

2ed Stage

Eighth Lecture

ROBERT HERRICK (1591-1674)

Clergyman and poet, Robert Herrick was born in London, the Nicholas seventh child of Herrick, a wealthy goldsmith. In November 1592, two days after making a will, his father killed himself by jumping from the of his house. However, the Queen's Almoner did not confiscate the Herrick estate for the crown as with fourth-floor window was usually the case suicides. There is no record of Herrick attending school. In 1607 he was apprenticed to his uncle Sir William Herrick as a goldsmith.

"A Country Life: To his Brother M. Tho. Herrick' (1610) is Herrick's earliest known poem, and deals with the move from London to farm life in Leicestershire. 'To My Dearest Sister M. Merice Herrick' was written before 1612. He entered St John's Co friends with Clipsby Crew to whom he addressed several poems such as Nuptial Song'. He graduated a Bachelor of Arts in 1617, Master of Arts in 1620, and in 1623 he was ordained priest. By 1925 he was well known as a poet, mixing in literary circles in

London such as that of Ben Jonson. In 1629 he was presented by Charles I to the living of Dean Prior, a remote parish of Devonshire. The best of his work was written in the peace and seclusion of country life; 'To Blossoms' and 'To Daffodils' are classical depictions of a devoted appreciation of nature.

However, having refused to subscribe to The Solemn League and Covenant, he was ejected from Devonshire in 1647. He then returned to London publishing his religious poems Noble Numbers and Hesperides (1648). He was (1647), distinguished as a lyric poet, and some of his love songs, for example, 'To Anthea' and 'Gather Ye

Rose-buds' are considered exceptional . In 1660 he was reinstated at Dean Prior where he lived for the remainder of his life. He wrote no more poems after 1648, and is buried in an unmarked grave in the churchyard at Dean Prior. Robert Herrick"s work is noted for its diversity of form and for its style, melody, and feeling. His Noble Numbers contains more than 1200 short poems, ranging in form from epistles, eclogues, themes are pastoral, dealing mostly with English country life and village customs. Herrick was influenced by classical Roman poetry. Many of his poems, such as "To the Virgins to Make Much of Time," "Corinna's Going a- Maying," and "Delight in anthologized, and several were set to music.

Robert Herrick is an outstanding lyrical poet of the seventeenth century.

1. He draws all his images from nature such as the sun, the moon, flowers and rivers...
2. He mostly deals with themes of the shortness of life and carpe diem following the example of Greek poets.
3. In his love poems he chooses imaginary women from history or from Greek poetry such Anthea, Corinthia and Dianem.
4. In his treatment the carpe diem theme he deals with it morally unlike other poets.

To Daffodils: Commentary

The speaker is the poet himself. He addresses the daffodils expressing his sadness because their life is very short. They are about to die before noon. The word "noon" is used metaphorically to mean youth.

Since ancient times the day is used metaphorically to mean human life: Morning stands for babyhood, noon stands for youth and evening stands for old age.

The poet pleads to the daffodils to stay till evening in order to be able to go with them, i. e. to die with them. This is suggested by the "even song" which means the evening prayer with its connotations of death. In the second stanza, the poet explains the metaphors of the first one. Human beings, he says, stay in this life for a short time like the daffodils. They also have a short spring (youth) like them and they grow up quickly from babyhood to youth, maturity, old age and death. They (people) die like the flowers and like any other creature. In the last three lines he compares human life to summer rain which is usually very short and to the Morning dew drops which fade away as soon as the sun rises.

Form and Language:

This poem is a light lyric written in two ten-line stanzas alternating between iambic tetrameter, iambic trimetre and monometre. The poem is written in simple language and all the images and metaphors are taken from nature: daffodils, the sun, noon, evening, spring, summer rain and morning dew.

Theme and Tone:

The theme of the poem is the shortness of human life. The tone of the speaker is neutral throughout the poem but it is pessimistic in the last line. It seems as if the poet does not believe in the afterlife. 85