Anne Bradstreet

Born 1612, died in 1672 at age 60. Puritan poet who was the first writer in England’s North American colonies to be published. Much of her writing was published after her death. Mother of eight children and wife of a public officer in the New England community. Her poetry reflect the hardships of being a mother, a woman, and a Puritan in the American colonies in the 17th century. During Bradstreet’s lifetime, it wasn’t considered acceptable by most for a woman to be a writer. Women were told to leave writing and reading for men, “whose minds are stronger.” When Bradstreet continued writing, this sometimes made her appear as going against their society. Bradstreet balances her Puritan faith, which maintains that men are intellectually superior to women, with her passion for writing poetry.

**To My Dear and Loving Husband**

If ever two were one, then surely we.   
If ever man were lov'd 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 recompetence.   
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 persever  
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

**In Reference to Her Children**

I had eight birds hatched in one nest,  
Four cocks there were, and hens the rest.  
I nursed them up with pain and care,  
Nor cost, nor labour did I spare,  
Till at the last they felt their wing,  
Mounted the trees, and learned to sing;  
Chief of the brood then took his flight  
To regions far and left me quite.  
My mournful chirps I after send,  
Till he return, or I do end:  
Leave not thy nest, thy dam and sire,  
Fly back and sing amidst this choir.  
My second bird did take her flight,  
And with her mate flew out of sight;  
Southward they both their course did bend,  
And seasons twain they there did spend,  
Till after blown by southern gales,  
They norward steered with filled sails.  
A prettier bird was no where seen,  
Along the beach among the treen.  
I have a third of colour white,  
On whom I placed no small delight;  
Coupled with mate loving and true,  
Hath also bid her dam adieu;  
And where Aurora first appears,  
She now hath perched to spend her years.  
One to the academy flew  
To chat among that learned crew;  
Ambition moves still in his breast  
That he might chant above the rest  
Striving for more than to do well,  
That nightingales he might excel.  
My fifth, whose down is yet scarce gone,  
Is 'mongst the shrubs and bushes flown,  
And as his wings increase in strength,  
On higher boughs he'll perch at length.  
My other three still with me nest,  
Until they're grown, then as the rest,  
Or here or there they'll take their flight,  
As is ordained, so shall they light.  
If birds could weep, then would my tears  
Let others know what are my fears  
Lest this my brood some harm should catch,  
And be surprised for want of watch,  
Whilst pecking corn and void of care,  
They fall un'wares in fowler's snare,  
Or whilst on trees they sit and sing,  
Some untoward boy at them do fling,  
Or whilst allured with bell and glass,  
The net be spread, and caught, alas.  
Or lest by lime-twigs they be foiled,  
Or by some greedy hawks be spoiled.  
O would my young, ye saw my breast,  
And knew what thoughts there sadly rest,  
Great was my pain when I you fed,  
Long did I keep you soft and warm,  
And with my wings kept off all harm,  
My cares are more and fears than ever,  
My throbs such now as 'fore were never.  
Alas, my birds, you wisdom want,  
Of perils you are ignorant;  
Oft times in grass, on trees, in flight,  
Sore accidents on you may light.  
O to your safety have an eye,  
So happy may you live and die.  
Meanwhile my days in tunes I'll spend,  
Till my weak lays with me shall end.  
In shady woods I'll sit and sing,  
And things that past to mind I'll bring.  
Once young and pleasant, as are you,  
But former toys (no joys) adieu.  
My age I will not once lament,  
But sing, my time so near is spent.  
And from the top bough take my flight  
Into a country beyond sight,  
Where old ones instantly grow young,  
And there with seraphims set song;  
No seasons cold, nor storms they see;  
But spring lasts to eternity.  
When each of you shall in your nest  
Among your young ones take your rest,  
In chirping language, oft them tell,  
You had a dam that loved you well,  
That did what could be done for young,  
And nursed you up till you were strong,  
And 'fore she once would let you fly,  
She showed you joy and misery;  
Taught what was good, and what was ill,  
What would save life, and what would kill.  
Thus gone, amongst you I may live,  
And dead, yet speak, and counsel give:  
Farewell, my birds, farewell adieu,  
I happy am, if well with you.

**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 are 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 the 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 interred in my oblivious 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 harmes,  
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 thyself, or loved'st me,  
These O protect from stepdame's injury.  
And if chance to thine eyes shall bring this verse,  
With some sad sighs honor my absent hearse;  
And kiss this paper for thy dear love's sake,   
Who with salt tears this last farewell did take.

**Of The Four Ages of Man**

Lo, now four other act upon the stage,  
Childhood and Youth, the Many and Old age:  
The first son unto phlegm, grandchild to water,  
Unstable, supple, cold and moist's his nature  
The second, frolic, claims his pedigree  
From blood and air, for hot and moist is he.  
The third of fire and choler is compos'd,  
Vindicative and quarrelsome dispos'd.  
The last of earth and heavy melancholy,  
Solid, hating all lightness and all folly.  
Childhood was cloth'd in white and green to show  
His spring was intermixed with some snow:  
Upon his head nature a garland set  
Of Primrose, Daisy and the Violet.  
Such cold mean flowers the spring puts forth betime,  
Before the sun hath thoroughly heat the clime.  
His hobby striding did not ride but run,  
And in his hand an hour-glass new begun,  
In danger every moment of a fall,  
And when 't is broke then ends his life and all:  
But if he hold till it have run its last,  
Then may he live out threescore years or past.  
Next Youth came up in gorgeous attire  
(As that fond age doth most of all desire),  
His suit of crimson and his scarf of green,  
His pride in's countenance was quickly seen;  
Garland of roses, pinks and gillyflowers  
Seemed on's head to grow bedew'd with showers.  
His face as fresh as is Aurora fair,  
When blushing she first 'gins to light the air.  
No wooden horse, but one of mettle tried,  
He seems to fly or swim, and not to ride.  
Then prancing on the stage, about he wheels,  
But as he went death waited at his heels,  
The next came up in a much graver sort,  
As one that cared for a good report,  
His sword by's side, and choler in his eyes,  
But neither us'd as yet, for he was wise;  
Of Autumn's fruits a basket on his arm,  
His golden god in's purse, which was his charm.  
And last of all to act upon this stage  
Leaning upon his staff came up Old Age,  
Under his arm a sheaf of wheat he bore,  
An harvest of the best, what needs he more?  
In's other hand a glass ev'n almost run,  
Thus writ about: "This out, then am I done."