

Renascence Editions

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A Monumental Column.

John Webster.

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A Monumental Column.

A Monumental Columne, Erected to the liuing Memory of the euer-glorious Henry, late Prince of Wales. *Virgil. Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata*. By John Webster. London, Printed by N. O. for William Welby dwelling in Pauls Church-yard at the signe of the Swan. 1613, forms a portion of a tract, the general title of which (in white letters on a black ground) runs thus:

Three Elegies on the most lamented Death of Prince Henrie,

The first} {Cyril Tourneur.

The second} written by {John Webster

The third} {Tho. Heywood.

London Printed for William Welbie. 1613. 4to.

Prince Henry died, to the great grief of the whole nation, on the 6tht of November, 1612, in his nineteenth year.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR ROBERT CARR, VISCOUNT ROCHESTER, KNIGHT OF
THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER, AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST
HONOURABLE PRIVY COUNCIL.

My right noble lord,

I present to your voidest leisure of survey these few sparks found out in our most glorious prince his ashes. I could not have thought this worthy your view, but that it aims at the preservation of his fame, than which I know not anything (but the sacred lives of both their majesties and their sweet issue) that can be dearer unto you. Were my whole life turned into leisure, and that leisure accompanied with all the Muses, it were not able to draw a map large enough of him; for his praise is an high-going sea that wants both shore and bottom. Neither do I, my noble lord, present you with this night-piece to make his death-bed still float in those compassionate rivers of your eyes: you have already, with much lead upon your heart, sounded both the sorrow royal and your own. O, that care should ever attain to so ambitious a title! Only, here though I dare not say you shall find him live, for that assurance were worth many kingdoms, yet you shall perceive him draw a little breath, such as gives us comfort his critical day is past, and the glory of a new life risen, neither subject to physic nor fortune. For my defects in this undertaking, my wish presents itself with that of Martial's;

*O utinam mores animumque effingere possem!
Pulchrior in terris nulla tabella foret.*

Howsoever, your protection is able to give it noble lustre, and bind me by that honourable courtesy to be ever

Your honour's truly devoted servant,

JOHN WEBSTER.

A MONUMENTAL COLUMN.

A FUNERAL ELEGY.

THE greatest of the kingly race is gone,
Yet with so great a reputation
Laid in the earth, we cannot say he's dead,

But as a perfect diamond set in lead,
Scorning our foil, his glories do break forth,
Worn by his maker, who best knew his worth.
Yet to our fleshy eyes there does belong
That which we think helps grief, a passionate tongue:
Methinks I see men's hearts pant in their lips;
We should not grieve at the bright sun's eclipse,
But that we love his light: so travellers stray,
Wanting both guide and conduct of the day.
Nor let us strive to make this sorrow old;
For wounds smart most when that the blood grows cold.
If princes think that ceremony meet,
To have their corpse embalm'd to keep them sweet,
Much more they ought to have their fame exprest
In Homer, though it want Darius' chest:
To adorn which in her deserved throne,
I bring those colours which Truth calls her own.
Nor gain nor praise by my weak lines are sought:
Love that's born free cannot be hir'd nor bought.
Some great inquisitors in nature say,
Royal and generous forms sweetly display
Much of the heavenly virtue, as proceeding
From a pure essence and elected breeding:
Howe'er, truth for him thus nuch doth importune,
His form and value both deserv'd his fortune;
For 'tis a question not decided yet,
Whether his mind or fortune were more great.
Methought I saw him in his right hand wield
A caduceus, in th' other Pallas' shield:
His mind quite void of ostentation,
His high-erected thoughts look'd down upon
The smiling valley of his fruitful heart:
Honour and courtesy in every part
Proclaim'd him, and grew lovely in each limb:
He well became those virtues which grac'd him.
He spread his bounty with a provident hand,
And not like those that sow th' ingrateful sand:
His rewards follow'd reason, ne'er were plac'd
For ostentation; and to make them last,
He was not like the mad and thriftless vine
That spendeth all her blushes at one time,
But like the orange-tree his fruits he bore,-
Some gather'd, he had green, and blossoms store.

We hop'd much of him, till death made hope err:
We stood as in some spacious theatre,
Musing what would become of him, his flight
Reach'd such a noble pitch above our sight;
Whilst he discreetly-wise this rule had won,
Not to let fame know his intents till done.
Men came to his court as to bright academies
Of virtue and of valour: all the eyes,
That feasted at his princely exercise,
Thought that by day Mars held his lance, by night
Minerva bore a torch to give him light.
As once on Rhodes, Pindar reports, of old
Soldiers expected 't would have rain'd down gold,
Old husbandmen i' the country gan to plant
Laurel instead of elm, and made their vaunt
Their sons and daughters should such trophies wear
Whenas the prince return'd a conqueror
From foreign nations; for men thought his star
Had mark'd him for a just and glorious war.
And, sure, his thoughts were ours: he could not read
Edward the Black Prince's life but it must breed
A virtuous emulation to have his name
So lag behind him both in time and fame;
He that like lightning did his force advance,
And shook to th' centre the whole realm of France,
That of warm blood open'd so many sluices
To gather and bring thence six flower-de-luces;
Who ne'er saw fear but in his enemies' flight;
Who found weak numbers conquer, arm'd with right;
Who knew his humble shadow spread no more
After a victory than it did before;
Who had his breast instated with the choice
Of virtues, though they made no ambitious noise;
Whose resolution was so fiery-still
It seem'd he know better to die than kill,
And yet drew Fortune, as the adamant steel,
Seeming t' have fix'd a stay upon her wheel;
Who jestingly would say, it was his trade
To fashion death-beds, and hath often made
Horror look lovely, when i' the fields there lay
Arms and legs so distracted, one would say
That the dead bodies had no bodies left;
He that of working pulse sick France bereft;

Who knew that battles, not the gaudy show
Of ceremonies, do on kings bestow
Best theatres; t' whom naught so tedious as court-sport;
That thought all fans and ventroys of the court
Ridiculous and loathsome to the shade
Which, in a march, his waving ensign made.
Him did he strive to imitate, and was sorry
He did not live before him, that his glory
Might have been his example: to these ends,
Those men that follow'd him were not by friends
Or letters preferr'd to him; he made choice
In action, not in complimentary voice.
And as Marcellus did two temples rear
To Honour and to Virtue, plac'd so near
They kiss'd, yet none to Honour's got access
But they that pass'd through Virtue's; so, to express
His worthiness, none got his countenance
But those whom actual merit did advance.
Yet, alas, all his goodness lies full low!
O greatness, what shall we compare thee to?
To giants, beasts, or towers fram'd out of snow,
Or like wax.gilded tapers, more for show
Than durance! thy foundation doth betray
Thy frailty, being builded on such clay.
This shows the all-controlling power of fate,
That all our sceptres and our chairs of state
Are but glass-metal, that we are full of spots
And that, like new-writ copies, t'avoid blots,
Dust must be thrown upon us; for in him
Our comfort sunk and drown'd, learning to swim.
And though he died so late, he's no more near
To us than they that died three thousand year
Before him; only memory doth keep
Their fame as fresh as his from death or sleep.
Why should the stag or raven live so long,
And that their age rather should not belong
Unto a righteous prince, whose lengthen'd years
Might assist men's necessities and fears?
Let beasts live long, and wild, and still in fear;
The turtle-dove never outlives nine year.
Both life and death have equally exprest,
Of all the shortest madness is the best.
We ought not think that his great triumphs need

Our wither'd laurels. Can our weak praise feed
His memory, which worthily contemns
Marble, and gold, and oriental gems?
His merits pass our dull invention.
And now, methinks, I see him smile upon
Our fruitless tears; bids us disperse these showers,
And says his thoughts are far refin'd from ours:
As Rome of her beloved Titus said,
That from the body the bright soul was fled
For his own good and their affliction:
On such broken column we lean on;
And for ourselves, not him, let us lament,
Whose happiness is grown our punishment.
But, surely, God gave this as an allay
To the blest union of that nuptial day
We hop'd; for fear of surfeit, thought it meet
To mitigate, since we swell with what is sweet.
And, for sad tales suit grief, 'tis not amiss
To keep us waking, I remember this.
Jupiter, on some business, once sent down
Pleasure unto the world, that she might crown
Mortals with her bright beams; but her long stay
Exceeding far the limit of her day,-
Such feasts and gifts were number'd to present her,
That she forgot heaven and the god that sent her,-
He calls her thence in thunder: at whose lure
She spreads her wings, and to return more pure,
Leaves her eye-seeded robe wherein she's suited,
Fearing that mortal breath had it polluted.
Sorrow, that long had liv'd in banishment,
Tugg'd at the oar in galleys, and had spent
Both money and herself in court-delays,
And sadly number'd many of her
By a prison-calendar, though once she bragged
She had been in great men's bosoms, now all ragg'd,
Crawl'd with a tortoise pace, or somewhat slower,
Nor found she any that desir'd to know her,
Till by good chance, ill hap for us, she found
Where Pleasure laid her garment: from the ground
She takes it, dons it; and, to add a grace
To the deformity of her wrinkled face.
An old court-lady, out of mere compassion,
Now paints it o'er, or puts it into fashion.

When straight from country, city, and from court,
Both without wit or number, there resort
Many to this impostor: all adore
Her haggish false-hood; usurers from their store
Supply her, and are cozen'd; citizens buy
Her forged titles; riot and ruin fly,
Spreading their poison universally.
Nor are the bosoms of great statesmen free
From her intelligence, who lets them see
Themselves and fortunes in false perspectives;
Some landed heirs consort her with their wives,
Who, being a bawd, corrupts their all-spent oaths;
They have entertained the devil in Pleasure's clothes.
And since this cursed mask, which, to our cost,
Lasts day and night, we have entirely lost
Pleasure, who from heaven wills us be advis'd
That our false Pleasure is but Care disguis'd.
Thus is our hope made frustrate. O sad ruth!
Death lay in ambush for his glorious youth;
And, finding him prepar'd, was sternly bent
To change his love into fell ravishment.
O cruel tyrant, how canst thou repair
This ruin, though hereafter thou shouldst spare
All mankind, break thy dart and ebon spade?
Thou canst not cure this wound which thou hast made.
Now view his death-bed and from thence let's meet,
In his example, our own winding-sheet.
There his humility, setting apart
All titles, did retire into his heart.
O blessed solitariness, that brings
The best content to mean men and to kings!
Manna there falls from heaven: the dove there flies
With olive to the ark, a sacrifice
Of God's appeasement; ravens in their beaks
Bring food from heaven: God's preservation speaks
Comfort to Daniel in the lions' den;
Where contemplation leads us, happy men,
To see God face to face: and such sweet peace
Did he enjoy amongst the various preace
Of weeping visitants, it seem'd he lay
As kings at revels sit, wish'd the crowd away,
The tedious sports done, and himself asleep;
And in such joy did all his senses steep,

As great accountants, troubled much in mind,
When they hear news of their quietus sign'd.
Never found prayers, since they convers'd with death,
A sweeter air to fly in than his breath:
They left in's eyes nothing but glory shining;
And though that sickness with her over-pining
Look ghastly, yet in himit did not so;
He knew the place to which he was to go
Had larger titles, more triumphant wreaths
To instate him with; and forth his soul he breathes,
Without a sigh, fixing his constant eye
Upon his triumph, immortality.
He was rain'd down to us out of heaven, and drew
Life to the spring; yet, like a little dew,
Quickly drawn thence: so many times miscarries
A crystal glass, whilst that the workman varies
The shape i' the furnace, fix'd too much upon
The curiousness of the proportion,
Yet breaks it ere 't be finish'd, and yet then
Moulds it anew, and blows it up agen,
Exceeds his workmanship, and sends it thence
To kiss the hand and lip of some great prince;
Or like a dial, broke in wheel or screw,
That's ta'en in pieces to be made go true:
So to eternity he now shall stand,
New-form'd and gloried by the all-working hand.
Slander, which hath a large and spacious tongue,
Far bigger than her mouth, to publish wrong,
And yet doth utter 't with so ill a grace,
Whilst she's a-speaking no man sees her face;
That like dogs lick foul ulcers, not to draw
Infection from them, but to keep them raw;
Though she oft scrape up earth from good men's graves,
And waste it in the standishes of slaves
To throw upon their ink, shall never dare
To approach his tomb: be she confin'd as far
From his sweet reliques as is heaven from hell!
Not witchcraft shall instruct her how to spell
That barbarous language which shall sound him ill.
Fame's lips shall bleed, yet ne'er her trumpet fill
With breath enough; but not in such sick air
As make waste elegies to his tomb repair,
With scraps of commendation more base

Than are the rags they are writ on. O disgrace
To nobler poesy! this brings to light,
Not that they can, but that they cannot write.
Better they had ne'er troubled his sweet trance;
So silence should have hid their ignorance;
For he's a reverend subject to be penn'd
Only by his sweet Homer and my friend.
Most savage nations should his death deplore,
Wishing he had set his foot upon their shore,
Only to have made them civil. This black night
Hath fall'n upon 's by nature's oversight;
Or while the fatal sister sought to twine
His thread and keep it even, she drew it so fine
It burst. O all-compos'd of excellent parts,
Young, grave Mecaenas of the noble arts,
Whose beams shall break forth from thy hollow tomb,
Stain the time past, and light the time to come!
O thou that in thy own praise still wert mute,
Resembling trees, the more they are ta'en with fruit,
The more they strive and bow to kiss the ground!
Thou that in quest of man hast truly found,
That while men rotten vapours do pursue,
They could not be thy friends and flatterers too;
That, despite all injustice, wouldst have prov'd
So just a steward for this land, and lov'd
Right for its own sake,- now, O woe the while,
Fleet'st dead in tears, like to a moving isle!
Time was when churches in the land were thought
Rich jewel-houses; and this age hath bought
That time again: think not I feign; go view
Henry the Seventh's Chapel, and you'll find it true:
The dust of a rich diamond's there inshrin'd;
To buy which thence would beggar the West-Inde.
What a dark night-piece of tempestuous weather
Have the enraged clouds summon'd together!
As if our loftiest palaces should grow
To ruin, since such highness fell so low;
And angry Neptune makes his palace groan,
That the deaf rocks may echo the land's moan.
Even senseless things seem to have lost their pride,
And look like that dead mouth wherein he died:
To clear which, soon arise that glorious day
Which, in her sacred union, shall display

Infinite blessings, that we all may see
The like to that of Virgil's golden tree,
A branch of which being slipt, there freshly grew
Another that did boast like form and hue.
And for these worthless lines, let it be said,
I hasted till I had this tribute paid
Unto his grave: so let the speed excuse
The zealous error of my passionate Muse.
Yet, though his praise here bear so short a wing,
Thames hath more swans that will his praises sing
In sweeter tunes, be-pluming his sad hearse
And his three feathers, while men live or verse.
And by these signs of love let great men know,
That sweet and generous favour they bestow
Upon the Muses never can be lost;
For they shall live by them, when all the cost
Of gilded monuments shall fall to dust:
They grave in metal that sustains no rust;
Their wood yields honey and industrious bees,
Kills spiders and their webs, like Irish trees.
A poet's pen, like a bright sceptre, sways
And keeps in awe dead men's dispraise or praise.
Thus took he acquittance of all worldly strife:
The evening shows the day, and death crowns life.

My impresa to your lordship,
A swan flying to a laurel for shelter, the mot, *Amor est mihi causa.*