

The Duel and Lesson

'Tis London town
Where my tale is found
A story of two lads
Of schools of defense there in that land.
One wearing colors of red and gold
And one of black and plaid.

'Tis a near tragedy my tale is of
One that is neatly avoided
Only by the minds of a few.

Ones whom think
With the wisdom of man
And not only the heart of lion.
Those who give pause but
Not with claws to those about.

Were not for these grand leaders
My verse would end in woe
Pray attend my tale
Of what calm minds do teach
To youths of hale and heart
Bent on harm and hate.

On a hill outside of the city
Two lads of different schools
Take stance with no pity
In their hearts.
Their seconds stand ready
Determined to meet
Dishonor with blade
Any foul intent with
Speed and strength.

As the lads take their paces
The seconds count off the steps
Once ten has been shouted
The lads turn face to face
Points of swords aimed
At hearts, death in mind.

As the duelists approach
The seconds circle hands
On hilts, waiting,
Insults hurled
Adding baiting to reproach .

The first pass finds that
Both learned well as
Blood drips from
Face and hand

They back away,
Breathe quickening,
Cuts stinging
Sword points raise again
Only to both be knocked, ringing
Out of their hands

The lads and seconds so intent
Do look to see
Masters standing unbent
In belief of law and honor
That no duel would be
Outside of school yard

“You simple children know
Not what you play at.
To duel being unclean
And brings plague that lasts
Upon mans heart.”

“There is no honor done here
Only unrest that will fester
To ruin your merit.
There are better ways to
Prove valiant spirit.”

Masters glare down
Students’ heads hang
Swords droop
In light of frowns.

Under watchful eyes
Cloaks and capes
Are gathered
As young men
Stumble to comply,
To unspoken charges.

Masters watch as the two
Groups leave
Still separate in faith to
School, but now akin
In dismay.

Knowing that the lesson
Learned today
Has both saved lives
And created brothers in humility
As well as in arms

But tomorrow both groups
Will continue to learn the lesson began
This night as,
Their Masters will drill
Them from sunrise until
Long past sunset.

That to fight when no
Quarrel exists
To make quarrel where none was
Is man's largest folly.

One that always ends
With someone harmed
Even when no blood
Is shed.
That man's best honor
Is to share knowledge
And welcome his fellows
With mind and heart
Leaving swords apart
For true enemies found
Further abroad.

And so my tale is done
But pray attend
Instead of raised voices or swords
Keep thy temper and raise a glass
Celebrating your fellow
Even if he is an ass.