to be a man of law,
And spent some time with learnèd Littleton,
Yet in the end he provèd but a daw,
For law was dark and he had quickly done.
Then could he wish Fitzherbert such a brain
As Tully had, to write the law by art,
So that with pleasure, or with little pain,
He might perhaps have caught a truant's part.
But all too late, he most misliked the thing
Which most might help to guide his arrow straight;
He winkèd wrong, and so let slip the string,
Which cast him wide, for all his quaint conceit.
From thence he shot to catch a courtly grace,
And thought even there to weild the world at will,
But, out alas, he much mistook the place,
And shot awry at every rover still,
The blazing baits which draw the gazing eye
Unfeathered there his first affectiön;
No wonder then although he shot awry,

Wanting the feathers of discretiön.
Yet more than them, the marks of dignity
He much mistook, and shot the wronger way,
Thinking the purse of prodigality
Had been best mean to purchase such a prey.
He thought the flattering face which fleereth still,
Had been full fraught with all fidelity,
And that such words as courtiers use at will
Could not have varied from the verity.
But when his bonnet buttonèd with gold,
His comely cap beguarded all with gay,
His bombast hose, with linings manifold,
His knit silk stocks and all his quaint array,
Had picked his purse of all the Peter-pence,
Which might have paid for his promotiön,
Then (all too late) he found that light expense
Had quite quenched out the court's devotiön.
So that since then the taste of misery
Hath been always full bitter in his bit,
And why? forsooth because he shot awry,
Mistaking still the marks which others hit.
But now behold what marks the man doth find:
He shoots to be a solider in his age:
Mistrusting all the virtues of the mind,
He trusts the power of his personage.
As though long limbs led by a lusty heart
Might yet suffice to make him rich again;
But Flushing frays have taught him such a part
That now he thinks the wars yeild no such gain.
And sure I fear, unless your lordship deign
To train him yet into some better trade,
It will be long before he hit the vein
Whereby he may a richer man be made.
He cannot climb as other catchers can,
To lead a charge before himself be led.
He cannot spoil the simple sakeless man,
Which is content to feed him with his bread.
He cannot pinch the painful soldier's pay,
And shear him out his share in ragged sheets,
He cannot stoop to take a greedy prey
Upon his fellows groveling in the streets.
He cannot pull the spoil from such as pill,

And seem full angry at such foul offense,
Although the gain of content his greedy will,
Under the cloak of contrary pretence:
And nowadays, the man that shoots not so,
May shoot amiss, even as your woodman doth:
But then you marvel why I let them go,
And never shoot, but say farewell forsooth:
Alas, my Lord, while I do muse hereon,
And call to mind my youthful years misspent,
They give me such a bone to gnaw upon,
That all my senses are in silence pent.
My mind is rapt in contemplatiön,
Wherein my dazzled eyes only behold
The black hour of my constellatiön
Which framèd me so luckless on the mold.
Yet therewithal I cannot but confess,
That vain presumption makes my heart to swell,
For thus I think, not all the world (I guess)
Shoots bet than I, nay some shoots not so well.
In Aristotle somewhat did I learn,
To guide my manners all by comeliness,
And Tully taught me somewhat to discern
Between sweet speech and barbarous rudeness.
Old Parkins, Rastell, and Dan Bracton's books
Did lend me somewhat of the lawless law;
The crafty courtiers with their guileful looks
Must needs put some experience in my maw:
Yet cannot these with many mast'ries moe
Make me shoot straight at any gainful prick
Where some that never handled such a bow
Can hit the white or touch it near the quick,
Who can nor speak nor write in pleasant wise,
Nor lead their life by Aristotle's rule,
Nor argue well on questions that arise,
Nor plead a case more than my lord mayor's mule,
Yet can they hit the marks that I do miss,
And win the mean which may the man maintain.
Now when my mind doth mumble upon this,
No wonder then although I pine for pain:
And whiles mine eyes behold this mirror thus,
The herd goeth by, and farewell gentle does:
So that your lordship quikly may discuss

What blinds mine eys so oft (as I suppose).
But since my Muse can to my Lord rehearse
What makes me miss, and why I do not shoot,
Let me imagine in this worthless verse,
If right before me, at my standing's foot
There stood a doe, and I should strike her dead,
And then she prove a carrion carcass too,
What figure might I find within my head,
To scuse the rage which ruled me so to do?
Some might interpret with plain paraphrase,
That lack of skill or fortune led the chance,
But I must otherwise expound the case;
I say Jehovah did this doe advance,
And made her bold to stand before me so,
Till I had thrust mine arrow to her heart,
That by the sudden of her overthrow
I might endeavor to amend my part
And turn mine eyes that they no more behold
Such guileful marks as seem more than they be:
And though they glister outwardly like gold,
Are inwardly like brass, as men may see:
And when I see the milk hang in her teat,
Methinks it saith, old babe, now learn to suck,
Who in thy youth coulst never learn the feat
To hit the whites which live with all good luck.
Thus have I told my Lord (God grant in season)
A tedious tale in rhyme, but little reason.

Haud ictus sapio.

George Gascoigne

You Must Not Wonder, Though You Think It Strange

You must not wonder, though you think it strange,
To see me hold my lowering head so low;
And that mine eyes take no delight to range
About the gleams which on your face do grow.
The mouse which once hath broken out of trap
Is seldom teased with the trustless bait,
But lies aloof for fear of more mishap,
And feedeth still in doubt of deep deceit.
The scorched fly which once hath 'scap'd the flame
Will hardly come to play again with fire.
Whereby I learn that grievous is the game
Which follows fancy dazzled by desire.
So that I wink or else hold down my head,
Because your blazing eyes my bale have bred.

□

George Gascoigne