

Robert Southey (1774-1843)

12 *Queen Mary's Christening*

The first wish of Queen Mary's heart
Is, that she may bear a son,
Who shall inherit in his time
The kingdom of Aragon.

She hath put up prayers to all the Saints 5
This blessing to accord,
But chiefly she hath call'd upon
The Apostles of our Lord.

The second wish of Queen Mary's heart
Is to have that son call'd James, 10
Because she thought for a Spanish King
'T was the best of all good names.

To give him this name of her own will
Is what may not be done,
For having applied to all the Twelve 15
She may not prefer the one.

By one of their names she hath vow'd to call
Her son, if son it should be;
But which, is a point whereon she must let
The Apostles themselves agree. 20

Already Queen Mary hath to them
Contracted a grateful debt,
And from their patronage she hoped
For these farther blessings yet.

Alas! it was not her hap to be 25
As handsome as she was good;

And that her husband King Pedro thought so
She very well understood.

She had lost him from her lawful bed
For lack of personal graces, 30
And by prayers to them, and a pious deceit,
She had compass'd his embraces.

But if this hope of a son should fail,
All hope must fail with it then,
For she could not expect by a second device 35
To compass the King again.

Queen Mary hath had her first heart's wish —
She hath brought forth a beautiful boy;
And the bells have rung, and masses been sung,
And bonfires have blazed for joy. 40

And many's the cask of the good red wine,
And many the cask of the white,
Which was broach'd for joy that morning,
And emptied before it was night.

But now for Queen Mary's second heart's wish, 45
It must be determined now,
And Bishop Boyl, her Confessor,
Is the person who taught her how.

Twelve waxen tapers he hath had made,
In size and weight the same; 50
And to each of these twelve tapers,
He hath given an Apostle's name.

One holy Nun had bleach'd the wax,
Another the wicks had spun;
And the golden candlesticks were blest, 55
Which they were set upon.

From that which should burn the longest,
The infant his name must take;
And the Saint who own'd it was to be
His Patron for his name's sake. 60

A godlier or a goodlier sight
Was nowhere to be seen,
Methinks, that day, in Christendom,
Than in the chamber of that good Queen.

Twelve little altars have been there 65
Erected, for the nonce;
And the twelve tapers are set thereon,
Which are all to be lit at once.

Altars more gorgeously drest
You nowhere could desire; 70
At each there stood a minist'ring Priest
In his most rich attire.

A high altar hath there been raised,
Where the crucifix you see;
And the sacred Pix that shines with gold 75
And sparkles with jewelry.

Bishop Boyl, with his precious mitre on,
Hath taken there his stand,
In robes which were embroidered
By the Queen's own royal hand. 80

In one part of the ante-room
The Ladies of the Queen,
All with their rosaries in hand,
Upon their knees are seen.

In the other part of the ante-room 85

The Chiefs of the realm you behold,
Ricos Omes, and Bishops and Abbots,
And Knights and Barons bold.

Queen Mary could behold all this
As she lay in her state bed; 90
And from the pillow needed not
To lift her languid head.

One fear she had, though still her heart
The unwelcome thought eschew'd,
That haply the unlucky lot 95
Might fall upon St. Jude.

But the Saints, she trusted, that ill chance
Would certainly forefend;
And moreover there was a double hope
Of seeing the wish'd-for end: 100

Because there was a double chance
For the best of all good names;
If it should not be Santiago himself,
It might be the lesser St. James.

And now Bishop Boyl hath said the mass; 105
And as soon as the mass was done,
The priests who by the twelve tapers stood
Each instantly lighted one.

The tapers were short and slender too,
Yet to the expectant throng, 110
Before they to the socket burnt,
The time, I trow, seem'd long.

The first that went out was St. Peter,
The second was St. John;
And now St. Matthias is going, 115

And now St. Matthew is gone.

Next there went St. Andrew,
There goes St. Philip too;
And see! there is an end
Of St. Bartholomew. 120

St. Simon is in the snuff;
But it was a matter of doubt
Whether he or St. Thomas could be said
Soonest to have gone out.

There are only three remaining, 125
St. Jude, and the two St. James;
And great was then Queen Mary's hope
For the best of all good names.

Great was then Queen Mary's hope,
But greater her fear, I guess, 130
When one of the three went out,
And that one was St. James the Less.

They are now within less than quarter-inch,
The only remaining two!
When there came a thief in St. James, 135
And it made a gutter too!

Up started Queen Mary,
Up she sate in her bed:
"I never can call him Judas!"
She claspt her hands and said. 140

"I never can call him Judas!"
Again did she exclaim;
"Holy Mother preserve us!
It is not a Christian name!"

She spread her hands and claspt them again, 145
And the Infant in the cradle
Set up a cry, an angry cry,
As loud as he was able.

“Holy Mother preserve us!”
The Queen her prayer renew’d; 150
When in came a moth at the window
And flutter’d about St. Jude.

St. James hath fallen in the socket
But as yet the flame is not out,
And St. Jude hath singed the silly moth 155
That flutters so blindly about.

And before the flame and the molten wax
That silly moth could kill,
It hath beat out St. Jude with its wings,
And St. James is burning still! 160

Oh, that was a joy for Queen Mary’s heart;
The babe is christened James;
The Prince of Aragon hath got
The best of all good names!

Glory to Santiago, 165
The mighty one in war!
James he is call’d, and he shall be
King James the Conqueror!

Now shall the Crescent wane,
The Cross be set on high 170
In triumph upon many a Mosque;
Woe, woe to Mawmetry!

Valencia shall be subdued;
Majorca shall be won;

The Moors be routed every where; 175
Joy, joy, for Aragon!

Shine brighter now, ye stars, that crown
Our Lady del Pilar.
And rejoice in thy grave, Cid Campeador,
Ruydiez de Bivar! 180

1829

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