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Edmund Spenser



A S T R O P H E L.

A Pastorall Elegie vpon
the death of the most Noble and valorous
Knight, Sir *Philip Sidney*.

Dedicated

*To the most beautifull and vertuous Ladie, the Countesse
of Effex.*





Astrophel.

*S*hepheards that wont on pipes of oaten reed,
Oft times to plaine your loues concealed smart:
And with your piteous layes haue learnd to breed
Compassion in a countrey lasses hart.
Hearken ye gentle shepheards to my song,
And place my dolefull plaint your plaints emong.

To you alone I sing this mournfull verse,
The mournfulst verse that euer man heard tell:
To you whose softened hearts it may empierse,
With dolours dart for death of Astrophel.
To you I sing and to none other wight,
For well I wot my rymes bene rudely dight.

Yet as they been, if any nycer wit
Shall hap to heare, or couet them to read:
Thinke he, that such are for such ones most fit,
Made not to please the liuing but the dead.
And if in him found pity euer place,
Let him be moov'd to pity such a case.

A Gentle Shepheard borne in Arcady,
Of gentlest race that euer shepheard bore:
About the grassie bancks of *Hæmony*,
Did keepe his sheep, his litle stock and store.
Full carefully he kept them day and night,
In fairest fields, and *Astrophel* he hight.

Young *Astrophel* the pride of shepheards praise,
Young *Astrophel* the rusticke lasses loue:
Far passing all the pastors of his daies,
In all that seemly shepheard might behoue.
In one thing onely fayling of the best,
That he was not so happie as the rest.

For from the time that first the Nymph his mother
Him forth did bring, and taught her lambs to feed,
A sclder swaine excelling far each other,
In comely shape, like her that did him breed,
He grew vp fast in goodnesse and in grace,
And doubly faire wox both in mynd and face.

Which daily more and more he did augment,
With gentle vsage and demeanure myld: 20
That all mens hearts with secret rauishment
He stole away, and weetingly beguyld.
Ne spight it selfe that all good things doth spill,
Found ought in him, that she could say was ill.

His sports were faire, his ioyance innocent,
Sweet without sowre, and honny without gall:
And he himselfe seemd made for meriment,
Merily masking both in bowre and hall.
There was no pleasure nor delightfull play,
When *Astrophel* so euer was away. 30

For he could pipe and daunce, and caroll sweet,
Emongst the shepherds in their shearing feast:
As Somers larke, that with her song doth greet
The dawning day forth comming from the East.
And layes of loue he also could compose.
Thrise happie she, whom he to praise did chose.

Full many Maydens often did him woo,
Them to vouchsafe emongst his rimes to name,
Or make for them as he was wont to doo,
For her that did his heart with loue inflame. 40
For which they promised to dight, for him,
Gay chapelets of flowers and gyrlonds trim.

And many a Nymph both of the wood and brooke,
Soone as his oaten pipe began to shrill:
Both christall wells and shadie groues forsooke,
To heare the charmes of his enchanting skill.

14 feed, *F*: feed: *Q*
larke *Q* greet *F*: greet, *Q*
dight, *F*: dight *Q*

16 breed, *F*: breed. *Q* 33 larke, *F*:
35 compose. *F*: compose, *Q* 41

And brought him presents, flowers if it were prime,
Or mellow fruit if it were haruest time.

But he for none of them did care a whit,
Yet wood Gods for them often sighed sore: 50
Ne for their gifts vnworthie of his wit,
Yet not vnworthie of the countries store.
For one alone he cared, for one he sight,
His lifes desire, and his deare loues delight.

Stella the faire, the fairest star in skie,
As faire as *Venus* or the fairest faire:
A fairer star saw neuer liuing eie,
Shot her sharp pointed beames through purest aire.
Her he did loue, her he alone did honor,
His thoughts, his rimes, his songs were all vpon her. 60

To her he vowd the seruice of his daies,
On her he spent the riches of his wit:
For her he made hymnes of immortall praise,
Of onely her he sung, he thought, he writ.
Her, and but her, of loue he worthie deemed,
For all the rest but litle he esteemed.

Ne her with ydle words alone he wowed,
And verses vaine (yet verses are not vaine)
But with braue deeds to her sole seruice vowed,
And bold atchieuements her did entertaine. 70
For both in deeds and words he nourtred was,
Both wise and hardie (too hardie alas).

In wrestling nimble, and in renning swift,
In shooting steddie, and in swimming strong:
Well made to strike, to throw, to leape, to lift,
And all the sports that shepherds are emong.
In euery one he vanquisht euery one,
He vanquisht all, and vanquisht was of none.

Besides, in hunting, such felicitie,
Or rather infelicitie he found: 80

50 often *F*: oft *Q* 53 sight *Q*: sigh't *F* 65 but her, *F*: but
her *Q* 73-4 In wrestling, nimble; and in running, swift; In shooting,
steddie; and in swimming, *F* 79 hunting, *F*: hunting *Q* 80 rather
Q: rather, *F*

That euery field and forest far away,
 He sought, where saluage beasts do most abound.
 No beast so saluage but he could it kill,
 No chace so hard, but he therein had skill.

Such skill matcht with such courage as he had,
 Did prick him foorth with proud desire of praise:
 To seek abroad, of daunger nought y'drad,
 His mistresse name, and his owne fame to raise.
 What needeth perill to be sought abroad,
 Since round about vs, it doth make aboard? 90

It fortun'd, as he that perilous game
 In forreine soyle pursued far away:
 Into a forest wide and waste he came
 Where store he heard to be of saluage pray.
 So wide a forest and so waste as this,
 Nor famous *Ardeyn*, nor fowle *Arlo* is.
 There his welwouen toyles and subtil traines
 He laid, the brutish nation to enwrap:
 So well he wrought with practise and with paines,
 That he of them great troupes did soone entrap. 100
 Full happie man (misweening much) was hee,
 So rich a spoile within his power to see.

Eftsoones all heedlesse of his dearest hale,
 Full greedily into the heard he thrust:
 To slaughter them, and worke their finall bale,
 Least that his toyle should of their troupes be Brust.
 Wide wounds emongst them many one he made,
 Now with his sharp borespear, now with his blade.

His care was all how he them all might kill,
 That none might scape (so partiall vnto none) 110
 Ill mynd so much to mynd anothers ill,
 As to become vnmyndfull of his owne.
 But pardon that vnto the cruell skies,
 That from himselfe to them withdrew his eies.

89 needeth *F*: need *Q*
 93 wide *F*: wide, *Q*
 106 Brust *Q*: burst *F*

91 fortun'd, as he *F*: fortun'd as he, *Q*
 97-8 traines He laid, *F*: traines, He laid *Q*

So as he rag'd emongst that beastly rout,
 A cruell beast of most accursed brood
 Vpon him turnd (despeyre makes cowards stout)
 And with fell tooth accustomed to blood,
 Launched his thigh with so mischieuous might,
 That it both bone and muscles ryued quight. 120

So deadly was the dint and deep the wound,
 And so huge streames of blood thereout did flow,
 That he endured not the direfull stound,
 But on the cold deare earth himselfe did throw.
 The whiles the captiue heard his nets did rend,
 And hauing none to let, to wood did wend.

Ah where were ye this while his shepheard peares,
 To whom aliue was nought so deare as hee:
 And ye faire Mayds the matches of his yeares,
 Which in his grace did boast you most to bee? 130
 Ah where were ye, when he of you had need,
 To stop his wound that wondrously did bleed?

Ah wretched boy the shape of dreryhead,
 And sad ensample of mans suddein end:
 Full litle faileth but thou shalt be dead,
 Vnpitied, vnplaynd, of foe or frend.
 Whilest none is nigh, thine eyelids vp to close,
 And kisse thy lips like faded leaues of rose.

A sort of shepherds sewing of the chace,
 As they the forest raunged on a day: 140
 By fate or fortune came vnto the place,
 Where as the lucklesse boy yet bleeding lay.
 Yet bleeding lay, and yet would still haue bled,
 Had not good hap those shepherds thether led.

They stopt his wound (too late to stop it was)
 And in their armes then softly did him reare:
 Tho (as he wild) vnto his loued lasse,
 His dearest loue him dolefully did beare.
 The dolefulst beare that euer man did see,
 Was *Astrophel*, but dearest vnto mee. 150

116 brood] brood: *Q*, *F* 122 flow, *F*: flow: *Q*

She when she saw her loue in such a plight,
 With crudled blood and filthie gore deformed:
 That wont to be with flowers and gyrlonds dight,
 And her deare fauours dearly well adorned,
 Her face, the fairest face, that eye mote see,
 She likewise did deforme like him to bee.

Her yellow locks that shone so bright and long,
 As Sunny beames in fairest somers day
 She fiersly tore, and with outragious wrong
 From her red cheeks the roses rent away. 160
 And her faire brest the threasury of ioy,
 She spoyld thereof, and filled with annoy.

His palled face impictured with death,
 She bathed oft with teares and dried oft:
 And with sweet kisses suckt the wasting breath,
 Out of his lips like lillies pale and soft.
 And oft she cald to him, who answerd nought,
 But onely by his lookes did tell his thought.

The rest of her impatient regret,
 And piteous mone the which she for him made, 170
 No toong can tell, nor any forth can set,
 But he whose heart like sorrow did inuade.
 At last when paine his vitall powres had spent,
 His wasted life her weary lodge forwent.

Which when she saw, she staid not a whit,
 But after him did make vntimely haste:
 Forth with her ghost out of her corps did flit,
 And followed her make like Turtle chaste.
 To proue that death their hearts cannot diuide,
 Which liuing were in loue so firmly tide. 180

The Gods which all things see, this same beheld,
 And pittying this paire of louers trew,
 Transformed them there lying on the field,
 Into one flowre that is both red and blew.

154 adorned, *F*: adorned *Q* 158 day] day: *Q*, *F* 161 brest *Q*:
 brest, *F* 166 lips *Q*: lips, *F* 170 made, *F*: made: *Q* 182
 trew, *F*: trew: *Q*

It first growes red, and then to blew doth fade,
 Like *Astrophel*, which thereinto was made.

And in the midst thereof a star appeares,
 As fairly formd as any star in skyes:
 Resembling *Stella* in her freshest yeares,
 Forth darting beames of beautie from her eyes, 190
 And all the day it standeth full of deow,
 Which is the teares, that from her eyes did flow.

That hearbe of some, Starlight is cald by name,
 Of others *Penithia*, though not so well:
 But thou where euer thou doest finde the same,
 From this day forth do call it *Astrophel*.
 And when so euer thou it vp doest take,
 Do pluck it softly for that shepherds sake.

Hereof when tydings far abroad did passe,
 The shepherds all which loued him full deare, 200
 And sure full deare of all he loued was,
 Did thether flock to see what they did heare.
 And when that pitteous spectacle they vewed.
 The same with bitter teares they all bedewed.

And euery one did make exceeding mone,
 With inward anguish and great grieffe opprest:
 And euery one did weep and waile, and mone,
 And meanes deviz'd to shew his sorrow best.
 That from that houre since first on grassie greene
 Shepherds kept sheep, was not like mourning seen. 210

But first his sister that *Clorinda* hight,
 The gentlest shepherdesse that liues this day:
 And most resembling both in shape and spright
 Her brother deare, began this dolefull lay.
 Which least I marre the sweetness of the vearse,
 In sort as she it sung, I will rehearse.

200 deare,] deare: *Q*: deare followed by bracket (And . . . was) *F*
 209 greene *F*: greene, *Q*

AY me, to whom shall I my case complaine,
 That may compassion my impatient grieffe?
 Or where shall I enfold my inward paine,
 That my enriuen heart may find reliefe?
 Shall I vnto the heauenly powres it show?
 Or vnto earthly men that dwell below?
 To heuens? ah they alas the authors were,
 And workers of my vnremedied wo:
 For they foresee what to vs happens here,
 And they foresaw, yet suffred this be so. 10
 From them comes good, from them comes also il,
 That which they made, who can them warne to spill.
 To men? ah they alas like wretched bee,
 And subiect to the heuens ordinance:
 Bound to abide what euer they decree,
 Their best redresse, is their best sufferance.
 How then can they, like wretched, comfort mee,
 The which no lesse, need comforted to bee?
 Then to my selfe will I my sorrow mourne,
 Sith none aliuie like sorrowfull remaines: 20
 And to my selfe my plaints shall back retourne,
 To pay their vsury with doubled paines.
 The woods, the hills, the riuers shall resound
 The mournfull accent of my sorrowes ground.
 Wood̄s, hills and riuers, now are desolate,
 Sith he is gone the which them all did grace:
 And all the fields do waile their widow state,
 Sith death their fairest flowre did late deface.
 The fairest flowre in field that euer grew,
 Was *Astrophel*; that was, we all may rew, 30
 What cruell hand of cursed foe vnknowne,
 Hath cropt the stalke which bore so faire a flowre?
 Vntimely cropt, before it well were growne,
 And cleane defaced in vntimely howre.
 Great losse to all that euer him did see,
 Great losse to all, but greatest losse to mee.

17 they, like wretched, *F*: they like wretched *Q* 35 did see *F*: see *Q*

Breake now your gyrlonds, O ye shepheards lasses,
 Sith the faire flowre, which them adornd, is gon:
 The flowre, which them adornd, is gone to ashes,
 Neuer againe let lasse put gyrlond on. 40
 In stead of gyrlond, weare sad Cypres nowe,
 And bitter Elder, broken from the bowe.
 Ne euer sing the loue-layes which he made,
 Who euer made such layes of loue as hee?
 Ne euer read the riddles, which he sayd
 Vnto your selues, to make you mery glee.
 Your mery glee is now laid all abed,
 Your mery maker now alasse is dead.
 Death the deuourer of all worlds delight,
 Hath robbed you and reft fro me my ioy: 50
 Both you and me, and all the world he quight
 Hath robd of ioyance, and left sad annoy.
 Ioy of the world, and shepheards pride was hee,
 Shepheards hope neuer like againe to see.
 Oh death that hast vs of such riches reft,
 Tell vs at least, what hast thou with it done?
 What is become of him whose flowre here left
 Is but the shadow of his likenesse gone.
 Scarse like the shadow of that which he was,
 Nought like, but that he like a shade did pas. 60
 But that immortall spirit, which was dect
 With all the dowries of celestially grace:
 By soueraine choyce from th'heuenly quires select,
 And lineally deriv'd from Angels race,
 O what is now of it become, aread.
 Ay me, can so diuine a thing be dead?
 Ah no: it is not dead, ne can it die,
 But liues for aie, in blisfull Paradise:
 Where like a new-borne babe it soft doth lie.
 In bed of lillies wrapt in tender wise. 70
 And compast all about with roses sweet,
 And daintie violets from head to feet.

65 become, *F*: become *Q*

There thousand birds all of celestiaall brood,
 To him do sweetly caroll day and night:
 And with straunge notes, of him well vnderstood,
 Lull him a sleep in Angelick delight;

Whilest in sweet dreame to him presented bee
 Immortall beauties, which no eye may see.

But he them sees and takes exceeding pleasure
 Of their diuine aspects, appearing plaine, 80
 And kindling loue in him aboue all measure,
 Sweet loue still ioyous, neuer feeling paine.

For what so goodly forme he there doth see,
 He may enioy from iealous rancor free.

There liueth he in euerlasting blis,
 Sweet spirit neuer fearing more to die:
 Ne dreading harme from any foes of his,
 Ne fearing saluage beasts more crueltie.

Whilest we here wretches waile his priuate lack,
 And with vaine vowes do often call him back. 90

But lieue thou there still happie, happie spirit,
 And giue vs leaue thee here thus to lament:
 Not thee that doest thy heauens ioy inherit,
 But our owne selues that here in dole are drent.

Thus do we weep and waile, and wear our eies,
 Mourning in others; our owne miseries.

Which when she ended had, another swaine
 Of gentle wit and daintie sweet deuce:
 Whom *Astrophel* full deare did entertaine,
 Whilest here he liv'd, and held in passing price, 100
 Hight *Thestylis*, began his mournfull tourne,
 And made the *Muses* in his song to mourne.

And after him full many other mœe,
 As euerie one in order lov'd him best,
 Gan dight themselues t'expresse their inward woe,
 With dolefull layes vnto the time address.
 The which I here in order will rehearse,
 As fittest flowres to deck his mournfull hearse.