
CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE

ca. 1558–1586

Tichborne was executed in 1586 as a member of the Babington conspiracy to assassinate Queen Elizabeth and her chief ministers, release Mary Queen of Scots from captivity, and promote an uprising of English Catholics to coincide with a Spanish invasion. The detection of this plot by Walsingham, and the proof of Mary's complicity in it, finally cost the Scottish queen her life. Tichborne, one of the six conspirators assigned to kill Queen Elizabeth, pleaded guilty at his trial. His "Elegy" was published in a volume called *Verses of Praise and Joy Written upon Her Majesty's Preservation*; it was later set to music by three different composers.

Tichborne's Elegy

Written with His Own Hand in the Tower Before His Execution

My prime of youth is but a frost of cares,
 My feast of joy is but a dish of pain,
 My crop of corn is but a field of tares,
 And all my good is but vain hope of gain;
 5 The day is past, and yet I saw no sun,
 And now I live, and now my life is done.

My tale was heard and yet it was not told,
 My fruit is fallen and yet my leaves are green,
 My youth is spent and yet I am not old,
 10 I saw the world and yet I was not seen;
 My thread is cut and yet it is not spun,
 And now I live, and now my life is done.

I sought my death and found it in my womb,
 I looked for life and saw it was a shade,
 15 I trod the earth and knew it was my tomb,
 And now I die, and now I was but made;
 My glass is full, and now my glass is run,
 And now I live, and now my life is done.