

Thomas B. Macaulay (1800-59)

2 *The Battle of Naseby*

Oh! wherefore come ye forth, in triumph from the north,
With your hands, and your feet, and your raiment all red?
And wherefore doth your rout send forth a joyous shout?
And whence be the grapes of the wine-press which ye tread?

Oh, evil was the root, and bitter was the fruit, 5
And crimson was the juice of the vintage that we trod;
For we trampled on the throng of the haughty and the strong,
Who sate in the high places, and slew the saints of God.

It was about the noon of a glorious day of June, 10
That we saw their banners dance and their cuirasses shine,
And the Man of Blood was there, with his long essenced hair,
And Astley and Sir Marmaduke, and Rupert of the Rhine.

Like a servant of the Lord, with his Bible and his sword,
The General rode along us to form us to the fight, 15
When a murmuring sound broke out, and swelled into a shout,
Among the godless horsemen upon the tyrant's right.

And, hark! like the roar of the billows on the shore,
The cry of battle rises along their charging line!
For God! for the Cause! for the Church! for the Laws!
For Charles, King of England, and Rupert of the Rhine! 20

The furious German comes, with his clarions and his drums,
His bravoes of Alsatia, and pages of Whitehall;
They are bursting on our flanks. Grasp your pikes, close your ranks;
For Rupert never comes but to conquer or to fall.

They are here! They rush on! We are broken! We are gone! 25
Our left is borne before them like stubble on the blast.
O Lord, put forth Thy might! O Lord, defend the right!
Stand back to back, in God's name, and fight it to the last.

Stout Skippon hath a wound; the centre hath given ground:
Hark! hark! What means the trampling of horsemen on our rear? 30

Whose banner do I see, boys? 'Tis he, thank God, 'tis he, boys,
Bear up another minute: brave Oliver is here!

Their heads all stooping low, their points all in a row,
Like a whirlwind on the trees, like a deluge on the dykes,
Our cuirassiers have burst on the ranks of the Accurst, 35
And at a shock have scattered the forest of his pikes.

Fast, fast the gallants ride, in some safe nook to hide
Their coward heads, predestined to rot on Temple Bar;
And he — he turns, he flies: — shame on those cruel eyes
That bore to look on torture, and dare not look on war! 40

Ho! comrades, scour the plain; and, ere ye strip the slain,
First give another stab to make your search secure;
Then shake from sleeves and pockets their broad-pieces and lockets,
The tokens of the wanton, the plunder of the poor.

Fools! your doublets shone with gold, and your hearts were gay and bold, 45
When you kissed your lily hands to your lemans to-day;
And to-morrow shall the fox, from her chambers in the rocks,
Lead forth her tawny cubs to howl above the prey.

Where be your tongues that late mocked at heaven and hell and fate,
And the fingers that once were so busy with your blades, 50
Your perfumed satin clothes, your catches and your oaths,
Your stage plays and your sonnets, your diamonds and your spades?

Down, down, for ever down with the mitre and the crown,
With the Belial of the Court and the Mammon of the Pope;
There is woe in Oxford halls; there is wail in Durham's stalls; 55
The Jesuit smites his bosom; the Bishop rends his cope.

And She of the seven hills shall mourn her children's ills,
And tremble when she thinks on the edge of England's sword;
And the Kings of earth in fear shall shudder when they hear
What the hand of God hath wrought for the Houses and the Word. 60

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