

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A LOVER'S
COMPLAINT

Bird Publisher, 2012

About this eBook

A LOVER'S COMPLAINT

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare, 1609

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Table of Content

A lover's complaint	6
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From off a hill whose concave womb reworded
 A plaintful story from a sist'ring vale,
 My spirits t'attend this double voice accorded,
 And down I laid to list the sad-tuned tale,
 Ere long espied a fickle maid full pale,
 Tearing of papers, breaking rings atwain,
 Storming her world with sorrow's wind and rain.

Upon her head a platted hive of straw,
 Which fortified her visage from the sun,
 Whereon the thought might think sometime it saw
 The carcase of a beauty spent and done.
 Time had not scythed all that youth begun,
 Nor youth all quit, but spite of heaven's fell rage
 Some beauty peeped through lattice of seared age.

Oft did she heave her napkin to her eyne,
 Which on it had conceited characters,
 Laund'ring the silken figures in the brine
 That seasoned woe had pelleted in tears,
 And often reading what contents it bears;
 As often shrieking undistinguished woe,
 In clamours of all size, both high and low.

Sometimes her levelled eyes their carriage ride,
 As they did batt'ry to the spheres intend;
 Sometime diverted their poor balls are tied
 To th' orb'd earth; sometimes they do extend
 Their view right on; anon their gazes lend
 To every place at once, and nowhere fixed,
 The mind and sight distractedly commixed.

Her hair, nor loose nor tied in formal plat,
 Proclaimed in her a careless hand of pride;
 For some, untucked, descended her sheaved hat,
 Hanging her pale and pined cheek beside;
 Some in her threaden fillet still did bide,
 And, true to bondage, would not break from thence,
 Though slackly braided in loose negligence.

A thousand favours from a maund she drew
 Of amber, crystal, and of beaded jet,
 Which one by one she in a river threw,
 Upon whose weeping margent she was set;
 Like usury applying wet to wet,
 Or monarchs' hands that lets not bounty fall
 Where want cries some, but where excess begs all.

Of folded schedules had she many a one,
 Which she perused, sighed, tore, and gave the flood;
 Cracked many a ring of posied gold and bone,
 Bidding them find their sepulchres in mud;
 Found yet moe letters sadly penned in blood,
 With sleided silk feat and affectedly
 Enswathed and sealed to curious secrecy.

These often bathed she in her fluxive eyes,
 And often kissed, and often 'gan to tear;
 Cried, 'O false blood, thou register of lies,
 What unapproved witness dost thou bear!
 Ink would have seemed more black and damned here!
 This said, in top of rage the lines she rents,
 Big discontents so breaking their contents.