

THE PRAISE OF THE NEEDLE

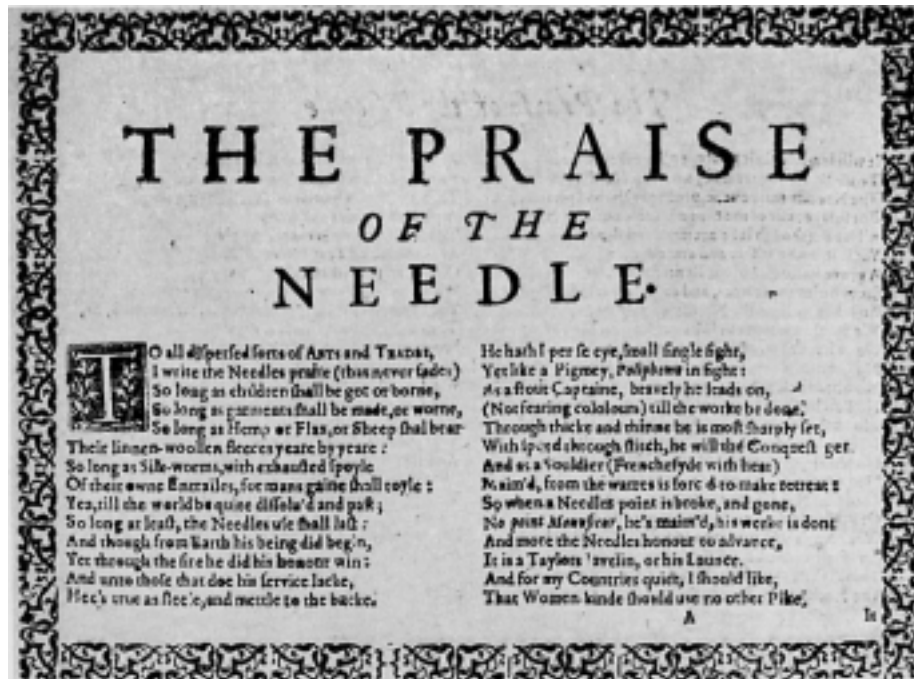
by

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 Praise of the Needle.

All these are good, and these we must allow,
And these are every where in practice now,
And in this Booke, these are of these some store,
With many others, never lesse before.
Here Practice and Invention may be free,
And as a Squirrel skips from tree to tree,
So Maids may (from their Mistresse, or their Mother)
Learne to leave one worke, and to learne another.
If here they may make choise of which is which,
And skip from worke to worke, from stitch to stitch,
With, in some, deliquitfull practice shall
(With profit) make them perfect in them all,
Thus hoping that these wokes may have this guide
To serve for ornament, and not for pride:
To the rich vertue, to the idle waste,
For these ends, may this booke have good success.

Here follow certaine Sonnets in the Honorable
memory of *Queens and great Ladies*, who
have bin famous for their rare Inventions,
and practise with the Needle.

King David by an apt Gentlewode
Durst show, with Musick, she chark her worde,

And to a Kings faire daughter, doth allude,
Where to her Spouse, he bravely brings her fode,
In Garments wrought of Needleworke and Gold,
Richer then and more glorious to the eye,
Whole our life much more glory did unfold,
The presence of th' eternall Majesty.
Thus may you see Records of holy Writ
Set downe (what Death or Time can nere deface.)
By these comparisons, comparing fit,
The noble worth of Needleworke high grace.
Then learne faire Daughters, leaue your games to spend
In this, which such high praises doth commend.

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

I Read that in the seventh Kin. *Henric's* Daighe,
Faire Katharine, Daughter to the Castile King,
Came into England with a pompous traine
Of French Ladies, which she thence did bring.
She to the eighth King Henry married was,
And afterwards divorc'd, wasse virtuously

(Although

The Praise of the Needle.

(Although a Queene) yet she her dayes did passe,
In working with the Needle curiously,
As in the Tower, and places more beside,
Her excellent memoriall may be seene:
Wherby the Needles praise is dignified
By her faire Ladies, and her selfe, a Queene.
Thus for her paines, have her reward is full,
Her worke proclaime her praise, though she be dull.

Mary, *Queene of England, and wife to Phillip,*
King of Spaine.

Her Daughter *Mary* here the Scepter swaid,
And though she were a Queene of mighty power,
Her memory will never be decreed,
Which by her wokes are likewise in the Tower.
In *Pyndar* Castle, and in *Ramppe* Court,
In that most poisonous roome call'd *Paradise*:
Who ever pleaseth thither to resort,
May see some wokes of heere, of woodden price,
Her greatest heere in no-dit-reparation,
To take the Needle in her Royall hand:

Which was a good example to our Nation,
To be imitator from another Land:
And thus this Queene, in wisdom thought it fit,
The Needles worke pleas'd her, and the grac' dit.

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

When this great Queene, whose memory shall not
By any time of time be overcast:
For when she world, and all things in shall not,
Yet shall her glorious fame for ever last,
When first a Maid, had many troubles past,
From layle to layle, by *Maries* angry spleene
And *Wolfe*, and the Tower in prison fast,
And after all, was *Englands* Percelesse Queene
Yet howsoever fortune came or went,
She made the Needle her companion still,
And in that exercise her time she spent,
As many living yet, doe know her skill.
Thus was she still a Captive, or else Crownd,
A Needle-woman Royall, and renownd.

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The Praise of the Needle.

5
The Right Honourable, Vertuous, and learned
Lady, Mary, late Countesse of
Pembrooke.

A Patience, and a Patientie she was
Of vertuous industry, and studious learning:
And she her earthly F's gramage did passe
In Acts, which were high honour most concerning.
Rave *V*illan booke in *W*ild fire well can show,
Her admirable workes in Art fraid:
Where men, and beasts, seeme like, evens seeme to grow,
And Art (surpass'd by Nature) seemes afraid.
Thus this renowned Honourable Dame,
Her happy time most happily did spend;
Whole worth recorded in the mouth of Fame,
(Vntill the world shall end) shall never end
She wrought so well in Needle-work, that she,
Nor yet her workes, shall ere forgotten be.

6
The Right Honourable and religious Lady,
Elizabeth Dormer, Wife to the late Right
Honorable, the Lord Robert
Dormer deceased.

*T*his Noble Lady imitates time past,
Does this time present, teach us how to come,
And longer on her life, her lead shall last,
Workes shewes her worth, though all the world were
And though her Reverend frile, with many dayes (dumb,
Of honorable age is leaden deepe,
Yet with her Needle (so her worthy praye)
Shee's working often, ere the Sunne doth perpe.
And, many times, when Phoebe in the West
Declined is, and Lasse shines her head:
This ancient honour'd Lady rests from Beed,
And workes when shee's flesh goes loose to bed.
Thus shee the Needle makes her recreation,
Whose well spent paines are others imitation.

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The Praise of the Needle.

*To all degrees of both sexes, that love or live by
the laudable employment of
the Needle.*

*I*f any ask to whom these lines are writ,
I answer, unto them that doe inquire:
For since the worlds Creation none was yet,
Whose wants did not the Needles helpe desire.
And therefore, as to him, or her, or thee,
Or them, or they, I doe not write at all:
Nor so particulars of he or she,
But generally, to all in generall.

Then let not Pride looke scornfully a-ferwe,
Without the Needle, Pride would makee goe:
Nor yet let *S*orne cry pish, and cust, and new,
Sorne is forgetfull much in doing so.
Nor yet let any one presume to prate,
And call these lines poore trifles, by me pend:
Let not opinion be perjurate,
But mend it, ere they dare to discourde,
So fare thou well, my well deserving booke,
(I meane, the workes desires, and not my looke)
I much presume that all that on it looke,
Will like and lend the workemans good deserv.
Foolles play the Foolles, but 'tis through want of wit,
Whil I to wisdomes censur doe servit.

FINIS

John Taylor.