

[1] A Cradle Song

Sleep, Sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant whiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel
Smiles as of the morning steel
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.

Oh the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep!
When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful night shall break.

William Blake (1757-1827)

[2] Weep you no more (Ireland)

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at e'en he sets?
Rest you, then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Anon., 16th Century

[3] Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene;
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha ha he!"

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread:
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha ha he!"

William Blake

[4] The Peaceful Western Wind

The peaceful western wind
The winter storms hath tamed
And Nature in each kind
The kind heart hath inflamed
The forward buds so sweetly breathe
Out of their earthly bow'rs
That heav'n which views their pomp beneath
Would fain be deck'd with flow'rs.

See how the morning smiles
On her bright eastern hill
And with soft steps beguiles
Them that lie slumbering still!
The music loving birds are come
From cliffs and rocks unknown
To me the trees and briars bloom
That late were overthrown.

What Saturn did destroy
Love's Queen revives again
And now her naked Boy
Doth in the fields remain
When he such pleasing change doth view
In ev'ry living thing
As if the world were born anew
To gratify the Spring.

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

[5] Spring, the sweet Spring

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-wta-woo!
Spring! The sweet Spring!

Thomas Nashe (1567-1601)

[6] When May is in his prime

When May is in his prime, then may each heart rejoice,
When May bedecks each branch with green,
each bird strains forth his voice.
The lively sap creeps up into the blooming thorn,
The flowers, which cold in prison kept,
now laugh the frost to scorn.
All nature's imps triumph which joyful May doth last,
When May is gone, of all the year the pleasant time is past.

May makes the cheerful hue,
May breeds and brings new blood,
May marches throughout every limb,
May makes the merry mood.
May pricketh tender hearts, their warbling notes to tune,
Full strange it is yet some we see do make their May in June.
Thus things are strangely wrought while joyful May does last,
When May is gone, of all the year the pleasant time is past.

All you that live on earth, and have your May at will,
Rejoice in May, as I do now, and use your May with skill.
Use May while that you may, for May has but his time,
When all the fruit is gone it is too late the tree to climb.
Your liking and your lust is fresh while May doth last,
Take May in time,
when May is gone the pleasant time is past.

Richard Edwardes (1525-1566)

[7] Cupid

Why was Cupid a boy,
And why a boy was he?

He should have been a girl,
For aught that I can see.

For he shoots with his bow,
And the girl shoots with her eye,
And they both are merry and glad,
And laugh when we do cry.

Then to make Cupid a boy
Was surely a woman's plan;
For a boy never learns so much
Till he has become a man.

And then he's so plex'd with cares,
And wounded with arrowy smarts,
That the whole business of his life
Is to pick out the heads of the darts.

William Blake

[8] Fain would I change that note

Fain would I change that note
To which fond Love hath charm'd me
Long, long to sing by rote,
Fancying that that harm'd me:
Yet when this thought doth come
'Love is the perfect sum
Of all delight!'
I have no other choice
Either for pen or voice
To sing or write.

O Love! they wrong thee much
That say thy fruit is bitter,
When thy rich fruit is such
As nothing can be sweeter.
Fair house of joy and bliss,
Where truest pleasure is,
I do adore thee:
I know thee what thou art,
I serve thee with my heart,
And fall before thee.

Tobias Hume (1579-1645)

[9] Twilight Night

We met hand to hand,
We clasped hands close and fast,
As close as oak and ivy stand
But it is past;
Come day, come night, day comes at last.

We loosed hand from hand,
We parted face from face:
Each went his way to his own land
At his own pace,
Each went to fill his separate place.

If we should meet one day,
If both should not forget,
We shall clasp hands the accustomed way,
As when we met,
So long ago, as I remember yet.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

[10] These things shall be

These things shall be! A loftier race
Than e'er the world hath known, shall rise,
With flame of freedom in their souls,
And light of science in their eyes.

They shall be gentle, brave and strong,
To spill no drop of blood, but dare
All that may plant man's lordship firm
On earth, and fire, and sea, and air.

Nation with nation, land with land,
In-armed shall live as comrades free;
In every heart and brain shall throb
The pulse of one fraternity.

New arts shall bloom of loftier mould
And mightier music thrill the skies,
And every life shall be a song,
When all the earth is paradise.

These things – they are no dream – shall be
For happier men when we are gone:
These golden days for them shall dawn,
Transcending aught we gaze upon.

John Addington Symonds (1840-1893)

[12] Immortality

These fields, which now lie smiling in the sun,
Were tamed and schooled to harvest long ago
By men whose lives, whose names, we cannot know,
Who went in silence when their work was done.

Their furrows, slowly traced, their crops, hard-won,
Have vanished like some ancient winter's snow,
Their hearts, dispersed in dust, have ceased to glow,
Mere random bones declare their race is run.

And yet within the fields there lie in wait
Strange virtues which to them, not us, belong,
And as we plod behind the plough, which bares
The gracious earth they wooed, we know the strong
Compulsion laid by them on all their heirs,
And cannot choose but plough our furrows straight.

Henry P. Compton

[13] They told me, Heraclitus

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept as I remember'd how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

William Cory (1823-1892)

[15] In praise of Neptune

Of Neptune's empire let us sing,
At whose command the waves obey;
To whom the rivers tribute pay,
Down the high mountains sliding:
To whom the scaly nation yields
Homage for the crystal fields
Wherein they dwell:
And every sea-dog pays a gem
Yearly out of his wat'ry cell
To deck great Neptune's diadem.

The Tritons dancing in a ring
Before his palace gates do make
The water with their echoes quake,

Like the great thunder sounding;
The sea-nymphs chant their accents shrill,
And the sirens, taught to kill
With their sweet voice,
Make ev'ry echoing rock reply
Unto their gentle murmuring noise
The praise of Neptune's empery.

Thomas Campion

Songs of Springtime

[16] Under the greenwood tree

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to live i' the sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
And pleas'd with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

[17] The River-God's Song

Do not fear to put thy feet
Naked in the river sweet;
Think not leech, or newt, or toad,
Will bite thy foot, when thou hast trod;
Nor let the water, rising high,
As thou wadest, make thee cry
And sob; but ever live with me,
And not a wave shall trouble thee!

John Fletcher (1579-1625)

[18] Spring, the sweet Spring

Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!
Spring! The sweet Spring!

Thomas Nashe

[19] Love is a sickness

Love is a sickness full of woes,
All remedies refusing;
A plant that with most cutting grows,
Most barren with best using,
Why so?
More we enjoy it, more it dies;
If not enjoy'd, it sighing cries —
Heigh ho!

Love is a torment of the mind,
A tempest everlasting;
And Jove hath made it of a kind
Not well, nor full, nor fasting.
Why so?

More we enjoy it, more it dies;
If not enjoy'd, it sighing cries —
Heigh ho!

Samuel Daniel (1562-1619)

[20] Sigh no more, ladies

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea and one on shore;
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny;
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no more,
Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so
Since summer first was leavy.
Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny;
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

William Shakespeare

[21] Good Wine

Now that the Spring hath filled our veins
With kind and active fire,
And made green liveries for the plains,
And every grove a choir;

Sing we a song of merry glee,
And Bacchus fill the bowl.
Then here's to thee! And thou to me
And every thirsty soul.

Nor care nor sorrow e'er paid debt,
Nor never shall do mine;
I have no cradle going yet,
Not I, by this good wine.

No wife at home to send for me,
No hogs are in my ground,
No suit at law to pay a fee;
Then round, old jockey, round!

Shear sheep that have them, cry we still,
But see that no man 'scape
To drink of the sherry
That makes us so merry,
And plump as the lusty grape.

William Browne, of Tavistock (1590-1645)

[22] To Daffodils

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong,

And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.
We die,
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain,
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

[23] Blue-eyed Spring

Now has the blue-eyed Spring
Sped dancing through the plain.
Girls weave a daisy chain;
Boys race beside the sedge;
Dust fills the blinding lane;
May lies upon the hedge:
All creatures love the spring!

The clouds laugh on, and would
Dance with us if they could;
The larks ascend and shrill;
A woodpecker fills the wood;
Jays laugh crossing the hill:
All creatures love the spring!

The lithe cloud-shadows chase
Over the whole earth's face,
And where winds ruffling veer
O'er wooded streams' dark ways
Mad fish upscudding steer:
All creatures love the spring!

Into the dairy cool
Run, girls, to drink thick cream!
Race, boys, to where the stream
Winds through a rumbling pool,
And your bright bodies fling
Into the foaming cool!
For we'll enjoy our spring!

Robert Nichols (1893-1944)

[24] Weep you no more (Moeran)

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at e'en he sets?
Rest you, then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping,
Softly now, softly lies
Sleeping.

Anon., 16th Century

[25] Phyllida and Corydon

In the merry month of May,
In a morn by break of day,
Forth I walked by the woodside,
When as May was in his pride:
There I spied all alone
Phyllida and Corydon.
Much ado there was, God wot!
He would love and she would not.

She said, never man was true;
He said, none was false to you.
He said, he had loved her long;
She said, Love should have no wrong.
Corydon would kiss her then;
She said, maids must kiss no men
Till they did for good and all.
Then she made the shepherd call
All the heav'ns to witness truth
Never loved a truer youth.

Thus with many a pretty oath,
Yea and nay, and faith and troth,
Such as silly shepherds use
When they will not love abuse.
Love, which long hath been deluded,
Was with kisses sweet concluded;
And Phyllida with garlands gay,
Was made the Lady of the May.

Nicholas Breton (1545-1626)

[26] Beauty sat bathing by a spring

Beauty sat bathing by a spring,
Where fairest shades did hide her,
The winds blew calm, the birds did sing,
The cool streams ran beside her.
My wanton thoughts enticed mine eye
To see what was forbidden:
But better memory said Fie,
So vain desire was chidden.

Hey nonny nonny.

Into a slumber then I fell,
And fond imagination
Seemed to see, but could not tell
Her feature or her fashion.
But even as babes in dreams do smile
And sometimes fall a-weeping,
So I awaked as wise that while
As when I fell a-sleeping.

Hey nonny nonny.

Anthony Munday (c. 1560-1633)

[27] On a hill there grows a flower

On a hill there grows a flower,
Fair befall the dainty sweet:
By that flower there is a Bower,
Where the heavenly Muses meet.
In that Bower there is a chair,
Fringed all about with gold,
Where doth sit the fairest fair
That ever eye did yet behold.

It is Phyllis, fair and bright,
She that is the shepherds' joy,
She that Venus did despise
And did blind her little boy.
O fair eyes yet let me see

One good look and I am gone;
Look on me, for I am he,
Thy poor silly Corydon.

Thou that art the Shepherds' Queen,
Look upon thy silly swain;
By thy comfort have been seen
Dead men brought to life again

Nicholas Breton

[28] Phyllis inamorata

Come, be my valentine!
I'll gather eglantine,
Cowslips and sops in wine
With fragrant roses;
Down by thy Phyllis sit,
She will white lilies get,
And daffadillies fit
To make thee posies.

I bear, in sign of love,
A sparrow in my glove,
And in my breast a dove,
This shall be all thine.
Besides, of sheep a flock,
Which yieldeth many a lock,
And this shall be thy stock,
Come, be my valentine!

Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626)

[29] Said I that Amaryllis

Said I that Amaryllis
Was fairer than is Phyllis?
Upon my death I take it,
Sweet Phyll, I never spake it.

But if you think I did then,
Take me and hang me,
Yet let more and more love,
More love and beauty pang me.

Anon., 16th century

[30] The treasure of my heart

Lock up, fairs lids, the treasure of my heart,
Preserve those beams, this age's only light.
To her sweet sense, sweet sleep, some ease impart,
Her sense too weak to bear her spirit's might.

And while, O sleep, thou closest up her sight,
Her light where love did forge his fairest dart,
O harbour all her parts in easeful plight,
Let no strange dream make her fair body start.

But yet, O dream, if though wilt not depart,
In this rare subject from thy common right,
But wilt thyself in such a seat delight,
Then take my shape and play and lover's part:
Kiss her from me, and say unto her sprite,
Till her eyes shine, I live in darkest night.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)

[31] While she lies sleeping

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping,

Now softly lies sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at even her sets?
Rest you then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping,
Now softly lies sleeping.

Anon., 16th century

[32] Corydon, arise

Corydon, arise, my Corydon.
Titian shineth clear.
Who is it that calleth Corydon,
Who is it that I hear?
Phyllida, thy true love calleth thee,
Arise then and keep thy flock with me.
Phyllida, my true love, is it she?
I come then and keep my flock with thee.

Here are cherries ripe for my Corydon,
Eat them for my sake.
Here's my oaten pipe, my lovely one,
Sport for thee to make.
Here are threads, my true love, fine as silk,
To knit thee a pair of stockings white as milk.
Here are reeds, my true love, fine and neat,
To make thee a bonnet to withstand the heat.

I will gather flowers, my Corydon,
I will gather flowers to set in thy cap.
I will gather pears, my lovely one,
I will gather pears to put in thy lap.
I will buy thy true love garters gay,
For Sundays, to wear about his legs so tall.
I will buy my true love yellow say,
For Sundays, to wear about her middle small.

Yonder comes my mother, Corydon,
Whither shall I fly?
Under yonder beech, my lovely one,
While she passes by.
Say to her thy true love was not here:
Remember, tomorrow is another day.
Doubt me not, my true love, do not fear:
Farewell then, Heaven keep our loves always.

Anon., 16th century

[33] To meadows

Ye have been fresh and green,
Ye have been filled with flowers:
And ye the walks have been
Where maids have spent their hours.

Ye have beheld how they
With wicker arks did come
To kiss and bear away,
The richer cowslips home.

You've heard them sweetly sing,
And seen them in a round,
Each virgin, like a spring,
With honeysuckles crowned.

But now we see none here
Whose silvery feet did tread,
And with dishevelled hair
Adorned this smoother mead.

Like unthrifts, having spent
Your stock, and needy grown,
You're left here to lament
Your poor estates alone.

Robert Herrick