John Gay (1685-1732)

4   *Sweet William's Farewell to Black-Ey'd Susan*

All in the *Downs* the fleet was moor'd,
    The streamers waving in the wind,
When black-ey'd *Susan* came aboard.
    Oh! where shall I my true love find!
Tell me, ye jovial sailors, tell me true,   5
If my sweet *William* sails among the crew.

William, who high upon the yard,
    Rock'd with the billow to and fro,
Soon as her well-known voice he heard,
    He sigh'd, and cast his eyes below: 10
The cord slides swiftly through his glowing hands
And, (quick as lightning,) on the deck he stands.

So the sweet lark, high-pois'd in air,
    Shuts close his pinions to his breast,
(If, chance, his mate's shrill call he hear)   15
    And drops at once into her nest.
The noblest Captain in the *British* fleet,
Might envy *William*'s lip those kisses sweet.

O *Susan*, *Susan*, lovely dear,
    My vows shall ever true remain;   20
Let me kiss off that falling tear,
    We only part to meet again.
Change, as ye list, ye winds; my heart shall be
The faithful compass that still points to thee.

Believe not what the landmen say,   25
    Who tempt with doubts thy constant mind:
They'll tell thee, sailors, when away,
    In ev'ry port a mistress find.

Yes, yes, believe them when they tell thee so,
For thou art present wheresoe'er I go.   30

    If to far *India*'s coast we sail,
        Thy eyes are seen in di'monds bright,
    Thy breath is *Africk*'s spicy gale,
        Thy skin is ivory, so white.
Thus ev'ry beauteous object that I view,   35
Wakes in my soul some charm of lovely *Sue*.

    Though battel call me from thy arms,
        Let not my pretty *Susan* mourn;
    Though cannons roar, yet safe from harms,
        William shall to his Dear return.   40
Love turns aside the balls that round me fly,
Lest precious tears should drop from *Susan*'s eye.

    The boatswain gave the dreadful word,
        The sails their swelling bosom spread,
    No longer must she stay aboard: 45
        They kiss'd, she sigh'd, he hung his head.
Her less'ning boat, unwilling rows to land:
Adieu, she cries! and wav'd her lilly hand.

1720

(From *The Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*.
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