

Sonnets to the Fairest Coelia (1594)

William Percy.

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SONNETS TO THE FAIREST COELIA.

*Parue, nec inuidio, sine me liber ibis as illam,
Hei mihi quod domino non licet ire tuo. -- Trist. I.*

L O N D O N,

*Printed by Adam Isli,
for W. P.*

1594.

TO THE READER.



Ourteous Reader, whereas I was fullie determined to haue concealed my Sonnets, as thinges priuie to my selfe, yet of courtesie hauing lent them to some, they were secretelie committed to the Presse, and almost finished, before it came to my knowledge. Wherefore making, as they say, Vertue of necessitie, I did deeme it most conuenient to proepose mine Epistle, onely to beseech you to account of them as toyes and amorous deuises, and ere long, I will impart vnto the world another Poeme which shall be both more fruitfull and ponderous. In the meane while I commit these as a pledge vnto your indifferent censures. London,

1594.

W. PERCY.

COELIA.

SONNET I.

Iudg'd by my goddesse doome to endlesse paine,
 Lo here I ope my sorrowes passion,
 That eu'rie sillie eye may view most plaine,
 A sentence giuen on no occasion.

If that by chaunce they fall most fortunate,
 Within those cruell hands that did enact it,
 Say but, alas he was too passionate,
 My doome is past, nor can be now vnactit.

So mayst thou see I was a spotlesse louer,
 And grieue withall that ere thou dealt so sore:
 Vnto remorse who goes about to moue her,
 Pursues the winged winds, and tils the shore.

Louelie is her semblance, hard is her heart,
 Wauering is her mind, sure is her dart.

SONNET II.

Oh happie houre, and yet vnhappie houre,
 When first by chaunce I had my goddesse viewved,
 Then first I tasted of the sweetest soure,
 Wherevwith the cup of *Cypria* is embrevved.

For gazing firme without suspition,
 Loue coopt behind the charet of her eye,
 Iustly to schoole my bold presumption,
 Against my hart did let an arrow flie:

Faire sir, quoth he, to practise haue you nought
 But to be gazing on deuinitie?
 Before you part, your leare you shall be tought:
 With that at once he made his arrowes hie.

Imperious God, I did it not to loue her,
 Ah, stay thy hand, I did it but to proue her.

SONNET III.

Proue her? Ah no, I did it but to loue her;
 Then shoote amaine, drad liege, I stand [vnarmed],
 Altho no hope that any thing may moue her,
 Some case it is to be by beautie charmed.

Then quicke, my liege, then quicke, & end thy game,
 That all the world may see hovv thou hast plagu'd vs,
 Then cruell she shall vievv vnto her blame,
 That all men be not fickle as they've term'd vs:

May be, my vvords, may vvinne contrition;
 If not my vvords, my sobs; if not my sobs,
 My teares may moue her to compassion;
 If teares do faile, my teares, my vvords, my throbs,
 Ay me, ah no, teares, vvords, throbs all in vaine,
 She scornes my dole, and smileth at my paine.

SONNET IIII.

Oh, heauenlie Coelia, as faire as vertuous,
 The only mirroure of true chastitie,

Haue I been gainst they godhead impious,
That thus am guerdond for my fealtie?

Haue I not shed upon thine yu'rie shrine,
Huge drops of teares vvith large eruptions?
Haue I not offred, euening and at prime,
My sighs, my Psalmes of inuocations?

What be mens sighs, but calcs of guilefulnesse?
They shevv, deare loue, true proofs of fermitie.
What be your teares but meere vngratiousnesse?
Teares only plead for our simplicitie.

When all strike mute, she saies it is my dutie,
And claimes as much as to her deitie.

SONNET V.

Faire Queene of *Gnidos* come adorn my forehead,
And crowne me with the lavvrell emperor,
I'o thrise sing *I'o* about thy Poet,
Loe on my goddessse I am conqueror.

For once by chaunce, not sure, or vvittingly,
Upon my foot, her tender foot alighted,
With that she pluckt it off full vvimbely,
As though the very touch had her affrighted.

Deare mistresse, vvill you deal so cruelly,
To priue me of so small a benefit?
What? Do you iert it off so nimbely,
As though in verie sooth a snake had bit it?

Yea bit perhaps indeed: Ho, Muses blab you?
Not a vvord, Picanneys, or I will gag you.

SONNET VI.

Good God how sencelesse be vve paramours,
So proudly on a nothing for to vaunt it?
We cannot reape the meanest of all faouours,
But by and by vve thinke our sute is grauntit.

Had ye obseru'd tvvo planets which then mounted.
Two certaine signes of indignation,
Ye would haue deemed rather both consented,
To turne all hopes to desperation.

Then can you vvauer so inconstantly,

To shew first loue, and then disdainfulnesse?
 First for to bring a dramme of courtesse,
 Then mix it vvith an ounce of scornfulnesse?
 No, no, the doubt is answer'd, certainlie
 She trod by chaunce, she trod not vvittingly.

SONNET VII.

If it be sin, so dearely for to loue thee,
 Come bind my hands, I am thy prisoner,
 Yet if a sparke of pitie may but moue thee,
 First sit vpon the cause commissioner.

The same vvell heard may wrest incontinent
 Two floods from foorth those rocks of adamant
 Which streaming dovvne with force impatient,
 May melt the brest of my fierce *Rhadamant*.

Dearest cruell the cause I see dislikes thee,
 On vs thy browes thou bends so direfully;
 Enioine me pennaunce whatsoeuer likes thee,
 What e're it be Ile take it thankfully.

Yet since for loue it is I am thy bondman,
 Good *Coelia* vse me like a Gentleman.

SONNET VIII.

Strike vp, my Lute, and ease my heauie cares,
 The onely solace to my passions,
 Impart vnto the aires thy pleasing aires,
 More sweet than heauenly consolations.

Rehearse the songs of forlorne amor'us
 Driv'ne to despaire by dames tyranicall,
 Of *Alpheus* losse, of vvoes of *Troilus*,
 Of *Rowlands* rage, of *Iphis* funeral.

Ay me, vvhat vvarbles yeelds mine instrument?
 The bases shrieke, as though they vvere amis,
 The meanes, no meanes, too sad the meriment,
 No, no, the musicke good, but thus it is,
 I loath both Meanes, meriment, Diapasons,
 So she and I may be but Vnisons.

SONNET IX.

Whilst others vveene sole hopes to be a sauue,
 Sole hopes I find to be my corsiuues:
 Whilst others found in hopes an harbour haue,
 From hopes I feele a sea of sorrowes rise:
 For vvhen mild hopes should ease my raging fires,
 They fester more, in that they are but hopes:
 Then vvilst I touch the port of my desires,
 A storme of hate doth burne mine anchor ropes.
 Were I but once resoued certainly,
 Soon should I knovv which point my helme to stere,
 But she denies my sute most womanly,
 As hidden documents for vs to heare.
 Loe this the cause my hell forsakes me neuer.
 Tell me, (deare sweet) thus shal I liue for euer?

SONNET X.

A MYSTERIE.

To vvinne the Fort hovv oft haue I assay'd,
 Wherein the heart of my faire mistresse lies?
 What Rammes, what mines, what plots haue I not layd?
 Yet still am frighted from mine enterprise.
 First from the leads of that proud citadell,
 Do soulder forth tvvo fierie culuerines,
 Vnder tvvo red coates keepe the Larum bell,
 For feare of close or open venturings.
 Before the gates Scorne, Feare, and Modestie,
 Do tosse amaine their pikes, but boue them all
 Pudic'itie vveilds her staffe most manfullie,
 Garded with blocks that keepe me from the wall,
 Yet if this staffe will ford me cleare the way,
 In spite of all, I'le bear my Dame avvay.

SONNET XI.

TO POLYXENA.

Of all the vvomen which of yore haue beene,
Alcest for vertue may be glorify'd,
 For courage *Teuce'*, for features *Spartaes* queene,
 For all in one *Polyxen'* deify'd.

If true it be, by old Philosophie,
 These soules to haue since destin entered,
 To other bodies of like simpathie,
 Thou art the last of these Metems'chosed.

Thy courage vvoonderous, thy vertues peerelesse,
 Thy features haue the fairest Ladies blamed,
 Then, if thou scorn'st not such a Monarchesse,
 Henceforth by reason good, thou shalt be named,
 Nor *Teuce'*, nor *Alcest*, nor faire *Helena*,
 Thou shalt be nam'd my deare *Polyxena*.

SONNET XII.

Coelia, of all sweet courtesies resolute me,
 For vvished grace hovv must I now be doing,
 Since *Ops*, the complet'st frame which did absolute thee,
 Hath made each parcell to my sole vndoing?

Those vvires, vvich should thy corps to mine vnite,
 Be raies to daze vs from so neere approach,
 Thine eyne, which should my nighted soule reproach.

Those ruddie plumes embrevv'd vvith heauenly foods,
 When I would sucke them turne to driest currall,
 And when I couch betweene her lillie buds,
 They surge like frothie water mounts about all:
 Surelie, they were all made vnto good vuses,
 But she them all vntowardly abuses.

SONNET XIII.

With greuous thoughts & weighty cares opprest,
 One day I vvent to *Venus* Fanacle,
 Of *Cyprian* dreames, which did me sore molest,
 To be resolv'd by certaine oracle.

No sooner was I past the temples gate,
 But from the shrine, where *Venus* went to stand,

I savv a Ladie faire and delicate,
 Did beckon to me with her yu'rie hand.

Weening she was the goddesse of the Fane,
 With cheerefull lookes I towards bent my pace,
 Soone when I came, I found vnto my bane,
 A Gorgon shadovv'd vnder *Venus* face,
 Whereat afright, vvhen backe I would be gone,
 I stood transformed to a speechlesse stone.

SONNET XIV.

When once I saw that no intreats would moue her,
 All means I sought to be deliuered,
 Against white *Cupid*, and his golden mother,
 In hie contempt base words I vttered;

When both, from clouds of her bright firmament,
 With heauie griefes and strong disdain sumounted,
 Vpon my thoughts and me did shoot reueng'ment,
 Whilst in our highest prides we were amounted.

Nor be they pleas'd to give vs all these wounds,
 To make me languish as a dying liuer:
 But from her orbes they fling their fiarbronds,
 Therby to quite consume both hart and lyuer:
 Pardon, drad povv'rs! pardon my rash offence,
 By heauens bright vaile, t'was gainst my conscience.

SONNET XV.

What is the faire to whom so long I plead?	<i>Lead,</i>
What is her face so Angell-like?	<i>Angellike.</i>
Then vnto saints in mind sh' is not vnlike.	<i>Vnlike.</i>
What may be hop'd of one so euill nat'red?	<i>Hatred.</i>
O then my vvoes hovv shall I ope best?	<i>Hope-best.</i>
Then she is flexible.	<i>She is flexible</i>
Fie no, it is impossible--	<i>Possible.</i>
About her straight then only our best--	<i>You're best.</i>
How must I first her loues to me approue?	<i>Proue.</i>
Hovv if she say, I may not kiss hir?	<i>Kisse hir.</i>
For all hir bobs I must then beare, or mis hir?	<i>Yes sir.</i>
Then will she yeeld at length to Loue?	<i>To loue.</i>

Eu'n so? *Eu'n so.* By *Narcisse* is it true? *True.*
 Of thine honestie? *I.* Adieu. *Adieu.*

SONNET XVI.

What may be thought of thine vntowardnesse,
 That mouest still at euerie motion?
 What may be hop'd of so strange vncouthnesse
 That scorns all vovves, scornes all deuotion?
 If I but sue, thou wouldst releue myne anguish,
 Two threatning arcks thou bendest rig'rously:
 Then if I swear thy loue doth make me languish,
 Thou turnst away, and smilest scornfully:
 Then if I vvish thou would'st not tyrannise,
 Of Tyrannie thou makest but a mock'ry,
 And if I vveepe, my teares thou doost despise,
 And if I stir, thou threatnest battery:
 Froune on, smile on, mocke me, despise me, threat mee,
 All shall not make me leaue for to intreat thee.

SONNET XVII.

Relent, my deere, yet vnkind *Coelia*,
 At length relent, and giue my sorrovves end,
 So shall I keepe my long wisht holyday,
 And set a trophey on a forward frend,
 Nor tributes, nor imposts, nor other duties,
 Demand I will as lavvfull conqueror;
 Duties, tributes, imposts unto thy beauties,
 My selfe will pay, as yeelded seruator.
 Then quicke relent, thy selfe surrender vs:
 Braue sir and why, quoth she, must I relent?
 Relent, cry'd I, thy selfe doth conquer vs,
 When eftsoons with my propper instrument,
 She cut me off, ay me, and answered,
 You cannot conquer and be conquered.

SONNET XVIII.

I cannot conquer and be conquered:
 Then vvhole my selfe I yeeld vnto thy favor,
 Behold my thoughts flote in an ocean battered,
 To be cast off, or vvafted to thine harbor.

If of the same thou vvilt then take acceptance,
 Stretch out thy fairest hand as flag of peace,
 If not, no longer keepe vs in attendance,
 But all at once thy firie shafts release.

If thus I die, an honest cause of loue,
 Will of my fates the rigor mittigate,
 Those gracious eyene, which vvill a *Tarter* moue,
 Will proue my case the lesse vnfortunate,
 Altho my friends may rue my chaunce for ay,
 It will be said, he dy'de for *Coelia*.

SONNET XIX.

It shall be sayd I dy'de for *Coelia*;
 Then quicke thou grieslie man of *Erebus*,
 Transport me hence vnto *Proserpina*,
 To be adjudg'd as wilfull amor'us:

To be hong vp within the liquid aire,
 For all the sighs vvhich I in vaine haue vvafted,
 To be through *Lethes* waters censed faire,
 For those darke clouds vvhich haue my lookes 'or'ecasted,

To be condemned to euerlasting fire,
 Because at *Cupids* fire I wilful brent me,
 And to be clad for deadly dumps in mire:
 Among so manie plagues vvhich shall torment me,
 One solace I shall find vvhen I am ouer,
 It will be knowne I dy'de a constant louer.

SONNET XX.

Receaeue these writs, my sweet and deerest frend,
 The liuelie patterns of my liuelesse bodie,
 VVhere thou shalt find in Hebon pictures pend,
 Hovv I was meeke, but thou extremelie blodie.

I'll walke forlorne along the vvillovv shades,
 Alone complaining of a ruthlesse dame;
 Where ere I passe, the rocks, the hilles, the glades,
 In pittious yelles shall sound her cruell name.

There I will vvaile the lot which fortune sent me,
 And make my mones vnto the sauage eares,
 The remnant of the daies which nature lent me,
 He spend them all, conceald, in ceaselesse teares.

Since vnkind fates permit me not t'ennoy her,
 No more, burst eyes, I meane for to annoy her.

FINIS.

To *Parthenophil* vpon his *Laya* and
Parthenophe.

MADRIGAL.

*When first I heard thy loues to Laya,
 I wisht the gods to turne it to good hap,
 Yet since I heare thy blessed flight away,
 I ioy thy chaunce for feare of afterclap.*

*Vnwily man, why could'st keepe thee there,
 But must with Parthenoph' thee 'gaine entrap?
 I little rue thy well deserued teates.*

*The beast once scap't will euer shun the trap.
 What tel'st thou me by spells th' hast wonne thy deare?*

*Beleeue her, friend, no more then Laya past,
 Charm'd loue endures but whilst the charme doth last.*



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