

Letters from Spenser to Gabriel Harvey

A Note on the [Renascence Editions](#) text:

This HTML etext is based upon *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Edmund Spenser* [Grosart, London, 1882] by R.S. Bear at the [University of Oregon](#). Grosart is here less reliable than in the verse; I have compared his text with a copy of the original in the collection of the Huntington Library, and made a number of corrections. The text is in the public domain. Markup is copyright © 1995 University of Oregon; this version is distributed for nonprofit use only.

*To the Worshipfull his very singular good friend, maister G. H., Fellow of
 Trinitie Hall in Cambridge.*



Ood Master G. I perceiue by your most curteous and friendly Letters your good will to be no lesse in deed, than I alwayes esteemed. In recompence whereof, think I beseech you, that I wil spare neither speech, nor wryting, nor aught else, whensoever, and wheresoever occasion shal be offred me: yea, I will not stay, till it be offred, but will seeke it, in al that possibly I may. And that you may perceiue how much your Counsel in al things preuaileth with me, and how altogether I am ruled and ouer-ruled thereby: I am now determined to alter mine owne former purpose, and to subscribe to your aduisement: being notwithstanding resolved stil, to abide your farther resolution. My principal doubts are these. First, I was minded for a while to haue intermitted the vttering of my writings: leaste by ouer-much cloying their noble eares, I should gather a contempt of myself, or else seeme rather for gaine and commoditie to doe it, for some sweetness that I haue already tasted. Then also meseemeth the work too base for his excellent Lordship, being made in Honour of a priuate Personage vnknowne, which of some yll-willers might be vpbraided, not to be so worthie, as you knowe she is: or the matter not so weightie, that it should be offred to so weighty a Personage: or the like. The selfe former Title stil liketh me well ynough, and your fine Addition no lesse. If these, and the like doubttes, maye be of importaunce in your seeming, to frustrate any parte of your aduice, I beseeche you without the leaste selfe loue of your own purpose, councill me for the beste:

and the rather doe it faithfully, and carefully, for that, in all things I attribute so much to your iudgement, that I am euermore content to annihilate mine owne determinations, in respecte thereof. And indeede for your selfe to, it sitteth with you now, to call your wits & senses together, (which are alwaies at call) when occasion is so fairely offered of Estimation and Preferment. For, whiles the yron is hote, it is good striking, and minds of Nobles varie, as their Estates. *Verùm ne quid durius.*

I pray you bethinke you well hereof, good Maister G. and forthwith write me those two or three special points and caueats for the nonce, *De quibus in superioribus illis mellitissimus longissimisque Litteris tuis.* Your desire to heare of my late beeing with hir Maiestie, muste dye in it selfe. As for the twoo worthy Gentlemen, Master *Sidney* and Master *Dyer*, they haue me, I thank them, in some vse of familiarity: of whom, and to whome, what speache passeth for your credite and estimation, I leaue your selfe to conceiue, hauing alwayes so well conceiued of my unfained affection, and zeale towards you. And nowe they haue proclaimed in their *areopagos* a generall surceasing and silence of balde Rymers, and also of the very beste to: in steade whereof, they haue, by authoritie of their whole Senate, prescribed certaine Lawes and rules of Quantities of English sillables for English Verse: hauing had thereof already great practice, and drawen mee to their faction. Newe Bookes I heare of none, but only of one, that writing a certaine Booke, called the *Schoole of Abuse*, and dedicating it to Maister *Sidney*, was for his labor scorned: if at leaste it be in the goodnesse of that nature to scorne. Suche follie is it, not to regarde aforehande the inclination and qualitie of him to whom wee dedicate oure Bookes. Suche mighte I happily incurre, entituling *My Slomber*, and the other Pamphlets vnto his honor. I meant them rather to Maister *Dyer*. But I am, of late, more in loue wyth my English Versifying than with Ryming: whyche I should haue done long since, if I would then haue followed your councell. *Sed te solum iam tum suspicabar cum Aschamo sapere: nunc Aulam video egregios alere Poëtas Anglicos.*

Maister *E. K.* hartily desireth to be commended vnto your Worshipp: of whome, what accompte he maketh, youre selfe shall hereafter perceiue, by hys paynefull and dutifull Verses of your selfe.

Thus much was written at Westminster yesternight: but comming this morning, beeing the sixteenth of October, to Mystresse *Kerkes*, to haue it deliuered to the Carrier, I receyued youre letter, sent me the laste weeke: whereby I perceiue you otherwhiles continue your old exercise of Versifying in English: whych glorie I had now thought shoulde haue bene onely ours heere at London and the Court.

Truste me, your Verses I like passingly well, and enuye your hidden paines in this kinde, or rather maligne, and grudge at your selfe, that woulde not once imparte so much to me. But once, or twice you make a breach in Maister *Drants* Rules: *quod tamen condonabimus tanto Poëtæ, tuæque ipsius maximæ in his rebus auctoritati.* You shall see when we meete in London (whiche, when it shall be, cerifye vs) howe fast I haue followed after you in that Course: beware, leaste in time I ouertake you. *Veruntamen te solùm sequar, (vt soepenumerò, sum professus,) nunquam sanè assequar dum viuam.*

And nowe requite I you with the like, not with the veye best, but with the veye shortest, namely, with a few *Iambickes*: I dare warrant, they be precisely perfect for the feete (as you can easily iudge), and varie not one inch from the Rule. I will imparte yours to

Maister *Sidney*, and Maister *Dyer*, at my nexte going to the Courte. I praye you, keepe mine close to your selfe, or your verie entire friendes, Maister *Preston*, Maister *Still*, and the reste.

Iambicum Trimeterum.

Vnhappie Verse, the witnessse of my vnhappie state,
 Make thy selfe fluttering wings of thy fast flying
 Thought, and fly forth vnto my Loue whersoever she be:
 Whether lying reastlesse in heauy bedde, or else
 Sitting so cheerelesse at the cheerfull boorde, or else
 Playing alone carelesse on hir heauenlie Virginals.
 If in Bed, tell hir, that my eyes can take no reste:
 If at Boorde, tell hir, that my mouth can eate no meate:
 If at hir Virginals, tell hir, I can heare no mirth.
 Asked why? say: Waking Loue suffereth no sleepe:
 Say, that raging Loue dothe appall the weake stomacke:
 Say, that lamenting Loue marreth the Musicall.
 Tell hir, that her pleasures were wonte to lull me asleepe:
 Tell hir, that hir beautie was wonte to feede mine eyes:
 Tell hir, that hir sweete Tongue was wonte to make me mirth.
 Nowe doe I nightly waste, wanting my kindely reste:
 Nowe doe I dayly starue, wanting my liuely foode:
 Nowe doe I alwayes dye, wanting thy timely mirth.
 And if I waste, who will bewaile my heauy chaunce?
 And if I starue, who will record my cursed end?
 And if I dye, who will saye: *this was, Immerito?*

I thought once agayne here to haue made an ende, with a heartie *Vale*, of the best fashion: but loe, an ylfauoured myschance. My last farewell, whereof I made great accompt, and muche maruelled you shoulde make no mention thereof, I am nowe tolde, (in the Diuels name) was thorough one mans negligence quite forgotten, but shoulde nowe vndoubtedly haue been sent, whether I hadde come, or no. Seeing it can now be no otherwise, I pray you take all together, wyth all their faultes: and nowe I hope, you will vouchsafe mee an answeare of the largest size, or else I tell you true, you shall bee verie deepe in my debte: notwythstanding, thys other sweete, but shorte letter, and fine, but fewe Verses. But I woulde rather I might yet see youre owne good selfe, and receiue a Reciprocall farewell from your owne sweete mouth.

Ad ornatissimum virum, multis iam diu

NOMINIBUS CLARISSIMUM G. H. IMMERITO

*sui, mox in Gallias nauigaturi,
entuchein.*

*Sic malus egregium, sic non inimicus Amicum:
Sicque novus veterem iubet ipse Poëta Poëtam,
Salvere, ac coelo mage, post secula multa secundo
Iam reducem, coelo mage, quàm nunc ipse, secundo
Vtier. Ecce Deus, (modò sit Deus ille, renixum
Qui vocet in scelus, & iuratos perdat amores)
Ecce Deus mihi clara dedit modò signa Marinus,
Et sua veligero lenis parat Æquora Ligno,
Mox sulcanda, suas etiam pater Æolus Iras
Ponit, & ingentes animos Aquilonis-----
Cuncta vijs sic apta meis: ego solus ineptus.
Nam mihi nescio quo mens saucia vulnere, dudum
Fluctuat ancipiti Pelago, dum Nauita proram
Inualidam validus rapit huc Amor, & rapit illuc.
Consilij Ratio melioribus vsa, decusque
Immortale leui diffessa Cupdinis Arcu.
Angimur hoc dubio, & portu vexamur in ipso.
Magne phretrati nunc tu contemptor Amoris,
(id tibi Dij nomen precor haud impune remittant)
Hos nodos exsolue, & eris mihi magnus Apollo.
Spiritus ad summos, scio, te generosus Honores
Exstimulat, maiusque docet spirare Pötam,
Quàm leuis est Amor, & tamen haud leuis est Amor omnis.
Ergo nihil laudi reputas æquale perenni,
Præque sacrosancta splendoris imagine tanti,
Cætera, quæ vecors, vti Numina, vulgus adorat,
Prædia, Amicitias, vrbana peculia, Nummos,
Quæque placent oculis, formas, spectacula, Amores,
Conculcare soles, vt hummum, & ludibria sensus.
Digna meo certè Harueio Sententia, digna
Oratore amplo, & generoso pectore, quam non
Stoica formidet veterum Sapiencia vinclis
Sancire æternis: sapor haud tamen omnibus idem
Dicitur effæti proles facunda Laëtæ,
Quamlibet ignoti iactata per æquora Coeli
Inque procelloso longùm exsul gurgite ponto,
Præ tamen amplexu lachrymosæ Coniugis, Ortus
Coelestes Diuûmque thoros spreuisse beatos.*

*Tantum Amor, & Mulier, vel Amore potentior. Illum
 Tu tamen illudis: tua Magnificentia tanta est:
 Præque subumbrata Splendoris Imagine tanti,
 Præque illo Meritis famosis nomine parto
 Cætera, quæ Vecors, vti Numina, vulgus adorat,
 Prædia, Amicitias, armenta, peculia, nummos.
 Quæque placent oculis, formas, spectaculata, Amores,
 Quæque placent ori, quæque auribus, omnia temnis.
 Næ tu grande sapis, Sapor at sapientia non est:
 Omnis & in paruis benè qui scit desipuisse,
 Sæpe supercilijs palmam sapientibus ausert.
 Ludit Aristippum modò tetrica Turba Sophorum,
 Mitia purpureo moderantem verba Tyranno
 Ludit Aristippus dictamina vana Sophorum,
 Quos leuis emensi male torquet Culicis umbra:
 Et quisquis placuisse Studet Heroibus altis,
 Desipuisse studet, sic gratia crescit ineptis.
 Denique Laurigeris quisquis sua tempora vittis,
 Insignire volet, Populoque placere fauenti,
 Desipere insanus discit, turpemque pudendæ
 Stultitiæ laudem quærit. Pater Ennius vnus
 Dictus in innumeris sapiens: laudatur at ipsa
 Carmina vesano sudisse liquentia vino.
 Nec tu pace tua, nostri Cato Maxime sæcli,
 Nomen honorati sacrum mereare Poëtæ,
 Quantamuis illustre canas, & nobile Carmen,
 Ni stultire velis, sic S[t]ultorum omnia plena.
 Tuta sed in medio superest via gurgite, nam Qui
 Nec reliquis nimiùm vult desipuisse videri,
 Nec sapuisse nimis, Sapientem dixeris vnum.
 Hinc te merserit vnda, illinc combusserit Ignis.
 Nec tu delicias nimis aspernare fluentes,
 Nec serò Dominam, venientem in vota, nec Aurum.
 Si sapis, ablatum, (Curijs ea, Fabricijsque
 Linque viris miseris miseranda Sophismata: quondam
 Grande sui decus ij, nostri sed dedecus æui:)
 Nec sectare nimis. Res utraque crimine plena.
 Hoc bene qui callet, (si quis tamen hoc bene callet)
 Scribe, vel inuito sapientem hunc Socrate solum.
 Vis facit vna pios: Iustos facit altera: & altra
 Egrediè cordata, ac fortia pectora: verùm
 Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.
 Dij mihi, dulce diu dederant: verum vtile nunquam:
 Vtile nunc etiam, ô vtinam quoque dulce dedissent.*

*Dij mihi (quippe Dijs æquivalia maxima paruis)
 Ni nimis inuideant mortalibus esse beatis,
 Dulce simul tribuisse queant, simul vtile: tanta
 Sed Fortvna tva est: pariter quæque vtile, qæque
 Dulce dat ad placitum: sæuo nos sydere nati
 Qæsitum imus eam per inhospita Caucasa longè,
 Perque Pyrenæos montes, Babilonaque turpem,
 Quæ si quæsitum nec ibi inuenerimus, ingens
 Æquor inexhaustis permensi erroribus, ultrâ
 Fluctibus in medijs socij quæremus Vlyssis.
 Passibus inde Deam fessis comitabimur ægram,
 Nobile qui furtum quærenti defuit orbis.
 Namque sinu pudet in patrio, tenebrisque pudendis
 Non nimis ingenio Iuuenem infoelice, virentes,
 Officijs frustra deperdere vilibus Annos,
 Frugibus & vacuas speratis cernere spicas.
 Ibimus ergo statim: (quis eunti fausta precetur?)
 Et pede Clibosas fesso calcabimus Alpes.
 Quis dabit interea conditas rore Britanno,
 Quis tibi Litterulas? quis carmen amore petulcum?
 Musa sub Oebalij desueta cacumine montis,
 Flebit inexhausto tam longa silentia planctu,
 Lugebitque sacrum lachrymis Heliconæ tacentem.
 Harueiusque bonus, (charus licet omnibus vnus,)
 Angelus & Gabriel, (quamuis comitatus amicis
 Innumeris, geniûmque choro stipatus amæno)
 Immerito tamen vnum absentem sæpe requiret,
 Optabitque, Vtinam meus hîc Edmundus adesset,
 Qui noua scripsisset, nec Amores conticuisset,
 Ipse suos, & sæpe animo, verbisque benignis
 Fausta precaretur, Deus illum aliquando reducat, &c.*

*Plura vellem par Charites sed non licet per Musas.
 Vale, Vale plurimû, Mi amabilissime Harueie, meo cordi, meorum
 omnium longè charissime.*

I was minded also to haue sent you some English verses: or Rymes, for a farewell: but by my Troth, I haue no spare time in the world, to think on such Toyes, that you know will demaund a freer head, than mine is presently. I beseeche you by all your Curtesies, and Graces, let me be answered, ere I goe: which will be, (I hope, I feare, I thinke) the next weeke, if I can be dispatched of my Lorde. I goe thither, as sent by him, and maintained most what of him: and there am to employ my time, my body, my minde, to his Honours seruice. Thus with many superhartie Commendations, and Recommendations to your selfe, and all my friendes with you, I ende my last Farewell, not thinking any more to write

vnto you, before I goe: and withall committing to your faithfull Credence the eternal Memorie of our euerlasting friendship, the inuiolable Memorie of our vnspotted friendshipp, the sacred Memorie of our vowed friendship: which I beseech you Continue with vsuall writings, as you may, and of all things let me heare some Newes from you. As gentle *M. Sidney*, I thank his good Worship, hath required of me, and so promised to do againe. *Qui monet, vt facias, quod iam facis*, you know the rest. You may alwayes send them most safely to me by *Mistresse Kerke*, and by none other. So once againe, and yet once more, Farewell most hartily, mine owne good *Master H.* and loue me, as I loue you, and thinke vpon poore *Immerito*, as he thinketh vpon you.

Leycester House. This 5. of October. [1]579.

*Per mare, per terras,
Viuus, mortuusque
Tuus Immerito.*

To my long approued and singular good frende, master *G. H.*



Ood Master H. I doubt not but you haue some great important matter in hande, which al this while restraineth youre Penne, and wonted readinesse in prouoking me vnto that, wherein your selfe nowe faulte. If there bee any such thing in hatching, I pray you hartily, lette vs knowe, before al the worlde see it. But if happily you dwell altogether in Iustinians Courte, and giue your selfe to be deuoured of secreate Studies, as of all likelyhood you doe: yet at least imparte some your olde, or newe Latine, or Englishe, Eloquent and Gallant Poesies to vs, from whose eyes, you saye, you keepe in a manner nothing hidden. Little newes is here stirred: but that olde greate matter still depending. His Honoure neuer better. I thinke the Earthquake was also there wyth you (which I would gladly learne) as it was here with vs: ouerthrowing diuers old buildings, and peeces of Churches. Sure verye straunge to be hearde of in these Countries, and yet I heare some saye (I knowe not howe truely) that they haue knowne the like before in their dayes. *Sed quid vobis videtur magnis Philosophis?* I like your late Englishe Hexameters so exceedingly well, that I also enure my Penne sometime in that kinde: whyche I fynd indeede, as I haue heard you often defende in worde, neither so harde, nor so harshe, that it will easily and fairely, yeelde it selfe to our Moother tongue. For the onely, or cheifest hardnesse, whych seemeth, is in the Accente: whyche sometime gapeth, and as it were yawneeth ilfauouredly, comming shorte of that it should, and sometime exceeding the measure of the Number, as in *Carpenter*, the middle sillable being vsed shorte in speache, when it shall be read long in Verse, seemeth like *a lame Gosling, that draweth one legge*

after hir: and *Heauen* being vsed shorte as one sillable, when it is in verse stretched out with a *Diastole*, is like a lame Dogge that holds vp one legge. But it is to be wonne with Custome, and rough words must be subdued with Vse. For, why a Gods name may not we, as else the Greekes, haue the kingdome of our owne Language, and measure our Accentes by the sounde, reseruing the Quantitie to the Verse? Loe here I let you see my olde vse of toying in Rymes, turned into your artificiall straightnesse of Verse, by this *Tetrasticon*. I beseech you tell me your fansie without parcialitie.

See yee the blindfoulded pretie God, that feathered Archer,
Of Louers Miseries which maketh his bloodie Game?
Wote ye why, his Moother with a Veale hath couered his Face?
Trust me, least he my Looue happely chaunce to beholde.

Seeme they comparable to those two, which I translated you *ex tempore* in bed, the last time we lay together in Westminster?

That which I eate, did I ioy, and that which I greedily gorged,
As for those many goodly matters leaft I for others.

I would hartily wish, you would either send me the Rules and Precepts of Arte, which you obserue in Quantities, or else followe mine, that *M. Philip Sidney* gaue me, being the very same which *M. Drant* deuised, but enlarged with *M. Sidneys* own iudgement, and augmented with my Obseruations, that we might both accorde and agree in one: leaste we ouerthrowe one an other, and be ouerthrown of the rest. Truste me, you will hardly beleue what great liking and estimation Maister *Dyer* had of your *Satyricall Verses*, and I, since the viewe thereof, hauing before of my selfe had speciall liking of *Englishe Versifying*, am euen nowe aboute to giue you some token, what and howe well therein I am able to doe: for, to tell you trueth, I minde shortely at conuenient leysure, to sette forth a Booke in this kinde, whiche I entitle, *Epithalamion Thamesis*, whyche Booke, I dare vndertake wil be very profitable for the knowledge, and rare for the Inuention and manner of handling. For in setting forth the marriage of the Thames: I shewe his first beginning, and offspring, and all the Countrey, that he passeth thorough, and also describe all the Riuers throughout Englande, whyche came to this Wedding, and their righte names, and right passage, &c. A worke, beleue me, of much labour, wherein Master Holinshed hath mucche furthered and aduantaged me, who therein hath bestowed singular paines, in searching oute their firste heades, and sources: and also in tracing and dogging oute all their Course, til they fall into the Sea.

*O Tite, siquid, ego,
Ecquid erit pretij?*

But of that more hereafter. Nowe, my *Dreames*, and *Dying Pellicane*, being fully finished (as I partelye signified in my laste Letters) and presentlye to bee imprinted, I wil in hande forthwith with my *Faery Queene*, whyche I praye you hartily send me with al expedition:

and your frendly Letters, and long expected Iudgement wythal, whyche let not be shorte, but in all pointes suche, as you ordinarilye vse, and I extrordinarily desire. *Multum vale. Westminster. Quarto Nonas Aprilis 1580. Sed, amabò te, meum Corculum tibi se ex animo commendat plurimùm: iamdiu mirata, te nihil ad literas suas responsi dedisse. Vide quæso, ne id tibi Capitale sit: Mihi certè quidem erit, neque tibi hercle impunè, vt opinor, Iterum vale, & quam voles sæpè.*

Yours alwayes to commaunde,
IMMERITO.

Postscripte.

I take best my *Dreames* shoulde come forth alone, being growen by meanes of the Glosse, (running continually in maner of a Paraphrase) full as great my *Calendar*. Therein be some things excellently, and many things wittily discoursed of E. K. and the pictures so singularly set forth, and purtrayed, as if *Michael Angelo* were there, he could (I think) nor amende the beste, nor reprehende the worst. I know you woulde lyke them passing wel. Of my *Stemmata Dudleiana*, and especially of the sundry Apostrophes therein, addressed you knowe to whome, must more aduisement be had, than so lightly to sende them abroade: howbeit, trust me (though I doe neuer very well,) yet in my owne fancie, I neuer dyd better. *Veruntamen to sequor solum: nunquam verò assequar.*