
3-7 Two Poems on Family by Anne Bradstreet Published in 1650

Born in Northampton, England, Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) traveled to America in 1630 with the first Massachusetts Bay colonists. There she settled with her husband to raise eight children and to write poetry. When a collection of her work was printed (without her knowledge) in London in 1650, she became the first American poet to be published. The following are two poems in Bradstreet's distinctively pious verse, one written for her husband, the other for one of her children.

Before the Birth of One of Her Children

All things within this fading world hath end,
Adversity doth still our joys attend;
No ties so strong, no friends so dear and sweet,
But with death's parting blow is sure to meet.
The sentence past is most irrevocable,
A common thing, yet oh inevitable;
How soon, my dear, death may my steps attend,
How soon't may be thy lot to lose thy friend,
We both are ignorant, yet love bids me
These farewell lines to recommend to thee,
That when that knot's untied that made us one,
I may seem thine, who in effect am none.
And if I see not half my days that's due,
What nature would, God grant to yours and you;

The many faults that well you know I have, Let be
interr'd in my oblivion's grave; If any worth or
virtue were in me, Let that live freshly in thy
memory, And when thou feel'st no grief, as I no
harms, Yet love thy dead, who long lay in thine
arms: And when thy loss shall be repaid with
gains, Look to my little babes, my dear remains.
And if thou love thy self, or loved'st me, These O
protect from step-dame's injury. And if chance to
thine eyes shall bring this verse, With some sad
sighs honor my absent hearse; And kiss the paper
for thy love's dear sake, Who with salt tears this
last farewell did take.

To My Dear and Loving Husband

If ever two were one, then surely we. If ever man
were loved 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 recompense. Thy
love is such I can no way repay, The heavens
reward thee manifold, I pray. Then while we live,
in love let's so persevere That when we live no
more, we may live ever.