

# Prothalamion By Edmund Spenser

CALM was the day, and through the trembling air  
Sweet breathing Zephyrus did softly play,  
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay  
Hot Titan's beams, which then did glister fair;  
When I whose sullen care,  
Through discontent of my long fruitless stay  
In prince's court, and expectation vain  
Of idle hopes, which still do fly away  
Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain,  
Walked forth to ease my pain  
Along the shore of silver streaming Thames,  
Whose ruddy bank, the which his river hems,  
Was painted all with variable flowers,  
And all the meads adorned with dainty gems,  
Fit to deck maidens' bowers,  
And crown their paramours,  
Against the bridal day, which is not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

There, in a meadow, by the river's side,  
A flock of nymphs I chanced to espy,  
All lovely daughters of the flood thereby,  
With goodly greenish locks, all loose untied,  
As each had been a bride;  
And each one had a little wicker basket,  
Made of fine twigs, entrained curiously,  
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,  
And with fine fingers cropt full featously  
The tender stalks on high.  
Of every sort, which in that meadow grew,  
They gathered some; the violet pallid blue,  
The little daisy, that at evening closes,  
The virgin lily, and the primrose true,  
With store of vermeil roses,  
To deck their bridegrooms' posies  
Against the bridal day, which was not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

With that, I saw two swans of goodly hue  
Come softly swimming down along the Lee;  
Two fairer birds I yet did never see.  
The snow which doth the top of Pindus strew,  
Did never whiter shew,  
Nor Jove himself, when he a swan would be  
For love of Leda, whiter did appear:  
Yet Leda was they say as white as he,  
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing near.  
So purely white they were,  
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,  
Seemed foul to them, and bade his billows spare  
To wet their silken feathers, lest they might  
Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair,  
And mar their beauties bright,  
That shone as heaven's light,  
Against their bridal day, which was not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Eftsoons the nymphs, which now had flowers their fill,  
Ran all in haste, to see that silver brood,  
As they came floating on the crystal flood.  
Whom when they saw, they stood amazed still,  
Their wondering eyes to fill.  
Them seemed they never saw a sight so fair,  
Of fowls so lovely, that they sure did deem  
Them heavenly born, or to be that same pair  
Which through the sky draw Venus' silver team;  
For sure they did not seem  
To be begot of any earthly seed,  
But rather angels, or of angels' breed:  
Yet were they bred of Somers-heat they say,  
In sweetest season, when each flower and weed  
The earth did fresh array,  
So fresh they seemed as day,  
Even as their bridal day, which was not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Then forth they all out of their baskets drew  
Great store of flowers, the honour of the field,  
That to the sense did fragrant odours yield,  
All which upon those goodly birds they threw,  
And all the waves did strew,  
That like old Peneus' waters they did seem,  
When down along by pleasant Tempe's shore,  
Scattered with flowers, through Thessaly they stream,  
That they appear through lilies' plenteous store,  
Like a bride's chamber floor.

Two of those nymphs meanwhile, two garlands bound,  
Of freshest flowers which in that mead they found,  
The which presenting all in trim array,  
Their snowy foreheads therewithal they crowned,  
Whilst one did sing this lay,  
Prepared against that day,  
Against their bridal day, which was not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

'Ye gentle birds, the world's fair ornament,  
And heaven's glory, whom this happy hour  
Doth lead unto your lovers' blissful bower,  
Joy may you have and gentle heart's content  
Of your love's complement:

And let fair Venus, that is queen of love,  
With her heart-quelling son upon you smile,  
Whose smile, they say, hath virtue to remove  
All love's dislike, and friendship's faulty guile  
For ever to assoil.

Let endless peace your steadfast hearts accord,  
And blessed plenty wait upon your board,  
And let your bed with pleasures chaste abound,  
That fruitful issue may to you afford,  
Which may your foes confound,  
And make your joys redound  
Upon your bridal day, which is not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.'

So ended she; and all the rest around  
To her redoubled that her undersong,  
Which said their bridal day should not be long.  
And gentle echo from the neighbour ground  
Their accents did resound.

So forth those joyous birds did pass along,  
Adown the Lee, that to them murmured low,  
As he would speak, but that he lacked a tongue,  
Yet did by signs his glad affection show,  
Making his stream run slow.

And all the fowl which in his flood did dwell  
Gan flock about these twain, that did excel  
The rest so far as Cynthia doth shend  
The lesser stars. So they, enranged well,  
Did on those two attend,  
And their best service lend,  
Against their wedding day, which was not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

At length they all to merry London came,  
To merry London, my most kindly nurse,  
That to me gave this life's first native source;  
Though from another place I take my name,  
An house of ancient fame.

There when they came, whereas those bricky towers,  
The which on Thames' broad aged back do ride,  
Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers  
There whilom wont the Templar Knights to bide,  
Till they decayed through pride:

Next whereunto there stands a stately place,  
Where oft I gained gifts and goodly grace  
Of that great lord, which therein wont to dwell,  
Whose want too well now feels my friendless case.

But ah, here fits not well

Old woes but joys to tell

Against the bridal day, which is not long:

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.



Yet therein now doth lodge a noble peer,  
Great England's glory, and the world's wide wonder,  
Whose dreadful name late through all Spain did  
thunder,  
And Hercules' two pillars standing near  
Did make to quake and fear:  
Fair branch of honour, flower of chivalry,  
That fillest England with thy triumph's fame,  
Joy have thou of thy noble victory,  
And endless happiness of thine own name  
That promiseth the same:  
That through thy prowess and victorious arms,  
Thy country may be freed from foreign harms;  
And great Elisa's glorious name may ring  
Through all the world, filled with thy wide alarms,  
Which some brave Muse may sing  
To ages following,  
Upon the bridal day, which is not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

From those high towers this noble lord issuing,  
Like radiant Hesper when his golden hair  
In th'Ocean billows he hath bathed fair,  
Descended to the river's open viewing,  
With a great train ensuing.

Above the rest were goodly to be seen  
Two gentle knights of lovely face and feature  
Beseeming well the bower of any queen,  
With gifts of wit and ornaments of nature,  
Fit for so goodly stature;  
That like the twins of Jove they seemed in sight,  
Which deck the baldrick of the heavens bright.  
They two forth pacing to the river's side,  
Received those two fair birds, their love's delight;  
Which, at th' appointed tide,  
Each one did make his bride  
Against their bridal day, which is not long:  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.