

Classic Poetry Series

Richard Barnfield

- poems -

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Against the Dispraisers of Poetry

Chaucer is dead; and Gower lies in grave;
The Earl of Surrey long ago is gone;
Sir Philip Sidney's soul the heavens have;
George Gascoigne him before was tombed in stone.
Yet, though their bodies lie full low in ground,
As every thing must die that erst was born,
Their living fame no fortune can confound,
Nor ever shall their labors be forlorn.
And you, that discommend sweet poetry,
(So that the subject of the same be good)
Here may you see your fond simplicity,
Sith kings have favored it, of royal blood.
The King of Scots (now living) is a poet,
As his Lepanto and his Furies show it.

Richard Barnfield

An Ode

As it fell upon a day
In the merry month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade
Which a grove of myrtles made,
Beasts did leap and birds did sing,
Trees did grow and plants did spring;
Every thing did banish moan,
Save the nightingale alone.
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,
Lean'd her breast up-till a thorn
And there sung the doleful'st ditty,
That to hear it was great pity.
Fie, fie, fie, now would she cry,
Teru, teru, by and by;
That to hear her so complain,
Scarce I could from tears refrain;
For her griefs so lively shown
Made me think upon mine own.
Ah, thought I, thou mourn'st in vain;
None takes pity on thy pain;
Senseless trees, they cannot hear thee;
Ruthless bears, they will not cheer thee;
King Pandion, he is dead,
All thy friends are lapp'd in lead;
All thy fellow birds do sing,
Careless of thy sorrowing;
Whilst as fickle fortune smil'd,
Thou and I were both beguil'd.
Every one that flatters thee
Is no friend in misery:
Words are easy, like the wind,
Faithful friends are hard to find;
Every man will be thy friend
Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend,
But if store of crowns be scant,
No man will supply thy want.
If that one be prodigal,
Bountiful they will him call;
And with such-like flattering
Pity but he were a king.
If he be addict to vice,
Quickly him they will entice;
If to women he be bent,
They have at commandment;
But if fortune once do frown,
Then farewell his great renown;
They that fawn'd on him before
Use his company no more.
He that is thy friend indeed
He will help thee in thy need:
If thou sorrow, he will weep;
If thou wake, he cannot sleep;

Thus of every grief, in heart,
He with thee doth bear a part.
These are certain signs to know
Faithful friend from flatt'ring foe.

Richard Barnfield

Cherry-lipped Adonis...

Cherry-lipped Adonis in his snowy shape,
Might not compare with his pure ivory white,
On whose fair front a poet's pen might write,
Whose rosiate red excels the crimson grape.
His love-enticing delicate soft limbs,
Are rarely framed t' intrap poor gazing eyes;
His cheeks, the lily and carnation dyes,
With lovely tincture which Apollo's dims.
His lips ripe strawberries in nectar wet,
His mouth a hive, his tongue a honeycomb,
Where muses (like bees) make their mansion.
His teeth pure pearl in blushing coral set.
Oh how can such a body sin-procuring,
Be slow to love, and quick to hate, enduring?

Richard Barnfield

The Nightingale

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In the merry month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade
Which a grove of myrtles made,
Beasts did leap and birds did sing,
Trees did grow and plants did spring;
Every thing did banish moan,
Save the nightingale alone.
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,
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To his Friend Master R. L., In Praise of Music and Poetry

If music and sweet poetry agree,
As they must needs (the sister and the brother),
Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me,
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.
Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch
Upon the lute doth ravish human sense;
Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such
As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.
Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound
That Phoebus' lute (the queen of music), makes;
And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd
Whenas himself to singing he betakes.
One god is god of both (as poets feign),
One knight loves both, and both in thee remain

Richard Barnfield