

Classic Poetry Series

Owen Feltham
- poems -

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Owen Felltham(1602 - 1668)

Owen Felltham, born about 1602, possibly at Mutford, a village near Lowestoft, Suffolk. Second son to his father, Thomas Felltham and mother, Mary Ufflete Felltham.

Felltham, appears to have been self-educated or that of a squire, for there is little information available that clearly states his education. He continued his self-education through out his life. And although one of his poems was later published in Panassis Biceps (1656), a collection of alumni of Oxford and Cambridge, there is no record of him attending either of these universities.

His influences included, Ben Jonson for whom he wrote the elegy "To the Memory of Immortall BEN' a seventy-four-line poem which was published in Jonus Vibius, 1638, and possibly Bacon and Donne.

Felltham, as a young man traveled to London searching his fortune as a merchant. He married on October 10, 1621, his wife Mary Clopton of Kentwell Hall, Melford, Suffolk. By 1628 he left London, leaving his trade behind he then became steward to the Great Billing estate (Northamptonshire) belonging to Barnabas O'Brien (whom was to become the sixth Earl of Thomond after 1639), then to Henry O'Brien (seventh Earl Of Thomond). Later becoming steward to Dowager Countess Mary, Till his death on February 23, 1668 at her London townhouse. It also appears that his wife and/or any children they may have had, died before him, for there was no mention of them in his will.

In his lifetime Felltham wrote several pieces, his interest in moral problems clearly displayed in his work, which showed certain mastery in reflective prose and essays. Known and remembered primarily for his works, a collection of prose musings called Resolves Divine, Morall, Political originally published in 1623, and His most anthologized poem, "When, Dearest, I but think on thee,".

When, Dearest, I But Think On Thee

When, dearest, I but think on thee,
Methinks all things that lovely be
Are present, and my soul delighted:
For beauties that from worth arise
Are like the grace of deities,
Still present with us, though unsighted.

Thus while I sit and sigh the day
With all his spreading lights away,
Till night's black wings do overtake me:
Thinking on thee, thy beauties then,
As sudden lights do sleeping men,
So they by their bright rays awake me.

Thus absence dies, and dying proves
No absence can consist with loves
That do partake of fair perfection:
Since in the darkest night they may
By their quick motion find a way
To see each other by reflection.

The waving sea can with such flood
Bathe some high palace that hath stood
Far from the main up in the river:
Oh think not then but love can do
As much, for that's an ocean too,
That flows not every day, but ever.

Owen Felltham