

## 29 QUOTATIONS



Anne Bradstreet

(1612-1672)

Anne Bradstreet sailed to America in 1630 with the group led by John Winthrop and became the first significant American poet with her collection *The Tenth Muse* in 1650. She married Simon Bradstreet, a Puritan leader in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, had 8 children, maintained a household in a frontier wilderness and wrote meditations as well as poems. She has an independent mind, transcends Puritan inhibition and Calvinist doctrines and resembles the later Victorians:

### SELECTED MEDITATIONS

For My Dear Son Simon Bradstreet

Parents perpetuate their lives in their posterity, and their manners in their imitation. Children do naturally rather follow the failings than the virtues of their predecessors, but I am persuaded better things of you. You once desired me to leave something for you in writing that you might look upon when you should see me no more. I could think of nothing more fit for you, nor of more ease to myself, than these short meditations following. Such as they are I bequeath to you: small legacies are accepted by true friends, much more by dutiful children. I have avoided encroaching upon others' conceptions, because I would leave you nothing but mine own; though in value they fall short of all in this kind, yet I presume they will be better prized by you for the author's sake. The Lord bless you with grace here, and crown you with glory hereafter, that I may meet you with rejoicing at that great day of appearing, which is the continual prayer of

Your affectionate mother, A.B.  
March 20, 1664

There is no object that we see, no action that we do, no good that we may enjoy, no evil that we feel or fear, but we may make some spiritual advantage of all; and he that makes such improvement is wise, as well as pious.

4

A ship that bears much sail, and little or no ballast, is easily overset; and that man whose head hath great abilities and his heart little or no grace, is in danger of foundering.

5

It is reported of the peacock that, priding himself in his gay feathers, he ruffles them up; but, spying his black feet, he soon lets fall his plumes: so he that glories in his gifts and adornings should look upon his corruptions, and that will damp his high thoughts.

6

The finest bread hath the least bran; the purest honey, the least wax; and the sincerest Christian, the least self-love.

8

Downy beds make drowsy persons, but hard lodging keeps his eyes open. A prosperous state makes a secure Christian, but adversity makes him consider.

9

Sweet words are like honey: a little may refresh, but too much gluts the stomach.

10

Diverse children have their different natures: some are like flesh which nothing but salt will keep from putrefaction; some again like tender fruits that are best preserved with sugar. Those parents are wise that can fit their nurture according to their nature.

11

That town which thousands of enemies without hath not been able to take, hath been delivered up by one traitor within; and that man, which all the temptations of Satan without could not hurt, hath been foiled by one lust within.

12

Authority without wisdom is like a heavy axe without an edge, fitter to bruise than polish.

13

The reason why Christians are so loath to exchange this world for a better is because they have more sense than faith: they see what they enjoy, they do but hope for that which is to come.

14

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.

15

A low man can go upright under that door where a taller man is glad to stoop: so a man of weak faith and mean abilities may undergo a cross more patiently than he that excels him both in gifts and graces.

16

That house which is not often swept makes the cleanly inhabitant soon loathe it; and that heart which is not continually purifying itself is not fit temple for the spirit of God to dwell in.

31

Iron till it be thoroughly heated is incapable to be wrought: so God sees good to cast some men into the furnace of affliction, and then beats them on His anvil into what frame He pleases.

32

Ambitious men are like hops that never rest climbing so long as they have anything to stay upon: but take away their props, and they are of all the most dejected.

36

Sore laborers have hard hands, and old sinners have brawny consciences.

50

Sometimes the sun is only shadowed by a cloud that we cannot see his luster, although we may walk by his light. But when he is set, we are in darkness till he arise again. So God doth sometimes veil His face but for a moment, that we cannot behold the light of His countenance as at some other time; yet He affords so much light as may direct our way, that we may go forwards to the city of habitation. But when He seems to set and be quite gone out of sight, then must we needs walk in darkness and see no light; yet then must we trust in the Lord, and stay upon our God. And when the morning (which is the appointed time) is come, the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings.

53

A Christian is sailing through this world unto his heavenly country, and here he hath many conveniences and comforts; but he must beware of desiring to make this the place of his abode, lest he meet with such tossings that may cause him to long for shore before he sees land. We must, therefore, be here as strangers and pilgrims, that we may plainly declare that we seek a city above, and wait all the days of our appointed time till our change shall come.

62

As man is called the little world, so his heart may be called the little commonwealth: his more fixed and resolved thoughts are like to inhabitants; his slight and flitting thoughts are like passengers that travel to and fro continually. Here is also the great court of justice erected, which is always kept by conscience.

77

God hath by His providence so ordered that no one country hath all commodities within itself, but what it wants another shall supply, that so there may be a mutual commerce through the world. As it is with countries, so it is with men: there was never yet any one man that had all excellences. Let his parts, natural and acquired, spiritual and moral, be never so large, yet he stands in need of something which another man hath—perhaps meaner than himself: which shows us perfection is not below, as also that God will have us beholden one to another.

from POEMS

The Author to Her Book: Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain...

I heard two sisters reason on / Things that are past and things to come. / One Flesh was called, who had her eye / On worldly wealth and vanity; / The other Spirit, who did rear / Her thoughts into a higher sphere.

The city where I hope to dwell / There's none on earth can parallel.

If ever two were one, then surely we. / If ever man were loved by wife, then thee. / If ever wife was happy in a man, / Compare with me, ye women, if you can.

If two be one, as surely thou and I, / How stayest thou there, whilst I at Ipswich lie? / So many steps head from the heart to sever, / If but a neck, soon should we be together.

His warmth such frigid colds did cause to melt. / My chilled limbs now numbed lie forlorn: / Return, return, sweet sol, from Capricorn.

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are. / Men have precedency, and still excel. / It is but vain unjustly to wage war: / Men can do best, and women know it well. / Preeminence in all and each is yours— / Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

Blest babe, why should I once bewail thy fate, / Or sigh the days so soon were terminate, / Since thou art settled in an everlasting state?



Anne Bradstreet's house