

Document Transcript 4

Thomas Churchyard's Fairy Farewell Show for Queen Elizabeth

On the Friday, the Court upon remove [leaving], the City, troubled with many causes, and some seeking to do service like myself, moved me to do somewhat of myself, because my aids [helpers] (as many times they were before) were drawn from me, each one about his own business, and I left to my own inventions and policy [strategy]. At which exigent [necessity], or casual things of Fortune, I drew my boys unto me, that were the nymphs on the water, and so departed the City, with such garments and stuff necessary as fitted my purpose and the matter [that] I went about.

Then chose I a ground, by the which the Queen must [was going] to pass, enclosing [hiding] my company in the corner of a field, being defenced with high and thick bushes, and there some parts I made, which the boys might miss [leave out if they needed to], because the time was short for the learning of those parts. But I, being resolved to do somewhat [which] might make the Queen laugh, appointed that seven boys of twelve should pass through a hedge from the place of our abode (which was gallantly trimmed [decorated]), and deliver seven speeches, which follow in the next leaf [page].

And these boys, you must understand, were dressed like nymphs of the water, and were to play by a device [plan] and degrees [sequence] the Fairies, and to dance (as near as could be imagined) like the Fairies. Their attire, and coming so strangely out, I know made the Queen's Highness smile and laugh withal. And I, hearing this good hope, being apparelled like a water sprite [spirit], began to sound a timbrel [tambourine]. And the rest with me, all the twelve nymphs together (when the seven had repaired [returned] in), sounded timbrels [tambourines] likewise. And although I had no great hearting [encouragement], yet as I durst [dared], I lead the young foolish Fairies a dance, which boldness of mine bred no disgrace, and, as I heard said, was well taken [received]. The Queen, upon our retiring [returning] in, hastened to Her Highness' lodging [Kimberley Hall], which was seven miles off. And at that present, when the show ended, it was past 5 of the clock.

Thus have you truly heard the report of my own works and inventions, with the which did no one deal but myself. And, as I have made a recital of matters done in Norwich, so mean I a little to treat of [discuss] the Queen's return from thence, in as short and brief order as I may and the briefer, because I have not all the gentlemen's names in whose houses the Queen lay [stayed], and who bestowed some entertainment on the train [the Queen's retinue]. But, those in whose houses I was (and where I saw or heard anything worthy [of] memory), I mind to speak of, and touch, praying you that shall read the same, to pardon me, where I omit any matter or men that merits commendation. For it is not want

[lack] of goodwill that shall make me forget any good entertainments bestowed on the Court, but it is want [lack] of knowledge that shall cause me [to] so slightly [insubstantially] run over the causes, and make a brief report thereof: as knoweth God, who grant and send our Queen often to such pleasant progresses, and increase good people and loving subjects to show the like duty and order, as hath been orderly seen in this season and time of triumph.

The Queen of Fairies' Speech

Though clean against the Fairies' kind [nature],
we come in open view,

(And that, the Queen of Fairies here,
presents herself to you)

Some secret cause procures the same:
the gods, at first, ye know,

In field to honour thee, good Queen,
did make a gallant show.

Should we, that are but sprites [spirits] of the air,
refuse to do the same?

No, sure, for gods and mortal men shall serve thee,
noble Dame.

The Second [Fairy]

When Mercury came first in coach,
a message to unfold [deliver],

(And masque of gods amid [in] the might,
in chamber secrets told)

We warned were to shape [organize] ourselves,
to do what Jove assigned,

But water nymphs stepped in the while,
and so expressed their mind,

And thrust poor Fairies out of place!
Yet we, for fear of foil [sabotage],

Watched here our time, and for our sports,
did choose this certain [particular] soil.

The Third [Fairy]

Yea, out of hedge we crept indeed,
where close [hidden] in caves we lay,

And knowing by the brute [noise] of fame,
a Queen must pass this way,

To make her laugh, we clapped [put on] coats,
of sedge and bulrush both,

That she should know, and world should say,
'Lo, there the Fairies go,

Like Furies mad, and satyrs wild! Yet lo,
we have in store

Fine timbrels [tambourines], that the ancients use,
to make the show the more.

Document Transcript 4 (continued)

The Fourth [Fairy]

When saints and souls, and sprites [spirits] of men,
from Heaven down did fling,

And Jehovah spoke, and clouds did shake,
and many a crowned king

Crept out of [his] grave, to honour thee,
we ready were to wait [attend upon you],

But hags of hell, and damned fiends [devils],
that feed on false deceit,

Did blush to see thy presence, Queen.
But we that harmless were

Kept love in store, to show at length
our duty void of [without] fear.

The Fifth [Fairy]

But when that Cupid was condemned,
and Venus fell in rage,

And wantoness [recklessness] and riot rude,
for knacks [tricks] were clapped in cage,

And all the regiment row of gods,
to one great God gave place,

We silly Fairies were afeared,
therewith to show our face.

Yet when we saw a masque well-liked,
and gods condemned appear,

We did consult [decide], at last farewell,
the Fairies should be here.

The Sixth [Fairy]

But with orations [speeches] grave and great,
to wall the weak was thrust,

Yet when the strongest did their best,
of force [necessity] yet speak we must.

For Jove, that all commands, and doth,
bade us to watch the hour,

And show no more at this ado [activity],
than was in Fairies' power.

So, keeping course of Jove's command,
we speak that [which] is in breast,

And leave the Queen, and all the train [retinue],
with wit to judge the rest.

The Seventh [Fairy]

With gods, yea, kings and queens,
began your entry to this place,

With gentle ghosts, and merry sprites,
we mind to end the case.

So, in good sign of happy chance, to thee,
O sacred Queen,

To knit up all, we mean to dance
with timbrels [tambourines] on this green.

And then, farewell, we can no more,
salute thee in our guise [fashion],

All that is done, by great good will,
is offered to the wise.

Then came the Fairies out with timbrels [tambourines],
and danced a while, and so departed, and therewithal
the Queen went on her way to Her Highness' lodging.

Glossary

Furies – in Greek mythology, the furies were the three goddesses of vengeance, who were said to punish those who were guilty of crimes such as matricide, breaking your promises, and failing to display appropriate hospitality to your guests.

Jehovah – an Old Testament name for the Judeo-Christian God.

Jove – another name for the Roman god Jupiter, King of the Gods, and of sky and thunder.

Nymphs – in Greek and Roman mythology, these were minor female nature goddesses, associated with a particular natural location in the landscape, such as a pool or a forest.

Mercury – in Roman mythology, the trickster god of commerce and eloquence

Satyrs – in Greek and Roman mythology, these were the riotous companions of the god of wine and revelry Bacchus or Dionysius. They are usually portrayed with men's bodies, but with horns and the hind parts of goats, in reference to their lecherous nature.

Sedge – a name for a family of grass-like, rush-like plants that grow in wet places, eg wetlands such as the Norfolk Broads.