

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11039-6 - Poetical Works: Giles and Phineas Fletcher, Volume I

Edited by Frederick S. Boas

Excerpt

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## A CANTO UPON THE DEATH OF ELIZA.

The earely Houres were readie to unlocke  
 The doore of Morne, to let abroad the Day,  
 When sad *Ocyroe* sitting on a rocke,  
 Hemmd in with teares, not glassing as they say  
 Shee woont, her damaske beuties (when to play  
 Shee bent her looser fancie) in the streame,  
 That sudding on the rocke, would closely seeme  
 To imitate her whitenesse with his frothy creame.

But hanging from the stone her carefull head,  
 That shewed (for griefe had made it so to shew)  
 A stone it selfe, thus onely differed,  
 That those without, these streames within did flow,  
 Both ever ranne, yet never lesse did grow,  
 And tearing from her head her amber haire,  
 Whose like or none, or onely Phæbus weares,  
 Shee strowd thē on the flood to waite upō her teares.

About her many Nymphes sate weeping by,  
 That when shee sang were woont to daunce & leape.  
 And all the grasse that round about did lie,  
 Hung full of teares, as if that meant to weepe,  
 Whilest, th' undersliding streames did softly creepe,  
 And clung about the rocke with winding wreath,  
 To heare a *Canto* of Elizaes death: (her breath.  
 Which thus poore nymph shee sung, whilest sorrowe lent

Tell me ye blushing currols that bunch out,  
 To cloath with beuteous red your ragged sire,  
 So let the sea-greene mosse cūrle round about  
 With soft embrace (as creeping vines doe wyre  
 Their loved Elmes) your sides in rosie tyre,  
 So let the ruddie vermeyle of your cheeke  
 Make staind carnations fresher liveries seeke,  
 So let your branched armes grow crooked, smooth, & sleeke.

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## GILES FLETCHER

So from your growth late be you rent away,  
 And hung with silver bells and whistles shrill,  
 Unto those children be you given to play  
 Where blest Eliza reign'd: so never ill  
 Betide your canes nor them with breaking spill,  
     Tell me if some uncivill hand should teare  
     Your branches hence, and place them elsewhere;  
 Could you still grow, & such fresh crimson ensignes beare?  
 Tell me sad Philomele that yonder sit'st  
 Piping thy songs unto the dauncing twig,  
 And to the waters fall thy musicke fit'st,  
 So let the friendly prickle never digge  
 Thy watchfull breast with wound or small or bigge,  
     Whereon thou lean'st, so let the hissing snake  
     Sliding with shrinking silence never take  
 Th'unwarie foote, whilst thou perhaps hangst halfe awake.  
 So let the loathed lapwing when her nest  
 Is stolne away, not as shee uses, flie,  
 Cousening the searcher of his promised feast,  
 But widdowd of all hope still *Itis* crie,  
 And nought but *Itis, Itis*, till shee die.  
     Say sweetest querister of the airie quire  
     Doth not thy *Tereu, Tereu* then expire,  
 When winter robs thy house of all her greene attire?  
 Tell me ye velvet headed violets  
 That fringe the crooked banke with gawdie blewe,  
 So let with comely grace your prettie frets  
 Be spread, so let a thousand *Zephyrs* sue  
 To kisse your willing heads, that seeme t'eschew  
     Their wanton touch with maiden modestie,  
     So let the silver dewe but lightly lie  
 Like little watrie worlds within your azure skie,  
 So when your blazing leaves are broadly spread  
 Let wandring nymphes gather you in their lapps,  
 And send you where Eliza lieth dead,  
 To strow the sheete that her pale bodie wraps,  
 Aie me in this I envie your good haps:  
     Who would not die, there to be buried?  
     Say if the sunne denie his beames to shedde  
 Upon your living stalkes, grow you not withered?

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## UPON THE DEATH OF ELIZA

Tell me thou wanton brooke, that slip'st away  
 T'avoid the straggling bankes still flowing cling,  
 So let thy waters cleanly tribute pay  
 Unmixt with mudde unto the sea your king,  
 So never let your streames leave murmuring  
 Untill they steale by many a secret furt  
 To kisse those walls that built Elizaes court, (durt?  
 Drie you not when your mother springs are choakt with

Yes you all say, and I say with you all,  
 Naught without cause of joy can joyous bide,  
 Then me unhappie nymph whome the dire fall  
 Of my joyes spring, But there aye me shee cried,  
 And spake no more, for sorrow speech denied.

And downe into her watrie lodge did goe;  
 The very waters when shee sunke did showe  
 With many wrinckled ohs they sympathiz'd her woe.

The sunne in mourning cloudes inveloped  
 Flew fast into the westearne world to tell  
 Newes of her death. Heaven it selfe sorrowed  
 With teares that to the earthes danke bosome fell;  
 But when the next Aurora gan to deale

Handfuls of roses fore the teame of day  
 A sheapheard drove his flocke by chance that way  
 & made the nymph to dance that mourned yesterday.

*G. Fletcher. Trinit.*

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CHRISTS  
VICTORIE, AND TRI-  
umph in Heaven, and Earth,  
*over, and after death.*

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*A te principium, tibi desinet, accipe jussis  
Carmina c[æ]pta tuis, atque hanc sine tempora circum  
Inter vitæ hederam tibi serpere lauros.*

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CAMBRIDGE

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## TO THE RIGHT

## WORSHIP[F]ULL, AND REVEREND

M<sup>r</sup>. DOCTOR NEVILE, Deane of CANTERBURIE,  
*and the Master of TRINITIE Colledge*  
 in CAMBRIDGE.

**R**ight worthie, and reverend Syr :

*As I have alwaies thought the place wherein I live, after heaven, principally to be desired, both because I most want, and it most abounds with wisdom, which is fled by some with as much delight, as it is obtained by others, and ought to be followed by all : so I cannot but next unto God, for ever acknowledge my selfe most bound unto the hand of God, (I meane your selfe) that reacht downe, as it were out of heaven, unto me, a benefit of that nature, and price, then which, I could wish none, (onely heaven itselfe excepted) either more fruitfull, and contenting for the time that is now present, or more comfortable, and encouraging for the time that is alreadie past, or more hopefull, and promising for the time that is yet to come.*

*For as in all mens judgements (that have any judgement) Europe is worthily deem'd the Queene of the world, that Garland both of Learning, and pure Religion beeing now become her crowne, and blossoming upon her head, that hath long since laine withered in Greece and Palestine ; so my opinion of this Island hath alwaies beene, that it is the very face, and beautie of all Europe, in which both true Religion is faithfully professed without superstition, and (if on earth) true Learning sweetly flourishes without ostentation : and what are the two eyes of this Land, but the two Universities ; which cannot but prosper in the time of such a Prince, that is a Prince of Learning, aswell as of People : and truly I should forget my selfe, if I should not call Cambridge*

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*the right eye: and I thinke (King Henrie the 8. beeing the uniter, Edward the 3. the Founder, and your selfe the Repairer of this Colledge, wherein I live) none will blame me, if I esteeme the same, since your polishing of it, the fairest sight in Cambridge: in which beeing placed by your onely favour, most freely, without either any meanes from other, or any desert in my selfe, beeing not able to doe more, I could doe no lesse, then acknowledge that debt, which I shall never be able to pay, and with old Silenus, in the Poet (upon whome the boyes—injiciunt ipsis ex vincula sertis, making his garland, his fetters) finding my selfe bound unto you by so many benefits, that were given by your selfe for ornaments, but are to me as so many golden cheines, to hold me fast in a kind of desired bondage, seeke (as he doth) my freedome with a song, the matter whereof is as worthie the sweetest Singer, as my selfe, the miserable Singer, unworthie so divine a subjeēt: but the same favour, that before rewarded no desert, knowes now as well how to pardon all faults, then which indulgence, when I regard my selfe, I can wish no more; when I remember you, I can hope no lesse.*

*So commending these few broken lines unto yours, and your selfe into the hands of the best Physitian, JESUS CHRIST, with whome, the most ill affected man, in the midst of his sicknes, is in good health, and without whome, the most lustie bodie, in his greatest jollitie, is but a languishing karcase, I humbly take my leave, ending with the same wish, that your devoted Observer, and my approved Friend doth, in his verses presently sequent, that your passage to heaven may be slow to us, that shall want you here, but to your selfe, that cannot want us there, most secure and certeyne.*

Your Worships, in all

dutie, and service

G. FLETCHER.

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THOMAS NEVYLE.  
MOST HEAVENLY.

AS when the Captaine of the heavenly host,  
Or else that glorious armie doth appeare  
In waters drown'd, with surging billowes tost,  
We know they are not, where we see they are ;  
We see them in the deepe, we see them moove,  
We know they fixed are in heaven above :  
So did the Sunne of righteousnesse come downe  
Clowded in flesh, and seem'd be in the deepe :  
So doe the many waters seeme to drowne  
The starres his Saints, and they on earth to keepe,  
And yet this Sunne from heaven never fell,  
And yet these earthly starres in heaven dwell.  
What if their soules be into prison cast  
In earthly bodies? yet they long for heaven :  
What if this wordly Sea they have not past?  
Yet faine they would be brought into their haven.  
They are not here, and yet we here them see,  
For every man is there, where he would be.  
Long may you wish, and yet long wish in vaine,  
Hence to depart, and yet that wish obtaine.  
Long may you here in heaven on earth remaine,  
And yet a heaven in heaven hereafter gaine.  
Go you to heaven, but yet O make no hast,  
Go slowly slowly, but yet go at last.

But when the Nightingale so neere doth sit,  
Silence the Titmouse better may befit.

*F. Nethersale.*

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[More information](#)*To the Reader.*

THEAR are but fewe of many that can rightly judge of Poetry, and yet thear ar many of those few, that carry so left-handed an opinion of it, as some of them thinke it halfe sacrilege for prophane Poetrie to deale with divine and heavenly matters, as though *David* wear to be sentenced by them, for uttering his grave matter upon the harpe: others something more violent in their censure, but sure lesse reasonable (as though Poetrie corrupted all good witts, when, indeed, bad witts corrupt Poetrie) banish it with *Plato* out of all well-ordered Commonwealths. Both theas I will strive rather to satisfie, then refute.

And of the first I would gladlie knowe, whither they suppose it fitter, that the sacred songs in the Scripture of those heroicall Saincts, *Moses, Deborah, Jeremie, Mary, Simeon, David, Salomon*, (the wisest Scholeman, and wittiest Poet) should bee ejected from the canon, for wante of gravitie, or rather this erreure eraced out of their mindes, for wante of truth. But, it maye bee, they will give the Spirit of God leave to breath through what pipe it please, & will confesse, because they must needs, that all the songs dittied by him, must needs bee, as their Fountaine is, most holy: but their common clamour is, who may compare with God? true; & yet as none may compare without presumption, so all may imitat, and not without commendation: which made *Nazianzen*, on[e] of the Starrs of the Greeke Church, that nowe shines as bright in heaven, as he did then on earth, write so manie divine Poems of the Genealogie, Miracles, Parables, Passion of Christ, called by him his *χριστός πάσχω*, which when *Basil*, the Prince of the Fathers, and his Chamberfellowe, had seene, his opinion of them was, that he could have devised nothing either more



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## TO THE READER

fruitfull to others : because it kindly woed them to Religion, or more honourable to himselfe, *οὐδέν γὰρ μακαριώτερόν ἐστι τοῦ τὴν ἀγγέλων χορείαν ἐν γῆ μιμῆσθαι*, because by imitating the singing Angels in heav'n, himselfe became, though before his time, an earthly Angel. What should I speake of *Juvenus*, *Prosper*, & the wise *Prudentius*? the last of which living in *Hieroms* time, twelve hundred yeares agoe, brought foorth in his declining age, so many, & so religious poems, straitly charging his soule, not to let passe so much as one either night or daye without some divine song, *Hymnis continuet dies, Nec nox ulla vacet, quin Dominum canat*. And as sedulous *Prudentius*, so prudent *Sedulius* was famous in this poetically divinity, the coetan of *Bernard*, who sung the historie of *Christ* with as much devotion in himself, as admiration to others; all which wear followed by the choicest witts of *Christendome*: *Nonnius* translating all Sainct *Johns* Gho[s]pel into Greek verse, *Sanazar*, the late-living Image, and happy imitator of *Virgil*, bestowing ten yeares upon a song, onely to celebrat that one day when *Christ* was borne unto us on earth, & we (a happie change) unto God in heav'n: thrice-honour'd *Bartas*, & our (I know no other name more glorious then his own) Mr. *Edmund Spencer* (two blessed Soules) not thinking ten years inough, layeing out their whole lives upon this one studie: Nay I may justly say, that the Princely Father of our Countrey (though in my conscience, God hath made him of all the learned Princes that ever wear the most religious, and of all the religious Princes, the most learned, that so, by the one, hee might oppose him against the Pope, the peste of all Religion, and by the other, against *Bellarmino* the abuser of all good Learning) is yet so far enamour'd with this celestially Muse, that it shall never repent mee—*calamo trivisse labellum*, whensoever I shall remember *Hæc eadem ut sciret quid non faciebat Amyntas?* To name no more in such plenty, whear I may finde how to beginne, sooner then to end, Saincte Paule, by the Exāple of *Christ*, that wente singing to mounte Olivet, with his Disciples, after his last supper, exciteth the Christians to solace themselves with hymnes, and Psalmes, and spirituall songs; and thearefore, by their leav's, be it an error for *Poets* to be Divines, I had rather err with the Scripture, then be rectifi'd by them: I had rather adore the steps of *Nazianzen*,

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*Prudentius, Sedulius*, then followe their steps, to bee misguided: I had rather be the devoute Admirer of *Nonnius, Bartas*, my sacred Sovereign, and others, the miracles of our latter age, then the false sectarie of these, that have nothing at all to follow, but their own naked opinions: To conclude, I had rather with my Lord, and his most divine Apostle sing (though I sing sorilie) the love of heaven and earthe, then praise God (as they doe) with the woorthie guift of silence, and sitting still, or think I dispraisd him with this poetical discourse. It seems they have either not read, or clean forgot, that it is the dutie of the Muses (if wee maye beeleeue *Pindare*, and *Hesiod*) to set allwaies under the throne of *Jupiter, ejus & laudes, & beneficia ὑμνειούσας*, which made a very worthy German writer conclude it *Certò statuimus, proprium atq̃ peculiare poetarum munus esse, Christi gloriam illustrare*, beeing good reason that the heavenly infusion of such Poetry, should ende in his glorie, that had beginning from his goodnes, *fit orator, nascitur Poeta*.

For the secound sorte thearfore, that eliminat Poets out of their citie gates; as though they wear nowe grown so bad, as they could neither growe woorse, nor better, though it be somewhat hard for those to bee the onely men should want cities, that wear the onely causers of the building of them, and somewhat inhumane to thrust them into the woods, to live among the beasts, who wear the first that call'd men out of the woods, from their beastly, and wilde life, yet since they will needes shoulder them out for the onely firebrands to inflame lust (the fault of earthly men, not heavenly Poetrie) I would gladly learne, what kind of professions theas men would bee intreated to entertaine, that so deride and disaffect Poesie: would they admit of Philosophers, that after they have burnt out the whole candle of their life in the circular studie of Sciences, crie out at length, *Se nihil prorsus scire?* or should Musicians be welcome to them, that *Dant sine mente sonum*—bring delight with them indeede, could they aswell expresse with their instruments a voice, as they can a sound? or would they most approve of Soldiers that defend the life of their countrymen either by the death of themselves, or their enemies? If Philosophers please them, who is it, that knowes not, that all the lights of Example, to cleare their precepts, are borrowd