

## H25 Hadst thou lik other Sirs and knights of worth

*Notes.* This poem is one of three commendatory epitaphs on Overbury that circulated both in manuscript and as part of the prefatory verse printed in the 1616 editions of Sir Thomas Overbury His Wife. The most copied of the three, this piece is accepted as the work of Richard Corbett.

### “On Sir Thomas Overbury”

Hadst thou lik other Sirs and knights of worth  
Sicknd and died, bene strecht out and laid forth  
After thy funerall sermon taken earth  
And left noe deed to praise thee, but thy birth  
Then Overbury by a pass of the heires 5  
Thou mightst have tyded henc in two-houres teares  
Then had we worne thy spring of memorie  
Noe longer then thy friend did rosemarie<sup>1</sup>  
Or when the doale<sup>2</sup> was dealing for thy sake  
And thou hadst sunck in thin owne wine and cake<sup>3</sup> 10  
But since twas so ordeined and thought fitt  
By them who knew thy truth and thy witt  
Thou shouldst be poysond; death hath don thee grace  
Rackt thee above the region of thy place  
For none heares poyson nam'd, but makes reply 15  
What Prince was that, what statesman that did die  
In this thou hast outliv'd an Elegie  
Which were to narrow for posteritie:  
And the ranck poyson which did seem to kill  
Working afresh in some historians quill 20  
Shall now preserve thee longer ere thou rott  
Then could a poeme mixt with Antidote  
Now needst thou trust noe herauld with thy name  
Thou art the voice of justice and of fame

Whilst som detesting their owne conscience strive 25  
To pay the use and interest of lives  
Enough of time and if it pleas the law  
Enough of blood<sup>4</sup> for naming bloud I saw  
He that writes more of thee must writ of more  
Which I affect not, but referre men ore 30  
To Tyburne,<sup>5</sup> wher they may define  
What life of man is worth by valuing thine

**Source.** Folger MS V.a.97, p. 20

**Other known sources.** Corbett 18; Overbury A2v; Bodleian MS Ashmole 47, fol. 112r; Bodleian MS Firth d.7, fol. 138r; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 117, fol. 261v; BL Add. MS 10309, fol. 152r; BL MS Egerton 2230, fol. 72v; BL MS Harley 6931, fol. 65v; BL MS Sloane 1792, fol. 74r; BL MS Stowe 402, fol. 24r; Folger MS V.a.125, fol. 14r; Folger MS V.a.319, fol. 22v; Folger MS V.a.322, p. 49; Folger MS V.a.345, p. 106; Rosenbach MS 239/22, fol. 49v

## H25

<sup>1</sup> *spring of memorie...rosemarie*: sprigs of rosemary, the herb of remembrance, were carried by mourners at funerals (“spring” is probably a scribal error).

<sup>2</sup> *doale*: dole; funerary gifts given to the poor.

<sup>3</sup> *wine and cake*: allusion to the funeral meal.

<sup>4</sup> *Enough of blood*: Corbett is suggesting that enough people had already been hanged for Overbury’s murder. This might well be read as an appeal for the King to show mercy towards the Somersets.

<sup>5</sup> *Tyburne*: one of London’s chief sites of execution. Two of the four Overbury murderers to be hanged were executed at Tyburn.

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