

Classic Poetry Series

Thomas Campion
- poems -

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Thomas Campion(1567-1620)

Thomas Campion (sometimes Campian) (12 February 1567 – 1 March 1620) was an English composer, poet, and physician. He wrote over a hundred lute songs, masques for dancing, and an authoritative technical treatise on music.

Life

Campion was born in London, the son of John Campion, a clerk of the Court of Chancery, and Lucy (née Searle – daughter of Laurence Searle, one of the queen's serjeants-at-arms). Upon the death of Campion's father in 1576, his mother married Augustine Steward, dying soon afterwards. His step-father assumed charge of the boy and sent him, in 1581, to study at Peterhouse, Cambridge as a "gentleman pensioner"; he left the university after four years without taking a degree. He later entered Gray's Inn to study law in 1586. However, he left in 1595 without having been called to the bar.

On 10 February 1605, he received his medical degree from the University of Caen.

Campion is thought to have lived in London, practicing as a physician, until his death in March 1620 – possibly of the plague. He was apparently unmarried and had no children. He was buried the same day at St Dunstan-in-the-West in Fleet Street.

He was implicated in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, but was eventually exonerated, as it was found that he had unwittingly delivered the bribe that had procured Overbury's death.

Poetry and songs

The body of his works is considerable, the earliest known being a group of five anonymous poems included in the "Songs of Divers Noblemen and Gentlemen," appended to Newman's edition of Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, which appeared in 1591. In 1595, *Poemata*, a collection of Latin panegyrics, elegies and epigrams was published, winning him a considerable reputation. This was followed, in 1601, by a songbook, *A Booke of Ayres*, with words by himself and music composed by himself and Philip Rosseter. The following year he published his *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, "against the vulgar and unartificial custom of riming," in favour of rhymeless verse on the model of classical quantitative verse. Campion's theories on poetry were demolished by Samuel

Daniel in "Defence of Rhyme" (1603).

In 1607, he wrote and published a masque for the occasion of the marriage of Lord Hayes, and, in 1613, issued a volume of Songs of Mourning: Bewailing the Untimely Death of Prince Henry, set to music by John Cooper (also known as Coperario). The same year he wrote and arranged three masques: The Lords' Masque for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth; an entertainment for the amusement of Queen Anne at Caversham House; and a third for the marriage of the Earl of Somerset to the infamous Frances Howard, Countess of Essex. If, moreover, as appears quite likely, his Two Bookes of Ayres (both words and music written by himself) belongs also to this year, it was indeed his annus mirabilis.

In 1615, he published a book on counterpoint, A New Way of Making Fowre Parts in Counterpoint By a Most Familiar and Infallible Rule, a technical treatise which was for many years the standard textbook on the subject. It was included, with annotations by Christopher Sympson, in Playford's Brief Introduction to the Skill of Musick, and two editions appear to have been published by 1660.

A Lenten Hymn

With broken heart and contrite sigh,
A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry:
Thy pard'ning grace is rich and free:
O God, be merciful to me.
I smite upon my troubled breast,
With deep and conscious guilt oppress,
Christ and His cross my only plea:
O God, be merciful to me.
Far off I stand with tearful eyes,
Nor dare uplift them to the skies;
But Thou dost all my anguish see:
O God, be merciful to me.
Nor alms, nor deeds that I have done,
Can for a single sin atone;
To Calvary alone I flee:
O God, be merciful to me.
And when, redeemed from sin and hell,
With all the ransomed throng I dwell,
My raptured song shall ever be,
God has been merciful to me.

Thomas Campion

Amaryllis

I care not for these ladies that must be wooed and prayed;
Give me kind Amaryllis, the wanton country maid.
Nature Art disdaineth; her beauty is her own.
Her when we court and kiss, she cries: forsooth, let go!
But when we come where comfort is, she never will say no.

If I love Amaryllis, she gives me fruit and flowers;
But if we love these ladies, we must give golden showers.
Give them gold that sell love, give me the nut-brown lass,
Who when we court and kiss, she cries: forsooth, let go!
But when we come where comfort is, she never will say no.

These ladies must have pillows and beds by strangers wrought.
Give me a bower of willows, of moss and leaves unbought,
And fresh Amaryllis with milk and honey fed,
Who when we court and kiss, she cries: forsooth, let go!
But when we come where comfort is, she never will say no.

Thomas Campion

Cherry-Ripe

There is a garden in her face
Where roses and white lilies blow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow:
There cherries grow which none may buy
Till "Cherry-ripe" themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose
Of orient pearl a double row,
Which when her lovely laughter shows,
They look like rose-buds filled with snow;
Yet them no peer nor prince can buy
Till "Cherry-ripe" themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still;
Her brows like bended bows do stand,
Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill
All that attempt with eye or hand
Those sacred cherries to come nigh,
Till "Cherry-ripe" themselves do cry.

Thomas Campion

Corinna

When to her lute Corinna sings,
Her voice revives the leaden strings,
And doth in highest notes appear
As any challenged echo clear.
But when she doth of mourning speak,
Even with her sighs the strings do break.

And as her lute doth live or die;
Led by her passion, so must I.
For when of pleasure she doth sing,
My thoughts enjoy a sudden spring;
But if she doth of sorrow speak,
Even from my heart the strings do break.

Thomas Campion

Devotion II

FOLLOW your saint, follow with accents sweet!
Haste you, sad notes, fall at her flying feet!
There, wrapt in cloud of sorrow, pity move,
And tell the ravisher of my soul I perish for her love:
But if she scorns my never-ceasing pain,
Then burst with sighing in her sight, and ne'er return again!

All that I sung still to her praise did tend;
Still she was first, still she my songs did end;
Yet she my love and music both doth fly,
The music that her echo is and beauty's sympathy:
Then let my notes pursue her scornful flight!
It shall suffice that they were breathed and died for her delight.

Thomas Campion

Fain Would I Wed

Fain would I wed a fair young man that night and day could please me,
When my mind or body grieved, that had the power to ease me.
Maids are full of longing thoughts that breed a bloodless sickness,
And that, oft I hear men say, is only cured by quickness.
Oft I have been wooed and praised, but never could be movèd;
Many for a day or so I have most dearly lovèd,
But this foolish mind of mine straight loathes the thing resolvèd;
If to love be sin in me, that sin is soon absolvèd.
Sure I think I shall at last fly to some holy order;
When I once am settled there, then can I fly no farther.
Yet I would not die a maid, because I had a mother,
As I was by one brought forth, I would bring forth another.

Thomas Campion

Follow Thy Fair Sun

Follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow;
Though thou be black as night,
And she made all of light,
Yet follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow.
Follow her, whose light thy light depriveth;
Though here thou liv'st disgrac'd,
And she in heaven is plac'd,
Yet follow her whose light the world reviveth.
Follow those pure beams, whose beauty burneth;
That so have scorched thee,
As thou still black must be,
Till her kind beams thy black to brightness turneth.
Follow her, while yet her glory shineth;
There comes a luckless night
That will dim all her light;
And this the black unhappy shade divineth.
Follow still, since so thy fates ordained;
The sun must have his shade,
Till both at once do fade,
The sun still proud, the shadow still disdained.

Thomas Campion

Follow Your Saint

Follow your saint, follow with accents sweet;
Haste you, sad notes, fall at her flying feet.
There, wrapp'd in cloud of sorrow, pity move,
And tell the ravisher of my soul I perish for her love:
But if she scorns my never-ceasing pain,
Then burst with sighing in her sight and ne'er return again.

All that I sung still to her praise did tend,
Still she was first; still she my songs did end;
Yet she my love and music both doth fly,
The music that her echo is and beauty's sympathy.
Then let my notes pursue her scornful flight:
It shall suffice that they were breath'd and died for her delight.

Thomas Campion

Jack And Joan

Jack and Joan they think no ill,
But loving live, and merry still;
Do their week-days' work, and pray
Devoutly on the holy day:
Skip and trip it on the green,
And help to choose the Summer Queen;
Lash out, at a country feast,
Their silver penny with the best.

Well can they judge of nappy ale,
And tell at large a winter tale;
Climb up to the apple loft,
And turn the crabs till they be soft.
Tib is all the father's joy,
And little Tom the mother's boy.
All their pleasure is Content;
And care, to pay their yearly rent.

Joan can call by name her cows,
And deck her window with green boughs;
She can wreaths and tutties make,
And trim with plums a bridal cake.
Jack knows what brings gain or loss;
And his long flail can stoutly toss:
Makes the hedge, which others break;
And ever thinks what he doth speak.

Now, you courtly dames and knights,
That study only strange delights;
Though you scorn the homespun grey,
And revel in your rich array;
Though your tongues dissemble deep,
And can your heads from danger keep;
Yet, for all your pomp and train,
Securer lives the silly swain.

Thomas Campion

Kind Are Her Answers,

Kind are her answers,
But her performance keeps no day;
Breaks time, as dancers
From their own music when they stray.
All her free favours and smooth words,
Wing my hopes in vain.
O did ever voice so sweet but only feign?
Can true love yield such delay,
Converting joy to pain?
Lost is our freedom,
When we submit to women so:
Why do we need them
When, in their best they work our woe?
Can alter ends, by Fate prefixed.
O why is the good of man with evil mixed?
Never were days yet called two,
But one night went betwixt.

Thomas Campion

My Sweetest Lesbia

My sweetest Lesbia, let us live and love,
And though the sager sort our deeds reprove,
Let us not weigh them. Heaven's great lamps do dive
Into their west, and straight again revive,
But soon as once set is our little light,
Then must we sleep one ever-during night.

If all would lead their lives in love like me,
Then bloody swords and armor should not be;
No drum nor trumpet peaceful sleeps should move,
Unless alarm came from the camp of love.
But fools do live, and waste their little light,
And seek with pain their ever-during night.

When timely death my life and fortune ends,
Let not my hearse be vexed with mourning friends,
But let all lovers, rich in triumph, come
And with sweet pastimes grace my happy tomb;
And Lesbia, close up thou my little light,
And crown with love my ever-during night.

Thomas Campion

Now Winter Nights Enlarge

Now winter nights enlarge
This number of their hours;
And clouds their storms discharge
Upon the airy towers.
Let now the chimneys blaze
And cups o'erflow with wine,
Let well-tuned words amaze
With harmony divine.
Now yellow waxen lights
Shall wait on honey love
While youthful revels, masques, and courtly sights
Sleep's leaden spells remove.

This time doth well dispense
With lovers' long discourse;
Much speech hath some defense,
Though beauty no remorse.
All do not all things well:
Some measures comely tread,
Some knotted riddles tell,
Some poems smoothly read.
The summer hath his joys,
And winter his delights;
Though love and all his pleasures are but toys
They shorten tedious nights.

Thomas Campion

O Come Quickly!

NEVER weather-beaten sail more willing bent to shore,
Never tired pilgrim's limbs affected slumber more,
Than my wearied sprite now longs to fly out of my troubled breast:
O come quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soul to rest!

Ever blooming are the joys of heaven's high Paradise,
Cold age deafs not there our ears nor vapour dims our eyes:
Glory there the sun outshines; whose beams the Blessed only see:
O come quickly, glorious Lord, and raise my sprite to Thee!

Thomas Campion

Rose-Cheeked Laura

Rose-cheek'd Laura, come,
Sing thou smoothly with thy beauty's
Silent music, either other
Sweetly gracing.

Lovely forms do flow
From concert divinely framed;
Heav'n is music, and thy beauty's
Birth is heavenly.

These dull notes we sing
Discords need for helps to grace them;
Only beauty purely loving
Knows no discord,

But still moves delight,
Like clear springs renew'd by flowing,
Ever perfect, ever in them-
Selves eternal.

Thomas Campion

The Charm

Thrice toss these oaken ashes in the air,
Thrice sit thou mute in this enchanted chair,
Then thrice three times tie up this true love's knot,
And murmur soft 'She will, or she will not.'
Go burn these pois'nous weeds in yon blue fire,
These screech-owl's feathers and this prickling briar,
This cypress gathered at a dead man's grave,
That all my fears and cares an end may have.
Then come, you fairies! dance with me a round;
Melt her hard heart with your melodious sound.
In vain are all the charms I can devise:
She hath an art to break them with her eyes.

Thomas Campion

The Measure Of Beauty

Give Beauty all her right,
She's not to one form tied;
Each shape yields fair delight,
Where her perfections bide:
Helen, I grant, might pleasing be,
And Ros'mond was as sweet as she.

Some the quick eye commends,
Some swelling lips and red;
Pale looks have many friends,
Through sacred sweetness bred:
Meadows have flowers that pleasure move,
Though roses are the flowers of love.

Free beauty is not bound
To one unmoved clime;
She visits every ground
And favours every time.
Let the old loves with mine compare,
My sovereign is as sweet as fair.

Thomas Campion

There Is A Garden In Her Face

There is a garden in her face
Where roses and white lilies grow;
A heav'nly paradise is that place
Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow.

There cherries grow which none may buy,
Till 'Cherry ripe' themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose
Of orient pearl a double row,
Which when her lovely laughter shows,
They look like rose-buds fill'd with snow;
Yet them nor peer nor prince can buy,
Till 'Cherry ripe' themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still,
Her brows like bended bows do stand,
Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill
All that attempt with eye or hand
Those sacred cherries to come nigh,
Till 'Cherry ripe' themselves do cry.

Thomas Campion

Think'st Thou To Seduce Me Then

Think'st thou to seduce me then with words that have no meaning?
Parrots so can learn to prate, our speech by pieces gleaning;
Nurses teach their children so about the time of weaning.

Learn to speak first, then to woo; to wooing much pertaineth:
He that courts us, wanting art, soon falters when he feigneth,
Looks asquint on his discourse, and smiles when he complaineth.

Skillful anglers hide their hooks, fit baits for every season;
But with crooked pins fish thou, as babes do that want reason:
Gudgeons only can be caught with such poor tricks of treason.

Ruth forgive me, if I erred from humane heart's compassion,
When I laughed sometimes too much to see thy foolish fashion:
But, alas, who less could do that found so good occasion?

Thomas Campion

Thrice Toss These Oaken Ashes

Thrice toss these oaken ashes in the air,
Thrice sit thou mute in this enchanted chair,
Then thrice three times tie up this true love's knot,
And murmur soft 'She will, or she will not.'

Go burn these pois'nous weeds in yon blue fire,
These screech-owl's feathers and this prickling briar,
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Melt her hard heart with your melodious sound.
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Thomas Campion

View Me, Lord, A Work Of Thine

View me, Lord, a work of thine!
Shall I then lie downed in night?
Might thy grace in me but shine,
I should seem made all of light.

Cleanse me, Lord, that I may kneel
At thine altar pure and white;
They at once thy mercies feel,
Gaze no more on earth's delight.

Worldly joys like shadows fade
When the heavenly light appears;
But the covenants Thou hast made,
Endless, know not days nor years.

In thy word, Lord, is my trust,
To thy mercies fast I fly;
Though I am but clay and dust,
Yet thy grace can lift me high.

Thomas Campion

Vobiscum Est Iope

WHEN thou must home to shades of underground,
And there arrived, a new admired guest,
The beauteous spirits do engirt thee round,
White Iope, blithe Helen, and the rest,
To hear the stories of thy finish'd love
From that smooth tongue whose music hell can move;

Then wilt thou speak of banqueting delights,
Of masques and revels which sweet youth did make,
Of tourneys and great challenges of knights,
And all these triumphs for thy beauty's sake:
When thou hast told these honours done to thee,
Then tell, O tell, how thou didst murder me!

Thomas Campion

When Thou Must Home To Shades Of Underground

When thou must home to shades of underground,
And there arriv'd, a new admired guest,
The beauteous spirits do engirt thee round,
White Iope, blithe Helen, and the rest,
To hear the stories of thy finish'd love
From that smooth tongue whose music hell can move;

Then wilt thou speak of banqueting delights,
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Thomas Campion

When To Her Lute Corinna Sings

When to her lute Corinna sings,
Her voice revives the leaden strings,
And doth in highest notes appear,
As any challenged echo clear;
But when she doth of mourning speak,
E'en with her sighs, the strings do break,

And as her lute doth live or die,
Led by her passion, so must I:
For when of pleasure she doth sing,
My thoughts enjoy a sudden spring,
But if she doth of sorrow speak,
E'en from my heart the strings do break

Thomas Campion

