

A Louers complaint.

BY

WILLIAM SHAKE-SPEARE.

[1]

From off a hill whose concaue wombe reworded,
A plaintfull story from a sistring vale
My spirrits t'attend this doble voyce accorded,
And downe I laid to list the sad tun'd tale,
Ere long espied a fickle maid full pale
Tearing of papers breaking rings a twaine,
Storming her world with sorrowes, wind and raine.

[2]

Vpon her head a plattid hiue of straw,
Which fortified her visage from the Sunne,
Whereon the thought might thinke sometime it saw
The carkas of a beauty spent and donne,
Time had not sithed all that youth begun,
Nor youth all quit, but spight of heauens fell rage,
Some beauty peept, through lettice of sear'd age.

[3]

Oft did she heaue her Napkin to her eyne,
Which on it had conceited charecters:
Laundring the silken figures in the brine,
That seasoned woe had pelleted in teares,
And often reading what contents it beares:
As often shriking vndistinguisht wo,
In clamours of all size both high and low.

[4]

Some-times her leueld eyes their carriage ride,
As they did battry to the spheres intend:
Sometime diuerted their poore balls are tide,
To th'orbed earth; sometimes they do extend,
Their view right on, anon their gases lend,
To euery place at once and no where fixt,

The mind and sight distractedly commxit.

[5]

Her haire nor loose nor ti'd in formall plat,
Proclaimd in her a carelesse hand of pride;
For some vntuck'd descended her sheu'd hat,
Hanging her pale and pined cheeke beside,
Some in her threedden fillet still did bide,
And trew to bondage would not breake from thence,
Though slackly braided in loose negligence.

[6]

A thousand fauours from a maund she drew,
Of amber christall and of bedded Iet,
Which one by one she in a riuer threw,
Vpon whose weeping margent she was set,
Like vsery applying wet to wet,
Or Monarches hands that lets not bounty fall,
Where want cries some; but where excesse begs all.

[7]

Of folded schedulls had she many a one,
Which she perus d, sighd, tore and gaue the flud,
Crackt many a ring of Posied gold and bone,
Bidding them find their Sepulchers in mud,
Found yet mo letters sadly pend in blood,
With sleided silke, feate and affectedly
Enswath'd and seald to curious secrecy.

[8]

These often bath'd she in her fluxiuie eies,
And often kist, and often gaue to teare,
Cried O false blood thou register of lies,
What vnapproued witnes doost thou beare!
Inke would haue seem'd more blacke and damned heare;
This said in top of rage the lines she rents,
Big discontent, so breaking their contents.

[9]

A reuerend man that graz'd his cattell ny,

Sometime a blusterer that the ruffle knew
Of Court of Citty, and had let go by
The swiftest houres obserued as they flew,
Towards this afflicted fancy fastly drew:
And priuiledg'd by age desires to know
In breefe the grounds and motiues of her wo.

[10]

So slides he downe vppon his greyned bat;
And comely distant sits he by her side,
When hee againe desires her, being satte,
Her greuance with his hearing to deuide:
If that from him there may be ought applied
Which may her suffering extasie asswage
Tis promist in the charitie of age.

[11]

Father she saies, though in mee you behold
The iniury of many a blasting houre;
Let it not tell your Iudgement I am old,
Not age, but sorrow, ouer me hath power;
I might as yet haue bene a spreading flower
Fresh to my selfe, if I had selfe applyed
Loue to my selfe, and to no Loue beside.

[12]

But wo is mee, too early I attended
A youthfull suit it was to gaine my grace;
O one by natures outwards so commended,
That maidens eyes stucke ouer all his face,
Loue lackt a dwelling and made him her place.
And when in his faire parts shee didde abide,
Shee was new lodg'd and newly Deified.

[13]

His browny locks did hang in crooked curles,
And euery light occasion of the wind
Vpon his lippes their silken parcels hurles,
Whats sweet to do, to do wil aptly find,
Each eye that saw him did inchaunt the minde:

For on his visage was in little drawne,
What largenesse thinkes in parradise was sawne.

[14]

Smal shew of man was yet vpon his chinne,
His phenix downe began but to appeare
Like vnshorne veluet, on that termlesse skin
Whose bare out-brag'd the web it seem'd to were.
Yet shewed his visage by that cost more deare,
And nice affections wauering stood in doubt
If best were as it was, or best without.

[15]

His qualities were beautious as his forme,
For maiden tongu'd he was and thereof free;
Yet if men mou'd him, was he such a storme
As oft twixt May and Aprill is to see,
When windes breath sweet, vnruely though they bee.
His rudenesse so with his authoriz'd youth,
Did liuery falsenesse in a pride of truth.

[16]

Wel could hee ride, and often men would say
That horse his mettell from his rider takes
Proud of subiection, noble by the swaie,
What rounds, what bounds, what course what stop he makes
And controuersie hence a question takes,
Whether the horse by him became his deed,
Or he his mannad'g, by'th wel doing Steed.

[17]

But quickly on this side the verdict went,
His reall habitude gaue life and grace
To appertainings and to ornament,
Accomplisht in him-selfe not in his case:
All ayds them-selues made fairer by their place,
Can for addicions, yet their purpos'd trimme
Peec'd not his grace but were al grac'd by him.

[18]

So on the tip of his subduing tongue
All kinde of arguments and question deepe,
Al replication prompt, and reason strong
For his aduantage still did wake and sleep,
To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weepe:
He had the dialect and different skil,
Catching al passions in his craft of will.

[19]

That hee didde in the general bosome raigne
Of young, of old, and sexes both enchanted,
To dwel with him in thoughts, or to remaine
In personal duty, following where he haunted,
Consent's bewitcht, ere he desire haue granted,
And dialogu'd for him what he would say,
Askt their own wils and made their wils obey.

[20]

Many there were that did his picture gette
To serue their eies, and in it put their mind,
Like fooles that in th' imagination set
The goodly obiects which abroad they find
Of lands and mansions, theirs in thought assign'd,
And labouring in moe pleasures to bestow them,
Then the true gouty Land-lord which doth owe them.

[21]

So many haue that neuer toucht his hand
Sweetly suppos'd them mistresse of his heart:
My wofull selfe that did in freedome stand,
And was my owne fee simple (not in part)
What with his art in youth and youth in art
Threw my affections in his charmed power,
Reseru'd the stalke and gaue him al my flower.

[22]

Yet did I not as some my equals did
Demaund of him, nor being desired yeilded.
Finding my selfe in honour so forbidde,
With safest distance I mine honour sheilded,

Experience for me many bulwarkes builded
Of proofs new bleeding which remaind the foile
Of this false Iewell, and his amorous spoile.

[23]

But ah who euer shun'd by precedent,
The destin'd ill she must her selfe assay,
Or forc'd examples gainst her owne content
To put the by-past perrils in her way?
Counsaile may stop a while what will not stay:
For when we rage, aduise is often seene
By blunting vs to make our wits more keene.

[24]

Nor giues it satisfaction to our blood,
That wee must curbe it vppon others prooffe,
To be forbod the sweets that seemes so good,
For feare of harmes that preach in our behooffe;
O appetite from iudgement stand alooffe!
The one a pallate hath that needs will taste,
Though reason weepe and cry it is thy last.

[25]

For further I could say this mans vntrue,
And knew the patternes of his foule beguiling,
Heard where his plants in others Orchards grew,
Saw how deceits were guiled in his smiling,
Knew vowes, wer e euer brokers to defiling,
Thought Characters and words meerly but art,
And bastards of his foule adulterat heart.

[26]

And long vpon these termes I held my Citty,
Till thus hee gan besiege me: Gentle maid
Haue of my suffering youth some feeling pittie
And be not of my holy vowes affraid,
Thats to ye sworne to none was euer said,
For feasts of loue I haue bene call'd vnto
Till now did nere inuire not neuer vovv.

[27]

All my offences that abroad you see
Are errors of the blood none of the mind:
Loue made them not, with acture they may be,
Where neither Party is nor trew nor kind,
They sought their shame that so their shame did find,
And so much lesse of shame in me remaines,
By how much of me their reproch containes,

[28]

Among the many that mine eyes haue seene,
Not one whose flame my hart so much as warmed,
Or my affection put to th, smallest teene,
Or any of my leisures euer Charmed,
Harne haue I done to them but nere was harmed,
Kept hearts in liueries, but mine owne was free,
And raignd commaunding in his monarchy.

[29]

Looke heare what tributes wounded fancies sent me,
Of palyd pearles and rubies red as blood:
Figuring that they their passions likewise lent me
Of greefe and blushes, aptly vnderstood
In bloodlesse white, and the encrimson'd mood,
Effects of terror and deare modesty,
Encampt in hearts but fighting outwardly.

[30]

And Lo behold these tallents of their heir,
With twisted mettle amorously empleacht
I haue receau'd from many a seueral faire,
Their kind acceptance, wepingly beseecht,
With th'annexions of faire gems inricht,
And deepe brain'd sonnets that did amplifie
Each stoness deare Nature, worth and quallity.

[31]

The Diamond? why twas beautifull and hard,
Whereto his inuis'd properties did tend,
The deepe greene Emrald in whose fresh regard,

Weake sights their sickly radience do amend.
The heauen hewd Saphir and the Opall blend
With obiects manyfold; each seuerall stone,
With wit well blazond smil'd or made some mone.

[32]

Lo all these trophies of affections hot,
Of pensiu'd and subdew'd desires the tender,
Nature hath chargd me that I hoord them not,
But yeeld them vp where I my selfe must render:
That is to you my origin and ender:
For these of force must your oblations be,
Since I their Aulter, you enpatrone me.

[33]

Oh then aduance (of yours) that phraseles hand,
Whose white weighes downe the airy scale of praise,
Take all these similies to your owne command,
Hollowed with sighes that burning lunges did raise:
What me your minister for you obaies
Workes vnder you, and to your audit comes
Their distract parcells, in combined summes.

[34]

Lo this deuice was sent me from a Nun,
Or Sister sanctified of holiest note,
Which late her noble suit in court did shun,
Whose rarest hauings made the blossoms dote,
For she was sought by spirits of ritchest cote,
But kept cold distance, and did thence remoue,
To spend her liuing in eternall loue.

[35]

But oh my sweet what labour ist to leaue,
The thing we haue not, mastring what not striues,
Playing the Place which did no forme receiue,
Playing patient sports in vnconstraiind giues,
She that her fame so to her selfe contriues,
The scarres of battaile scapeth by the flight,
And makes her absence valiant, not her might.

[36]

Oh pardon me in that my boast is true,
The accident which brought me to her eie,
Vpon the moment did her force subdewe,
And now she would the caged cloister flie:
Religious loue put out religions eye:
Not to be tempted would she be enur'd,
And now to tempt all liberty procure.

[37]

How mightie then you are, Oh heare me tell,
The broken bosoms that to me belong,
Haue emptied all their fountaines in my well:
And mine I powre your Ocean all amonge:
I strong ore them and you ore me being strong,
Must for your victorie vs all congest,
As compound loue to phisick your cold brest.

[38]

My parts had powre to charme a sacred Sunne,
Who disciplin'd I dieted in grace,
Beleu'd her eies, when they t'assaile begun,
All vowes and consecrations giuing place:
O most potentiall loue, vowe, bond, nor space
In thee hath neither sting, knot, nor confine
For thou art all and all things els are thine.

[39]

When thou impresses what are precepts worth
Of stale example? when thou wilt inflame,
How coldly those impediments stand forth
Of wealth of filliall feare, lawe, kindred fame,
Loues armes are peace, gainst rule, gainst sence, gainst shame
And sweetens in the suffring pangues it beares,
The *Alloes* of all forces, shockes and feares.

[40]

Now all these hearts that doe on mine depend,
Feeling it breake, with bleeding groanes they pine,

And supplicant their sighes to you extend
To leaue the battrie that you make gainst mine,
Lending soft audience, to my sweet designe,
And credent soule, to that strong bonded oth,
That shall preferre and vndertake my troth.

[41]

This said, his watrie eies he did dismount,
Whose sightes till then were leaueld on my face,
Each cheeke a riuer running from a fount,
With brynish currant downe-ward flowed a pace:
Oh how the channell to the streame gaue grace!
Who glaz'd with Christall gate the glowing Roses,
That flame through water which their hew incloses,

[42]

Oh father, what a hell of witch-craft lies,
In the small orb of one perticular teare?
Put with the invndation of the eies:
What rocky heart to water will not weare?
What brest so cold that is not warmed heare,
Or cleft effect, cold modesty hot wrath:
Both fire from hence, and chill extincture hath.

[43]

For loe his passion but an art of craft,
Euen there resolu'd my reason into teares,
There my white stole of chastity I daft,
Shooke off my sober gardes, and ciuill feares,
Appeare to him as he to me appeares:
All melting, though our drops this diffrence bore,
His poison'd me, and mine did him restore.

[44]

In him a plenitude of subtle matter,
Applied to Cautills, all straing formes receiues,
Of burning blushes, or of weeping water,
Or sounding palenesse: and he takes and leaues,
In eithers aptnesse as it best deceiues:
To blush at speeches ranck, to weepe at woes

Or to turne white and sound at tragick showes.

[45]

That not a heart which in his leuell came,
Could scape the haile of his all hurting ayme,
Shewing faire Nature is both kinde and tame:
And vaild in them did winne whom he would maime,
Against the thing he sought, he would exclaime,
When he most burnt in hart-wisht luxurie,
He preacht pure maide, and praisd cold chastitie.

[46]

Thus meerely with the garment of a grace,
The naked and concealed feind he couerd,
That th'vnexperient gaued the tempter place,
Which like a Cherubin aboue them houerd,
Who young and simple would not be so louerd.
Aye me I fell, and yet do question make,
What I should doe againe for such a sake.

[47]

O that infected moysture of his eye,
O that false fire which in his cheeke so glowd:
O that forc'd thunder from his heart did flye,
O that sad breath his spungie lungs bestowed,
O all that borrowed motion seeming owed,
Would yet againe betray the fore-betrayed,
And new peruert a reconciled Maide.

FINIS.

[Original content ©2015 by Dirk Jol]