
SIR CHARLES SEDLEY

1639–1701

Sir Charles Sedley was just twenty-one when the Restoration occurred; and during the first wild years of Charles II, he was notorious as one of the most profligate and abandoned of the court rakes. But like many of these dissolute creatures he had literary interests, which led him to write five plays and a number of light lyrical songs. He survived the sowing of his wild oats to become a serious politician in the last years of the century.

Song

Love still has something of the sea,
 From whence his mother rose;¹
 No time his slaves from doubt can free,
 Nor give their thoughts repose.

5 They are becalmed in clearest days,
 And in rough weather tossed;
 They wither under cold delays,
 Or are in tempests lost.

10 One while they seem to touch the port,
 Then straight into the main
 Some angry wind in cruel sport
 The vessel drives again.

15 At first disdain and pride they fear,
 Which if they chance to 'scape,
 Rivals and falsehood soon appear
 In a more dreadful shape.

20 By such degrees to joy they come,
 And are so long withstood,
 So slowly they receive the sum,
 It hardly does them good.

'Tis cruel to prolong a pain;
 And to defer a joy,
 Believe me, gentle Celemene,
 Offends the wingéd boy.

25 An hundred thousand oaths your fears
 Perhaps would not remove;
 And if I gazed a thousand years,
 I could no deeper love.

1702

1. Aphrodite, or Venus, goddess of love and mother of Eros or Cupid ("Love"), was born, according to the myth, from sea foam.