

Classic Poetry Series

Giles Fletcher The Elder
- poems -

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Giles Fletcher The Elder(1548 - 1611)

Giles Fletcher, the Elder was an English poet and diplomat, member of the English Parliament.

Giles Fletcher was the son of Richard Fletcher, vicar of Bishop's Stortford. He spent his early life at Cranbrook before entering Eton College about 1561. From there, Fletcher continued his education at King's College, Cambridge, where he was appointed a fellow in 1568 and gained his B.A. in the academic year 1569-70.

Studying Greek and poetry, Fletcher contributed to the translation of several of Demosthenes' orations. On 22 March 1572, Fletcher became a lecturer in King's and held this position until March the following year, until he became a lecturer in Greek, a position which he held until Michaelmas term 1579. Continually rising within the academia, Fletcher rose to dean of arts, the highest position he was to attain at Kings, in 1580-81.

However, this would not last long, for he decided to marry, forcing him to give up his fellowship. On 16 January, in his father's church, he married Joan Sheafe. Returning to Cambridge later, he received his Doctor of Civil Law degree. After attaining his law degree, the family settled back in Cranbrook, where once again the family was united. On 8 April 1582, Giles and Joan's first child, [Phineas Fletcher](http://www.poemhunter.com/phineas-fletcher/), was baptized. During the same year, Giles was made chancellor of the diocese of Sussex.

In 1584, Fletcher was elected to the parliament which began on 23 November, for Winchelsea, one of the Cinque Ports. It was at this point that the Fletchers would permanently call London home. During his stint in Parliament, Fletcher served on three committees. In 1588 he was an ambassador to Russia to reestablish the treaty with tsar Feodor I of Russia. Fletcher published a treatise, *Of the Russe Common Wealth* (1591). The treaty to be reestablished was primarily concerning the English trade, but before he departed Queen Elizabeth made him a Master of Requests. The account of Russia Fletcher portrayed gives a vivid description into the Russian world pre-1600.

He is best known for his sonnet *Licia*. He is the father of the poet [Giles Fletcher Junior](http://www.poemhunter.com/giles-fletcher-junior/) although the two have commonly been confused as the other.

Licia Sonnets 01

Bright matchless star, the honour of the sky,
From whose clear shine heaven's vault hath all his light,
I send these poems to your graceful eye;
Do you but take them, and they have their right.
I build besides a temple to your name,
Wherein my thoughts shall daily sing your praise;
And will erect an altar for the same,
Which shall your virtues and your honour raise.
But heaven the temple of your honour is,
Whose brasen tops your worthy self made proud;
The ground an altar, base for such a bliss
With pity torn, because I sighed so loud.
And since my skill no worship can impart,
Make you an incense of my loving heart.

Sad, all alone, not long I musing sat,
But that my thoughts compelled me to aspire;
A laurel garland in my hand I gat,
So the Muses I approached the nigher.
My suit was this, a poet to become,
To drink with them, and from the heavens be fed.
Phoebus denied, and sware there was no room,
Such to be poets as fond fancy led.
With that I mourned and sat me down to weep;
Venus she smiled, and smiling to me said,
Come drink with me, and sit thee still, and sleep.
This voice I heard; and Venus I obeyed.
That poison sweet hath done me all this wrong,
For now of love must needs be all my song.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 02

Weary was love and sought to take his rest,
He made his choice, upon a virgin's lap;
And slyly crept from thence unto her breast,
Where still he meant to sport him in his hap;
The virgin frowned like Phœbus in a cloud;
Go pack, sir boy, here is no room for such,
My breast no wanton foolish boy must shroud."
This said, my love did give the wag a touch;
Then as the foot that treads the stinging snake
Hastes to be gone, for fear what may ensue,
So love my love was forced for to forsake,
And for more speed, without his arrows flew.
"Pardon," he said, "For why? You seemed to me
My mother Venus in her pride to be."

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 03

The heavens beheld the beauty of my queen,
And all amazed, to wonder thus began:
"Why dotes not Jove, as erst we all have seen,
And shapes himself like to a seemly man?
Mean are the matches which he sought before,
Like bloomless buds, too base to make compare,
And she alone hath treasured beauty's store,
In whom all gifts and princely graces are.
Cupid replied: "I posted with the sun
To view the maids that livéd in those days,
And none there was that might not well be won,
But she, most hard, most cold, made of delays.
Heavens were deceived, and wrong they do esteem,
She hath no heat, although she living seem.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 04

Love and my love did range the forest wild,
Mounted alike, upon swift coursers both.
Love her encountered, though he was a child.
"Let's strive," saith he, whereat my love was wroth,
And scorned the boy, and checked him with a smile.
"I mounted am, and arméd with my spear;
Thou art too weak, thyself do not beguile;
I could thee conquer if I naked were."
With this love wept, and then my love replied:
"Kiss me, sweet boy, so weep my boy no more."
Thus did my love, and then her force she tried;
Love was made ice, that fire was before.
A kiss of hers, as I, poor soul, do prove,
Can make the hottest freeze and coldest love.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 05

Love with her hair my love by force hath tied,
To serve her lips, her eyes, her voice, her hand;
I smiled for joy, when I the boy espied
To lie unchained and live at her command.
She if she look, or kiss, or sing, or smile,
Cupid withal doth smile, doth sing, doth kiss,
Lips, hands, voice, eyes, all hearts that may beguile,
Because she scorns all hearts but only this.
Venus for this in pride began to frown
That Cupid, born a god, enthralled should be.
She in disdain her pretty son threw down,
And in his place, with love she chainéd me.
So now, sweet love, though I myself be thrall,
Not her a goddess, but thyself I call.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 06

My love amazed did blush herself to see,
Pictured by art, all naked as she was.
"How could the painter know so much by me,
Or art effect what he hath brought to pass?
It is not like he naked me hath seen,
Or stood so nigh for to observe so much."
No, sweet; his eyes so near have never been,
Nor could his hands by art have cunning such;
I showed my heart, wherein you printed were,
You, naked you, as here you painted are;
In that my love your picture I must wear,
And show't to all, unless you have more care.
Then take my heart, and place it with your own;
So shall you naked never more be known.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 08

Hard are the rocks, the marble, and the steel,
The ancient oak with wind and weather tossed;
But you, my love, far harder do I feel
Than flint, or these, or is the winter's frost.
My tears too weak, your heart they cannot move;
My sighs, that rock, like wind it cannot rent;
Too tiger-like you swear you cannot love;
But tears and sighs you fruitless back have sent.
The frost too hard, not melted with my flame,
I cinders am, and yet you feel no heat.
Surpass not these, sweet love, for very shame,
But let my tears, my vows, my sighs entreat;
Then shall I say as I by trial find;
These all are hard, but you, my love, are kind.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 09

Love was laid down, all weary fast asleep,
Whereas my love his armor took away;
The boy awaked, and straight began to weep,
But stood amazed, and knew not what to say.
"Weep not, my boy," said Venus to her son,
"Thy weapons none can wield, but thou alone;
Licia the fair, this harm to thee hath done,
I saw her here, and presently was gone;
She will restore them, for she hath no need
To take thy weapons where thy valour lies;
For men to wound the Fates have her decreed,
With favour, hands, with beauty, and with eyes."
No, Venus, no: she scorns them, credit me;
But robbed thy son that none might care for thee

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 10

A painter drew the image of the boy,
Swift love, with wings all naked, and yet blind;
With bow and arrows, bent for to destroy;
I blamed his skill, and fault I thus did find
"A needless task I see thy cunning take;
Misled by love, thy fancy thee betrayed;
Love is no boy, nor blind, as men him make,
Nor weapons wears, whereof to be affrayed;
But if thou, love, wilt paint with greatest skill
A love, a maid, a goddess, and a queen;
Wonder and view at Licia's picture still,
For other love the world hath never seen;
For she alone all hope all comfort gives;
Men's hearts, souls, all, led by her favour lives."

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 11

In Ida vale three queens the shepherd saw,
Queens of esteem, divine they were all three,
A sight of worth. But I a wonder shaw,
Their virtues all in one alone to be.
Licia the fair, surpassing Venus' pride,
(The matchless queen, commander of the gods,
When drawn with doves she in her pomp doth ride)
Hath far more beauty, and more grace by odds
Juno, Jove's wife, unmeet to make compare,
I grant a goddess, but not half so mild;
Minerva wise, a virtue, but not rare;
Yet these are mean, if that my love but smiled.
She them surpasseth, when their prides are full
As far as they surpass the meanest trull.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 12

I wish sometimes, although a worthless thing,
Spurred by ambition, glad to aspire,
Myself a monarch, or some mighty king,
And then my thoughts do wish for to be higher.
But when I view what winds the cedars toss.
What storms men feels that covet for renown,
I blame myself that I have wished my loss,
And scorn a kingdom, though it give a crown.
Ah Licia, though the wonder of my thought,
My heart's content, procurer of my bliss,
For whom a crown I do esteem as naught,
As Asia's wealth, too mean to buy a kiss!
Kiss me, sweet love, this favor do for me;
Then crowns and kingdoms shall I scorn for thee.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 13

Enamored Jove commanding did entreat
Cupid to wound my love, which he denied,
And swore he could not for she wanted heat
And would not love, as he full oft had tried.
Jove in a rage, impatient this to hear,
Replied with threats; "I'll make you to obey!"
Whereat the boy did fly away for fear
To Licia's eyes, where safe intrenched he lay.
Then Jove he scorned, and dared him to his face,
For now more safe than in the heavens he dwelled,
Nor could Jove's wrath do wrong to such a place
Where grace and honour have their kingdom held.
Thus in the pride and beauty of her eyes
The seely boy the greatest god defies.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 14

My love lay sleeping, where birds music made,
Shutting her eyes, disdainful of the light;
The heat was great but greater was the shade
Which her defended from his burning sight.
This Cupid saw, and came a kiss to take,
Sucking sweet nectar from her sugared breath;
She felt the touch, and blushed, and did awake,
Seeing t'was love, which she did think was death,
She cut his wings and caused him to stay,
Making a vow, he should not thence depart,
Unless to her the wanton boy could pay
The truest, kindest and most loving heart.
His feathers still she used for a fan,
Till by exchange my heart his feathers won.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 15

I stood amazed, and saw my Licia shine,
Fairer than Phoelibus, in his brightest pride,
Set forth in colors by a hand divine,
Where naught was wanting but a soul to guide.
It was a picture, that I could descry,
Yet made with art so as it seemed to live,
Surpassing fair, and yet it had no eye,
Whereof my senses could no reason give.
With that the painter bid me not to muse;
"Her eyes are shut, but I deserve no blame;
For if she saw, in faith, it could not choose
But that the work had wholly been a flame,
"Then burn me, sweet, with brightness of your eyes,
That phoelignix-like from thence I may arise.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 16

Grant, fairest kind, a kiss unto thy friend!
A blush replied, and yet a kiss I had.
It is not heaven that can such nectar send
Whereat my senses all amazed were glad.
This done, she fled as one that was affrayed,
And I desired to kiss by kissing more;
My love she frowned, and I my kissing stayed,
Yet wished to kiss her as I did before.
Then as the vine the propping elm doth clasp,
Loath to depart till both together die,
So fold me, sweet, until my latest gasp,
That in thy arms to death I kissed may lie.
Thus whilst I live for kisses I must call;
Still kiss me, sweet, or kiss me not at all.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 17

As are the sands, fair Licia, on the shore,
Or colored flowers, garlands of the spring,
Or as the frosts not seen, not felt before,
Or as the fruits that autumn forth doth bring;
As twinkling stars, the tinsel of the night,
Or as the fish that gallop in the seas;
As airs each part that still escapes our sight,
So are my sighs, controllers of my ease.
Yet these are such as needs must have an end,
For things finite none else hath nature done;
Only the sighs, which from my heart I send,
Will never cease, but where they first begun.
Accept them, sweet, as incense due to thee
For you immortal made them so to be.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 18

I swear, fair Licia, still for to be thine,
By heart, by eyes, by what I held most dear;
Thou checked mine oath, and said: these were not mine,
And that I had no right by them to swear.
Then by my sighs, my passions, and my tears,
My vows, my prayers, my sorrow, and my love,
My grief, my joy, my hope, and hopeless fears,
My heart is thine, and never shall remove.
These are not thine, though sent unto thy view,
All else I grant, by right they are thine own;
Let these suffice that what I swear is true,
And more than this if that it could be known.
So shall all these though troubles ease my grief;
If that they serve to work in thee belief.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 19

That time, fair Licia, when I stole a kiss,
From off those lips, where Cupid lovely laid,
I quaked for cold, and found the cause was this:
My life which loved, for love behind me staid.
I sent my heart my life for to recall,
But that was held, not able to return,
And both detained as captives were in thrall,
And judged by her, that both by sighs should burn.
Fair, burn them both, for that they were so bold,
But let the altar be within thy heart;
And I shall live because my life you hold,
You that give life, to every living part;
A flame I took whenas I stole the kiss;
Take you my life, yet can I live with this.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 20

First did I fear, when first my love began,
Possessed in fits by watchful jealousy
I sought to keep what I by favor won,
And brooked no partner in my love to be.
But tyrant sickness fed upon my love,
And spread his ensigns, dyed with color white;
Then was suspicion glad for to remove,
And loving much did fear to lose her quite.
Erect, fair sweet, the colors thou didst wear;
Dislodge thy griefs, the short'ners of content;
For now of life, not love, is all my fear,
Lest life and love be both together spent.
Live but, fair love, and banish thy disease,
And love, kind heart, both when and whom thou please.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 21

Licia my love was sitting in a grove,
Tuning her smiles unto the chirping songs,
But straight she spied where two together strove,
Each one complaining of the other's wrongs.
Cupid did cry lamenting of the harm;
Jove's messenger, thou wrong'st me too too far;
Use thou thy rod, rely upon the charm;
Think not by speech my force thou canst debar.
A rod, Sir boy, were fitter for a child,
My weapons oft and tongue and mind you took;
And in my wrong at my distress thou smiled,
And scorned to grace me with a loving look.
Speak you, sweet love, for you did all the wrong
That broke his arrows, and did bind his tongue.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 22

I might have died before my life begun,
Whenas my father for his country's good
The Persian's favor and the Sophey won
And yet with danger of his dearest blood.
Thy father, sweet, whom danger did beset,
Escapéd all, and for no other end
But only this, that you he might beget,
Whom heavens decreed into the world to send.
Then father, thank thy daughter for thy life,
And Neptune praise that yielded so to thee,
To calm the tempest when the storms were rife,
And that thy daughter should a Venus be.
I call thee Venus, sweet, but be not wroth;
Thou art more chaste, yet seas did favor both.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 23

My love was masked, and armed with a fan,
To see the sun so careless of his light,
Which stood and gazed, and gazing waxéd wan
To see a star himself that was more bright.
Some did surmise she hid her from the sun,
Of whom in pride she scorned for to be kissed,
Or feared the harm by him to others done.
But these the reason of this wonder missed,
Nor durst the sun, if that her face were bare
In greatest pride, presume to take a kiss.
But she more kind did show she had more care
Than with her eyes eclipse him of his bliss.
Unmask you, sweet, and spare not; dim the sun;
Your light's enough, although that his were done.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 24

When as my love lay sickly in her bed,
Pale death did post in hope to have a prey;
But she so spotless made him that he fled;
"Unmeet to die," she cried, and could not stay.
Back he retired, and thus the heavens he told;
"All things that are, are subject unto me,
Both towns, and men, and what the world doth hold;
But her fair Licia still immortal be."
The heavens did grant; a goddess she was made,
Immortal, fair, unfit to suffer change.
So now she lives, and never more shall fade;
In earth a goddess, what can be more strange?
Then will I hope, a goddess and so near,
She cannot choose my sighs and prayers but hear.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 25

Seven are the lights that wander in the skies,
And at these seven, I wonder in my love.
So see the moon, how pale she doth arise,
Standing amazed, as though she durst not move;
So is my sweet much paler than the snow,
Constant her looks, these looks that cannot change.
Mercury the next, a god sweet-tongued we know,
But her sweet voice doth wonders speak more strange.
The rising Sun doth boast him of his pride,
And yet my love is far more fair than he.
The warlike Mars can wieldless weapons guide,
But yet that god is far more weak than she.
The lovely Venus seemeth to be fair,
But at her best my love is far more bright.
Saturn for age with groans doth dim the air,
Whereas my love with smiles doth give it light.
Gaze at her brows, where heaven ingrafted is;
Then sigh, and swear, there is no heaven but this

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 26

I live, sweet love, whereas the gentle wind
Murmurs with sport in midst of thickest boughs,
Where loving woodbine doth the harbor bind,
And chirping birds do echo forth my vows;
Where strongest elm can scarce support the vine,
And sweetest flowers enameled have the ground;
Where Muses dwell; and yet hereat repine
That on the earth so rare a place was found.
But winds delight, I wish to be content;
I praise the woodbine, but I take no joy;
I moan the birds that music thus have spent;
As for the rest, they breed but mine annoy.
Live then, fair Licia, in this place alone;
Then shall I joy though all of these were gone.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 27

The crystal stream wherein my love did swim,
Melted in tears as partners of my woe;
Her shine was such as did the fountain dim,
The pearl-like fountain whiter than the snow;
Then like perfume, resolvéd with a heat,
The fountain smoked, as if it thought to burn;
A wonder strange to see the cold so great,
And yet the fountain into smoke to turn.
I searched the cause, and found it to be this:
She touched the water, and it burned with love.
Now by her means it purebased hath that bliss,
Which all diseases quickly can remove.
Then if by you these streams thus blesse'd be,
Sweet, grant me love, and be not worse to me.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 28

In time the strong and stately turrets fall,
In time the rose and silver lilies die,
In time the monarchs captive are and thrall,
In time the sea and rivers are made dry;
The hardest flint in time doth melt asunder;
Still living fame in time doth fade away;
The mountains proud we see in time come under;
And earth for age we see in time decay;
The sun in time forgets for to retire
From out the east where he was wont to rise;
The basest thoughts we see in time aspire,
And greedy minds in time do wealth despise.
Thus all, sweet fair, in time must have an end,
Except thy beauty, virtues, and thy friend.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 29

Why died I not whenas I last did sleep?
O sleep too short that shadowed forth my dear!
Heavens, hear my prayers, nor thus me waking keep!
For this were heaven, if thus I sleeping were.
For in that dark there shone a princely light;
Two milk-white hills, both full of nectar sweet,
Her ebon thighs, the wonder of my sight,
Where all my senses with their objects meet,--
I pass these sports, in secret that are best,
Wherein my thoughts did seem alive to be;
We both did strive, and weary both did rest;
I kissed her still, and still she kissed me.
Heavens, let me sleep, and shows my senses feed
Or let me wake and happy be indeed!

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 30

Whenas my Licia sailed in the seas,
Viewing with pride god Neptune's stately crown,
A calm she made, and brought the merchant ease,
The storm she stayed, and checked him with a frown.
Love at the stern sate smiling and did sing
To see how seas had learned for to obey;
And balls of fire into the waves did fling;
And still the boy full wanton thus did say
"Both poles we burnt whereon the world doth turn,
The round of heaven from earth unto the skies;
And now the seas we both intend to burn,
I with my bow, and Licia with her eyes."
Then since thy force, heavens, earth, nor seas can move,
I conquered yield, and do confess I love.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 31

Whenas her lute is tuned to her voice,
The air grows proud for honour of that sound,
And rocks do leap to show how they rejoice
That in the earth such music should be found.
Whenas her hair more worth, more pale than gold,
Like silver thread lies waiting in the air,
Diana-like she looks, but yet more bold;
Cruel in chase, more chaste and yet more fair.
Whenas she smiles, the clouds for envy breaks;
She Jove in pride encounters with a check;
The sun doth shine for joy whenas she speaks;
Thus heaven and earth do homage at her beck.
Yet all these graces, blots, not graces are,
If you, my love, of love do take no care.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 32

Years, months, days, hours, in sighs I sadly spend;
I black the night wherein I sleepless toss;
I love my griefs yet wish them at an end;
Thus time's expense increaseth but my loss.
I musing stand and wonder at my love,
That in so fair should be a heart of steel;
And then I think my fancy to remove,
But then more painful I my passions feel;
Thus must I love, sweet fair, until I die,
And your unkindness doth my love increase.
I conquered am, I can it not deny;
My life must end, yet shall my love not cease.
Then heavens, make Licia fair most kind to me,
Or with my life my loss may finished be!

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 33

I wrote my sighs, and sent them to my love;
I praised that fair that none enough could praise;
But plaints nor praises could fair Licia move;
Above my reach she did her virtues raise,
And thus replied: "False Scrawl, untrue thou art,
To feign those sighs that nowhere can be found;
For half those praises came not from his heart
Whose faith and love as yet was never found.
Thy master's life, false Scrawl shall be thy doom;
Because he burns, I judge thee to the flame;
Both your attempts deserve no better room."
Thus at her word we ashes both became.
Believe me, fair, and let my paper live;
Or be not fair, and so me freedom give.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 34

Pale are my looks, forsaken of my life,
Cinders my bones, consume'd with thy flame,
Floods are my tears, to end this burning strife,
And yet I sigh for to increase the same;
I mourn alone because alone I burn;
Who doubts of this, then let him learn to love;
Her looks cold ice into a flame can turn,
As I distressed in myself do prove.
Respect, fair Licia, what my torments are;
Count but the tithe both of my sighs and tears;
See how my love doth still increase my care,
And care's increase my life to nothing wears.
Send but a sigh my flame for to increase,
Or lend a tear and cause it so to cease.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 35

Whenas I wish, fair Licia, for a kiss
From those sweet lips where rose and lilies strive,
Straight do mine eyes repine at such a bliss,
And seek my lips thereof for to deprive;
Whenas I seek to glut mine eyes by sight,
My lips repine and call mine eyes away;
Thus both contend to have each other's right,
And both conspire to work my full decay.
O force admired of beauty in her pride,
In whose each part such strange effects there be,
That all my forces in themselves divide.
And make my senses plainly disagree.
If all were mine, this envy would be gone;
Then grant me all, fair sweet, or grant me none!

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 36

Hear how my sighs are echoed of the wind;
See how my tears are pitied by the rain;
Feel what a flame possesséd hath my mind;
Taste but the grief which I possess in vain.
Then if my sighs the blustering winds surpass,
And wat'ry tears the drops of rain exceed,
And if no flame like mine nor is nor was,
Nor grief like that whereon my soul doth feed,
Relent, fair Licia, when my sighs do blow;
Yield at my tears, that flintlike drops consume;
Accept the flame that doth my incense show,
Allow the grief that is my heart's perfume.
Thus sighs and tears, flame, grief shall plead for me;
So shall I pray, and you a goddess be.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 37

I speak, fair Licia, what my torments be,
But then my speech too partial do I find;
For hardly words can with those thoughts agree,
Those thoughts that swarm in such a troubled mind.
Then do I vow my tongue shall never speak
Nor tell my grief that in my heart doth lie;
But cannon-like, I then surcharged do break,
And so my silence worse than speech I try.
Thus speech or none, they both do breed my care;
I live dismayed, and kill my heart with grief;
In all respects my case alike doth fare
To him that wants, and dare not ask relief.
Then you, fair Licia, sovereign of my heart,
Read to yourself my anguish and my smart.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 38

Sweet, I protest, and seal it with an oath:
I never saw that so my thoughts did please;
And yet content displeased I see them wroth
To love so much and cannot have their ease.
I told my thoughts, my sovereign made a pause,
Disposed to grant, but willing to delay;
They then repined, for that they knew no cause,
And swore they wished she flatly would say nay.
Thus hath my love my thoughts with treason filled,
And 'gainst my sovereign taught them to repine.
So thus my treason all my thoughts hath killed,
And made fair Licia say she is not mine.
But thoughts too rash my heart doth now repent;
And as you please, they swear, they are content.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 39

Fair matchless nymph, respect but what I crave;
My thoughts are true, and honour is my love;
I fainting die whom yet a smile might save;
You gave the wound, and can the hurt remove.
Those eyes like stars that twinkle in the night,
And cheeks like rubies pale in lilies dyed,
Those ebon hands that darting hath such might
That in my soul my love and life divide,
Accept the passions of a man possessed;
Let love be loved and grant me leave to live;
Disperse those clouds that darkened have my rest,
And let your heaven a sun-like smile but give!
Then shall I praise that heaven for such a sun
That saved my life, whenas my grief begun.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 40

My grief begun, fair saint, when first I saw
Love in those eyes sit ruling with disdain,
Whose sweet commands did keep a world in awe,
And caused them serve your favor to obtain.
I stood as one enchanted with a frown,
Yet smiled to see all creatures serve those eyes,
Where each with sighs paid tribute to that crown,
And thought them graced by your dumb replies.
But I, ambitious, could not be content
Till that my service more than sighs made known;
And for that end my heart to you I sent
To say and swear that, fair, it is your own.
Then greater graces, Licia, do impart,
Not dumb replies unto a speaking heart.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 41

If, aged Charon, when my life shall end,
I pass thy ferry and my waftage pay,
Thy oars shall fall, thy boat and mast shall rend,
And through the deep shall be a dry foot-way.
For why? My heart with sighs doth breathe such flame
That air and water both incenséd be,
The boundless ocean from whose mouth they came,
For from my heat not heaven itself is free.
Then since to me thy loss can be no gain,
Avoid thy harm and fly what I foretell.
Make thou thy love with me for to be slain,
That I with her and both with thee may dwell.
Thy fact thus, Charon, both of us shall bless,
Thou save thy boat and I my love possess.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 43

Are those two stars, her eyes, my life's light gone,
By which my soul was freed from all dark?
And am I left distressed to live alone,
Where none my tears and mournful tale shall mark?
Ah sun, why shine thy looks, thy looks like gold,
When horsemen brave thou risest in the east?
Ah Cynthia pale, to whom my griefs I told,
Why do you both rejoice both man and beast?
And I alone, alone that dark possess
By Licia's absence brighter than the sun,
Whose smiling light did ease my sad distress,
And broke the clouds, when tears like rain begun.
Heavens, grant that light and so me waking keep,
Or shut my eyes and rock me fast asleep!

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 44

Cruel fair love, I justly do complain
Of too much rigor and thy heart unkind,
That for mine eyes thou hast my body slain,
And would not grant that I should favour find.
I looked, fair love, and you my love looked fair,
I sighed for love and you for sport did smile.
Your smiles were such as did perfume the air,
And this perfuméd did my heart beguile.
Thus I confess the fault was in mine eyes,
Begun with sighs and ended with a flame.
I for your love did all the world despise,
And in these poems honored have your name.
Then let your love so with my fault dispense,
That all my parts feel not mine eyes' offense.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 45

There shone a comet, and it was full west.
My thoughts presagéd what it did portend;
I found it threatened to my heart unrest,
And might in time my joys and comfort end.
I further sought and found it was a sun,
Which day nor night did never use to set.
It constant stood when heavens did restless run,
And did their Virtues and their forces let.
The world did muse and wonder what it meant,
A sun to shine and in the west to rise;
To search the truth, I strength and spirits spent;
At length I found it was my Licia's eyes.
Now never after soul shall live in dark,
That hath the hap this western sun to mark.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 46

If he be dead, in whom no heart remains,
Or lifeless be in whom no life is found;
If he do pine that never comfort gains,
And be distressed that hath his deadly wound;
Then must I die whose heart elsewhere is clad,
And lifeless pass the greedy worms to feed;
Then must I pine that never comfort had,
And be distressed whose wound with tears doth bleed.
Which if I do, why do I not wax cold?
Why rest I not like one that wants a heart?
Why move I still like him that life doth hold,
And sense enjoy both of my joy and smart?
Like Niobe queen which made a stone did weep,
Licia my heart dead and alive doth keep

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 47

Like Memnon's rock, touched with the rising sun
Which yields a sound and echoes forth a voice,
But when it's drowned in western seas is done,
And drowsy-like leaves off to make a noise;
So I, my love, enlightened with your shine,
A poet's skill within my soul I shroud,
Not rude like that which finer wits decline,
But such as Muses to the best allowed.
But when your figure and your shape is gone
I speechless am like as I was before;
Or if I write, my verse is filled with moan,
And blurred with tears by falling in such store
Then muse not, Licia, if my Muse be slack,
For when I wrote I did thy beauty lack.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 48

I saw, sweet Licia, when the spider ran
Within your house to weave a worthless web,
You present were and feared her with your fan,
So that amazed speedily she fled.
She in your house such sweet perfumes did smell,
And heard the Muses with their notes refined,
Thus filled with envy, could no longer dwell,
But straight returned and at your house repined.
Then tell me, spider, why of late I saw
Thee lose thy poison, and thy bowels gone;
Did these enchant and keep thy limbs in awe,
And made thy forces to be small or none?
No, no, thou didst by chance my Licia see,
Who for her look Minerva seemed to thee

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 49

If that I die, fair Licia, with disdain,
Or heartless live surpriséd with thy wrong,
Then heavens and earth shall accent both my pain,
And curse the time so cruel and so long.
If you be kind, my queen, as you are fair,
And aid my thoughts that still for conquest strive,
Then will I sing and never more despair,
And praise your kindness whilst I am alive.
Till then I pay the tribute of my tears,
To move thy mercy and thy constant truth.
Respect, fair love, how these with sorrow wears
The truest heart unless it find some ruth.
Then grace me, sweet, and with thy favor raise me,
So shall I live and all the world shall praise thee.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 50

Ah Licia, sigh and say thou art my own;
Nay, be my own, as you full oft have said.
So shall your truth unto the world be known,
And I resolved where now I am afraid.
And if my tongue eternize can your praise,
Or silly speech increase your worthy fame,
If ought I can, to heaven your worth can raise,
The age to come shall wonder at the same.
In this respect your love, sweet love, I told,
My faith and truth I vowed should be forever.
You were the cause if that I was too bold;
Then pardon this my fault or love me never.
But if you frown I wish that none believe me,
For slain with sighs I'll die before I grieve thee.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 51

When first the sun whom all my senses serve,
Began to shine upon this earthly round,
The heavens for her all graces did reserve,
That Pandor-like with all she might abound.
Apollo placed his brightness in her eyes,
His skill presaging and his music sweet.
Mars gave his force; all force she now defies;
Venus her smiles wherewith she Mars did meet;
Python a voice, Diana made her chaste,
Ceres gave plenty, Cupid lent his bow,
Thetis his feet, there Pallas wisdom placed.
With these she queen-like kept a world in awe.
Yet all these honors deeméd are but pelf,
For she is much more worthy of herself.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

Licia Sonnets 52

O sugared talk, wherewith my thoughts do live!
O brows, love's trophy and my senses' shine!
O charming smiles, that death or life can give!
O heavenly kisses from a mouth divine!
O wreaths too strong, and trammels made of hair!
O pearls incloséd in an ebon pale!
O rose and lilies in a field most fair,
Where modest white doth make the red seem pale!
O voice whose accents live within my heart!
O heavenly hand that more than Atlas holds!
O sighs perfumed, that can release my smart!
O happy they whom in her arms she folds!
Now if you ask where dwelleth all this bliss,
Seek out my love and she will tell you this.

Giles Fletcher The Elder

To Love

If, Cupid, Heaven is your home, you
are the child of Venus, Nectar and
Ambrosia are your food, then why
do you spend days and nights with
me? Why burn me with your flame,
and quench my thirst with tears?
Why destroy me? You are indeed
descended from wild beasts. Are you
worthy of such descent and of
heaven? But I, I am merely
a shadow, why do you torture me?

Ad amorem.

Si coelum patria est puer beatum,
Si vero peperit VENUS benigna,
Si Nectar tibi Massicum ministrat;
Si sancta Ambrosia est cibus petitus,
Quid noctes habitas, diesque mecum?
Quid victum face supplicemque aduris?
Quid longam lachrimis sitim repellis?
Quid nostrae dape pasceris medullae?
O vere rabidum genus faerarum:
O domo stipe patriaque digne:
Jam levis sumus umbra, quid laccessis?

Giles Fletcher The Elder