

ASTROPHEL AND STELLA.
VVITTEN BY THE NOBLE KNIGHT
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

1

LOuing in truth, and faine in verse my loue to show,
That she (deare she) might take some pleasure of my paine:
Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine;

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inuentions fine, her wits to entertaine:
Oft turning others leaues, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitfull showers vpon my sunne-burn'd braine.

But words came halting forth, wanting Inuentions stay,
Inuention Natures child, fled step-dame Studies blowes,
And others feete still seem'd but strangers in my way.

Thus, great with child to speake, and helplesse in my throwes,
Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,
Fool, said my Muse to me, looke in thy heart and write.

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbed shot

Loue gaue the wound, which while I breathe will bleed:

But knowne worth did in mine of time proceed,

Till by degrees it had full conquest got.

I saw and liked, I liked but loued not,

I loued, but straight did not what *Loue* decreed:

At length to *Loues* decrees I, forc'd, agreed,

Yet with repining at so partiall lot.

Now euen that footstep of lost libertie

Is gone, and now like slave-borne *Muscouite*,

I call it praise to suffer Tyrannie;

And now employ the remnant of my wit,

To make my selfe beleue, that all is well,

While with a feeling skill I paint my hell.

Let daintie wits crie on the Sisters nine,
 That brauely maskt, their fancies may be told:
 Or *Pindares* Apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,
 Enam'ling with pied flowers their thoughts of gold:

Or else let them in statelier glorie shine,
 Ennobling new found Tropes with problemes old:
 Or with strange similies enrich each line,
 Of herbes or beastes which *Inde* or *Afrike* hold.

For me in sooth, no Muse but one I know:
 Phrases and Problemes from my reach do grow,
 And strange things cost too deare for my poore sprites.

How then? euen thus: in *Stellas* face I reed,
 What Loue and Beautie be, then all my deed
 But Copying is, what in her Nature writes.

Vertue alas, now let me take some rest,
 Thou setst a bate betweene my will and wit,
 If vaine loue haue my simple soule opprest:
 Leauē what thou likest not, deale not thou with it.

Thy scepter vse in some old *Catoes* brest;
 Churches or schooles are for thy seate more fit:
 I do confesse, pardon a fault confest:
 My mouth too tender is for thy hard bit.

But if that needs thou wilt vsurping be,
 The litle reason that is left in me,
 And still th'effect of thy perswasions proue:

I sweare, my heart such one shall shew to thee,
 That shrines in flesh so true a Deitie,
 That *Vertue*, thou thy selfe shalt be in loue.

It is most true, that eyes are form'd to serue
 The inward light: and that the heauenly part
 Ought to be king, from whose rules who do swerue,
 Rebels to Nature striue for their owne smart.

It is most true, what we call *Cupids* dart,
 An image is, which for our selues we carue;
 And, fooles, adore in temple of our hart,
 Till that good God make Church & Churchman starue.

True, that true Beautie Vertue is indeed,
 Whereof this Beauty can be but a shade,
 Which elements with mortall mixture breed:

True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
 And should in soule vp to our countrey moue:
 True, and yet true that I must *Stella* loue.

Some Louers speake when they their Muses entertaine,
 Of hopes begot by feare, of wot not what desires:
 Of force of heau'nly beames, infusing hellish paine:
 Of liuing deaths, deare wounds, faire stormes, & freesing fires:

Some one his song in *Ioue*, and *Ioues* strange tales attires,
 Bordred with buls & swans, powdred with golden raine:
 Another humbler wit to shepheards pipe retires,
 Yet hiding royall bloud full oft in rurall vaine.

To some a sweetest plaint a sweetest stile affords,
 While teares powre out his inke, & sighs breathe out his words:
 His paper pale dispaire, and paine his pen doth moue.

I can speake what I feele, and feele as much as they,
 But thinke that all the Map of my state I display,
 When trembling voice brings forth that I do *Stella* loue.

When Nature made her chiefe worke, *Stellas* eyes,
In colour blacke, why wrapt she beames so bright?
Would she in beemie blacke, like painter wise,
Frame daintiest lustre, mixt of shades and light?

Or did she else that sober hue devise,
In object best to knit and strength our sight,
Least if no vaile those braue gleames did disguise,
They sun-like should more dazle then delight?

Or would she her miraculous power show,
That whereas blacke seemes Beauties contrary,
She euen in blacke doth make all beauties flow?

Both so and thus, she minding *Loue* should be
Placed euer there, gaue him this mourning weed,
To honor all their deaths, who for her bleed.

Loue, borne in Greece, of late fled from his natiue place,
Forc'd by a tedious prooffe, that Turkish hardned hart,
Is no fit marke to pierce with his fine pointed dart:
And pleasd with our soft peace, staid here his flying race

But finding these North climes do coldly him embrace,
Not usde to frozen clips, he straued to find some part,
Where with most ease & warmth he might employ his art:
At length he perch'd himself in *Stellas* ioyfull face,

Whose faire skin, beamy eyes, like morning sun on snow,
Deceiu'd the quaking boy, who thought from so pure light,
Effects of liuely heat, must needs in nature grow.

But she most faire, most cold, made him thence take his flight
To my close heart, where while some firebrands he did lay,
He burnt vnwares his wings, and cannot fly away.

Queene *Vertues* court, which some call *Stellas* face,
 Prepar'd by Natures choisest furniture,
 Hath his front built of Alablaster pure;
 Gold in the couering of that stately place.

The doore by which sometimes comes forth her Grace,
 Red Porphir is, which locke of pearle makes sure:
 Whose porches rich (which name of cheekes endure)
 Marble mixt red and white do enterlace.

The windowes now through which this heau'nly guest
 Looks ouer the world, and can find nothing such,
 Which dare claime from those lights the name of best.

Of touch they are that without touch doth touch,
 Which *Cupids* selfe from Beauties mind did draw:
 Of touch they are, and poore I am their straw.

Reason, in faith thou art well seru'd, that still
Wouldst brabling be with sence and loue in me:
I rather wisht thee clime the Muses hill,
Or reach the fruite of Natures choisest tree,

Or seeke heau'ns course, or heau'ns inside to see:
Why shouldst thou toyle our thornie soile to till?
Leaue sense, and those which senses obiects be:
Deale thou with powers of thoughts, leaue loue to will.

But thou wouldst needs fight both with loue and sence,
With sword of wit, giuing wounds of dispraise,
Till downe-right blowes did foyle thy cunning fence:

For soone as they strake thee with *Stellas* rayes,
Reason thou kneel'dst, and offeredst straight to proue
By reason good, good reason her to loue.

[Original content ©2015 by Dirk Jol]