

Classic Poetry Series

Thomas Carew
- poems -

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Thomas Carew(1594 - 1640)

Thomas Carew was the son of a well-connected official and was educated at Merton College, Oxford and the Middle Temple in London. He worked as a diplomatic secretary in Italy, Holland and France, and soon gained a reputation as a poet.

His talent secured him a place at court, and he was privileged to serve at Charles I's table. In 1634 his masque *Coelum Britannicum* was performed before the King. His poems, like those of other gentlemen of the era, were not published in his own lifetime but hand-written copies were circulated among his friends. These included Ben Jonson and John Donne, who both exercised a strong influence on Carew's poetry; in his *Elegy* Carew proclaims Donne 'the universal monarchy of wit'. Another poet he admired greatly was the Italian Giambattista Marino, whose wit and extravagant lifestyle resembled Carew's own.

Though he never achieved the stature of Donne or Johnson, Carew was an elegant writer whose contribution to literature was typical of the stylish Cavalier school. A collected edition of his poems appeared shortly after his death.

A Cruel Mistress.

We read of kings and gods that kindly took
A pitcher fill'd with water from the brook ;
But I have daily tender'd without thanks
Rivers of tears that overflow their banks.
A slaughter'd bull will appease angry Jove,
A horse the Sun, a lamb the god of love,
But she disdains the spotless sacrifice
Of a pure heart, that at her altar lies.
Vesta is not displeas'd, if her chaste urn
Do with repaired fuel ever burn ;
But my saint frowns, though to her honour'd name
I consecrate a never-dying flame.
Th' Assyrian king did none i' th' furnace throw
But those that to his image did not bow ;
With bended knees I daily worship her,
Yet she consumes her own idolater.
Of such a goddess no times leave record,
That burnt the temple where she was adored.

Thomas Carew

A Divine Mistress

In Nature's pieces still I see
Some error that might mended be;
Something my wish could still remove,
Alter or add; but my fair love
Was fram'd by hands far more divine,
For she hath every beauteous line:
Yet I had been far happier,
Had Nature, that made me, made her.
Then likeness might (that love creates)
Have made her love what now she hates;
Yet I confess I cannot spare
From her just shape the smallest hair;
Nor need I beg from all the store
Of heaven for her one beauty more.
She hath too much divinity for me:
You gods, teach her some more humanity.

Thomas Carew

A Song

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauty's orient deep
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither doth stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet, dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more where those stars light,
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more if east or west
The phoenix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

Thomas Carew

A Song: When June Is Past, The Fading Rose

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauty's orient deep
These flowers as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither doth stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love heaven did prepare
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The phoenix builds her spicy nest;
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Thomas Carew

Ask Me No More

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauty's orient deep
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more whither doth haste
The nightingale when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more where those stars 'light
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become as in their sphere.

Ask me no more if east or west
The Phoenix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

Thomas Carew

Boldness In Love

Mark how the bashful morn in vain
Courts the amorous marigold,
With sighing blasts and weeping rain,
Yet she refuses to unfold.
But when the planet of the day
Approacheth with his powerful ray,
The she spreads, then she receives
His warmer beams into her virgin leaves.

So shalt thou thrive in love, fond boy;
If thy tears and sighs discover
Thy grief, thou never shalt enjoy
The just reward of a bold lover.
But when with moving accents thou
Shalt constant faith and service vow,
Thy Celia shall receive those charms
With open ears, and with unfolded arms.

Thomas Carew

Celia Beeding, To The Surgeon

Fond man, that canst believe her blood
Will from those purple channels flow;
Or that the pure untainted flood
Can any foul distemper know;
Or that thy weak steel can incise
The crystal case wherein it lies:

Know, her quick blood, proud of his seat,
Runs dancing through her azure veins;
Whose harmony no cold nor heat
Disturbs, whose hue no tincture stains:
And the hard rock wherein it dwells
The keenest darts of love repels.

But thou repli'st, "behold, she bleeds!"
Fool! thou 'rt deceiv'd, and dost not know
The mystic knot whence this proceeds,
How lovers in each other grow:
Thou struck'st her arm, but 'twas my heart
Shed all the blood, felt all the smart.

Thomas Carew

Disdain Returned

He that loves a rosy cheek,
Or a coral lip admires,
Or from starlike eyes doth seek
Fuel to maintain his fires;
As old Time makes these decay,
So his flames must waste away.

But a smooth and steadfast mind,
Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined,
Kindle never-dying fires.
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks, or lips, or eyes.

No tears, Celia, now shall win
My resolved heart to return;
I have searched thy soul within,
And find naught but pride and scorn;
I have learned thy arts, and now
Can disdain as much as thou.
Some power, in my revenge convey
That love to her I cast away.

Thomas Carew

Epitaph For Maria Wentworth

And here the precious dust is laid;
Whose purely-temper'd clay was made
So fine that it the guest betray'd.

Else the soul grew so fast within,
It broke the outward shell of sin,
And so was hatch'd a cherubin.

In height, it soar'd to God above;
In depth, it did to knowledge move,
And spread in breadth to general love.

Before, a pious duty shin'd
To parents, courtesy behind;
On either side an equal mind.

Good to the poor, to kindred dear,
To servants kind, to friendship clear,
To nothing but herself severe.

So, though a virgin, yet a bride
To ev'ry grace, she justified
A chaste polygamy, and died.

Learn from hence, reader, what small trust
We owe this world, where virtue must,
Frail as our flesh, crumble to dust.

Thomas Carew

Epitaph On The Late Mary Villiers

The Lady Mary Villiers lies
Under this stone; with weeping eyes
The parents that first gave her breath,
And their sad friends, laid her in earth.
If any of them, reader, were
Known unto thee, shed a tear;
Or if thyself possess a gem
As dear to thee as this to them,
Though a stranger to this place,
Bewail in theirs thine own hard case,
For thou perhaps at thy return
Mayst find thy darling in an urn.

Thomas Carew

He That Loves A Rosy Cheek

He that loves a rosy cheek,
Or a coral lip admires,
Or from star-like eyes doth seek
Fuel to maintain his fires:
As old Time makes these decay,
So his flames must waste away.

But a smooth and steadfast mind,
Gentle thoughts, and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined,
Kindle never-dying fires:
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes.

Thomas Carew

I Do Not Love Thee For That Fair

I do not love thee for that fair
Rich fan of thy most curious hair;
Though the wires thereof be drawn
Finer than threads of lawn,
And are softer than the leaves
On which the subtle spider weaves.

I do not love thee for those flowers
Growing on thy cheeks, love's bowers;
Though such cunning them hath spread,
None can paint them white and red:
Love's golden arrows thence are shot,
Yet for them I love thee not.

I do not love thee for those soft
Red coral lips I've kissed so oft,
Nor teeth of pearl, the double guard
To speech whence music still is heard;
Though from those lips a kiss being taken
Mighty tyrants melt, and death awaken.

I do not love thee, O my fairest,
For that richest, for that rarest
Silver pillar, which stands under
Thy sound head, that globe of wonder;
Though that neck be whiter far
Than towers of polished ivory are.

Thomas Carew

Ingrateful Beauty Threatened

Know Celia, since thou art so proud,
'Twas I that gave thee thy renown;
Thou hadst, in the forgotten crowd
Of common beauties, liv'd unknown,
Had not my verse exhal'd thy name,
And with it imp'd the wings of fame.

That killing power is none of thine,
I gave it to thy voice, and eyes;
Thy sweets, thy graces, all are mine;
Thou art my star, shin'st in my skies;
Then dart not from thy borrow'd sphere
Lightning on him that fix'd thee there.

Tempt me with such affrights no more,
Lest what I made, I uncreate;
Let fools thy mystic forms adore,
I'll know thee in thy mortal state;
Wise poets that wrapp'd Truth in tales,
Knew her themselves, through all her veils.

Thomas Carew

Know, Celia, Since Thou Art So Proud

Know, Celia, since thou art so proud,
'Twas I that gave thee thy renown.
Thou hadst in the forgotten crowd
Of common beauties lived unknown
Had not my verse extolled thy name,
And with it impeded the wings of Fame.

That killing power is none of thine;
I gave it to thy voice and eyes.
Thy sweets, thy graces, all are mine;
Thou art my star, shin'st in my skies:
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I know thee in thy mortal state.
Wise poets, that wrapped truth in tales,
Knew her themselves through all her veils.

Thomas Carew

Lips And Eyes.

IN Celia's face a question did arise,
Which were more beautiful, her lips or eyes ?
" We," said the eyes, "send forth those pointed darts
Which pierce the hardest adamantine hearts."
" From us," repli'd the lips, "proceed those blisses
Which lovers reap by kind words and sweet kisses."
Then wept the eyes, and from their springs did pour
Of liquid oriental pearl a shower ;
Whereat the lips, moved with delight and pleasure,
Through a sweet smile unlock'd their pearly treasure
And bad Love judge, whether did add more grace
Weeping or smiling pearls to Celia's face.

Thomas Carew

Mediocrity In Love Rejected

Give me more love or more disdain;
The torrid, or the frozen zone,
Bring equal ease unto my pain;
The temperate affords me none;
Either extreme, of love, or hate,
Is sweeter than a calm estate.

Give me a storm; if it be love,
Like Danae in that golden show'r
I swim in pleasure; if it prove
Disdain, that torrent will devour
My vulture-hopes; and he's possess'd
Of heaven, that's but from hell releas'd.

Then crown my joys, or cure my pain;
Give me more love, or more disdain.

Thomas Carew

My Mistress Commanding Me To Return Her Letters.

SO grieves th' adventurous merchant, when he throws
All the long toil'd-for treasure his ship stows
Into the angry main, to save from wrack
Himself and men, as I grieve to give back
These letters : yet so powerful is your sway
As if you bid me die, I must obey.
Go then, blest papers, you shall kiss those hands
That gave you freedom, but hold me in bands ;
Which with a touch did give you life, but I,
Because I may not touch those hands, must die.
Methinks, as if they knew they should be sent
Home to their native soil from banishment ;
I see them smile, like dying saints that know
They are to leave the earth and toward heaven go.
When you return, pray tell your sovereign
And mine, I gave you courteous entertain ;
Each line received a tear, and then a kiss ;
First bathed in that, it 'scaped unscorch'd from this :
I kiss'd it because your hand had been there ;
But, 'cause it was not now, I shed a tear.
Tell her, no length of time, nor change of air,
No cruelty, disdain, absence, despair,
No, nor her steadfast constancy, can deter
My vassal heart from ever honouring her.
Though these be powerful arguments to prove
I love in vain, yet I must ever love.
Say, if she frown, when you that word rehearse,
Service in prose is oft called love in verse :
Then pray her, since I send back on my part
Her papers, she will send me back my heart.
If she refuse, warn her to come before
The god of love, whom thus I will implore :
" Trav'ling thy country's road, great god, I spied
By chance this lady, and walk'd by her side
From place to place, fearing no violence,
For I was well arm'd, and had made defence
In former fights 'gainst fiercer foes than she
Did at our first encounter seem to be.
But, going farther, every step reveal'd

Some hidden weapon till that time conceal'd ;
Seeing those outward arms, I did begin
To fear some greater strength was lodged within ;
Looking into her mind, I might survey
An host of beauties, that in ambush lay,
And won the day before they fought the field,
For I, unable to resist, did yield.
But the insulting tyrant so destroys
My conquer'd mind, my ease, my peace, my joys,
Breaks my sweet sleeps, invades my harmless rest,
Robs me of all the treasure of my breast,
Spare not my heart, nor yet a greater wrong,
For, having stol'n my heart, she binds my tongue.
But at the last her melting eyes unseal'd
My lips, enlarged my tongue : then I reveal'd
To her own ears the story of my harms,
Wrought by her virtues and her beauty's charms.
Now hear, just judge, an act of savageness ;
When I complain, in hope to find redress,
She bends her andry brow, and from her eye
Shoots thousand darts ; I then well hoped to die
But in such sovereign balm Love dips his shot,
That, though they wound a heart, they kill it not.
She saw the blood gush forth from many a wound,
Yet fled, and left me bleeding on the ground,
Nor sought my cure, nor saw me since : 'tis true,
Absence and Time, two cunning leaches, drew
The flesh together, yet, sure, though the skin
Be closed without, the wound festers within.
Thus hath this cruel lady used a true
Servant and subject to herself and you ;
Nor know I, great Love, if my life be lent
To show thy mercy or my punishment :
Since by the only magic of thy art
A lover still may live that wants his heart.
If this indictment fright her, so as she
Seem willing to return my heart to me,
But cannot find it (for perhaps it may,
'Mongst other trifling hearts, be out o' th' way);
If she repent and would make me amends,
Bid her but send me hers, and we are friends."

Secrecy Protested.

FEAR not, dear love, that I'll reveal
Those hours of pleasure we two steal ;
No eye shall see, nor yet the sun
Descry, what thou and I have done.
No ear shall hear our love, but we
Silent as the night will be ;
The god of love himself (whose dart
Did first wound mine and then thy heart),
Shall never know that we can tell
What sweets in stol'n embraces dwell.
This only means may find it out ;
If, when I die, physicians doubt
What caused my death, and there to view
Of all their judgements which was true,
Rip up my heart, oh ! then, I fear,
The world will see thy picture there.

Thomas Carew

Song

ASK me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose;
For in your beauty's orient deep
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love heaven did prepare
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Ask me no more where those stars 'light
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become as in their sphere.

Ask me no more if east or west
The Phoenix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

Thomas Carew

Song. A Beautiful Mistress.

IF when the sun at noon displays
 His brighter rays,
 Thou but appear,
He then, all pale with shame and fear,
 Quencheth his light,
Hides his dark brow, flies from thy sight,
 And grows more dim,
 Compared to thee, than stars to him.
If thou but show thy face again,
When darkness doth at midnight reign,
The darkness flies, and light is hurl'd
Round about the silent world :
So as alike thou driv'st away
Both light and darkness, night and day.

Thomas Carew

Song. Good Counsel To A Young Maid

GAZE not on thy beauty's pride,
Tender maid, in the false tide
That from lovers' eyes doth slide.
Let thy faithful crystal show
How thy colours come and go :
Beauty takes a foil from woe.

Love, that in those smooth streams lies
Under pity's fair disguise,
Will thy melting heart surprise.

Nets of passion's finest thread,
Snaring poems, will be spread,
All to catch thy maidenhead.

Then beware ! for those that cure
Love's disease, themselves endure
For reward a calenture.

Rather let the lover pine,
Than his pale cheek should assign
A perpetual blush to thine.

Thomas Carew

Song. Mediocrity In Love Rejected.

GIVE me more love or more disdain ;
The torrid or the frozen zone
Bring equal ease unto my pain,
The temperate affords me none :
Either extreme of love or hate,
Is sweeter than a calm estate.

Give me a storm ; if it be love,
Like Danaë in that golden shower,
I swim in pleasure ; if it prove
Disdain, that torrent will devour
My vulture-hopes ; and he's possess'd
Of heaven, that's but from hell released.
Then crown my joys or cure my pain :
Give me more love or more disdain.

Thomas Carew

Song. Murdering Beauty

I'LL gaze no more on her bewitching face,
Since ruin harbours there in every place ;
For my enchanted soul alike she drowns
With calms and tempests of her smiles and frowns.
I'll love no more those cruel eyes of hers,
Which, pleased or anger'd, still are murderers :
For if she dart, like lightning, through the air
Her beams of wrath, she kills me with despair :
If she behold me with a pleasing eye,
I surfeit with excess of joy, and die.

Thomas Carew

Song: Eternity Of Love Protested

How ill doth he deserve a lover's name,
Whose pale weak flame
Cannot retain
His heat, in spite of absence or disdain;
But doth at once, like paper set on fire,
Burn and expire;
True love can never change his seat,
Nor did her ever love, that could retreat.

That noble flame which my breast keeps alive
Shall still survive
When my soul's fled;
Nor shall my love die when my body's dead,
That shall wait on me to the lower shade,
And never fade;
My very ashes in their urn
Shall, like a hallow'd lamp, forever burn.

Thomas Carew

Song: Mediocrity In Love Rejected

Give me more love, or more disdain;
The torrid or the frozen zone
Bring equal ease unto my pain,
The temperate affords me none;
Either extreme, of love or hate,
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Give me a storm; if it be love,
Like Danae in that golden shower,
I swim in pleasure; if it prove
Disdain, that torrent will devour
My vulture hopes; and he's possessed
Of heaven, that's but from hell released.
Then crown my joys, or cure my pain;
Give me more love, or more disdain.

Thomas Carew

Song: Perswasions To Enjoy

If the quick spirits in your eye
Now languish and anon must die;
If every sweet and every grace
Must fly from that forsaken face;
Then, Celia, let us reap our joys
Ere Time such goodly fruit destroys.

Or if that golden fleece must grow
For ever free from aged snow;
If those bright suns must know no shade,
Nor your fresh beauties ever fade;
Then fear not, Celia, to bestow
What, still being gather'd, still must grow.

Thus either Time his sickle brings
In vain, or else in vain his wings.

Thomas Carew

The Primrose

Ask me why I send you here
The firstling of the infant year;
Ask me why I send to you
This primrose all bepearled with dew:
I straight will whisper in your ears,
The sweets of love are washed with tears.
Ask me why this flower doth show
So yellow, green, and sickly too;
Ask me why the stalk is weak
And bending, yet it doth not break:
I must tell you, these discover
What doubts and fears are in a lover.

Thomas Carew

The Spring

Now that the winter's gone, the earth hath lost
Her snow-white robes, and now no more the frost
Candies the grass, or casts an icy cream
Upon the silver lake or crystal stream;
But the warm sun thaws the benumbed earth,
And makes it tender; gives a sacred birth
To the dead swallow; wakes in hollow tree
The drowsy cuckoo and the humble-bee.
Now do a choir of chirping minstrels bring
In triumph to the world the youthful spring.
The valleys, hills, and woods in rich array
Welcome the coming of the long'd-for May.
Now all things smile; only my love doth lour;
Nor hath the scalding noonday sun the power
To melt that marble ice, which still doth hold
Her heart congeal'd, and makes her pity cold.
The ox, which lately did for shelter fly
Into the stall, doth now securely lie
In open fields; and love no more is made
By the fireside, but in the cooler shade
Amyntas now doth with his Chloris sleep
Under a sycamore, and all things keep
Time with the season; only she doth carry
June in her eyes, in her heart January.

Thomas Carew

To a Lady That Desired I Would Love Her

Now you have freely given me leave to love,
What will you do?
Shall I your mirth, or passion move,
When I begin to woo;
Will you torment, or scorn, or love me too?

Each petty beauty can disdain, and I
Spite of your hate
Without your leave can see, and die;
Dispense a nobler fate!
'Tis easy to destroy, you may create.

Then give me leave to love, and love me too
Not with design
To raise, as Love's cursed rebels do,
When puling poets whine,
Fame to their beauty, from their blubbered eyne.

Grief is a puddle, and reflects not clear
Your beauty's rays;
Joys are pure streams, your eyes appear
Sullen in sadder lays;
In cheerful numbers they shine bright with praise,

Which shall not mention to express you fair,
Wounds, flames, and darts,
Storms in your brow, nets in your hair,
Suborning all your parts,
Or to betray, or torture captive hearts.

I'll make your eyes like morning suns appear,
As mild, and fair;
Your brow as crystal smooth, and clear,
And your disheveled hair
Shall flow like a calm region of the air.

Thomas Carew

To A. L. Persuasions To Love.

THINK not, 'cause men flattering say
You're fresh as April, sweet as May,
Bright as is the morning star,
That you are so ; or, though you are,
Be not therefore proud, and deem
All men unworthy your esteem :
For, being so, you lose the pleasure
Of being fair, since that rich treasure
Of rare beauty and sweet feature
Was bestow'd on you by nature
To be enjoy'd ; and 'twere a sin
There to be scarce, where she hath bin
So prodigal of her best graces.
Thus common beauties and mean faces
Shall have more pastime, and enjoy
The sport you lose by being coy.
Did the thing for which I sue
Only concern myself, not you ;
Were men so framed as they alone
Reap'd all the pleasure, women none ;
Then had you reason to be scant :
But 'twere a madness not to grant
That which affords (if you consent)
To you the giver, more content
Than me, the beggar. Oh, then be
Kind to yourself, if not to me.
Starve not yourself, because you may
Thereby make me pine away ;
Nor let brittle beauty make
You your wiser thoughts forsake ;
For that lovely face will fail.
Beauty's sweet, but beauty's frail,
'Tis sooner past, 'tis sooner done,
Than summer's rain, or winter's sun ;
Most fleeting, when it is most dear,
'Tis gone, while we but say 'tis here.
These curious locks, so aptly twined,
Whose every hair a soul doth bind,
Will change their auburn hue and grow

White and cold as winter's snow.
That eye, which now is Cupid's nest,
Will prove his grave, and all the rest
Will follow ; in the cheek, chin, nose,
Nor lily shall be found, nor rose.
And what will then become of all
Those whom now you servants call ?
Like swallows, when your summer's done,
They'll fly, and seek some warmer sun.
Then wisely choose one to your friend
Whose love may, when your beauties end,
Remain still firm : be provident,
And think, before the summer's spent,
Of following winter ; like the ant,
In plenty hoard for time of scant.
Cull out, amongst the multitude
Of lovers, that seek to intrude
Into your favour, one that may
Love for an age, not for a day ;
One that will quench your youthful fires,
And feed in age your hot desires.
For when the storms of time have moved
Waves on that cheek which was beloved,
When a fair lady's face is pined,
And yellow spread where once red shined ;
When beauty, youth, and all sweets leave her,
Love may return, but lover never :
And old folks say there are no pains
Like itch of love in aged veins.
O love me, then, and now begin it,
Let us not lose this present minute ;
For time and age will work that wrack
Which time or age shall ne'er call back.
The snake each year fresh skin resumes,
And eagles change their aged plumes ;
The faded rose each spring receives
A fresh red tincture on her leaves :
But if your beauties once decay,
You never know a second May.
O then, be wise, and whilst your season
Affords you days for sport, do reason ;
Spend not in vain your life's short hour,

But crop in time your beauty's flower,
Which will away, and doth together
Both bud and fade, both blow and wither.

Thomas Carew

To My Inconstant Mistress

When thou, poor excommunicate
From all the joys of love, shalt see
The full reward and glorious fate
Which my strong faith shall purchase me,
Then curse thine own inconstancy.

A fairer hand than thine shall cure
That heart which thy false oaths did wound;
And to my soul a soul more pure
Than thine shall by Love's hand be bound,
And both with equal glory crowned.

Then shalt thou weep, entreat, complain
To Love, as I did once to thee;
When all thy tears shall be as vain
As mine were then, for thou shalt be
Damned for thy false apostasy.

Thomas Carew