

Daniel Defoe, *The Storm: An Essay* (1704)

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[Note: while the title refers to this as an 'essay', this piece takes the form of a poem.]

I'm told, _for we have News among the Dead_,
Heaven lately spoke, but few knew what it said;
The Voice, in loudest Tempests spoke,
And Storms, which Nature's strong Foundation shook.
I felt it hither, and I'd have you know
I heard the Voice, and knew the Language too.
Think it not strange I heard it here,
No Place is so remote, but when _he speaks_, they hear.
Besides, tho' I am dead in Fame,
I never told you where I am. 10

Tho' I have lost Poetick Breath,
I'm not in perfect State of Death:
From whence this _Popish Consequence_ I draw,
I'm in the Limbus _of the Law_.
Let me be where I will I heard the Storm,
From every Blast _it eccho'd thus, REFORM_;
I felt the mighty Shock, and saw the Night,
When Guilt look'd pale, and own'd the Fright;
And every Time the raging Element
Shook _London_'s lofty Towers, at every Rent 20
The falling Timbers gave, _they cry'd, REPENT_.

I saw, when all the stormy Crew,
Newly commission'd from on high,
Newly instructed what to do,
In Lowring, Cloudy, Troops drew nigh:
They hover'd o'er the guilty Land,
As if they had been backward to obey;
As if they wondred at the sad Command,
And pity'd those they shou'd destroy.
But Heaven, that long had gentler Methods tried, 30
And saw those gentler Methods all defied,
Had now resolv'd to be obey'd.
The Queen, an Emblem of the _soft, still, Voice_,
Had told the Nation how to make their Choice;
Told them the only Way to Happiness
Was by the Blessed Door of Peace.
But the unhappy Genius of the Land,
Deaf to the Blessing, as to the Command,
Scorn the high Caution, and condemn the News,
And all the blessed Thoughts of Peace refuse. 40

Since Storms are then the Nation's Choice,
 Be Storms their Portion, said the Heavenly Voice:
 He said, and I could hear no more,
 So soon th' obedient Troops began to roar:
 So soon the blackning Clouds drew near,
 And fill'd with loudest Storms the trembling Air:
 I thought I felt the World's Foundation shake,
 And lookt when all the wondrous Frame would break.
 I trembl'd as the Winds grew high,
 And so did many a braver Man than I: 50
 For he whose Valour scorns his Sence,
 Has chang'd his Courage into Impudence.
 Man may to Man his Valour show,
 And 'tis his Vertue to do so.
 But if he's of his Maker not afraid,
 He's not courageous then, but mad.

Soon as I heard the horrid Blast,
 And understood how long 'twould last,
 View'd all the Fury of the Element,
 Consider'd well by whom 'twas sent, 60
 And _unto whom_ for Punishment:
 It brought my Hero to my Mind,
 William, the Glorious, Great, and Good, and Kind.
 Short Epithets to his Just Memory;
 The first he was to all the World, _the last to me_.

The mighty Genius to my Thought appear'd,
 Just in the same Concern he us'd to show,
 When private Tempests us'd to blow,
 Storms which the Monarch more than Death or Battel fear'd.
 When Party Fury shook his Throne, 70
 And made their mighty Malice known,
 I've heard the sighing Monarch say,
 The Publick Peace so near him lay,
 It took the Pleasure of his Crown away.
 It fill'd with Cares his Royal Breast;
 Often he has those Cares Prophetickly exprest,
 That when he should the Reins let go,
 Heaven would some Token of its Anger show,
 To let the thankless Nation see
 How they despis'd their own Felicity. 80
 This robb'd the Hero of his Rest,
 Disturb'd the Calm of his serener Breast.

When to the Queen the Scepter he resign'd,

With a resolv'd and steady Mind,
Tho' he rejoic'd to lay the Trifle down,
He pity'd Her to whom he left the Crown:
Foreseeing long and vig'rous Wars,
Foreseeing endless, private, Party Jarrs,
Would always interrupt Her Rest,
And fill with Anxious Cares Her Royal Breast. 90
For Storms of Court Ambition rage as high
Almost as Tempests in the Sky.

Could I my hasty Doom retrieve,
And once more in the Land of Poets live,
I'd now the Men of Flags and Fortune greet,
And write an Elegy upon the Fleet.
First, those that on the Shore were idly found,
Whom other Fate protects, while better Men were drown'd,
They may thank God for being Knaves on Shore,
But sure the Q---- will never trust them more. 100

They who rid out the Storm, and liv'd,
But saw not whence it was deriv'd,
Senseless of Danger, or the mighty Hand,
That could to cease, as well as blow, command,
Let such unthinking Creatures have a Care,
For some worse End prepare.
Let them look out for some such Day,
When what the Sea would not, _the Gallows may_.

Those that in former Dangers shunn'd the Fight,
But met their Ends in this Disast'rous Night, 110
Have left this Caution, tho' too late,
That all Events are known to Fate.
Cowards avoid no Danger when they run,
And Courage scapes the Death it would not shun;
'Tis Nonsense from our Fate to fly,
All Men must once have Heart enough to die.

Those Sons of Plunder are below my Pen,
Because they are below the Names of Men;
Who from the Shores presenting to their Eyes
The Fatal _Goodwin_, where the Wreck of _Navies_ Lyes, 120
A thousand dying Saylors talking to the Skies.
From the sad Shores they saw the Wretches walk,
By Signals of Distress they talk;
There with one Tide of Life they're vex't,
For all were sure to die the next.

The Barbarous Shores with Men and Boats abound,
 The Men more Barbarous than the Shores are found;
 Off to the shatter'd Ships they go,
 And for the Floating Purchase Row.
 They spare no Hazard, or no Pain, 130
 But 'tis to save the Goods, and not the Men.
 Within the sinking Suppliants Reach appear,
 As if they'd mock their dying Fear.
 Then for some Trifle all their Hopes supplant,
 With Cruelty would make a _Turk_ relent.

If I had any _Satyr_ left to write,
 Cou'd I with suited Spleen Indite,
 My Verse should blast that Fatal Town,
 And Drowned Saylor's Widows pull it down;
 No Footsteps of it should appear, 140
 And Ships no more Cast Anchor there.
 The Barbarous Hated Name of _Deal_ shou'd die,
 Or be a Term of Infamy;
 And till that's done, the Town will stand
 A just Reproach to all the Land.

The Ships come next to be my Theme,
 The Men's the Loss, I'm not concern'd for them;
 For had they perish'd e'er they went,
 Where to no Purpose they were sent,
 The Ships might ha' been built again, 150
 And we had sav'd the Money and the Men.
 There the Mighty Wrecks appear,
 Hic Jacent, Useless Things of War.
 Graves of Men, and Tools of State,
 There you lye too soon, there you lye too late.
 But O ye Mighty Ships of War!
 What in Winter did you there?
 Wild _November_ should our Ships restore
 To _Chatham_, _Portsmouth_, and the _Nore_,
 So it was always heretofore, 160
 For Heaven it self is not unkind,
 If Winter Storms he'll sometimes send,
 Since 'tis suppos'd the Men of War
 Are all laid up, and left secure.

Nor did our Navy feel alone,
 The dreadful Desolation;
 It shook the _Walls of Flesh_ as well as Stone,
 And ruffl'd all the Nation.

The Universal Fright
Made Guilty _H----_ expect his Fatal Night; 170
His harden'd Soul began to doubt,
And Storms grew high within, as they grew high without.

Flaming Meteors fill'd the Air,
But _Asgil_ miss'd his _Fiery Chariot_ there;
Recall'd his black blaspheming Breath,
And trembling paid his Homage unto Death.

Terror appear'd in every Face,
Even _Vile Blackbourn_ felt some shocks of Grace;
Began to feel the Hated Truth appear,
Began to fear, 180
After _he had Burlesqu'd a God_ so long,
He should at last be in the wrong.
Some Power he plainly saw,
(And seeing, felt a strange unusual Awe;)
Some secret Hand he plainly found,
Was bringing some strange thing to pass,
And he that neither God nor Devil own'd,
Must needs be at a loss to guess.
Fain he would not ha' guest the worst,
But Guilt will always be with Terror Curst. 190

Hell shook, for Devils Dread Almighty Power,
At every Shock they fear'd the Fatal Hour,
The Adamantine Pillars mov'd,
And Satan's _Pandemonium_ trembl'd too;
The tottering _Seraphs_ wildly rov'd,
Doubtful what the Almighty meant to do;
For in the darkest of the black Abode,
There's not a Devil but believes a God.
Old _Lucifer_ has sometimes try'd
To have himself be Deify'd; 200
But Devils nor Men the Being of God deny'd,
Till Men of late found out New Ways to sin,
And turn'd the Devil out to let the Atheist in.
But when the mighty Element began,
And Storms the weighty Truth explain,
Almighty Power upon the Whirlwind Rode,
And every Blast proclaim'd aloud
There is, there is, there is, a God.

Plague, Famine, Pestilence, and War,
Are in their Causes seen, 210

The true Originals appear
 Before the Effects begin:
 But Storms and Tempests are above our Rules,
 Here our Philosophers are Fools.
 The _Stagyrite_ himself could never show,
 From whence, nor how they blow.
 Tis all Sublime, 'tis all a Mystery,
 They see no Manner how, nor Reason why;
 All Sovereign Being is the amazing Theme,
 'Tis all resolv'd to Power Supreme; 220
 From this First Cause our Tempest came,
 And let the Atheists spight of Sense Blaspheme,
 They can no room for Banter find,
 Till they produce another Father for the Wind.

Satyr, thy Sense of Sovereign Being Declare,
 He made the Mighty Prince o'th' Air,
 And Devils recognize him by their Fear.

Ancient as Time, and Elder than the Light,
 Ere the First Day, or Antecedent Night,
 Ere Matter into settl'd Form became, 230
 And long before Existence had a Name;
 Before th' Expanse of indigested Space,
 While the vast _No-where_ fill'd the Room of Place.
 Liv'd _the First Cause_ The First Great _Where_ and _Why_,
 Existing _to and from_ Eternity,
 Of His Great Self, and _of Necessity_.
 This I call God, that One great Word of Fear,
 At whose great sound,
 When from his Mighty Breath 'tis eccho'd round,
 Nature pays Homage with a trembling bow, 240
 And Conscious Men would faintly disallow;

The Secret Trepidation racks the Soul,
 And while he says, no God, replies, thou Fool.
 But call it what we will,
 First Being it had, does Space and Substance fill.
 Eternal Self-existing Power enjoy'd,
 And whatsoe'er is so, _That same is God_.

If then it should fall out, as who can tell,
 But that there is a Heaven and Hell, 250
 Mankind had best consider well for fear
 'T should be too late when their Mistakes appear;
 Such may in vain Reform,

Unless they do't before another Storm.

They tell us _Scotland_ scap'd the Blast;
No Nation else have been without a Taste:
All _Europe_ sure have felt the Mighty Shock,
'T has been a Universal Stroke.
But Heaven has other Ways to plague the _Scots_,
As Poverty and Plots.
Her Majesty Confirms it, what She said, 260
I plainly heard it, tho' I'm dead.

The dangerous Sound has rais'd me from my Sleep,
I can no longer Silence keep,
Here _Satyr_'s thy Deliverance,
A Plot in _Scotland_, Hatch'd in _France_,
And Liberty the Old Pretence.
Prelatick Power with Popish join,
The Queens Just Government to undermine;
This is enough to wake the Dead,
The Call's too loud, it never shall be said 270
The lazy _Satyr_ slept too long,
When all the Nations Danger Claim'd his Song.

Rise _Satyr_ from thy sleep of legal Death,
And reassume Satyrick Breath;
What tho' to Seven Years sleep thou art confin'd,
Thou well may'st wake with such a Wind.
Such Blasts as these can seldom blow,
But they're both form'd above and heard below.
Then wake and warn us now the Storms are past,
Lest Heaven return with a severer Blast. 280
Wake and inform Mankind
Of Storms that still remain behind.

If from this Grave thou lift thy Head,
They'll surely mind one risen from the Dead.
Tho' _Moses_ and the Prophets can't prevail,
A Speaking _Satyr_ cannot fail.
Tell 'em while secret Discontents appear,
There'll ne'er be _Peace and Union_ here.
They that for Trifles so contend, 290
Have something farther in their End;
But let those hasty People know,
The Storms above reprove the Storms below,
And 'tis too often known,
The Storms below do Storms above Forerun;

They say this was a High-Church Storm,
 Sent out the Nation to Reform;
 But th' Emblem left the Moral in the Lurch,
 For't blew the Steeple down upon the Church.
 From whence we now inform the People,
 The danger of the Church is from the Steeple. 300
 And we've had many a bitter stroke,
 From Pinnacle and Weather-Cock;
 From whence the Learned do relate,
 That to secure the Church and State,
 The Time will come when all the Town
 To save the Church, will pull the Steeple down.

Two Tempests are blown over, now prepare
 For Storms of Treason and Intestine War.
 The High-Church Fury to the North extends,
 In haste to ruin all their Friends. 310
 Occasional Conforming led the Way,
 And now Occasional Rebellion comes in Play,
 To let the Wond'ring Nation know,
 That High-Church Honesty's an Empty Show,
 A Phantasm of Delusive Air,
 That as Occasion serves can disappear,
 And Loyalty's a senseless Phrase,
 An Empty Nothing which our interest sways,
 And as that suffers this decays.

Who dare the Dangerous Secret tell, 320
 That Church-men can Rebel.
 Faction we thought was by the Whigs Engross'd,
 And _Forty One_ was banter'd till the Jest was lost.
 Bothwel and _Pentland-Hills_ were fam'd,
 And _Gilly Cranky_ hardly nam'd.
 If Living Poets Dare not speak,
 We that are Dead must Silence break;
 And boldly let them know the Time's at Hand.
 When Ecclesiastick Tempests shake the Land.
 Prelatick Treason from the Crown divides, 330
 And now Rebellion changes sides.
 Their Volumes with their Loyalty may swell,
 But in their Turns too they Rebel;
 Can Plot, Contrive, Assassinate,
 And spight of Passive Laws disturb the State.
 Let fair Pretences fill the Mouths of Men,
 No fair Pretence shall blind my Pen;

They that _in such a Reign as this_ Rebel
Must needs be in Confederacy with Hell.
Oppressions, Tyranny and Pride,
May give some Reason to Divide;
But where the Laws with open Justice Rule,
He that Rebels _Must be both Knave and Fool_.
May Heaven the growing Mischief soon prevent,
And Traytors meet Reward in Punishment.

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