

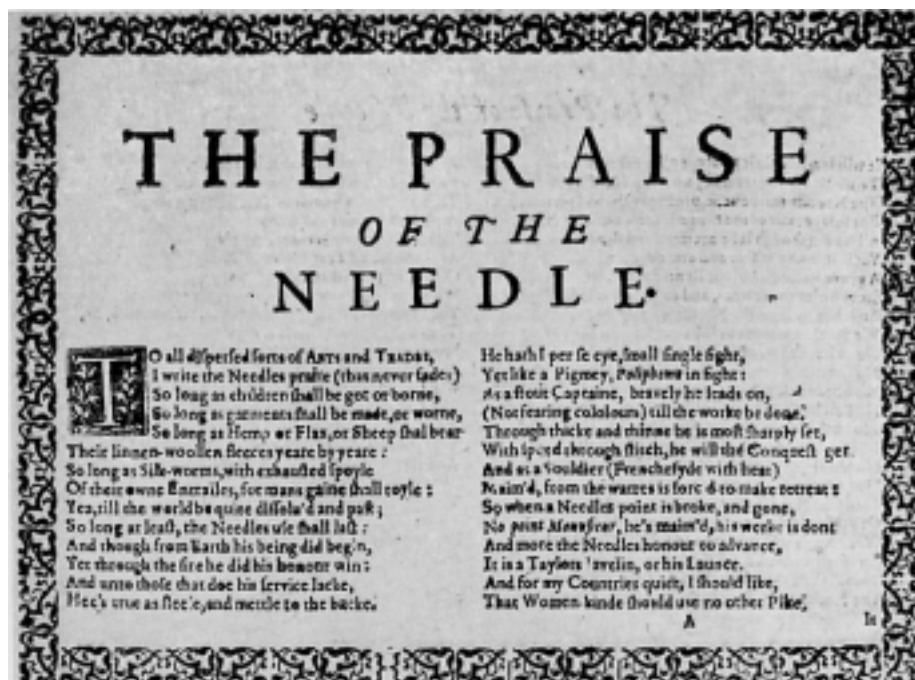
THE PRAISE OF THE NEEDLE

by
JOHN TAYLOR (1580-1653)

THIS famous old poem is here reprinted from a photostatic reproduction of the copy in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, of *The Needles Excellency*, 10th ed. (London). Printed for James Boler, 1634.

The author, John Taylor, was known as "The Water Poet" (1580-1653) because he was actually a Thames waterman, as well as a very prolific writer.

Although his collected works were published in 1630, this was not among them; so that it may have first appeared in the volume from which it is here reproduced.



The Praye of the Needle.

It will increase their steele, enlarge their floor,
To wile their tonges selfe, and their Needles more.
The Needles that penne, profit yelds, and pleasure,
But sharpe edge of the tongue, hires out of meane:
A Needle through it be but small and slender)
Yea; it both a master and a mentor;
A grave Retemer of old Remu decayd,
Stops holes and leamer, and desperate cuts displayd.
And thus without the Needle we may see,
We shalld without our Blis and Biggins bee;
No hirr or Smocke, our nakednec to hide,
No Garmens gay, to make us magnifie;
No Shadowe, Napparoomes, Caules, Bands, Ruffe, Kuffe,
No Knichie, Quayles, Chin-cles, or Marry-Mulles,
No Crav-clasps, Apron, Jland-kirchesfow Falh,
No Tauc-clasps, for Pacifiers or for Hall.
No Sheer, no Towels, Napkins, Pillow-besset,
Nor any Garment man or woman weare.
This is a Needle poyson instrument
Of poyson, pleasure, and of ornament.
Wreath-agh y Queensnes have gaud in hand to take,
An high borne Ladies lach esteeme did make,
That arther Daughters Daughters up did grow,
The Needles Art, they to their children show.

And as 'twas then an exerice of praise,
So what deserved more honour in thic dayes,
Then this which daily dath in selfe expesse,
A mortal enemy to idlenesse.
The use of Sewing is exceeding old,
As in the sacred Text it is entold:
Our Patents first in Paradise began,
Which hath descended since from man to man:
The Mothers taught their Daughters, Sires their Sons,
Thus in a line successifly it runs
For generall poyson, and for refection,
From generation unto generation.
With work like Cherubins Embroidered rare,
The Covers of the Tabernacle were,
And by th' Almightyes great command, we see,
That st Garmens besydeyd work should be;
And further, God did bid his Vellments should
Be made most gay, and gloriou to behold.
Thus plainly, and most truly is declar'd
The Needles work hath full bin in regard,
For in both A R. T, so like to N A T V R E frame,
As if IT were H E R Soller, or the S A M E.

¹ Gen. 3.7. ² Embroidery art. See 26.1. ch. 23.2.3.4.5.6. Flowers

The Praye of the Needle.

Flowers, Plants, and Fibres, Birds, Beasts, Birds, Flyes, and Bees,
Hill, Dales, Plains, Pastures, Skies, Seas, Rivers, Trees;
There's nothing neare at hand, or farrthefougle,
But with the Needle may be shap'd and wovewght,
In clothes of Arras I have often seene,
Men's ligard esuertion to bee have beeene,
That if the partie selfe had beene in place,
Yet A R. T would ryte with NAT V R E for the grace.
Moreover, Poetic rare, and Anagram,
Signique searching sentences from Names,
True History, or various pleasant fiction
In laundry colours maint, with Arts comission,
All in Dimension: Oval, Squares, and Roundr,
Arts life included within Natures bounds;
So that Art seemeth mostly naturall,
Informing shapes so Geometricall.
And though our Country every where is fill
With Ladies, and with Gentlewomen, skilful
In this rare Art, yet here they way differne
Some things to teach them, if they list to learn,
And as this booke feme cunning works doth teach,
(Too hard for meane capacities to reach)
So fee weake learners, other works here be,
As plaine and easie as are A B C.

Than skifull, or unskifull, each may take
This booke, and of it, each good use may make,
All sorts of workes, alway, that can be man'd,
Here are directions how they may be fram'd &c
And for this Kingdome god is hither come,
From the remotest parts of Christendome
Collected with much paines and industry,
From scorched Spain, and freezing Majestie,
From fertill France, and pleasant Italy,
From Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany,
And some of their rare Patterns have beeene fet
Beyondthe bounds of fairliele Mahomet:
From spacious China, and those Kingdome East,
And from great Mexico, the Indies West,
Thus are these workes, faire feult, and dainty bight,
And consequently, good for Ladiesthongue,
Nor doe I derigate (in any case)
Or due esteem of other reachinges bair,
For Text, wark, Embroidery, and wark, Poysonage, Wc.
Most curios Past, or rare Indian C. wark, (nowise)
Fine farr, farr, Fenny farr, New farr, and Chinc-sun,
Base Bird-farr, Fisher farr, In-farr, and Gurn-farr,
The Spanish-farr, Angomy-farr, and Stom-farr,
The Imant, PPhip-farr, Back-farr, and the Cropp-farr.

The Praye of the Neeidle.

All theſe are good; and theſe we muſt allow,
And theſe are every where to praſe now;
And in this Booke, theſe are of theſe lone floures,
With many oþers, never ſeen before.
Here Praſe and Invention may be free,
And as a ſpirituall ſkippe from tree to tree,
So Maids may (from their Maides, or their Mother)
Learn to leave one wocke, and to leaue another.
Or here they may make choi ce of what is which,
And ſkip from wocke to wocke, from floure to floure,
Whilis, in time, a diligent ill practice shall
(With profit) make them perfect in them all,
Thus hoping that theſe wockes may have this guide
To ſerve for ornament, and not for pride:
Tollerab yvonne, banis idlenesse,
For theſe ends, may theſe booke have good ſuccesse.

Here follow certayne Sonnets in the Honorable
memory of Queenes and great Ladys, who
have bin famous for their rare Invention,
and praſe with the Needles.

King David by an apte Couerſe
Dorthew, with Maudy, the Charkher wort;

And to a Kings faire daugher, doth allude,
Vvhile to her ſpaſie, be bravely being her fonds
In Garments wrought of Merle, myrry and Gold,
Replendent and maſt glorious to the eye;
Whiche our ſire muſt more glory did attide,
The preſence of an eternall Majestie.
Thus may you ſee Records of holy Yvid
Set downe (what Deaſe or Time can neuer defaue.)
By theſe compenſate, exasperatit Et,
The noble worth of Needle-worke high grace.
Then leaue faire Dauidis, leaue your names to ſpend
In this, which ſuch high grafting doth command.

Katharine firſt married to Arthur, Prince of
Wales, and afterward to Henry the 8.
King of England.

I Read that in the frenche Kyn, Henrie Raige,
Faire Katharine, daughter to the calfe King,
Came into Engeland with a pompeau, or ſacie
Of ſpaniſh Laces, which the theſe did bring.
Shee to the eight King Henry married was,
And afterwards diueld, were veruently

(Although

The Praye of the Neeidle.

(Although a Queene) yet the her dayes did paſſe,
In working with the Needles curiously,
At to the Tower, and places more beſide,
Her excellent memorials may be ſene:
Wherby the Needles praye indigſide
By her faire Ladys, and her ſelfe, a Queene,
Thus for her paines, hage her reward in ful,
Her wockes proclaim her praye, though ſcē be dulf.

Mary, Queene of England, and wife to Philip,
King of Spaine.

Her Daughter Mary here the Scoper ſeaid,
And though the were a Queene of mighty power,
Her memory will never be dead,
Which by her wockes are likewife in the Tower.
In Fynday Caille, and in Hampay Court,
In that moſt pompoſe roome call'd Paradiſe:
Who-ever pleaſeth ditherto to retor,
May fee lone wockes of heys, of woodroſe price,
Her greāneſſe held it no diſputation,
Twake the Needles in her Royall hand:

Which was a good example to our Nation,
To be with alwaies from other Land
And that this Queene, in wilcomme thought it ſe,
The Needles warke pleaſ'd her, and the grād dir,

Elizabeth Queene of England, and Daughter
to King Henrie the eight.

When this great Queene, whose memory shall neuer
By any teme of time be overcaſt;
For when the world, and all therein ſhall ſet,
Yet faulher glorie fane ſo ever left.
When fift a Man, had many troubles paſſed,
From layle to layle, by Maries angry ſpleen,
And P' ſedlocke, and the Tower in prison ſat,
And after all, was Englands Peccatice Queene
Yet howleuer ſetow came or went,
She made the Needles her companion full;
And in this exercice her ſime the ſpirit,
As man living yet, doe know her ſkill.
Thus was thefull a Captive, or elc Crownd,
A Needle-worke Royall, and renowned.

The

The Praye of the Neeidle.

To the Right Honourable, Vertuous, and learned
Lady, Mary, late Countesse of
Pembroke.

A Parsonne, and a Parsonesse she was,
Of vertuous industry, and studious learning :
And shes her earthly glorie did passe
In Aida, which were high honour most concerning.
Brave P'Nellie booke in shillfere well can shew,
Her admirale workes in Armes fram'd:
Where men, and beautes, seeme like, evet seeme to grow,
And Art (purpul'd by Nature) itemathaw'd,
Thus thikkened Honorable Dame,
Her happy time most happily did spend ;
Whiles worth recorded in the mouth of tame,
(Vntil the world shall end) shall never end.
She wrought so well in N-edle-worke, that ther,
Nor yet her warker, shall er forgotten be.

To the Right Honourable and religous Lady,
Elizabeth Dormer, Wife to the Right
Honorable, the Lord Robert
Dormer deceased.

This Noble Lady imiliess time past,
Dreadfull time preies, teacheth time to come,
And longers than her life, her land shall last,
Workers shew her worth, though all the world were
And though her Reverend felice, with many dayes. (dame),
Of honourable age is leaden deere,
Yet with her Neeidle (on her worthy prayle)
Shes working often, are the Same doth perpe,
And, many times, when P'Nellie in the VVest
Desirid is, and lame shewes her head:
This amant honourable Lady refls from Bell,
And workes when id flosch goes loose to bed.
Thus then the Neeidle makes her recreacion,
Whiles well spent paines are others iniurion,

To

The Praye of the Neeidle.

To all degrees of bachelors, that lerne or lury by
the landable imployment of
the Neeidle.

If any aske to whom these lines are writ,
I answer, unto them that doe inquire :
For since the worlds Creation none was yet,
Whiche wants did not the Neeidle helpe defire.
And therefore, nor to him, or her, se there,
Or them, or they, I doe not write at all :
Nor to particulars of he or they,
But generally, to all in generall.

Then let me pride looke fountayn a-skewe, "Without the Neeidle, pride would naked goe :
Nor yet let stornes cry pith, and tuffe, and new,
Scorne forgetfull much in doing so,
Nor yet let any one presume to prate,
And call these lines poore niffles, by me pente,
Let not opinion be pregaudie,
But mend it, are they due to discomendie,
So faire thou well, my well deserving booke,
(I meane, the workes defers, and not my line.)
I much preflue that all that on it looks,
Will like and laud the workemans good deuise,
Fooles play the Fooler, but 'tis through want of wit,
Whiles I to wisedomes content doe fulfile.

FINIS.

John Taylor.