

Classic Poetry Series

Thomas Nashe
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Thomas Nashe(1567-1601)

Thomas Nashe was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk. He studied at St John's College Cambridge and travelled widely in France and Italy before coming to London and involving himself in the Martin Marprelate controversy. The Martin Marprelate Pamphlets were a series of satirical tracts attacking the Bishops. Nashe was involved in the production of several anti-Martinist pamphlets in the early 1590's which established his talent for vituperation (skill in the use of abusive reproaches). The controversy raged on until 1599 during which time he focused his efforts on attacking the writers Richard and Gabriel Harvey who had criticised Nashe's mentor Robert Greene. 'Pierce Pennilesse, his Supplication to the Devil' (1592) was the first of Nashe's viscous attacks which culminated in 'Have with you to Saffron-Walden' (1596).

Nashe then turned to a variety of other literary pursuits. The Unfortunate Traveller was a picturesque tale laced with literary parody and the use of the mock-heroic. It was the first of its kind and remains his most famous work. After the death of the playwright Christopher Marlowe Nashe prepared his unfinished tragedy Dido, Queen of Carthage (1596) for the stage.

The satirical comedy The Isle of Dogs (1597), written jointly with Jonson, provoked the authorities into closing down the theatre and throwing Nashe into Fleet prison. His last work Nashes Lenten Stuffe (1599) was a comic eulogy (false appraisal) on the red herring, or kipper.

A Litany In Time Of Plague

Adieu, farewell, earth's bliss;
This world uncertain is;
Fond are life's lustful joys;
Death proves them all but toys;
None from his darts can fly;
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Rich men, trust not in wealth,
Gold cannot buy you health;
Physic himself must fade.
All things to end are made,
The plague full swift goes by;
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Beauty is but a flower
Which wrinkles will devour;
Brightness falls from the air;
Queens have died young and fair;
Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Strength stoops unto the grave,
Worms feed on Hector brave;
Swords may not fight with fate,
Earth still holds open her gate.
"Come, come!" the bells do cry.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Wit with his wantonness
Tasteth death's bitterness;
Hell's executioner
Hath no ears for to hear
What vain art can reply.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Haste, therefore, each degree,
To welcome destiny;
Heaven is our heritage,
Earth but a player's stage;
Mount we unto the sky.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!

Thomas Nashe

Adieu, Farewell Earth's Bliss

1 Adieu, farewell earth's bliss,
2 This world uncertain is;
3 Fond are life's lustful joys,
4 Death proves them all but toys,
5 None from his darts can fly:
6 I am sick, I must die.
7 Lord, have mercy on us!

8 Rich men, trust not in wealth,
9 Gold cannot buy you health;
10 Physic himself must fade;
11 All things to end are made;
12 The plague full swift goes by:
13 I am sick, I must die.
14 Lord, have mercy on us!

15 Beauty is but a flower
16 Which wrinkles will devour;
17 Brightness falls from the air,
18 Queens have died young and fair,
19 Dust hath clos'd Helen's eye:
20 I am sick, I must die.
21 Lord, have mercy on us!

22 Strength stoops unto the grave,
23 Worms feed on Hector brave,
24 Swords may not fight with fate,
25 Earth still holds ope her gate;
26 Come, come, the bells do cry.
27 I am sick, I must die.
28 Lord, have mercy on us!

29 Wit with his wantonness
30 Tasteth death's bitterness:
31 Hell's executioner
32 Hath no ears for to hear
33 What vain art can reply:
34 I am sick, I must die.
35 Lord, have mercy on us!

36 Haste, therefore, each degree
37 To welcome destiny:
38 Heaven is our heritage,
39 Earth but a player's stage:
40 Mount we unto the sky.
41 I am sick, I must die.
42 Lord, have mercy on us!

Thomas Nashe

Autumn

Autumn hath all the summer's fruitful treasure;
Gone is our sport, fled is poor Croydon's pleasure.
Short days, sharp days, long nights come on apace,
Ah, who shall hide us from the winter's face?
Cold doth increase, the sickness will not cease,
And here we lie, God knows, with little ease.
From winter, plague, and pestilence, good Lord deliver us!

London doth mourn, Lambeth is quite forlorn;
Trades cry, Woe worth that ever they were born.
The want of term is town and city's harm;
Close chambers we do want to keep us warm.
Long banished must we live from our friends;
This low-built house will bring us to our ends.
From winter, plague, and pestilence, good Lord deliver us!

Thomas Nashe

Fair Summer Droops

Fair summer droops, droop men and beasts therefore,
So fair a summer look for nevermore:
All good things vanish less than in a day,
Peace, plenty, pleasure, suddenly decay.
Go not yet away, bright soul of the sad year,
The earth is hell when thou leav'st to appear.

What, shall those flowers that decked thy garland erst,
Upon thy grave be wastefully dispersed?
O trees, consume your sap in sorrow's source,
Streams, turn to tears your tributary course.
Go not yet hence, bright soul of the sad year,
The earth is hell when thou leav'st to appear.

Thomas Nashe

Poem 1 From Pierce Penilesse

Why ist damnation to dispaire and die,
When life is my true happinesse disease?
My soule, my soule, thy safetie makes me flie
The faultie meanes, that might my paine appease.
Diuines and dying men may talke of hell,
But in my heart, her seuerall tormentes dwell.
Ah worthlesse Wit, to traine me to this woe,
Deceitfull Artes that nourish Discontent:
Ill thriue the Follie that bewicht me so,
Vaine thoughts adieu, for now I will repent.
And yet my wants perswade me to proceede,
Since none takes pitie of a Scollars neede.
Forgiue me God, although I curse my birth,
And ban the aire, wherein I breath a Wretch:
Since Miserie hath daunted all my mirth,
And I am quite vndone through promise-breach.
Oh friends, no friends, that then vngently frowne,
When changing Fortune casts us headlong downe.
Without redresse complaines my carelesse verse,
And Mydas-eares relent not at my moane:
In some far Land will I my griefes reherse,
Mongst them that will be mou'd when I shall groane.
England (adieu) the Soyle that brought me foorth,
Adieu vnkinde, where skill is nothing woorth.

Thomas Nashe

Poem 2 From Pierce Penilesse

Perusing yesternight with idle eyes,
The Fairy Singers stately tuned verse:
And viewing after Chap-mens wonted guise,
What strange contents the title did rehearse.
I streight leapt ouer to the latter end,
Where like the queint Comædians of our time,
That when their Play is doone do fal to ryme,
I found short lines, to sundry Nobles pend.
Whom he as speciall Mirrours singled fourth,
To be the Patrons of his Poetry;
I read them all, and reuerenc't their worth,
Yet wondred he left out thy memory.
But therefore gest I he supprest thy name,
Because few words might not co[m]prise thy fame.

Thomas Nashe

Spring, The Sweet Spring

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king,
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to witta-woo!

Thomas Nashe

Summer's Last Will And Testament (Excerpt)

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king,
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to witta-woo!

Thomas Nashe

To The Right Honorable The Lord S.

Pardon, _sweete flower of Matchles poetrie,
And fairest bud the red rose euer bare;
Although my Muse, devorst from deeper care,
Presents thee with a wanton Elegie.

Ne blame my verse of loose unchastitie
For painting forth the things that hidden are,
Since all men acte what I in speache declare,
Onlie induced with varietie.

Complants and praises euery one can write,
And passion out their pangu's in statlie rimes;
But of loues pleasures none did euer write,
That have succeeded in theis latter times.

Accept of it, Deare Lord, in gentle gree,
And better lynes, ere long, shall honor thee.

Thomas Nashe