

Matthew Prior (1664-1721)

4 *The Viceroy*

A Ballad.

To the Tune of Lady Isabella's Tragedy.

- 1 Of Nero, tyrant, petty king,
Who heretofore did reign
In famed Hibernia, I will sing,
And in a ditty plain.
- 2 He hated was by rich and poor, 5
For reasons you shall hear;
So ill he exercised his power,
That he himself did fear.
- 3 Full proud and arrogant was he, 10
And covetous withal;
The guilty he would still set free,
But guiltless men enthral.
- 4 He, with a haughty impious nod,
Would curse and dogmatize;
Nor fearing either man or God: 15
Gold he did idolize.
- 5 A patriot of high degree,
Who could no longer bear
This upstart Viceroy's tyranny,
Against him did declare. 20
- 6 And, armed with truth, impeached the don
Of his enormous crimes,
Which I'll unfold to you anon,
In low, but faithful rhymes.
- 7 The articles recorded stand 25
Against this peerless peer,
Search but the archives of the land,

You 'll find them written there.

- 8 Attend, and justly I'll recite
His treasons to you all, 30
The heads set in their native light
(And sigh poor Gaphny's fall).
- 9 That traitorously he did abuse
The power in him reposed;
And wickedly the same did use, 35
On all mankind imposed.
- 10 That he, contrary to all law,
An oath did frame and make,
Compelling the militia
The illegal oath to take. 40
- 11 Free quarters for the army too
He did exact and force
On Protestants; his love to show,
Than Papists used them worse.
- 12 On all provisions destined for 45
The camp at Limerick,
He laid a tax full hard and sore,
Though many men were sick.
- 13 The suttlers too he did ordain
For licenses should pay, 50
Which they refused with just disdain,
And fled the camp away.
- 14 By which provisions were so scant,
That hundreds there did die;
The soldiers food and drink did want, 55
Nor famine could they fly.
- 15 He so much loved his private gain,
He could not hear or see;
They might, or die, or might complain,
Without relief, pardie. 60

- 16 That, above and against all right,
By word of mouth did he,
In council sitting, hellish spite,
The farmer's fate decree:
- 17 That he, O Ciel! without trial, 65
Straightway should hangèd be;
Though then the courts were open all,
Yet Nero judge would be.
- 18 No sooner said, but it was done, 70
The Bourreau did his worst;
Gaphny, alas! is dead and gone,
And left his judge accursed.
- 19 In this concise despotic way
Unhappy Gaphny fell;
Which did all honest men affray, 75
As truly it might well.
- 20 Full two good hundred pounds a year,
This poor man's real estate,
He settled on his favourite dear,
And Culliford can say 't. 80
- 21 Besides, he gave five hundred pound
To Fielding his own scribe,
Who was his bail; one friend he found,
He owed him to the bribe.
- 22 But for this horrid murder vile 85
None did him prosecute;
His old friend helped him o'er the stile:
With Satan who 'd dispute?
- 23 With France, fair England's mortal foe, 90
A trade he carried on;
Had any other done 't, I trow
To Tripes he had gone.

- 24 That he did likewise traitorously,
To bring his ends to bear,
Enrich himself most knavishly; 95
O thief without compare!
- 25 Vast quantities of stores did he
Embezzle and purloin;
Of the king's stores he kept a key,
Converting them to coin. 100
- 26 The forfeited estates also,
Both real and personal,
Did with the stores together go,
Fierce Cerberus swallowed all.
- 27 Meanwhile the soldiers sighed and sobbed, 105
For not one *sous* had they;
His Excellence had each man fobbed,
For he had sunk their pay.
- 28 Nero, without the least disguise,
The papists at all times 110
Still favoured, and their robberies
Looked on as trivial crimes.
- 29 The protestants whom they did rob
During his government,
Were forced with patience, like good Job, 115
To rest themselves content.
- 30 For he did basely them refuse
All legal remedy;
The Romans still he well did use,
Still screened their roguery. 120
- 31 Succinctly thus to you I've told,
How this Viceroy did reign;
And other truths I shall unfold,
For truth is always plain.
- 32 The best of queens he had reviled, 125

Before and since her death,
He, cruel and ungrateful, smiled
When she resigned her breath.

33 Forgetful of the favours kind
She had on him bestowed, 130
Like Lucifer his rancorous mind,
He loved nor her nor God.

34 But listen, Nero, lend thine ears,
As still thou hast them on;
Hear what Britannia says with tears, 135
Of Anna dead and gone.

35 'Oh! sacred be her memory,
For ever dear her name!
There never was, nor e'er can be,
A brighter, juster dame. 140

36 'Blessed be my sons, and eke all those
Who on her praises dwell!
She conquered Britain's fiercest foes,
She did all queens excel.

37 'All princes, kings, and potentates, 145
Ambassadors did send;
All nations, provinces, and states,
Sought Anna for their friend.

38 'In Anna they did all confide,
For Anna they could trust: 150
Her royal faith they all had tried,
For Anna still was just.

39 'Truth, mercy, justice, did surround
Her awful judgment seat,
In her the Graces all were found, 155
In Anna all complete.

40 'She held the sword and balance right,
And sought her people's good;

- In clemency she did delight,
Her reign not stained with blood. 160
- 41 'Her gracious goodness, piety,
In all her deeds did shine,
And bounteous was her charity;
All attributes divine.
- 42 'Consummate wisdom, meekness all, 165
Adorned the words she spoke;
When they from her fair lips did fall;
And sweet her lovely look.
- 43 'Ten thousand glorious deeds to crown,
She caused dire war to cease: 170
A greater empress ne'er was known,
She fixed the world in peace.
- 44 'This last and godlike act achieved,
To heaven she winged her flight;
Her loss with tears all Europe grieved; 175
Their strength, and dear delight.
- 45 'Leave we in bliss this heavenly saint,
Revere, ye just, her urn;
Her virtues high and excellent,
Astræa gone we mourn. 180
- 46 'Commemorate, my sons, the day
Which gave great Anna birth:
Keep it for ever and for aye,
And annual be your mirth!
- 47 Illustrious George now fills the throne, 185
Our wise benign good king:
Who can his wondrous deeds make known,
Or his bright actions sing?
- 48 Thee, favourite Nero, he has deigned
To raise to high degree! 190
Well thou thy honours hast sustained,

Well vouched thy ancestry.

- 49 But pass: These honours on thee laid,
Can they e'er make thee white!
Don't Gaphny's blood, which thou hast shed, 195
Thy guilty soul affright?
- 50 Oh! is there not, grim mortal, tell,
Places of bliss and woe!
Oh! is there not a heaven, a hell;
But whither wilt thou go? 200
- 51 Can nought change thy obdurate mind?
Wilt thou for ever rail;
The prophet on thee well refined,
And set thy wit to sale.
- 52 How thou art lost to sense and shame, 205
Three countries witness be;
Thy conduct all just men do blame,
Libera nos, Domine!
- 53 Dame Justice waits thee, well I ween,
Her sword is brandished high: 210
Nought can thee from her vengeance screen,
Nor canst thou from her fly.
- 54 Heavy her ire will fall on thee,
The glittering steel is sure;
Sooner or later, all agree, 215
She cuts off the impure.
- 55 To her I leave thee, gloomy peer,
Think on thy crimes committed;
Repent, and be for once sincere,
Thou ne'er wilt be De-Witted. 220

1715

(From *The Poetical Works of Matthew Prior*. Ed. the Rev.
George Gilfillan. Edinburgh, 1858)