To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time

By Robert Herrick

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he’s a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he’s to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.


Robert Herrick was born in London and may have attended the Westminster School. At age 16, he was apprenticed to his uncle, a goldsmith, but he terminated the apprenticeship after six years and went to St. John’s College, Cambridge, where he received a master’s degree. He greatly admired Ben Jonson and became part of the group known as the “Tribe of Ben.” Herrick never married; many of the women he addresses in the poem in his volume Hesperides may have been fictional.

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