

Nii5 When we but heare that Turkes and Tartars fight

Notes. This bellicose poem reflects not only the hyperbole of the growing cult surrounding James I's daughter Elizabeth, erstwhile Queen of Bohemia and exiled Electress Palatine, but also records the intense frustration some English felt at James I's refusal to commit to a military solution to the Bohemian and Palatinate crises.

“The Common Peoples Apollegy to the Queene of Bohemia. 1623”

When we but heare that Turkes and Tartars fight¹

(Thou best of Princes) onely in thy right

That they have tooke up armes, do lay downe lives

Forsake their Countryes fortunes Children wives

Beate up their drummes their bloody Coullers spread

And all to place a Croune² uppon thy head

When we do heare and see and know all this

Shall not a Brittain against a Brittain hisse?³

Must the pale Turkish moones⁴ lend light to thee

Thou glorious starre of Europe? and must wee

So much degenerate from the bravery

of all our Ancestors as to stand by

When Romes bold dareinge Eagles⁵ perch so high

The Phoenix of the world?⁶ Can we for shame

See Pagans throw themselves into this flame

opening their veines with zealous true desyre

To Quench with their lost blood seditious fyre?

Are we so stupid growne so dull so Colde

shall it I say to after tymes be tolde

That England Scotland Ireland did give leave

unto the mice to breed spyders to weave

and eateinge rust within their Armes to rest

When their owne best of Princes was distrest?

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When the Cheife glory of this brittish ile
lives, though not in thraldome in exile⁷ 25
And must by Turkes and Infidells alone
Without our Ayde be seated in her throne?
Shall not our Soules blush after we are dead
When this unsampled basenes shall be read
in lastinge records? yes our sonnes shall be 30
asham'd to owne us: and there Pedegree
rather derive from some strange nacion faind
Then with such worthless fathers names be staynd
But oh thou mistress of Each good mans heart
This is our least of Feares our Cares least part, 35
It is thy frowne (blest soule) or which is worse
It is that foreseene everlastinge Curse
Of all thy Childrens Children, who will shame
To name the nacion whence their Mother Came.
And to their royall Issue will they say 40
Thou wert let downe from heaven not framd of Clay
For we (brave princess) should have thought no other
Had we not knowne thy father seene thy mother.
For sure a Soule more pure more white more good
As yet was never Cloath'd in Flesh and blood. 45
On that unshaken rocke of Excellence
Undoubted Charity matchless temperance.
Approved Industry rarest Apprehension
Our hopes firme ground, onely good intencon
We trust (brave princess) shall be receiv'd as fact 50
And though we do not yet our desires Act
Shall free us from that future infamy
That else would dogge us to eternity
For know (thou glory of thy sexe) in whome

The blotte and Taint of Eve⁸ I dare presume 55
 has lost all force, making thy faire Creacion
 Above all others worthy admiracion.
 Know for a Truth deigne to reporte it soe
 Thy Isle had been unpeopled long agoe
 If Sovereigne Dignity⁹ and scourge of Lawe 60
 Had not restrayn'd us kept us still in Awe
 In Prague¹⁰ we would once more have seene the Cround
 Or with our blood revolting Bohemia drownd
 Their Like a Sun whose beames no Eagles eye
 For feare of Blastinge should have durst come nigh. 65
 We would have fixed thee no divine Turkish moone
 At midnight should have rose much less at noone.
 No salvadge Tartar should have had the glory
 Once to have mencion in thy lives best story
 But all with feare and Tremblinge should have stood 70
 Whilst Brittish Ensignes¹¹ swamme in Spanish blood.
 It was not feare then (maddam) kept us thence
 Nor want of Love, nor dare I say from whence
 This base neglect originally Grewe
 You had our hearts what hindred then judge yow. 75
 Yow might have had our hands our blowes our blood
 Had not our good intencions been withstood
 Had not some power aboue us¹² us restraynd
 Yourselfe had been more grac'd we less disdayn'd
 The Poorest widdowe Maddam in your Quarrell 80
 With Joy and¹³ Emptied both her Cruse¹⁴ and barrell.
 Nay sacrific'd her sonne without a groane
 Proud to have had his tombe but neere your throne.
 The Churlish Nabal¹⁵ to a Souldiers pay
 A weather¹⁶ would have tend'red every day 85

Each Country lass her Jette ringe would have broken
And sent the sylver lyneinge for a Token -
unto that Lad that from her Parrish went
And in your Quarrell had the least blood spent
The knotty fisted Ploweman thickeskin'd boore 90
That greives to leave the least gleaninge for the poore
Or pay to God the Tyth¹⁷ of his encrease
Would gladly give the thirds to buy your peace.
The Toylinge Clowne¹⁸ that eates no other Meate
Then what is dayly basted with his sweat 95
Would borrow from the night one houre or two
And singe for Joy that then he wrought for you.
The poore mechannicke at whose Elbowe stands
More Mouths then he Hath fingers on his hands
Each suckinge from his labor their repast 100
Would teach those hungry Infants how to fast
And from their halfe starvd bellyes every day
ravish a meale, that he might so defray
A souldiers Charge. A nurse no sucke would give
Till she had taught her babe to cry long live 105
Bohemia's Queene, whilst heaven Confound all those
Profess themselves your opposites your foes.
And thus much Maddam I dare boldly sweare
Each English face doth sacrifice a yeare
and writes in wrinkles, or in white heares more 110
Some by five some by Ten some by a Score
Since these thy Troubles then they would have done
If these unhappy broyles had nere begun.
For when we did suppose yow sigh'd we wept
And when we dream'd yow wak'd we never slept 115
And if (as heaven defend) A teare yow shedd

Uppon my soule) each good mans heart then bledd.
 Your voyce is lyke an oracle and all
 Will hold what yow shall speake Canonically
 Proclayme then Maddam to posterity 120
 That Englands Commons Englands Gentry
 Did waste more blood in sighes and grones then those
 That did encounter with your boldest foes.
 This by yow beleiv'd this by yow proclaym'd
 Our sonnes need never blush when we are namd. 125

Source. Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. c.50, fol. 21v-22v

Other known sources. Brotherton MS Lt. q. 44, fol. 13r

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¹ *Turkes and Tartars*: probably an allusion to the anti-Habsburg military activities of the Protestant Prince Bethlen Gabor of Transylvania, a close ally of the Ottoman Turks (who supported his military activities because of a common concern to see Austrian power weakened). Turkish military efforts at this time, however, were focused on a war with the Persians.

² *Croune*: the crown of Bohemia. Elizabeth's husband Frederick V had been chosen King of Bohemia by rebellious Bohemian nobles in August 1619, and had accepted the crown the following month. Frederick had been driven from Bohemia by Imperial forces after the Battle of White Mountain in November 1620.

³ *Shall not...Brittayne hisse*: an allusion perhaps to the "hissing" of the libellers against their monarch.

⁴ *Turkish moones*: probably an allusion to the crescent moon symbolism on Islamic battle flags.

⁵ *Romes bold dareinge Eagles*: the Catholic military powers of Spain and Austria.

⁶ *The Phænix of the world*: meaning here something like the Habsburg "Universal Monarchy", "the unique supreme power of the world".

⁷ *in exile*: Elizabeth and Frederick, their lands in the Palatinate occupied by Spanish and Bavarian troops, were in exile in the United Provinces.

⁸ *Eve*: Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden was held to have brought original sin upon mankind. By overcoming the "blot and Taint of Eve", Elizabeth had also transcended the specifically female weaknesses that Eve was held to embody.

⁹ *Soveraigne Dignity*: i.e. James's opposition to large-scale military intervention on behalf of Elizabeth and Frederick.

¹⁰ *Prague*: capital of the kingdom of Bohemia.

¹¹ *Ensignes*: battle flags.

¹² *some power abouve us*: i.e. King James.

¹³ *and*: probable scribal error; read "had".

¹⁴ *Cruse*: jar.

¹⁵ *Churlish Nabal*: Nabal, a wealthy farmer, refused King David's request to supply his troops with provisions (see 1 Samuel 25).

¹⁶ *weather*: wether; a male sheep.

¹⁷ *Tyth*: tithe; the tenth of a person's goods or earnings paid to the church.

¹⁸ *Clowne*: rustic.
