

Coronation Ode of King Henry VIII¹

Thomas More, 1509

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1 IN SVSCEPTI DIADEMATIS DIEM HENRICI
2 OCTAVI, ILLVSTRISSIMI AC FAVS-
3 TISSIMI BRITANNIARVM REGIS,
4 AC CATHERINAE REGINAE EIVS
5 FELICISSIMAE, THOMAE MORI
6 LONDONIENSIS CARMEN
7 GRATVLATORIVM.

8 **SI** qua dies unquam, si quod fuit Anglia tempus,
9 Gratia quo superis esset agenda tibi,
10 Haec est illa dies niueo signanda lapillo,
11 Laeta dies fastis annumeranda tuis.
12 Meta haec seruitij est, haec libertatis origo,
13 Tristitiae finis, laetitiaeque caput.
14 Nam iuuenem secli decus O memorabile nostri
15 Vngit, et in regem praeficit ista tuum.
16 Regem qui populi non unius usque, sed orbis
17 Imperio dignus totius unus erat.
18 Regem qui cunctis lachrymas detergat ocellis,
19 Gaudia pro longo substituat gemitu.
20 Omnia discussis arrident pectora curis,
21 Vt solet excussa nube nitere dies.
22 Iam populus uultu liber praecurrit amoeno,
23 Iam uix laetitiam concipit ipse suam.

24 Gaudet, ouat, gestit, tali sibi rege triumphat,
25 Nec quicquam nisi rex quolibet ore sonat.

26 Nobilitas, uulgi iamdudum obnoxia faeci,
27 Nobilitas, nimium nomen inane diu,

28 Nunc caput attollit, nunc tali rege triumphat,
29 Et merito causas unde triumphet, habet.
30 Mercator uarijs deterritus ante tributis,
31 Nunc maris insuetas puppe resulcat aquas.

ON THE CORONATION DAY OF HENRY
VIII, MOST GLORIOUS AND BLESSED KING
OF THE BRITISH ISLES, AND OF
CATHERINE HIS MOST HAPPY QUEEN,
A POETICAL EXPRESSION OF
GOOD WISHES BY THOMAS MORE OF
LONDON

IF EVER there was a day, England, if ever there was
a time for you to give thanks to those above, *Exordium*
this is that happy day, one to be marked with a pure
white stone and put in your calendar.
This day is the [end] of our slavery, the beginning of
our freedom, the end of sadness, the source of joy,
for this day consecrates a young man who is the everlast-
ing glory of our time and makes him your king—
a king who is worthy not merely to govern a single
people but singly to rule the whole world—
such a king as will wipe the tears from every eye
and put joy in the place of our long distress.
Every heart smiles to see its cares dispelled, as the day
Shines bright when clouds are scattered.
Now the people, freed, run before their king with bright
faces. Their joy is almost beyond their own
comprehension.
They rejoice, they exult, they leap for joy and celebrate
their having such a king. "The King" is all that any
mouth can say.
The nobility, long since at the mercy of the dregs of the
population, the nobility, whose title has too long
been without meaning,
now lifts its head, now rejoices in such a king, and has
proper reason for rejoicing.
The merchant, heretofore deterred by numerous taxes,
now once again plows seas grown unfamiliar.

32	Congaudent omnes pariter pariterque rependunt	Laws, heretofore powerless--yes, even laws put to unjust
33	Omnes uenturo damna priora bono.	ends—now happily have regained their proper
		authority.
34	Leges inualidae prius, imo nocere coactae,	All are equally happy. All weigh their earlier losses
35	Nunc uires gaudent obtinuisse suas.	against the advantages to come.
36	Iam quas abdiderat caecis timor ante latebris,	Now each man happily does not hesitate to show the
37	Promere quisque suas gaudet et audet opes.	possessions which in the past his fear kept hidden in
		dark seclusion.
38	Iam iuuat O, potuit tot furum si qua tot uncas	Now there is enjoyment in any profit which managed to
39	Tam circumspectas fallere praeda manus.	escape the many sly clutching hands of the many
		thieves.
40	Non iam diuitias ullum est (magnum esse solebat)	No longer is it a criminal offense to own property which
41	Quaesitas nullo crimen habere dolo.	was honestly acquired (formerly it was a serious
		offense).
42	Non metus occultos insibilat aure susurros,	No longer does fear hiss whispered secrets in one's ear,
43	Nemo quod taceat, quodue susurret, habet.	for no one has secrets either to keep or to whisper.
44	Iam delatores uolupte est contemnere, nemo	Now it is a delight to ignore informers. Only exinfor-
45	Deferri, nisi qui detulit ante, timet.	mers fear informers now.
46	Conueniunt igitur simul aetas, sexus, et ordo,	The people gather together, every age, both sexes, and
47	Causaque non ullum continet ulla domi,	all ranks. There is no reason why they should lurk in
		their homes
48	Quo minus intersint, dum sacris rite peractis,	and not take part while the king, after completion of the
49	Rex init auspicijs regna Britannia bonis.	proper ceremonies, undertakes, amid happy auspices,
		the rule of Britain.
50	Quacunq̄ue ingreditur, studio conferta uidendi	Wherever he goes, the dense crowd in their desire to
51	Vix sinit angustam turba patere uiam.	look upon him leaves hardly a narrow lane for his
		passage.
52	Opplenturque domus, et pondere tecta laborant.	The houses are filled to overflowing, the rooftops strain
53	Tollitur affectu clamor ubique nouo,	to support the weight of spectators. On all sides there
		arises a shout of new good will.
54	Nec semel est uidisse satis, loca plurima mutant,	Nor are the people satisfied to see the king just once;
55	Si qua rursus eum parte uidere queant.	they change their vantage points time and time again
		in the hope that, from one place or another, they may
		see him again.
56	Ter spectare iuuat: quid ni hunc spectare iuaret,	Three times they delight to see him—and why not? This
57	Quo natura nihil finxit amabilius?	king, than whom Nature has [shaped] nothing more
		deserving of love.
58	Mille inter comites excelsior omnibus extat,	Among a thousand noble companions he stands out taller
59	Et dignum Augusto corpore robur habet.	than any. And he has strength worthy of his regal
		person. <i>Praise for</i>
		<i>Bodily Gifts</i>
60	Nec minus ille manu est agilis, quam pectore fortis,	His hand, too, is as skilled as his heart is brave, whether
61	Seu res districto debeat ense geri,	there is an issue to be settled by the naked sword,
62	Seu quum protentis auide concurritur hastis,	or an eager charge with leveled lances, or an arrow
63	Seu petat oppositum missa sagitta locum.	aimed to strike a target.

64	Ignea uis oculis, Venus insidet ore, genisque	There is fiery power in his eyes, [Venus] in his face, and
65	Est color, in geminis qui solet esse rosas.	such color in his cheeks as is typical of twin roses.
66	Illa quidem facies alacri ueneranda uigore	In fact, that face, admirable for its animated strength,
67	Esse potest tenerae uirginis, esse uiri.	could belong to either a young girl or a man.
68	Talis erat, Nympham quum se simulauit Achilles.	Thus Achilles looked when he pretended to be a maiden,
69	Talis, ubi Aemonijs Hectora traxit equis.	thus he looked when he dragged Hector behind his Thessalian steeds.
70	O si animi praestans una cum corpore uirtus	Ah, if only nature would permit that, like his body, the
71	Cerni, natura non prohibente, queat.	outstanding excellence of his [soul] be visible to the eye. <i>Praise for</i>
72	Imo etiam uultu uirtus pellucet ab ipso,	Nay but in fact his virtue does shine forth from <i>Virtues of</i>
73	Est facies animi nuncia aperta boni,	his very face; his countenance bears the open message of a good heart, <i>the Soul</i>
74	Quam matura graui sedeat prudentia mente,	revealing how ripe the wisdom that dwells in his judi-
75	Quam non solliciti pectoris alta quies,	cious mind, how profound the calm of his untroubled breast,
76	Quoque modo sortem ferat, et moderetur utranque,	how he bears his lot and manages it whether it be good
77	Quanta uerecundae cura pudicitiae.	or bad, how great his care for modest chastity.
78	Quam tranquilla fouet placidum clementia pectus,	How serene the clemency that warms his gentle heart,
79	Quam procul ex illo fastus abest animo,	how far removed from arrogance his mind,
80	Principis egregius nostri (quas fingere non est)	of these the noble countenance of our prince itself
81	Prae se fert certas uultus et ipse notas.	displays the indubitable signs, signs that admit no counterfeit.
82	At qua iustitia est, regnandi quas habet artes,	But his justice, the skill he has in the art of ruling, his
83	Prosequitur populum qua pietate suum,	sense of responsibility in the treatment of his people—
84	Haec facile ex uultu fiunt illustria nostro,	these can easily be discerned from our faces, these must
85	Haec sunt ex nostris conspicienda bonis.	be perceived from the prosperity we enjoy.
86	Quod sic afficimur, quod libertate potimur,	In that we are treated thus and are gaining our liberty, in
87	Quodque abiere timor, damna, pericia, dolor,	that fear, harm, danger, grief have vanished,
88	Quod rediere simul, pax, commoda, gaudia, risus,	while peace, ease, joy, and laughter have returned—
89	Eximij uirtus principis inde patet.	therein is revealed the excellence of our distinguished prince.
90	Eneruare bonas immensa licentia mentes	Unlimited power has a tendency to weaken good minds,
91	Idque etiam in magnis assolet ingenijs.	and that even in the case of very gifted men.
92	At quamuis erat ante pius, mores tamen illi	But howsoever dutiful he was before, his crown <i>Praise for</i>
93	Imperium dignos attulit imperio.	has brought our prince a character which deserves to rule, <i>Achievements</i>
94	Nam bona quae pauci sera fecere senecta,	or he has provided promptly on his first day such advan-
95	Protinus in primo praestitit ille die.	tages as few rulers have granted in extreme old age.
96	Illico correptos inclusit carcere, quisquis	He has instantly arrested and imprisoned anyone who by
97	Consilio regnum laeserat ante malo.	plots had harmed the realm.
98	Qui delator erat, uinclis constringitur arctis,	Whoever was an informer is closely fettered and con-
99	Vt mala quae multis fecerat, ipse ferat.	fined, so that he himself suffers the woes which he imposed on many.

100	Ad mercaturas aperit mare: si quod ab illis	Our prince opened the sea for trade. If any overharsh
101	Durius exactum est ante, remisit onus.	duties were required of the merchants, he lightened their load.
102	Despectusque diu magnatum nobilis ordo,	And the long-scorned nobility recovered on our prince's
103	Obtinuit primo pristina iura die.	first day the ancient rights of nobles.
104	Ille magistratus et munera publica, uendi	He now gives to good men the honors and public offices
105	Quae sueuere malis, donat habenda bonis.	which used to be sold to evil men.
106	Et uersis rerum uicibus feliciter, ante	By a happy reversal of circumstances, learned men now
107	Quae tulit indoctus praemia, doctus habet.	have the prerogatives which ignoramuses carried off in the past.
108	Legibus antiquam (nam uersae euertere regnum	Our prince without delay has restored to the laws their
109	Debuerant) subito uimque decusque dedit.	ancient force and dignity (for they had been perverted so as to subvert the realm).
110	Omnis cumque prius prorsus descisceret ordo,	And although formerly each rank in the state was
111	Protinus est omnis redditus ordo sibi.	changing character completely, now at once every rank is restored.
112	Quid quod in his etiam uoluit rescindere quaedan	What if, in the hope of being kind to his people, he de-
113	Vt populo possit commodus esse suo,	ecided to retract certain provisions of the law
114	Quae tamen ante suo nouit placuisse parenti?	which he knew his father had approved? In this he
115	Sic patriam, ut decuit, praetulit ille patri.	placed, as he should, his country before his father.
116	Nec miror: quid enim non principe fiat ab illo,	This preference does not surprise me; what could lie
117	Cui cultum ingenuis artibus ingenium est,	beyond the powers of a prince whose natural <i>Praise for</i> gifts have been enhanced by a liberal education, <i>Learning</i>
118	Castalio quem fonte nouem lauere sorores,	a prince bathed by the nine sisters in the Castalian fount
119	Imbuit et monitis Philosophia suis?	and steeped in philosophy's own precepts?
120	Nominibus populus multis obnoxius omnis	The whole people used to be, on many counts, in debt to
121	Regi erat: hoc unum pertimuitque malum.	the king, and this in particular was the evil they <i>Achievements</i> <i>Continued</i>
122	At rex, hinc metui quum posset, posset et inde	But our king, though he could have inspired fear in
123	Congerere immensas, si uoluisset, opes,	this way and could have gathered from this source immense riches, if he had wished to do so,
124	Omnibus ignouit: securos reddidit omnes,	has forgiven the debts of all, and rendered all secure,
125	Sollicitique malum substulit omne metus.	removing all the evil of distressing fear.
126	Ergo alios populi reges timuere, sed istum,	Hence it is that, while other kings have been feared by
127	Per quem nunc nihil est quod timeatur, amant.	their [people], this king is loved, since now through his action they have no cause for fear.
128	Hostibus O princeps multum metuende superbis.	O prince, terror to your proud enemies but not to your
129	O populo princeps non metuende tuo.	own people,
130	Illi te metuunt: nos te ueneramur, amamus.	it is your enemies who fear you; we revere and love you.
131	Illis, noster erit, cur metuaris, amor.	Our love for you will prove the reason for their fear.
132	Sic te securum, demptoque satellite tutum,	And thus it is that, in the absence of sycophants, your
133	Vndique praestabunt, hinc amor, inde timor.	[people's] love and your enemies' fear will hedge you round in peace and safety.
134	Extera bella quidem, coeat si Gallia Scotis,	As for wars beyond the borders—if the French, for in-
135	Sit tantum concors Anglia, nemo timet.	stance, join with the Scots—no one is afraid, pro- vided that England is not divided.

136	At procul intestina aberunt certamina: nam quae	And internal strife there will not be, for what cause,
137	Semina, quas causas unde oriantur, habent?	what reason, is there to provoke it?
138	Primum equidem de iure tuae titutioque coronae	Most important, concerning your right and title to the
139	Quaestio iam non est ulla, nec esse potest.	crown, there is no opposition, nor can there be.
140	Quae certare solet iam tu pars utraque solus,	You, all by yourself, represent both sides of the quarrel
141	Nobilis hanc litem soluit uterque parens.	which usually arises; the fact that both your parents
		were high-born disposes of this problem.
142	Ast magis abs te etiam est populi prociui ira, tumultus	And anyway the anger of the people, a wicked thing, common source of civil disturbance, is even more
143	Impia ciuilis quae solet esse caput.	remote from you.
144	Ciuius ipse tuis tam charus es omnibus unus,	To all your subjects you are so dear that no man could
145	Vt nemo possit charior esse sibi.	be dearer to himself.
146	Quod si forte duces committeret ira potentes,	But if perchance wrath were to bring powerful chieftains
147	Soluetur nutu protinus ha tuo.	to war, your nod will promptly put an end to that
		wrath,
148	Tanta tibi est maiestatis reuerentia sacrae,	such reverence for your sacred majesty have your virtues
149	Virtutes merito quam peperere tuae.	justly created.
150	Quae tibi sunt, fuerant patrum quaecunque tuorum.	And whatever virtues your ancestors had, these are
151	Secula prisca quibus nil habuere prius.	yours too, not excelled in ages past.
152	Est tibi namque tui princeps prudentia patris.	For you, sire, have your father's wisdom, you have your
153	Estque tibi matris dextra benigna tuae.	mother's kindly strength,
154	Est tibi mens auiae, mens reiligiosa paternae.	the devout intelligence of your paternal grandmother,
155	Est tibi materni nobile pectus aui.	the noble heart of your mother's father.
156	Quid mirum ergo, nouo si gaudeat Angiia more,	What wonder, then, if England rejoices in a fashion
157	Cum qualis nunquam rexerat ante, regat?	heretofore unknown, since she has such a king as she
		never had before?
158	Quid quod laetitia haec, quae uisa est non potuisse	And then there is the fact that this joy, apparently
159	Crescere, coniugio creuit adaucta tuo?	as great as it could be, was increased by your <i>Praise of the</i> marriage— <i>Queen</i>
160	Coniugio, superi quod decreuere benigni,	a marriage which the kindly powers above arranged and
161	Quo tibi, quoque tuis consulere bene.	in which they planned well for you and yours.
162	Llla tibi coniunx, laetus communia tecum	In her you have as wife one whom your people have
163	Quam uidit populus scepra tenere tuus,	been happy to see sharing your power,
164	Cuius habent tantam coelestia numina curam,	one for whom the powers above care so much that they
165	Vt thalamis ornent, nobilitentque tuis.	distinguish her and honor her by marriage with you.
166	Illa est, quae priscas uincat pietate Sabinas,	She it is who could vanquish the ancient Sabine women
167	Maiestate sacras uicerit hemitheas.	in devotion, and in dignity the holy, half-divine
		heroines of Greece.
168	Illa uel Alcestes castos aequarit amores,	She could equal the unselfish love of Alcestis or, in her
169	Vel prompto superet consilio Tanaquil.	unfailing judgment, outdo Tanaquil.
170	Illo ore, hoc uultu, forma est spectabilis illa,	In her expression, in her countenance, there is a remark-
171	Quae talem ac tantam sola decere potest.	able beauty uniquely appropriate for one so great and
		good.
172	Eloquio facunda cui Cornelia cedat,	The well-spoken Cornelia would yield to her in elo-
173	Inque maritali Penelopeia fide.	quence; she is like Penelope in loyalty to a husband.

174 Illa tibi princeps multos deuota per annos,
 175 Sola tui longa mansit amore mora.
 176 Non illam germana soror, nec patria flexit,
 177 Non potuit mater, non reuocare pater.

178 Vnum te matri, te praetulit illa sorori.
 179 Te patriae, et charo praetulit illa patri.
 180 Illa tibi felix populos, hinc inde potentes
 181 Non dissoluenda iunxit amicitia.
 182 Regibus orta quidem magnis, nihioque minorum est
 183 Regum, quam quibus est orta, futura parens.
 184 Hactenus una tui nauem tenet ancora regni,
 185 Vna, sat illa quidem firma, sed una tamen.
 186 At regina tibi sexu foecunda uirili
 187 Vndique firmatam perpetuamque dabit.
 188 Proueniunt illi magna ex te commoda, rursus
 189 Ex illa ueniunt commoda magna tibi:
 190 Non alia ulla fuit certe te digna marito.
 191 Illa non alius coniuge dignus erat.

192 Anglia thura feras, sacrumque potentius omni
 193 Thure, bonas mentes innocuasque manus,
 194 Connubium ut superi hoc, sicut fecere, secudent,
 195 Vt data coelesti sceptris regantur ope,

196 Vtque ipsis gestata diu haec diademata, tandem
 197 Et natus nati gestet, et inde nepos.

This lady, prince, vowed to you for many years, through
 a long time of waiting remained alone for love of you.
 Neither her own sister nor her native land could win her
 from her way; neither her mother nor her father
 could dissuade her.

It was you, none other, whom she preferred to her
 mother, sister, native land, and beloved father.

This blessed lady has joined in lasting alliance two
 nations, each of them powerful.

She is descended from great kings, to be sure; and she
 will be the mother of kings as great as her ancestors.

Until now one anchor has protected your ship of state—
 a strong one, yet only one.

But your queen, fruitful in male offspring, will render it
 on all sides stable and everlasting.

Great advantage is yours because of her, and similarly is
 hers because of you.

There has been no other woman, surely, worthy to have
 you as husband, nor any other man worthy to have
 her as wife.

England! bring incense, and an offering more potent than
 all incense—loyal hearts and innocent hands,
 that heaven, as it has made this marriage, may bless it,
 that the scepter may be swayed with the help of
 heaven that gave it,

and that these crowns may long be worn by these two,
 and may at length be worn by their son's son and their
 descendants thereafter.

Endnote

¹ Epigram 19, in volume 3.2, *Latin Poems, of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, eds. C. H. Miller, L. Bradner, C. A. Lynch, and R. P. Oliver (Yale UP, 1984), pp. 100-113.