

Poetry and Lyrics by and about Montrose

By W. James Nethery, FSA Scot



Engraving of The 1st Marquis of Montrose from Painting by Gerrit van Honthorst, 1649 in Brechin Castle

William Lithgow's sentence long title for his poem welcoming King Charles to Scotland, published in 1633 would discourage most readers of today.

“Scotlands Welcome to her Native Sonne, and Sovereigne Lord, King Charles: Wherein is also contained, the maner of His Coronation, and Convocation of Parliament; The whole Grievances, and abuses of the Common-wealth of this Kingdome, with diverse other relations, never heretofore published.

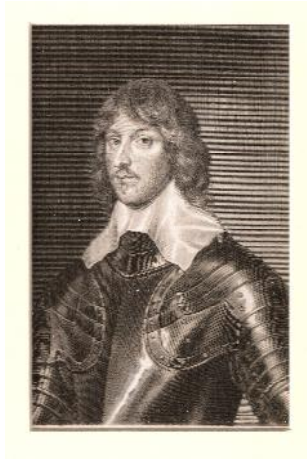
Worthy to be by all the Nobles and Gentry perused; and to be layd vp in the hearts, and chests of the whole Commouns, whose interests may best claime it, either in meane, or maner, from which their Priuiledges, and fortunes are drawne, as from the Loadstar of true direction.”

By William Lithgouv

But in the poem itself he did manage to include the youthful head of the Grahams ~ and he correctly predicted he would become a brave man of war who would conduct himself with unmatched honour and chivalry.

*'As for that hopefull youth, the young Lord Grahame,
James Earl of Montrose, whose warlyke name
Sprung from redoubted worth, made manhood try
Their matchless deeds in unmatched chivalry-
I do bequeath him to thy gracious love,
Whose noble stocke did ever faithful prove
To their old aged auncestors; and my Bounds
Were often freed from thraldome by their wounds
Leaving their roote, the stamp of fidele truth,
To be inherent in this noble youth
Whose Hearts, whose Hands, whose Swords, whose Deeds,
whose Fame
Made Mars, for valour, canonize THE GRAHAME.'*

By William Lithgow



Engraving of The 1st Marquis of Montrose from painting by William Dobson 1643-44

@ Scottish National Portrait Gallery

The following title and poem tell it all. Montrose abhorred wanton killing, so when the Earl of Newcastle's son's dog was killed by the Marquis of Hamilton in Queen's Garden, York he took revenge with his pen.

**~SOME LYNES ON THE KILLING OF YE
EARLE OF NEWCASTELL'S SONNE'S
DOGE~**

**BY YE MARQUESS HAMILTON, IN THE QUEEN'S GARDEN AT
YORKE. WRITTEN THERE BY THE EARLE OF MONTROIS.**

**HEIR layes a doge, quhosse qualities did plead,
Such fatall end from a Renouned blade,
And blame him not, though he succumbed now,
For Hercules could not combat against two;
For whilst he on hes foe revenge did take
He manfully was killed behind his back.**

Then say to eternize the curr thats gone,
He flech't the Mayden sword of Hamiltone.

By James Graham, Earl of Montrose

~ON THE FLYLEAVES OF HIS BOOKS~

*L*ines written in his copy of Lucan. Montrose's admiration of Lucan is shown by his comparing him to Homer and describing him as "my most precious gem".

**AS Macedo his Homer, I'll thee still,
Lucan, esteem as my most precious gem;
And, though my fortune second not my will,
That I may witness to the world the same,
Yet, if she would but smile even so on me,
My mind desires as his, and soars as hie.**

*O*n a leaf of Cæsar's Commentaries. Montrose knows he can not become an Emperor but he will equal Caesar's intellect.

**THOUGH Cæsar's paragon I cannot be,
Yet shall I soar in thoughts as high as he.**

*O*n his copy of Quintus Curtius he wrote the following verse that predicts the eventual course of his life including great favour and an early death.

**AS Philip's noble son did still disdain
All but the dear applause of merited fame,
And nothing harboured in that lofty brain
But how to conquer an eternal name;**

**So, great attempts, heroic ventures, shall
Advance my fortune, or renown my fall.**

By James Graham, Earl of Montrose
~ while a student at St Andrews University.

*A*s Montrose saw Argyle and the Covenanters beginning to subvert the government following the signing of the National Covenant at Greyfriars Kirk he expressed his concern for his King in this verse. In which he emphatically states “No, no it is not meet, the Head should not bow unto the feet”

~SOVEREIGNTY IN DANGER~

**CAN little Beasts with Lions roar,
And little Birds with Eagles soar;
Can shallow Streams command the Seas,
And little Ants the humming Bees?
No, no, no, no, it is not meet
The Head should stoup unto the Feet.**

By James Graham, 5Th Earl of Montrose

*P*robably the most quoted of all of Montrose’s poems is “My Dear and Only Love” in which he expresses his choice of King instead of Church. He realizes that there can only be one head of state and he believes that God has endowed the monarch with the right to rule over his kingdom. Montrose promises to make Charles glorious with his pen and famous with his sword.

~My Dear and Only Love~

My dear and only Love, I pray
This noble world of thee
Be govern'd by no other sway
But purest monarchy;
For if confusion have a part,
Which virtuous souls abhor,
And hold a synod in thy heart,
I'll never love thee more.

Like Alexander I will reign,
And I will reign alone,
My thoughts shall evermore disdain
A rival on my throne.
He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That puts it not unto the touch
To win or lose it all.

But I must rule and govern still,
And always give the law,
And have each subject at my will,
And all to stand in awe.
But 'gainst my battery, if I find
Thou shunn'st the prize so sore
As that thou sett'st me up a blind,
I'll never love thee more.

Or in the empire of thy heart,
Where I should solely be,
Another do pretend a part
And dares to vie with me;
Or if committees thou erect,
And go on such a score,
I'll sing and laugh at thy neglect,
And never love thee more.

But if thou wilt be constant then,
And faithful of thy word,
I'll make thee glorious by my pen
And famous by my sword:
I'll serve thee in such noble ways
Was never heard before;
I'll crown and deck thee all with bays,
And love thee evermore.

By James Graham, 5Th Earl of Montrose

Original text: [James Watson,] *A Choice collection of comic and serious Scots poems, both ancient and modern. By several hands* (Edinburgh: printed by James Watson and sold by J. Vallange, 1706-11). B-10 477 Fisher Rare Book Library
First publication date: 1711
RPO poem editor: N. J. Endicott
RP edition: 2RP.1.336; RPO 1996-2000.
Recent editing: 2:2002/4/17
Composition date: 1643

*M*ontrose describes women as a creature drawn from man's breast that excels him just as man excels the rest of God's creation. Using the analogy of a flower he says that even if you remove a woman's beauty he still adores her.

~IN PRAISE OF WOMEN~

WHEN Heav'ns great *Jove* had made the World's round
Frame,
Earth, Water, Air, and Fire; above the same,
The rolling Orbs, the Planets, Spheres, and all
The lesser Creatures, in the Earth's vast Ball:
But, as a curious Alchemist, still draws
From grosser Mettals finer, and from those
Extracts another, and from that again
Another that doth far excel the same.

So fram'd he Man of Elements combin'd
T'excel that Substance where he was refin'd:
But that poor Creature, drawn from his Breast
Excelleth him, as he excell'd the rest:
Or as a stubborn Stalk, whereon there grows
A dainty Lilly or a fragrant Rose;
The Stalk may boast, and set its Vertues forth,
But take away the Flow'r, where is its Worth?
But yet, fair Ladies, you must know
Howbeit I do adore you so:
Reciprocal your Flames must prove,
Or my Ambition scorns to love:
A Noble Soul doth still abhore
To strike, but where its Conquerour.

By James Graham, Marquis of Montrose

Taken to Edinburgh, he was sentenced to death without trial; Montrose knew what his fate would be as the words of this poem, penned by him on the evening of 20 May 1650 in his prison cell, show:

'Let them bestow on every airth a limb,
Then open all my veins, that I may swim
To Thee, my Maker, in that crimson lake;
Then place my parboiled head upon a stake;
Scatter my ashes, strew them in the air;
Lord ! since thou knowest where all these atoms are,
I'm hopeful thou'lt recover once my dust,
And confident thou'lt raise me with the just.'

By James Graham, 1st Marquis of Montrose

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Recent editing: 2:2002/4/17; **Form:** couplets

There is a **modern poet** viewing Montrose's death from the point of a father and his son who were there. The poem catches the dark mood of the day and places the blame squarely on the vengeful Argyll. The poet uses the analogy of a horse when he says-- "the horses' hooves hide a' the devil's work....For the Covenant's a Campbell mare that rides across the law.." It ends with the profound sentiment held by many who were there on 21 May 1650. The father tells his young son -- "Scotland hides her head in shame and justice looks away" *because* "the scaffold buys an English throne with the bravest heart of all".

Montrose

Montrose, Montrose, you were the rose
You gave your life for loyalty
But it's no' the hour for a rose tae flower
Between the kirk and royalty
Montrose

Father, father, tell me, why do the horsemen ride
Why do the troopers look so grim by Jamie Graham's side
Is it true that he's a traitor, father, tell me why
There's no' a man among them all will look him in the eye

Hide your eyes, my bonny boy, for the deed is a' but done
The headsman's axe will win the day, the Graham's race
is run
For honour rode with courage, but evil rode with guile
And the darkest horse among them a' was the vengeance
of Argyll

Hearken now, my bonny boy, as we stand before the kirk
Or does the thunder o' the horses' hooves hide a' the

devil's work
For the Covenant's a Campbell mare that rides across the
law

And ere a Stuart bridles her, a Graham's heid must fa'

I'll read you now a riddle by the shining o' the moon
When king and kirk sit down tae sup, wha needs the
longer spoon
When Scotland hides her head in shame and justice looks
awa'
And the scaffold buys an English throne wi' the bravest
heart of a'

By **Brian McNeill**

SOURCE: <http://mysongbook.de/msb/songs/m/montrose.html>

There is a song performed by the **Battlefield Band** called "**Montrose**" it's on the Album "**On the rise**" (1986). The lyrics come from Brian McNeill's poem "Montrose".

Here are the lyrics to Montrose:

Hide your eyes, my bonny boy
For the deed is all but done
The headsman's axe will win the day
The Graham's race is run
Though honor rode with courage
But evil rode with guile
And the darkest horse among them all
Was the vengeance of Argyle

Harken now, my bonny boy
As we stand before the kirk
Oh does the thunder of the horses' hooves
Hide all the devil's work?
For the Covenant's a Campbell mare
That rides across the law

**Then a Stuart bridles up
The Graham's head must fall**

**I'll read you know the riddle
By the shining o' the moon
When King and kirk sit down to sup
One needs a longer spoon
When Scotland hangs her head in shame
And justice looks awa'
And the scaffold buys an English throne
O'er the bravest heart of all**

SOURCE: <http://www.mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=34095>