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Three Chain-Sonnets: John White, Michael Pettitt, Barney Childs

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The fisher sitting on the river bank,
Trying to catch some minnows in a jar
Heedless of whether sun above or star
Deigns to shine forth upon the waters dank,
Forgets his station and his worldly rank;
Below, weed-gleam and grass and sandy bar
Entice him to the lower reach, where far
Below the surface h~~is~~s drowned Phoebe sank.

So through this quiet water still must swim
A greater and a greener fish that still
Keeps in his maw her daintiest white limb
And so will tempt him not when on the grill.
But in his sport perhaps he may forget
And still enjoy his virgin lover yet.

Thou art the fairest maid of Somerville.
Though other swains may gaily press their suit,
Though others try to pluck this fipest fruit
I will not let them steal the gilded pill.
Three terms of scorn hath failed to daunt my will
And, though my name is now of low repute,
I'll chant her name and gaily tune my lute
Though moons fall down and rivers run uphill.

I know a way to woo thee, fairest love,
Which would astonish more experienced queens,
But custom, grim mock-mummer, will not move
Hearts to which love says never what it means.
Therefore, my sweet, I'll do the normal thing:
Plough all my schools and, unrequited, sing.

When in the winter of this stony year
The fields are cheerless and the ground is iron,
Around his zoo-cage prowls the chilly lion
Still questioning the right of bars and fear.
To sever him from his home forests dear.
He cannot understand why men should spy on
His exile. So, perhaps, those flung from Zion,
Lions of Judah, keep such bitter cheer.

The leaders of the new-formed Jewish State
Who, though all the eyes of men cried mock
And too ambitious to be truly great
Do not their lions into cages lock.
Thus lions caged and brave men harsh oppressed
Must bear confinement and man's bitter jest.

(Order: RBC, MP, JRVW)