

Classic Poetry Series

William Browne
- poems -

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William Browne()

A Welcome

WELCOME, welcome! do I sing,
Far more welcome than the spring;
He that parteth from you never
Shall enjoy a spring for ever.

He that to the voice is near
Breaking from your iv'ry pale,
Need not walk abroad to hear
The delightful nightingale.
Welcome, welcome, then...

He that looks still on your eyes,
Though the winter have begun
To benumb our arteries,
Shall not want the summer's sun.
Welcome, welcome, then...

He that still may see your cheeks,
Where all rareness still reposes,
Is a fool if e'er he seeks
Other lilies, other roses.
Welcome, welcome, then...

He to whom your soft lip yields,
And perceives your breath in kissing,
All the odours of the fields
Never, never shall be missing.
Welcome, welcome, then...

He that question would anew
What fair Eden was of old,
Let him rightly study you,
And a brief of that behold.
Welcome, welcome, then...

William Browne

Behold, O God!

BEHOLD, O God! in rivers of my tears
I come to thee! bow down thy blessed ears
To hear me, wretch, and let thine eyes
 (which sleep
Did never close) behold a sinner weep:
Let not, O God, my God, my faults through great,
And numberless, between thy mercy's seat
And my poor soul be thrown! since we are taught,
Thou, Lord, remember'st thine, if thou be sought.
I come not, Lord, with any other merit
Than what I by my Saviour Christ inherit:
Be then his wounds my balm; his stripes my bliss;
My crown his thorns; my death be lost in his.
And thou, my blest Redeemer, Saviour, God,
Quit my accounts, withhold the vengeful rod!
O beg for me! my hopes on thee are set;
And Christ forgive, as well as pay the debt.

The living fount, the life, the way, I know,
And but to thee, O whither should I go?
All other helps are vain: grant thine to me,
For in thy cross my saving health must be.
O hearken then what I with faith implore,
Lest Sin and Death sink me for evermore.
Lastly, O God! my ways direct and guide;
In death defend me, that I never slide;
And at the doom let me be raised then,
To live with thee; sweet Jesus, say Amen!

William Browne

Britannia's Pastorals

Now as an angler melancholy standing
Upon a green bank yielding room for landing,
A wriggling yellow worm thrust on his hook,
Now in the midst he throws, then in a nook:
Here pulls his line, there throws it in again,
Mendeth his cork and bait, but all in vain,
He long stands viewing of the curled stream;
At last a hungry pike, or well-grown bream
Snatch at the worm, and hasting fast away,
He knowing it a fish of stubborn sway,
Pulls up his rod, but soft, as having skill,
Wherewith the hook fast holds the fish's gill;
Then all his line he freely yieldeth him,
Whilst furiously all up and down doth swim
Th' insnared fish, here on the top doth scud,
There underneath the banks, then in the mud,
And with his frantic fits so scares the shoal,
That each one takes his hide, or starting hole:
By this the pike, clean wearied, underneath
A willow lies, and pants (if fishes breathe)
Wherewith the angler gently pulls him to him,
And lest his haste might happen to undo him,
Lays down his rod, then takes his line in hand,
And by degrees getting the fish to land,
Walks to another pool: at length is winner
Of such a dish as serves him for his dinner:
So when the climber half the way had got,
Musing he stood, and busily 'gan plot
How (since the mount did always steeper tend)
He might with steps secure his journey end.
At last (as wand'ring boys to gather nuts)
A hooked pole he from a hazel cuts;
Now throws it here, then there to take some hold,
But bootless and in vain, the rocky mould
Admits no cranny where his hazel hook
Might promise him a step, till in a nook
Somewhat above his reach he hath espied
A little oak, and having often tried
To catch a bough with standing on his toe,

Or leaping up, yet not prevailing so,
He rolls a stone towards the little tree,
Then gets upon it, fastens warily
His pole unto a bough, and at his drawing
The early-rising crow with clam'rous cawing,
Leaving the green bough, flies about the rock,
Whilst twenty twenty couples to him flock:
And now within his reach the thin leaves wave,
With one hand only then he holds his stave,
And with the other grasping first the leaves,
A pretty bough he in his fist receives;
Then to his girdle making fast the hook,
His other hand another bough hath took;
His first, a third, and that, another gives,
To bring him to the place where his root lives.
Then, as a nimble squirrel from the wood,
Ranging the hedges for his filberd-food,
Sits peartly on a bough his brown nuts cracking,
And from the shell the sweet white kernel taking,
Till with their crooks and bags a sort of boys,
To share with him, come with so great a noise,
That he is forc'd to leave a nut nigh broke,
And for his life leap to a neighbour oak,
Thence to a beech, thence to a row of ashes;
Whilst through the quagmires, and red water plashes,
The boys run dabbling thorough thick and thin;
One tears his hose, another breaks his shin,
This, torn and tatter'd, hath with much ado
Got by the briars; and that hath lost his shoe;
This drops his band; that headlong falls for haste;
Another cries behind for being last;
With sticks and stones, and many a sounding holloa,
The little fool, with no small sport, they follow,
Whilst he, from tree to tree, from spray to spray,
Gets to the wood, and hides him in his dray:
Such shift made Riot ere he could get up,
And so from bough to bough he won the top,
Though hindrances, for ever coming there,
Were often thrust upon him by Despair.

William Browne

Memory

SO shuts the marigold her leaves
At the departure of the sun;
So from the honeysuckle sheaves
The bee goes when the day is done;
So sits the turtle when she is but one,
And so all woe, as I since she is gone.

To some few birds kind Nature hath
Made all the summer as one day:
Which once enjoy'd, cold winter's wrath
As night they sleeping pass away.
Those happy creatures are, that know not yet
The pain to be deprived or to forget.

I oft have heard men say there be
Some that with confidence profess
The helpful Art of Memory:
But could they teach Forgetfulness,
I'd learn; and try what further art could do
To make me love her and forget her too.

William Browne

Song

FOR her gait, if she be walking;
Be she sitting, I desire her
For her state's sake; and admire her
For her wit if she be talking;
 Gait and state and wit approve her;
 For which all and each I love her.

Be she sullen, I commend her
For a modest. Be she merry,
For a kind one her prefer I.
Briefly, everything doth lend her
 So much grace, and so approve her,
 That for everything I love her.

William Browne

The Rose

A ROSE, as fair as ever saw the North,
Grew in a little garden all alone;
A sweeter flower did Nature ne'er put forth,
Nor fairer garden yet was never known:
The maidens danced about it morn and noon,
And learned bards of it their ditties made;
The nimble fairies by the pale-faced moon
Water'd the root and kiss'd her pretty shade.
But well-a-day! - the gardener careless grew;
The maids and fairies both were kept away,
And in a drought the caterpillars threw
Themselves upon the bud and every spray.
God shield the stock! If heaven send no supplies,
The fairest blossom of the garden dies.

William Browne

The Sirens' Song

STEER, hither steer your winged pines,
All beaten mariners!
Here lie Love's undiscover'd mines,
A prey to passengers--
Perfumes far sweeter than the best
Which make the Phoenix' urn and nest.
Fear not your ships,
Nor any to oppose you save our lips;
But come on shore,
Where no joy dies till Love hath gotten more.

For swelling waves our panting breasts,
Where never storms arise,
Exchange, and be awhile our guests:
For stars gaze on our eyes.
The compass Love shall hourly sing,
And as he goes about the ring,
We will not miss
To tell each point he nameth with a kiss.
--Then come on shore,
Where no joy dies till Love hath gotten more.

William Browne