

THE AUTHOR TO HER BOOK

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
 Who after birth didst by my side remain,
 Till snatched from thence by friends, less wise than true,
 Who thee abroad, exposed to public view, 5
 Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,
 Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).
 At thy return my blushing was not small,
 My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,
 I cast thee by as one unfit for light, 10
 Thy visage was so irksome in my sight;
 Yet being mine own, at length affection would
 Thy blemishes amend, if so I could:
 I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,
 And rubbing off a spot still made a flaw. 15
 I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet,
 Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet;
 In better dress to trim thee was my mind,
 But nought save homespun cloth i' th' house I find.
 In this array 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam. 20
 In critic's hands beware thou dost not come,
 And take thy way where yet thou art not known;
 If for thy father asked, say thou hadst none;
 And for thy mother, she alas is poor,
 Which caused her thus to send thee out of door. 25

IN HONOUR OF THAT HIGH AND
MIGHTY PRINCESS QUEEN
ELIZABETH OF HAPPY MEMORY

The Proem

Although, great Queen, thou now in silence lie 5
Yet thy loud herald Fame doth to the sky
Thy wondrous worth proclaim in every clime,
And so hath vowed while there is world or time.
So great's thy glory and thine excellence,
The sound thereof rapt every human sense, 10
That men account it no impiety,
To say thou wert a fleshly deity.
Thousands bring offerings (though out of date)
Thy world of honours to accumulate;
Mongst hundred hecatombs of roaring verse, 15
Mine bleating stands before thy royal herse.
Thou never didst nor canst thou now disdain
T' accept the tribute of a loyal brain.
Thy clemency did erst esteem as much
The acclamations of the poor as rich, 20
Which makes me deem my rudeness is no wrong,
Though I resound thy praises 'mongst the throng.

The Poem

No Phoenix pen, nor Spenser's poetry,
No Speed's nor Camden's learned history, 25
Eliza's works wars, praise, can e'er compact;
The world's the theatre where she did act.
No memories nor volumes can contain
The 'leven Olympiads of her happy reign.
Who was so good, so just, so learn'd, so wise, 30

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Verses upon the Burning of our House

In silent night when rest I took,
For sorrow near I did not look,
I waken'd was with thund'ring noise
And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.
That fearful sound of "fire" and "fire,"
Let no man know is my Desire.
I starting up, the light did spy,
And to my God my heart did cry
To straighten me in my Distress
And not to leave me succourless.
Then coming out, behold a space
The flame consume my dwelling place.
And when I could no longer look,
I blest his grace that gave and took,
That laid my goods now in the dust.
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.
It was his own; it was not mine.
Far be it that I should repine,
He might of all justly bereft
But yet sufficient for us left.
When by the Ruins oft I past
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast
And here and there the places spy
Where oft I sate and long did lie.
Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest,
There lay that store I counted best,
My pleasant things in ashes lie
And them behold no more shall I.
Under the roof no guest shall sit,
Nor at thy Table eat a bit.
No pleasant talk shall 'ere be told
Nor things recounted done of old.
No Candle 'ere shall shine in Thee,
Nor bridegroom's voice ere heard shall bee.
In silence ever shalt thou lie.
Adieu, Adieu, All's Vanity.
Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide:
And did thy wealth on earth abide,
Didst fix thy hope on mouldring dust,
The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?

Raise up thy thoughts above the sky
That dunghill mists away may fly.
Thou hast a house on high erect
Fram'd by that mighty Architect,
With glory richly furnished
Stands permanent, though this be fled.
It's purchased and paid for too
By him who hath enough to do.
A price so vast as is unknown,
Yet by his gift is made thine own.
There's wealth enough; I need no more.
Farewell, my pelf; farewell, my store.
The world no longer let me love;
My hope and Treasure lies above.

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AN EPITAPH ON MY DEAR AND
EVER-HONOURED MOTHER
MRS. DOROTHY DUDLEY,
WHO DECEASED DECEMBER 27,
1643, AND OF HER AGE, 61

Here lies,

A worthy matron of unspotted life,
A loving mother and obedient wife,
A friendly neighbor, pitiful to poor,
Whom oft she fed and clothed with her store;
To servants wisely awful, but yet kind,
And as they did, so they reward did find.
A true instructor of her family,
The which she ordered with dexterity.
The public meetings ever did frequent,
And in her closet constant hours she spent;
Religious in all her words and ways,
Preparing still for death, till end of days:
Of all her children, children lived to see,
Then dying, left a blessed memory.

10

15

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IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR
GRANDCHILD ELIZABETH
BRADSTREET, WHO DECEASED
AUGUST, 1665, BEING A YEAR
AND HALF OLD

5

Farewell dear babe, my heart's too much content,
Farewell sweet babe, the pleasure of mine eye,
Farewell fair flower that for a space was lent,
Then ta'en away unto eternity.
Blest babe, why should I once bewail thy fate,
Or sigh thy days so soon were terminate,
Sith thou art settled in an everlasting state.

10

2

By nature trees do rot when they are grown,
And plums and apples thoroughly ripe do fall,
And corn and grass are in their season mown,
And time brings down what is both strong and tall.
But plants new set to be eradicate,
And buds new blown to have so short a date,
Is by His hand alone that guides nature and fate.

15

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[A LETTER TO HER HUSBAND,
ABSENT UPON PUBLIC
EMPLOYMENT

My head, my heart, mine eyes, my life, nay, more,
My joy, my magazine of earthly store,
If two be one, as surely thou and I,
How stayest thou there, whilst I at Ipswich lie?
So many steps, head from the heart to sever, 5
If but a neck, soon should we be together.
I, like the Earth this season, mourn in black,
My Sun is gone so far in's zodiac,
Whom whilst I 'joyed, nor storms, nor frost I felt,
His warmth such frigid colds did cause to melt. 10
My chilled limbs now numbed lie forlorn;
Return, return, sweet Sol, from Capricorn;
In this dead time, alas, what can I more
Than view those fruits which through thy heat I bore?
Which sweet contentment yield me for a space, 15
True living pictures of their father's face.
O strange effect! now thou art southward gone,
I weary grow the tedious day so long;
But when thou northward to me shalt return,
I wish my Sun may never set, but burn 20
Within the Cancer of my glowing breast,
The welcome house of him my dearest guest.
Where ever, ever stay, and go not thence,
Till nature's sad decree shall call thee hence:
Flesh of thy flesh, bone of thy bone, 25
I here, thou there, yet both but one.

A. B.

Anne Bradstreet
(1612-72)

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