

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Sir Robert Aytoun**

**- poems -**

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## To An Inconstant Mistress

I loved thee once, I'll love no more,  
Thine be the grief as is the blame,  
Thou art not what thou wast before,  
What reason I should be the same?  
He that can love unloved again  
Hath better store of love than brain;  
God send me love my debts to pay,  
While unthrifths fool their love away.

Nothing could have my love o'erthrown,  
If thou hadst still continued mine;  
Nay, if thou hadst remained thine own,  
I might perchance have yet been thine.  
But thou thy freedom did recall,  
That it thou might elsewhere enthrall,  
And then how could I but disdain  
A captive's captive to remain?

When new desires had conquered thee,  
And changed the object of thy will,  
It had been lethargy in me,  
Not constancy, to love thee still;  
Yea, it had been a sin to go  
And prostitute affection so,  
Since we are taught no prayers to say  
To such as must to others pray.

Yet do thou glory in thy choice,  
Thy choice of his good fortune boast;  
I'll neither grieve, nor yet rejoice  
To see him gain what I have lost.  
The height of my disdain shall be  
To laugh at him, to blush for thee;  
To love thee still, but go no more  
A-begging at a beggar's door.

Sir Robert Aytoun

## To His Forsaken Mistress

I DO confess thou'rt smooth and fair,  
And I might have gone near to love thee,  
Had I not found the slightest prayer  
That lips could move, had power to move thee;  
But I can let thee now alone  
As worthy to be loved by none.

I do confess thou'rt sweet; yet find  
Thee such an unthrift of thy sweets,  
Thy favours are but like the wind  
That kisseth everything it meets:  
And since thou canst with more than one,  
Thou'rt worthy to be kiss'd by none.

The morning rose that untouch'd stands  
Arm'd with her briers, how sweet she smells!  
But pluck'd and strain'd through ruder hands,  
Her sweets no longer with her dwells:  
But scent and beauty both are gone,  
And leaves fall from her, one by one.

Such fate ere long will thee betide  
When thou hast handled been awhile,  
With sere flowers to be thrown aside;  
And I shall sigh, while some will smile,  
To see thy love to every one  
Hath brought thee to be loved by none.

Sir Robert Aytoun