

GOWER

To sing a song that old was sung
From ashes ancient Gower is come,
Assuming man's infirmities
To glad your ear and please your eyes.
It hath been sung at festivals,
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.
If you, born in these latter times
When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes,
And that to hear an old man sing
May to your wishes pleasure bring,
I life would wish, and that I might
Waste it for you like taper light.
This Antioch, then. Antiochus the Great
Built up this city for his chiefest seat—
The fairest in all Syria.
I tell you what mine authors say:
This king unto him took a fere,
Who died and left a female heir
So buxom, blithe and full of face
As heaven had lent her all his grace,
With whom the father liking took
And her to incest did provoke.
Bad child, worse father, to entice his own
To evil should be done by none.
The beauty of this sinful dame
Made many princes thither frame
To seek her as a bedfellow.
Which to prevent he made a law
To keep her still and men in awe:
That whoso asked her for his wife,
His riddle told not, lost his life.
So for her many a wight did die,
As yon grim looks do testify.
What now ensues, to the judgement of your eye
I give, my cause who best can justify.