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## **Poems**

**Gray, Thomas**

**London, 1770**

The Bard. A Pindaric Ode.

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ADVERTISEMENT.  
THE  
B A R D.

A PINDARIC ODE.

E 2



## ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Ode is founded on a Tradition current in Wales, that EDWARD THE FIRST, when he compleated the conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards, that fell into his hands, to be put to death.





T H E

B A R D.

A P I N D A R I C O D E.

I. 1.

‘ **R** UIN seize thee, ruthless King!

‘ Confusion on thy banners wait,

‘ Tho’ fann’d by Conquest’s crimson wing

‘ They mock the air with idle state.

---

‘ Mocking the air with colours idly spread.

*Shakespeare’s King John.*

E 3

‘ Helm,



' Helm, nor <sup>f</sup> Hauberk's twisted mail,  
 ' Nor e'en thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail  
 ' To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,  
 ' From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears !<sup>g</sup>

Such were the sounds, that o'er the <sup>g</sup> crested pride  
 Of the first Edward scatter'd wild dismay,  
 As down the steep of <sup>h</sup> Snowdon's shaggy side  
 He wound with toilsome march his long array.

Stout

---

<sup>f</sup> The Hauberk was a texture of steel ringlets, or rings interwoven, forming a coat of mail, that sat close to the body, and adapted itself to every motion.

<sup>g</sup> — The crested adder's pride.

*Dryden's Indian Queen.*

<sup>h</sup> *Snowdon* was a name given by the Saxons to that mountainous tract, which the Welsh themselves call *Craigian-eyri*: it included all

Stout <sup>i</sup> Glo'fer flood aghaft in speechlefs trance:  
 To arms! cried <sup>k</sup> Mortimer, and couch'd his quiv'ring  
 [lance.

---

all the highlands of Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire, as far east as the river Conway. R. Hygden, speaking of the castle of Conway built by King Edward the first, says, "Ad ortum amnis Conway ad clivum montis Ery;" and Matthew of Westminster, (ad ann. 1283,) "Apud Aberconway ad pedes montis Snowdoniæ fecit erigi castrum forte."

<sup>i</sup> Gilbert de Clare, surnamed the Red, Earl of Gloucester and Hertford, son-in-law to King Edward.

<sup>k</sup> Edmond de Mortimer, Lord of Wigmore.

They both were *Lords-Marchers*, whose lands lay on the borders of Wales, and probably accompanied the King in this expedition.



## I. 2.

On a rock, whose haughty brow  
 Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,  
 Rob'd in the fable garb of woe,  
 With haggard eyes the Poet flood ;  
 (¹ Loose his beard, and hoary hair  
 ᵐ Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air)  
 And with a Master's hand, and Prophet's fire,  
 Struck the deep furrows of his lyre.

¹ The image was taken from a well-known picture of Raphaël, representing the Supreme Being in the vision of Ezekiel : there are two of these paintings (both believed original), one at Florence, the other at Paris.

ᵐ Shone, like a meteor, streaming to the wind.

*Milton's Paradise Lost.*

‘ Hark,

- ‘ Hark, how each giant-oak, and desert cave,  
‘ Sighs to the torrent’s awful voice beneath !  
‘ O’er thee, oh King ! their hundred arms they wave,  
‘ Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe ;  
‘ Vocal no more, since Cambria’s fatal day,  
‘ To high-born Hoel’s harp, or soft Llewellyn’s lay.

## I. 3.

- ‘ Cold is Cadwallo’s tongue,  
‘ That hush’d the stormy main :  
‘ Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed :  
‘ Mountains, ye mourn in vain  
‘ Modred, whose magic song  
‘ Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-top’d head.  
‘ On





- ‘<sup>n</sup> On dreary Arvon’s shore they lie,  
 ‘ Smear’d with gore, and ghastly pale:  
 ‘ Far, far aloof th’ affrighted ravens fail;  
 ‘ The famish’d ° Eagle screams, and passës by.
- 

<sup>n</sup> The shores of Caernarvonshire opposite to the isle of Anglesey.

° Camden and others observe, that eagles used annually to build their aerie among the rocks of Snowdon, which from thence (as some think) were named by the Welch *Craigian-eryri*, or the crags of the eagles. At this day (I am told) the highest point of Snowdon is called *the eagle’s nest*. That bird is certainly no stranger to this island, as the Scots, and the people of Cumberland, Westmoreland, &c. can testify: it even has built its nest in the Peak of Derbyshire. [See Willoughby’s Ornithol. published by Ray.]

‘ Dear



- ‘ Dear loft companions of my tuneful art,  
 ‘ P Dear, as the light that vifits thefe fad eyes,  
 ‘ Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,  
 ‘ Ye died amidft your dying country’s cries—  
 ‘ No more I weep. They do not fleep.  
 ‘ On yonder cliffs, a grieſly band,  
 ‘ I fee them fit, they linger yet,  
 ‘ Avengers of their native land :  
 ‘ With me in dreadful harmony they join,  
 ‘ And <sup>a</sup> weave with bloody hands the tiſſue of thy line.’
- 

P As dear to me as are the ruddy drops,  
 That viſit my fad heart—

*Shakeſp. Jul. Cæſar.*

<sup>a</sup> See the Norwegian Ode, that follows.



## II. I.

- “ Weave the warp, and weave the woof,  
“ The winding-sheet of Edward's race.  
“ Give ample room, and verge enough  
“ The characters of hell to trace.  
“ Mark the year, and mark the night,  
“ When Severn shall re-echo with affright  
“ The shrieks of death, thro' Berkley's roofs that ring;  
“ Shrieks of an agonizing King!
- 

\* Edward the Second, cruelly butchered in Berkley-Castle.

“ She-Wolf

“ s She-Wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,  
 “ That tear’ft the bowels of thy mangled Mate,  
 “ t From thee be born, who o’er thy country hangs  
 “ The scourge of Heav’n. What Terrors round him wait!  
 “ Amazement in his van, with Flight combin’d;  
 “ And Sorrow’s faded form, and Solitude behind.

II. 2.

“ Mighty Victor, mighty Lord,  
 “ n Low on his funeral couch he lies!  
 “ No pitying heart, no eye, afford  
 “ A tear to grace his obsequies.

---

\* Isabel of France, Edward the Second’s adulterous Queen.

t Triumphs of Edward the Third in France.

n Death of that King, abandoned by his Children, and even robbed  
 in his last moments by his Courtiers and his Mistress.

“ Is the fable <sup>w</sup> Warriour fled ?

“ Thy fon is gone. He refts among the Dead.

“ The Swarm, that in thy noon-tide beam were born ?

“ Gone to falute the rifing Morn.

“ Fair <sup>x</sup> laughs the Morn, and foft the Zephyr blows,

“ While proudly riding o'er the azure realm

“ In gallant trim the gilded Veffel goes ;

“ Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm ;

“ Regardlefs of the fweeping Whirlwind's fway,

“ That, hush'd in grim repofe, expects his evening-prey.

---

<sup>w</sup> Edward the Black Prince, dead fome time before his Father.

<sup>x</sup> Magnificence of Richard the Second's reign. See Froiffard, and other contemporary Writers.

II. 3.

- “ Fill high the sparkling bowl,  
“ The rich repast prepare,  
“ Reft of a crown, he yet may fhare the feaft :  
“ Clofe by the regal chair  
“ Fell Thirft and Famine fcowl  
“ A baleful fmile upon their baffled Gueft.

---

Richard the Second (as we are told by Archbishop Scroop and the confederate Lords in their manifefto, by Thomas of Walsingham, and all the older Writers) was ftarved to death. The ftory of his affaffination by Sir Piers of Exon, is of much later date.

“ Heard



- “ Heard ye the din of <sup>z</sup> battle bray,  
 “ Lance to lance, and horse to horse!  
 “ Long Years of havock urge their destin’d course,  
 “ And thro’ the kindred squadrons mow their way.  
 “ Ye Towers of Julius <sup>a</sup>, London’s lasting shame,  
 “ With many a foul and midnight murder fed,  
 “ Revere his <sup>b</sup> Confort’s faith, his Father’s <sup>c</sup> fame,  
 “ And spare the meek <sup>d</sup> Ufurper’s holy head.

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<sup>z</sup> Ruinous civil wars of York and Lancaſter.

<sup>a</sup> Henry the Sixth, George Duke of Clarence, Edward the Fifth, Richard Duke of York, &c. believed to be murdered ſecretly in the Tower of London. The oldeſt part of that ſtructure is vulgarly attributed to Julius Cæſar.

<sup>b</sup> Margaret of Anjou, a woman of heroic ſpirit, who ſtruggled hard to ſave her Huſband and her Crown.

<sup>c</sup> Henry the Fifth.

<sup>d</sup> Henry the Sixth very near being canonized. The line of Lancaſter had no right of inheritance to the Crown.

Above

“ Above, below, the<sup>e</sup> rose of snow,  
“ Twin’d with her blushing foe we spread :  
“ The bristled<sup>f</sup> Boar in infant-gore  
“ Wallows beneath the thorny shade.  
“ Now, Brothers, bending o’er th’ accursed loom,  
“ Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

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<sup>e</sup> The white and red roses, devices of York and Lancaster.

<sup>f</sup> The silver Boar was the badge of Richard the Third ; whence he was usually known in his own time by the name of *the Boar*.





## III. I.

“ Edward, lo ! to sudden fate

“ (Weave we the woof. The thread is spun.)

“ † Half of thy heart we consecrate.

“ (The web is wove. The work is done.)”

‘ Stay, oh stay ! nor thus forlorn

‘ Leave me unblefs’d, unpitied, here to mourn :

† Eleanor of Castile died a few years after the conquest of Wales. The heroic proof she gave of her affection for her Lord is well known. The monuments of his regret, and sorrow for the loss of her, are still to be seen, at Northampton, Geddington, Waltham, and other places,

‘ In

- ‘ In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,  
 ‘ They melt, they vanish from my eyes.  
 ‘ But oh ! what solemn scenes on Snowdon’s height  
 ‘ Descending slow their glitt’ring skirts unroll ?  
 ‘ Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,  
 ‘ Ye unborn Ages, crowd not on my soul !  
 ‘ No more our long-lost <sup>h</sup> Arthur we bewail.  
 ‘ All-hail, <sup>i</sup> ye genuine Kings, Britannia’s Issue, hail !
- 

<sup>h</sup> It was the common belief of the Welsh nation, that King Arthur was still alive in Fairy-Land, and should return again to reign over Britain.

<sup>i</sup> Both Merlin and Talieffin had prophesied, that the Welsh should regain their sovereignty over this island ; which seemed to be accomplished in the House of Tudor.



## III. 2.

- ' Girt with many a Baron bold  
 ' Sublime their starry fronts they rear ;  
 ' And gorgeous Dames, and Statesmen old  
 ' In bearded majesty, appear.  
 ' In the midst a Form divine !  
 ' Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-Line ;  
 ' Her lion-port<sup>k</sup>, her awe-commanding face,  
 ' Attemper'd sweet to virgin-grace.
- 

<sup>k</sup> Speed, relating an audience given by Queen Elizabeth to Paul Dzialinski, Ambassadour of Poland, says, ' And thus she, lion-like rising, daunted the malapert Orator no less with her stately port and majestic deporture, than with the tartness of her princelie checkes.

' What

- ‘ What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
- ‘ What strains of vocal transport round her play ;
- ‘ Hear from the grave, great Talieffin<sup>1</sup>, hear ;
- ‘ They breathe a soul to animate thy clay,
- ‘ Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,
- ‘ Waves in the eye of Heav’n her many-colour’d wings.

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<sup>1</sup> Talieffin, Chief of the Bards, flourished in the VIth Century. His works are still preserved, and his memory held in high veneration among his countrymen.



## III. 3.

‘ The verse adorn again

‘ <sup>m</sup> Fierce War, and faithful Love,

‘ And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction dress.

‘ In <sup>n</sup> buskin’d measures move

‘ Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,

‘ With Horror, Tyrant of the throbbing breast.

---

‘ A <sup>o</sup> Voice, as of the Cherub-Choir,

‘ Gales from blooming Eden bear ;

‘ <sup>p</sup> And distant warblings lessen on my ear,

‘ That lost in long futurity expire.

---

<sup>m</sup> Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralize my song,

*Spenser's Proëme to the Fairy Queen.*

<sup>n</sup> Shakespear.

<sup>o</sup> Milton.

<sup>p</sup> The succession of Poets after Milton's time.

‘ Fond

- ‘ Fond impious Man, think’st thou, yon sanguine cloud,  
‘ Rais’d by thy breath, has quench’d the Orb of day ?  
‘ To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,  
‘ And warms the nations with redoubled ray.  
‘ Enough for me : With joy I see  
‘ The different doom our Fates assign.  
‘ Be thine Despair, and scept’red Care;  
‘ To triumph, and to die, are mine.’

He spoke, and headlong from the mountain’s height  
Deep in the roaring tide he plung’d to endless night.



A PINDARIC ODE.

And impious Man, think it not vain  
To bid by the breath, has descended the Oracles  
To show the golden foot  
And warm the sailors with redoubled ray  
Enough for me: With joy I see  
The distant doom our fate align  
In these Deserts, and Remote Coast  
To triumph, and to die, no more  
Its spears, and heading from the mountains high  
There in the woods, as though to catch the night