

**THE ORINDA
BOOKLETA VI.
SELECTED POETRY**

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The Orinda Bookleta VI. Selected Poetry by Phineas Fletcher

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PHINEAS FLETCHER

**THE ORINDA
BOOKLETA VI.
SELECTED POETRY**

The Orinda Booklets

VI

Phineas Fletcher

Selected Poetry



J. R. Tutin

Cottingham near Hull

1904

Limited to 500 Copies

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Prefatory Note

It is difficult to understand why certain poets of undoubted merit—and Phineas Fletcher is a robust and nervous writer whom it is good to know—should long remain neglected while others are frequently reprinted, and therefore, it is to be presumed, continuously read. It may be hoped that a goodly proportion of the readers of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, who have had their curiosity piqued by Mrs Craik's praise of Phineas Fletcher, will be glad of an opportunity to read some portion of his work.

Phineas Fletcher—son of one who has been described as “civilian, ambassador and poet”—was born in 1582, at the pastoral village of Cranbrook in Kent; he was educated at Eton and Cambridge, staying at the University, as student and Fellow, from 1600 until 1616. Then for five years he was chaplain at Risley in Derbyshire to Sir Henry Willoughby, and from 1621 until his death, towards the close of 1650, he was rector of Hilgay in Norfolk. Despite the troubled times in which his later years were cast, he appears to have passed a quiet life conducive to contemplation. That his poetical genius was recognised by his contemporaries is shown by some striking tributes. Much of his work, we learn—from the records, not from its quality—was written when the poet was very young, though his first volume was not published until he had reached middle life; and when his best remembered book was issued, he was over fifty years of age.

It is by *The Purple Island; or, the Isle of Man*, that this member of a distinguished family is best known; and from that work—which with much of beauty and

Prefatory Note

much of true power has also much that has come to be regarded as merely "curious"—some striking "Impersonations" will be found in the following pages. The poem is a remarkable medley of genuine poetry and seventeenth-century physiology, of moral attributes and physical form. For literary students there is pleasant matter for investigation in tracing Milton's indebtedness, when writing his great epic to another poem of Phineas Fletcher's, his *Locusta*. Fletcher's indebtedness to Spenser is of course obvious to the most casual reader of the two poets, but that the former may be considered in the nature of a link between *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* may come as a surprise to some readers. The *Purple Island* is Phineas Fletcher's most sustained piece of work, but there is also much that is excellent and memorable in the miscellaneous poems, and in the poetical play of *Sicelides*, which he wrote in 1614, against a visit of King James to Cambridge; there is true pathos and beauty, too, in the elegiac *Elisa*. In versification Phineas Fletcher is easy and melodious as becomes one who was hailed as "the Spenser of this age"; in his descriptions of nature and country life he is often especially felicitous for his time; his imagery is frequently impressive, while in the use of "conceits" he is no less happy than those other poets who later in the century made of "conceit" poetry a new power, and of his epigrammatic condensation many instances might be cited—all of which qualities are to be found by sympathetic readers duly exemplified in this small selection from his works.—W. J.

Phineas Fletcher

I. Poetry of Love

Love

I

LOVE is the sire, dam, nurse, and seed
Of all that earth, air, waters breed :
All these, earth, water, air, fire,
Though contraries, in love conspire.
Fond painters : Love is not a lad
With bow, and shafts, and feathers clad,
As he is fancied in the brain
Of some loose loving idle swain.
Much sooner is he felt than seen ;
His substance subtle, slight, and thin.
Oft leaps he from the glancing eyes ;
Oft in some smooth mount he lies ;
Soonest he wins, the fastest flies ;
Oft lurks he 'twixt the ruddy lips,
Thence, while the heart his nectar sips,
Down to the soul the poison slips ;
Oft in a voice creeps down the ear ;
Oft hides his darts in golden hair ;
Oft blushing cheeks do light his fires ;
Oft in a smooth soft skin retires ;
Often in smiles, often in tears,
His flaming heat in water bears ;
When nothing else kindles desire,
Even Virtue's self shall blow the fire.
Love with a thousand darts abounds,
Surest and deepest virtue wounds ;

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