

Anne Bradstreet

Anne Bradstreet was born Anne Dudley in 1612 in Northamptonshire, England. She married Simon Bradstreet, a graduate of Cambridge University, at the age of 16. Two years later, Bradstreet, along with her husband and parents, emigrated to America with the Winthrop Puritan group, and the family settled in Ipswich, Massachusetts. There Bradstreet and her husband raised eight children, and she became one of the first poets to write English verse in the American colonies. It was during this time that Bradstreet penned many of the poems that would be taken to England by her brother-in-law, purportedly without her knowledge, and published in 1650 under the title *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America*.

Tenth Muse was the only collection of Bradstreet's poetry to appear during her lifetime. In 1644, the family moved to Andover, Massachusetts, where Bradstreet lived until her death in 1672. In 1678, the first American edition of *Tenth Muse* was published posthumously and expanded as *Several Poems Compiled with Great Wit and Learning*. Bradstreet's most highly regarded work, a sequence of religious poems entitled *Contemplations*, was not published until the middle of the nineteenth century.

VERSES UPON THE BURNING OF OUR HOUSE, JULY 18TH, 1666

1 In silent night when rest I took,
2 For sorrow near I did not look,
3 I waken'd was with thund'ring noise
4 And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.
5 That fearful sound of "fire" and "fire,"
6 Let no man know is my Desire.
7 I starting up, the light did spy,
8 And to my God my heart did cry
9 To straighten me in my Distress
10 And not to leave me succourless.
11 Then coming out, behold a space
12 The flame consume my dwelling place.
13 And when I could no longer look,
14 I blest his grace that gave and took,
15 That laid my goods now in the dust.
16 Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.
17 It was his own; it was not mine.

18 Far be it that I should repine,
19 He might of all justly bereft
20 But yet sufficient for us left.
21 When by the Ruins oft I past
22 My sorrowing eyes aside did cast
23 And here and there the places spy
24 Where oft I sate and long did lie.
25 Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest,
26 There lay that store I counted best,
27 My pleasant things in ashes lie
28 And them behold no more shall I.
29 Under the roof no guest shall sit,
30 Nor at thy Table eat a bit.
31 No pleasant talk shall 'ere be told
32 Nor things recounted done of old.
33 No Candle 'ere shall shine in Thee,
34 Nor bridegroom's voice ere heard shall bee.
35 In silence ever shalt thou lie.
36 Adieu, Adieu, All's Vanity.
37 Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide:
38 And did thy wealth on earth abide,
39 Didst fix thy hope on mouldring dust,
40 The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?
41 Raise up thy thoughts above the sky
42 That dunghill mists away may fly.
43 Thou hast a house on high erect
44 Fram'd by that mighty Architect,
45 With glory richly furnished
46 Stands permanent, though this be fled.
47 It's purchased and paid for too
48 By him who hath enough to do.
49 A price so vast as is unknown,
50 Yet by his gift is made thine own.
51 There's wealth enough; I need no more.
[52](#) Farewell, my pelf; farewell, my store.
53 The world no longer let me love;
54 My hope and Treasure lies above.

To My Dear and Loving Husband

- 1 If ever two were one, then surely we.
- 2 If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee.
- 3 If ever wife was happy in a man,
- 4 Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
- 5 I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold
- 6 Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
- 7 My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
- 8 Nor ought but love from thee give recompetence.
- 9 Thy love is such I can no way repay.
- 10 The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
- 11 Then while we live, in love let's so persever
- 12 That when we live no more, we may live ever.

The Vanity of All Worldly Things

1. As he said vanity, so vain say I,
2. Oh! Vanity, O vain all under sky;
3. Where is the man can say, "Lo, I have found
4. On brittle earth a consolation sound"?
5. What isn't in honor to be set on high?
6. No, they like beasts and sons of men shall die,
7. And whilst they live, how oft doth turn their fate;
8. He's now a captive that was king of late.
9. What isn't in wealth great treasures to obtain?
10. No, that's but labor, anxious care, and pain.
11. He heaps up riches, and he heaps up sorrow,
12. It's his today, but who's his heir tomorrow?
13. What then? Content in pleasures canst thou find?
14. More vain than all, that's but to grasp the wind.
15. The sensual senses for a time they pleasure,
16. Meanwhile the conscience rage, who shall appease?
17. What isn't in beauty? No that's but a snare,
18. They're foul enough today, that once were fair.
19. What is't in flow'ring youth, or manly age?
20. The first is prone to vice, the last to rage.
21. Where is it then, in wisdom, learning, arts?
22. Sure if on earth, it must be in those parts;

23. Yet these the wisest man of men did find
24. But vanity, vexation of the mind.
25. And he that know the most doth still bemoan
26. He knows not all that here is to be known.
27. What is it then? To do as stoics tell,
28. Nor laugh, nor weep, let things go ill or well?
29. Such stoics are but stocks, such teaching vain,
30. While man is man, he shall have ease or pain.
31. If not in honor, beauty, age, nor treasure,
32. Nor yet in learning, wisdom, youth, nor pleasure,
33. Where shall I climb, sound, seek, search, or find
34. That summum bonum which may stay my mind?
35. There is a path no vulture's eye hath seen,
36. Where lion fierce, nor lion's whelps have been,
37. Which leads unto that living crystal fount,
38. Who drinks thereof, the world doth naught account.
39. The depth and sea have said " 'tis not in me,"
40. With pearl and gold it shall not valued be.
41. For sapphire, onyx, topaz who would change;
42. It's hid from eyes of men, they count it strange.
43. Death and destruction the fame hath heard,
44. But where and what it is, from heaven's declared;
45. It brings to honor which shall ne'er decay,
46. It stores with wealth which time can't wear away.
47. It yieldeth pleasures far beyond conceit,
48. And truly beautifies without deceit.
49. Nor strength, nor wisdom, nor fresh youth shall fade,
50. Nor death shall see, but are immortal made.
51. This pearl of price, this tree of life, this spring,
52. Who is possessed of shall reign a king.
53. Nor change of state nor cares shall ever see,
54. But wear his crown unto eternity.
55. This satiates the soul, this stays the mind,
56. And all the rest, but vanity we find.

**In Memory of my Dear Grandchild Anne Bradstreet, who deceased June 20,
1699, being Tree Years and Seven Months Old**

WITH troubled heart and trembling hand I write.
The heavens have changed to sorrow my delight.
How oft with dissatisfaction have I met
When I on fading things my hopes have set.
Experience might 'fore this have made me wise
To value things according to their price.
Was ever stable joy yet found below?
Or perfect bliss without mixture of woe?
I knew she was but as a withering flower,
That's here today, perhaps gone in an hour;
Like as a bubble, or the brittle glass,
Or like a shadow turning, as it was.
More fool, then, I to look on that was lent
As if mine own, when thus impermanent.
Farewell, dear child; thou ne'er shalt come to me,
But yet a while and I shall go to thee.
Meantime my throbbing heart's cheered up with this--
Thou with thy Savior art in endless bliss.