



A Dialogue between Old England and New, Concerning Their Present Troubles

Anne Bradstreet (1642)

Anne Bradstreet was an English Puritan who, in 1630, migrated to New England as a colonist. She became the first published American poet when a collection of her poems was sent back to England and printed there. Presented here is a portion of one of the poems from that collection. Bradstreet composed this poem in 1642, at the outbreak of the civil war waged in England between King Charles I and a Puritan-dominated Parliament; several years later, in 1649, the war culminated in Parliament beheading Charles and abolishing the monarchy (restored in 1660).

Bradstreet's poem is a dialogue between England and New England, personified as mother and daughter. A grieving England explains to New England the causes of the civil war from a Puritan and Parliamentary perspective. New England comforts her mother with the hope that the war will result in king and Parliament reuniting to reform the Church of England in line with Puritan ideals, after which England will wage a successful holy war against Catholic and Muslim powers overseas, thereby inaugurating the Millennium. The excerpts presented below come from New England's final speech to the mother country, which concludes the poem.

New England:

Dear mother, cease complaints and wipe your eyes;
shake off your dust, cheer up, and now arise.
You are my mother, nurse; I, once your flesh,
your sunken bowels gladly would refresh.
Your griefs I pity much, but should do wrong
to weep for that we both have prayed for long:
to see these latter days of hoped-for good,
that right may have its right, though it be with blood.

After dark popery, the day did clear,
but now the sun in his brightness shall appear.
Blessed be the nobles of thy noble land
with ventured lives for truth's defense that stand.
Blessed be thy commons who for common good
and thine infringed laws have boldly stood. [...]
Blessed be thy preachers who do cheer thee on;
O cry, "The sword of God and Gideon!"
And shall I not on those wish Meroz's curse
that help thee not with prayers, arms, and purse;
and for myself, let miseries abound
if mindless of thy state I e'er be found.

These are the days the church's foes to crush,
to root out prelates, head, tail, branch, and rush.
Let's bring Baal's vestments out to make a fire—

their miters, surplices, and all their tire,
 copes, rochets, crosiers, and such trash—
 and let their names consume; but let the flash
 light Christendom and all the world to see
 we hate Rome's Whore, with all her trumpery.

Go on, brave Essex,^a show whose son thou art,
 not false to king nor country in thy heart;
 but those that hurt his people and his crown,
 by force expel, destroy, and tread them down.
 Let jails be filled with the remnant of that pack,
 and sturdy Tyburn^b loaded till it crack.
 And ye brave nobles, chase away all fear
 and to this blessed cause closely adhere. [...]

These, these, are they (I trust), with Charles our king,
 out of all mists such glorious days will bring
 that dazzled eyes, beholding much, shall wonder
 at that thy settled peace, thy wealth and splendor,
 thy church and weal established in such manner
 that all shall joy that thou displayedst thy banner
 and discipline erected; so I trust
 that nursing kings shall come and lick thy dust.
 Then justice shall in all thy courts take place,
 without respect of persons or of case;
 then bribes shall cease, and suits shall not stick long,
 patience and purse of clients for to wrong. [...]
 So shall thy happy nation ever flourish,
 when truth and righteousness they thus shall nourish.

When thus in peace, thine armies brave send out
 to sack proud Rome and all her vassals rout.
 There let thy name, thy fame, thy valor shine,
 as did thine ancestors' in Palestine,
 and let her spoils full pay, with interest, be
 of what unjustly once she polled from thee.
 Of all the woes thou canst, let her be sped;
 execute to the full the vengeance threatened.

^a Robert Devereux, third earl of Essex, who led the army raised by Parliament to combat the forces of King Charles I. Bradstreet echoes here what was, at the beginning of the civil war, the Parliamentary party line: that Parliament's aim was to overthrow not the king but his advisers, who were supposedly manipulating the king into betraying the country's interests. As the war continued, Parliament shifted away from that conciliatory line to openly opposing the king.

^b A famous gallows near London, used for mass executions.

Bring forth the beast that ruled the world with his beck,
 and tear his flesh, and set your feet on his neck,
 and make his filthy den so desolate
 to the astonishment of all that knew his state.
 This done, with brandished swords to Turkey go
 (for then what is it but English blades dare do)
 and lay her waste, for so's the sacred doom,
 and do to Gog as thou hast done to Rome.

O Abraham's seed, lift up your heads on high,
 for sure the day of your redemption's nigh;
 the scales shall fall from your long-blinded eyes,
 and him you shall adore, who now despise.
 Then fullness of the nations in shall flow
 and Jew and Gentile to one worship go.
 Then follows days of happiness and rest;
 whose lot doth fall to live therein is blessed.
 No Canaanite shall then be found in the land,
 and holiness on horses' bells shall stand.

If this make way thereto, then sigh no more;
 but if at all, thou didst not see it before.
 Farewell, dear mother; Parliament prevail,
 and in a while, you'll tell another tale.

Source: [Anne Bradstreet], "A Dialogue between Old England and New, Concerning Their Present Troubles. Anno 1642," in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* [...] (London: Stephen Bowtell, 1650), 180-190. From a digital transcript created for the Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A77237.0001.001>. The University of Michigan Library provides access to this keyboarded and encoded edition of the work for educational and research purposes; the transcription is believed to be in the public domain in the United States.

Excerpts edited and annotated by John-Charles Duffy. Stanza breaks inserted and long sentences broken up for readability. Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and typography (italics) modernized, Americanized, or regularized. Most elisions spelled out. The spelling of a biblical name emended to match that used in the King James Version. Capital letters at the beginning of lines converted to lowercase for readability. Extraneous parentheses omitted.

The words *popery*, *church*, and *king*, capitalized in the source publication, have been converted here to lowercase, together with many other words capitalized in the source per antiquated convention (including *preachers*, *prelates*, *nobles*, *commons*, *courts*, *cause*, *sun*, *land*, *country*, and *nation*). The capitalizing of *Whore* replicates the source and is retained here to underscore the allusion to the character from the Book of Revelation. The lowercasing of *beast* also replicates the source; it is unclear whether that reference, too, is meant as an allusion to Revelation.

These edited excerpts from Bradstreet's poem are intended for **teaching** purposes only. For **research** purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed above.



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