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, 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 everlasting 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.

IN SVSCEPTI DIADEMATIS DIEM HENRICI OCTAVI, ILLVSTRISSIMI AC FAVS-TISSIMI BRITANNIARVM REGIS, AC CATHERINAE REGINAE EIVS FELICISSIMAE, THOMAE MORI LONDONIENSIS CARMEN GRATVLATORIVM.

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

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

Nobilitas, uulgi iamdudum obnoxia faeci,
Nobilitas, nimium nomen inane diu,
Nunc caput attollit, nunc tali rege triumphat,
Et merito causas unde triumphet, habet.
Mercator uarijs deterritus ante tributis,
Nunc maris insuetas puppe resulcat aquas.
Coronation Ode by Thomas More

Laws, heretofore powerless—yes, even laws put to unjust ends—now happily have regained their proper authority.

All are equally happy. All weigh their earlier losses against the advantages to come.

Now each man happily does not hesitate to show the possessions which in the past his fear kept hidden in dark seclusion.

Now there is enjoyment in any profit which managed to escape the many sly clutching hands of the many thieves.

No longer is it a criminal offense to own property which was honestly acquired (formerly it was a serious offense).

No longer does fear hiss whispered secrets in one’s ear, for no one has secrets either to keep or to whisper.

Now it is a delight to ignore informers. Only exinformers fear informers now.

The people gather together, every age, both sexes, and all ranks. There is no reason why they should lurk in their homes and not take part while the king, after completion of the proper ceremonies, undertakes, amid happy auspices, the rule of Britain.

Wherever he goes, the dense crowd in their desire to look upon him leaves hardly a narrow lane for his passage.

The houses are filled to overflowing, the rooftops strain to support the weight of spectators. On all sides there arises a shout of new good will.

Nor are the people satisfied to see the king just once; they change their vantage points time and time again in the hope that, from one place or another, they may see him again.

Three times they delight to see him—and why not? This king, than whom Nature has [shaped] nothing more deserving of love.

Among a thousand noble companions he stands out taller than any. And he has strength worthy of his regal person.

His hand, too, is as skilled as his heart is brave, whether there is an issue to be settled by the naked sword, or an eager charge with leveled lances, or an arrow aimed to strike a target.
Coronation Ode by Thomas More

There is fiery power in his eyes, [Venus] in his face, and such color in his cheeks as is typical of twin roses.

In fact, that face, admirable for its animated strength, could belong to either a young girl or a man.

Thus Achilles looked when he pretended to be a maiden, thus he looked when he dragged Hector behind his Thessalian steeds.

Ah, if only nature would permit that, like his body, the outstanding excellence of his [soul] be visible to the eye.

Nay but in fact his virtue does shine forth from his very face; his countenance bears the open message of a good heart,

revealing how ripe the wisdom that dwells in his judicious mind, how profound the calm of his untroubled breast,

how he bears his lot and manages it whether it be good or bad, how great his care for modest chastity.

How serene the clemency that warms his gentle heart, how far removed from arrogance his mind, of these the noble countenance of our prince itself displays the indubitable signs, signs that admit no counterfeit.

But his justice, the skill he has in the art of ruling, his sense of responsibility in the treatment of his people—

these can easily be discerned from our faces, these must be perceived from the prosperity we enjoy.

In that we are treated thus and are gaining our liberty, in that fear, harm, danger, grief have vanished, while peace, ease, joy, and laughter have returned—therein is revealed the excellence of our distinguished prince.

Unlimited power has a tendency to weaken good minds, and that even in the case of very gifted men.

But howsoever dutiful he was before, his crown has brought our prince a character which deserves rule,

or he has provided promptly on his first day such advantages as few rulers have granted in extreme old age.

He has instantly arrested and imprisoned anyone who by plots had harmed the realm.

Whoever was an informer is closely fettered and confined, so that he himself suffers the woes which he imposed on many.
Ad mercaturas aperit mare: si quod ab illis
durius exactum est ante, remisit onus.

Despectusque diu magnatum nobilis ordo,
Obtinuit primo pristina iura die.

Ille magistratus et munera publica, uendi
Quae sueuere malis, donat habenda bonis.

Et ursi rerum uicibus feliciter, ante
Quae tult inductus praemia, doctus habet.

Legibus antiquam (nam uersae euertere regnum
Debuerant) subito vimque decusque dedit.

Omnis cumque prius prorsus descisceret ordo,
Protinus est omnis redditus ordo sibi.

Quid quod in his etiam uoluit rescindere quaedan
Vt populo possit commodus esse suo,

At rex, hinc metui quum posset, posset et inde
Congerere immensas, si uoluiisset, opes,

Omnibus ignouit: securos reddidit omnes,
Solicitique malum substulit omne metus.

Per quem nunc nihil est quod timeatur, amant.

Hostibus O princeps multum metuende superbis.
O populo princeps non metuende tuo.

Illi te metuunt: nos te ueneramur, amamus.
Illis, noster erit, cur metuam, amor.

Sic te securum, demptoque satellite tutum,
Vndique praestabunt, hinc amor, inde timor.

Extera bella quidem, coeat si Gallia Scotis,
Sit tantum concors Anglia, nemo timet.
At procul intestina aberunt certamina: nam quae Semina, quas causas unde orientur, habent? Primum equidem de iure tuae tituioque coronae Quaestio iam non est ulla, nec esse potest. Quae certare solet iam tu pars utraque solus, Nobilis hanc litem soluit uterque parens.

Ast magis abs te etiam est populi procui ira, tumultus Impia ciulis quae solet esse caput. Ciibus ipse tuis tam charus es omnibus unus, Ut nemo possit charior esse sibi. Quod si forte duces committeret ira potentes, Soluetur nutu protinus ha tuo.


Quid mirum ergo, nouo si gaudeat Angiia more, Cum qualis nunquam rexerat ante, regat? Crescere, coniugio creuit aucta tuo?

Coniugio, superi quod decreuere benigni, Quo tibi, quoque tuis consolure Bene. Illa est, quae priscas uncat pietate Sabinas, Maiestate sacras uicerit hemitheas.

Illa uel Alcestes castos aequarit amores, Vel prompto superet consilio Tanaquil. Illo ore, hoc uultu, forma est spectabilis illa, Quae talem ac tantam sola decere potest.

Eloquio facunda cui Cornelia cedat, Inque maritali Penelopeia fide.

And internal strife there will not be, for what cause, what reason, is there to provoke it?

Most important, concerning your right and title to the crown, there is no opposition, nor can there be. You, all by yourself, represent both sides of the quarrel which usually arises; the fact that both your parents were high-born disposes of this problem. And anyway the anger of the people, a wicked thing, common source of civil disturbance, is even more remote from you.

To all your subjects you are so dear that no man could be dearer to himself. But if perchance wrath were to bring powerful chieftains to war, your nod will promptly put an end to that wrath, such reverence for your sacred majesty have your virtues justly created.

And whatever virtues your ancestors had, these are yours too, not excelled in ages past. For you, sire, have your father’s wisdom, you have your mother’s kindly strength, the devout intelligence of your paternal grandmother, the noble heart of your mother’s father.

What wonder, then, if England rejoices in a fashion heretofore unknown, since she has such a king as she never had before?

And then there is the fact that this joy, apparently as great as it could be, was increased by your marriage—a marriage which the kindly powers above arranged and in which they planned well for you and yours. In her you have as wife one whom your people have been happy to see sharing your power, one for whom the powers above care so much that they distinguish her and honor her by marriage with you. She it is who could vanquish the ancient Sabine women in devotion, and in dignity the holy, half-divine heroines of Greece.

She could equal the unselfish love of Alcestis or, in her unfailing judgment, outdo Tanaquil.

In her expression, in her countenance, there is a remarkable beauty uniquely appropriate for one so great and good.

The well-spoken Cornelia would yield to her in eloquence; she is like Penelope in loyalty to a husband.
Illa tibi princeps multos deuota per annos,
Sola tui longa mansit amore mora.
Non illam germana soror, nec patria flexit,
Non potuit mater, non reuocare pater.

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