

Caleno Custure Me

Callino Casturame (Instrumental Title)

1582

CAPO 5

1. 7. When as I view ___ your come - ly grace,
 2. With - - in my - self ___ then I can say,
 3. Then how dare I _____ with bold - en'd face,
 4. And thus a - maz - - ed as I stand,
 5. My soul with si - - lence mov - ing sense,
 6. Long life, and vir - - tue you poss - ess:

Cal - - le - no _____ Cus - tu - - - re me, --->

Your gold - - en hairs, ___ your an - - gel's face: _____
 the night ___ is gone, ___ be - hold ___ the day: _____
 pre - sume ___ to crave ___ or wish ___ your grace? _____
 not feel - - ing sense, ___ nor mov - - ing hand. _____
 doth wish ___ for thee ___ with re - - ve - rence, _____
 to match ___ those gifts ___ of wor - - thi - ness, _____

Cal - le - - no _____ Cus - tu - - - re me.

From "Shakespeare's Songbook", Volume 1, Ross W. Duffin, p.86.

The ballad title was registered on March 10, 1582.

The poem appeared in "A Handefull of Pleasant Delites (1584).

The tune was printed by Pierre Phalese in 1568. The earliest English version is found in the Dallis Lute Book (1583-85).

There is a William Byrd setting in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (ca. 1619).

In act IV of Shakespeare's play "Henry V", Pistol (a minor character) encounters a French soldier on the battlefield. The French soldier speaks no English and Pistol does not understand French.

Pistol, in stupid frustration, shouts foreign-sounding gibberish at the soldier thinking that it will make sense to him: Qualtitie calmie custure me! Art thou a gentleman? What is thy name? discuss. (Henry V 4-4)

It's a laugh line for two reasons. First, it's funny because you can't just make up French-sounding nonsense and have a Frenchman understand you. Second, Shakespeare's audience knew it was nonsense because "Custure me" was the title of a popular love song at the time. A love song that had no place on the battle field. The phrase was so unique, it was instantly recognizable. This little refrain phrase may have come from some obscure Gaelic expression. But in the song, it was just nonsense words that sounded vaguely Latin or Italian and therefore gave the song a little classy cachet.