

Nv16 Oh for an Ovid or a Homer now

Notes. This ambitious poem celebrating the return of Charles and Buckingham from Spain in October 1623 is notable not only for its evocation of the popular festivities recorded in other verses on the return, but also for its lament about the contemporary taste for libels.

Oh for an Ovid¹ or a Homer² now

Whose sweet immortalizinge pen knowes how

To give such life by that there excellence

To this dayes joy that many ages hence

Decreped Grandsires by their workes divine

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May warme there blood by readinge but a line

And greiv'd they liv'd not in that blessed houre

When heaven rain'd soe much joy to have the power

To make times rusty chimes to backward runne

Untwistinge soe the thred the Fates had spunne

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And children curse slow natures longe delay

That had not them producte to see this day

Is Spencer³ dead & Daniel⁴ gone, oh then

This morninges glories lost: theres not a pen

Can point on shaddow much lesse lustre give

15

To that daies fame that might for ever live

Now doe I wish I had the power to charme

All Poetts now a sleepe theise doe but harme

All writers now have soe farr wrackt their braines

With cloven-footed rough Satyrick straines

20

That everie thing seemes monstrous they produce

Libellous rimes are onlie now in use

The soule of poetrie alas is fledd,

For Homer Ovid Spenser Daniells dead

And Charles & George⁵ that have outstript all story

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Must want a pen t' immortalize their glory
The thunder mockinge Cannons lowde do hollow
And fame woulde force from harme the great Apollo⁶
As if the subject did require the pen
Rather of gods then anie mortall men 30
The acclamations of the people peirce
The roofe of heaven & thence would draw a verse
Great Sydneis⁷ soule I thinke they woulde invite
On this unsampled theame some lines to write
That in record of everlastinge fame 35
Men still might read great Charles & Georges name
And by the vertue of his Muses fire
Draw after times their actions to admire:
That when there ashes rested in there urne
Yett men might read of joy for there returne 40
Which is soe farr beyond all mens expression
As none attempt itt may without transgression
Noe pen, noe tongue, noe excellence of art
Can speake the rapture of each good mans heart
Children uncapable to each mans thinkinge 45
Were drunke with joy as others were a drinkinge
Matrons & Virgins who untill that morninge
Nere lookt on wine but with a modest scorninge
Did drinke & blush & blush & drinke againe
For joy prince Charles was safe return'd from Spaine 50
Cripples lett fall there crutches, sick & lame
Forgott there paine when they but heard his name
The blind man now lamentinge lowdlie cries
He never greiv'd soe much his losse of eies
Infants scarce taught to goe were seene to run 55
To see prince Charles great Britaines only son

The dumbe man now his want of speech bemoanes
 Ventinge his joyes in sighes, in teares, in groanes
 They sigh & groane for greife they cannot speake
 Emptying there heartes by teares that els would breake 60
 The Country clowne as he past on the waie
 Aid⁸ force from night an artificiall day
 The Citizens to shew there deere affection
 Did strive to bringe time under there subjection
 And kept back night by stratagemes & force 65
 Five howers longer then her common course
 The eveninge now att midnight did beginne
 The starrs lookt out & blusht & soe shutt in
 Heaven wept for joy the useless sun retirde
 Fearinge his cheekes should by our flames⁹ be fir'd 70
 Aurora¹⁰ rose survaide from East to West
 Saw day without her & went back to rest
 Yea Jove¹¹ himselfe did call the gods about him
 Fearinge the worlde had fir'd himselfe without him
 And whether this the last day were or noe 75
 Swift Mercury¹² is sent in hast to know
 The sullen fates¹³ that never till that day
 Were merry knowne to be he found att play
 And on there brass-leav'd bookes¹⁴ castinge his eye
 Hee saw it written for eternitie 80
 A day of rest & sport, & lett it stande
 For ever in the Calends of this land
 And lett the fift of October¹⁵ be found
 Like August fift wth a redd letter crown'd¹⁶
 For never soe much good as this before 85
 Unshipt itt selfe upon the Brittish shore
 Our weepinge summer was no sooner gone

But Charles a gracious after spring brings home
 Speake mightie prince found you not mens lookes
 As are indeed the Common peoples bookes 90
 Where those of understandinge read & find
 Where¹⁷ very soules, there thoughts there hearts there minds
 Have you not such a welcome written there
 As noe tongue can deliver to your eare
 Have you not th'heraulds of each Brittans hart 95
 Mantled in deepest scarlett dy ready to start
 Out of each blushing cheeke, each sparklinge eye
 Proclaiminge there (without base flattery)
 There speechlesse blisse there loves sinceritie
 There soules gladnesse there heartes alacritie 100
 Countinge nothinge more happy then t'expresse
 To you there joy, to heaven there thankefullnes
 O lett the memory of itt ever rest
 Within the Cabinett of your princely breast
 And lett itt bringe forth fruite when you are old 105
 So shall you reape from us a thousand fould
 Each graine of love cast on our humble ground
 Shall with a glorious harvest still be crown'd
 Winter shall loose its powers, noe mill-dew blast itt
 Time may sinke with itt Sir, but not out last itt 110
 What need your highness seek for love far hence
 Or fetch itt home with hazzard or expence
 Husband but what you have great Sir then know
 Emperours & Kinges the worlds Monarkes shall throw
 There sisters daughters neeces on our shoare 115
 And gaininge your alliance aske noe more
 Beautie & blood & wealth & birth shall stand
 The humble vassals of your great command

England Scotland, Ireland joynd together
 What dares she call her name they'le not fetch hither 120
 Leave us not then in everlasting night
 By such your absence Sir, by such your flight
 Day without sunn may better govern'd be
 Then England Scotland Ireland wantinge thee
 And thou great Buckingham fortunes best child 125
 On whom both heaven & earth & seas have smil'd
 Live long in that high sphere wherein you move
 In Gods, the Kinges, the Princes peoples love
 Detraction now repeales what she hath spoken
 Envy hath drunke her last is swolne & broken 130
 And mightie prince whiles others offer gold
 Some mirrhe, some frankinsence, some from the fold
 Bring goats & kidds, some oxen from the stall
 They offer but in part, I offer all
 Some billetts brought some faggotts to the fire 135
 I bringe a zealous heart whose flames aspires
 As high as did the greatest piles of wood
 And what they spent in wine Ile spend in blood
 All that they did was but to speake there love
 Upon the selfe same warrant comes this dove 140
 From forth the arke then of your grace & favour
 Vouchsafe to looke, putt forth your hand and save her
 She bringes but 2 bare leaves of olive now
 But att next flight great Sir expect a bow.

Source. Rosenbach MS 239/27, pp. 6-10

- 1 *Ovid*: Roman poet.
 - 2 *Homer*: ancient Greek epic poet.
 - 3 *Spencer*: Edmund Spenser, English epic poet (d.1599).
 - 4 *Daniel*: English poet Samuel Daniel (d.1619).
 - 5 *Charles & George*: Prince Charles and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, whose return from Spain is the occasion of the poem.
 - 6 *Apollo*: sun god and god of the muses.
 - 7 *Sydneis*: Sir Philip Sidney (d.1586), Elizabethan poet and writer.
 - 8 *Aid*: probable scribal error; read “Did”.
 - 9 *our flames*: bonfires were lit to celebrate Charles’s return.
 - 10 *Aurora*: goddess of dawn.
 - 11 *Jove*: king of the gods.
 - 12 *Mercury*: messenger of the gods.
 - 13 *fates*: the three fates, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos.
 - 14 *bookes*: i.e. the books of fates.
 - 15 *fift of October*: Charles and Buckingham arrived in England on 5 October 1623.
 - 16 *August fift...crown’d*: bells were rung on 5 August to commemorate the anniversary of King James’s deliverance from the Gowrie conspiracy in Scotland. “Red letter” days were holidays marked with red ink in the prayer book.
 - 17 *Where*: probable scribal error; read “There” (i.e. “Their”).
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