

Prologue

By Anne Bradstreet

To sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,
For my mean Pen are too superior things;
Or how they all, or each their dates have run,
Let Poets and Historians set these forth.
My obscure lines shall not so dim their worth.

But when my wond'ring eyes and envious heart
Great Bartas' sugar'd lines do but read o'er,
Fool, I do grudge the Muses did not part
'Twixt him and me that over-fluent store.
A Bartas can do what a Bartas will
But simple I according to my skill.

From School-boy's tongue no Rhet'ric we expect,
Nor yet a sweet Consort from broken strings,
Nor perfect beauty where's a main defect.
My foolish, broken, blemished Muse so sings,
And this to mend, alas, no Art is able,
'Cause Nature made it so irreparable.

Nor can I, like that fluent sweet-tongued Greek
Who lis'd at first, in future times speak plain.
By Art he gladly found what he did seek,
A full requital of his striving pain.
Art can do much, but this maxim's most sure:
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits.
A Poet's Pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
For such despite they cast on female wits.
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
They'll say it's stol'n, or else it was by chance.

But sure the antique Greeks were far more mild,
Else of our Sex, why feigned they those nine
And poesy made Calliope's own child?
So 'mongst the rest they placed the Arts divine,
But this weak knot they will full soon untie.

The Greeks did nought but play the fools
and lie.

Let Greeks be Greeks, and Women what they are.
Men have precedency and still excel;
It is but vain unjustly to wage war.
Men can do best, and Women know it well.
Preeminence in all and each is yours;
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

And oh ye high flown quills that soar the skies,
And ever with your prey still catch your praise,
If e'er you deign these lowly lines your eyes,
Give thyme or Parsley wreath, I ask no Bays.
This mean and unrefined ore of mine
Will make your glist'ring gold but more to shine.

Verses upon the Burning of Our House

By Anne Bradstreet

In silent night when rest I took,
For sorrow near I did not look,
I wakened was with thundering 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 strengthen me in my distress,
And not to leave me succorless.
Then coming out, behold a space
The flame consume my dwelling place.
And when I could no longer look,
I blest His name 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 passed
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast
And here and there the places spy
Where oft I sat 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 thy roof no guest shall sit,
Nor at thy table eat a bit;

No pleasant tale shall e'er be told,
Nor things recounted done of old;
No candle e'er shall shine in thee,
Nor bridegroom's voice e'er heard shall be.

In silence ever shall 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;
Framed 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 lie above.

To My Dear and Loving Husband

By Anne Bradstreet

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me ye women if you can.

I prize thy love more than whole Mines of Gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompence.

Thy love is such I can no way repay,
The heavens reward thee manifold I pray.
Then while we live, in love lets so persevere,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.