

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Nahum Tate**

## **- poems -**

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# Nahum Tate(1652 - 1715)

Nahum Tate, son of poet Faithful Teate, was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1652. He was educated at Dublin's Trinity College and graduated with a BA in 1672.

As a writer, his first volume of poetry was published in 1677. His most original poem is perhaps Panacea - a poem on Tea (1700). Prior to this, Tate was given the honour of being made Britain's poet laureate in 1692. In 1696 he collaborated with Nicholas Brady to write a metrical adaptation of the Psalms. Further religious pieces appeared in the supplementary volume Psalter in 1702. These two collections were regarded as tedious and verbose and only such hymns as While Shepherds Watched have stood up to the test of time.

It is as a playwright that Tate is best remembered. He wrote several popular adaptations of Shakespeare, the most famous being his King Lear (1687), in which he omitted the part of the fool and had Cordelia survive to marry Edgar. In Richard II he altered the names of the personages, and changed the text so that every scene, to use his own words, was " full of respect to Majesty and the dignity of courts". He also adapted works by John Fletcher and John Webster, amongst others.

Tate died in Southwark, where he had taken refuge from his creditors, on the 12th of August 1715. He is buried at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

# Whilst Shepherds Watch'D

Whilst Shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,  
All seated on the ground,  
The Angel of the Lord came down,  
And glory shone around.  
Fear not, said he, for mighty dread  
Had seized their troubled mind,  
Glad tidings of great joy I bring  
To you and all mankind.  
To you in David's town this day  
Is born of David's line  
A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;  
And this shall be the sign.  
The heavenly Babe you there shall find,  
To human view display'd,  
All meanly wrapt in swaddling bands  
And in a manger laid.  
Thus spake the Seraph, and forthwith  
Appeared a heavenly throng  
Of Angels praising God, and thus  
Address'd their joyful song:  
All glory be to God on high,  
And to the earth be peace,  
Good-will henceforth from Heav'n to men  
Begin and never cease.  
Hallelujah.

Nahum Tate