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978-1-108-04248-2 - Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History: Composed during the Period from the Accession of Edward III to that of Richard III: Volume 2

Edited by Thomas Wright

Excerpt

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POLITICAL POEMS.

VOL. II.

COMPLIMENTARY VERSES ON KING HENRY IV.¹

By John Gower.

Sequitur carmen unde magnificus rex noster Henricus prænотatus apud Deum et homines cum omni benedictione glorificetur.

Rex cœli Deus et Dominus, qui tempora solus
 Condidit, et solus condita cuncta regit ;
 Qui rerum causas ex se produxit, et unum
 In se principium rebus inesse dedit ;
 Qui dedit ut stabili motu consisteret orbis,
 Fixus in æternum mobilitate sua ;
 Quique potens verbi produxit adesse creata,
 Quique suæ mentis lege ligavit ea ;
 Ipse caput regum, reges quo rectificantur,
 Teque tuum regnum, rex pie, quæso regat.
 Grata superveniens te misit gratia nobis,
 O sine labe salus, nulla par ante fuit.
 Sic tuus adventus nova gaudia sponte reduxit,
 Quo prius in luctu lachryma major erat.
 Nos tua milities pavidos relevavit ab imo,
 Quos prius oppressit ponderis omne malum.
 Ex probitate tua, quo mors latitabat in umbra
 Vita resurrexit claraque regna regit.

¹ From MS. Cotton. Tiberius A. iv. fol. 166, r^o. It is found in most of the manuscripts of Gower's Latin poems; and has here been collated with a copy in the MS. of Gower's poems in possession of the duke of Sutherland, now preserved at Trentham.

Sic tua sors sortem mediante Deo renovatam
 Sanat et emendat, quæ prius ægra fuit.
 O pie rex, Christum per se laudamus, et ipsum
 Qui tibi nos tribuit terra reviva colit.
 Sancta sit illa dies, qua tu tibi regna petisti,
 Sanctus et ille Deus qui tibi regna dedit.
 Qui tibi prima tulit, confirmet regna futura,
 Quo poteris magno magnus honore frui.
 Sit tibi progenies ita multiplicata per ævum,
 Quod genus inde pium repleat omne solum.
 Quicquid in orbe boni fuerit tibi summus ab alto
 Donet, ut in terris rex in honore regas.
 Omne quod est turpe vacuum discedat, et omne
 Est quod honorificum det Deus esse tuum.
 Consilium nullum, pie rex, te tangat iniquum,
 In quibus occultum scit Deus esse dolum.
 Absit avaritia, ne tangat regia corda,
 Nec queat in terra proditor esse tua.
 Sic tua processus habeat fortuna perennes,
 Quo recolant laudes sæcula cuncta tuas.
 Nuper ut Augusti fuerant præconia Romæ,
 Concinat in gestis Anglia læta tuis.
 O tibi, rex, ævo detur fortissime nostro
 Semper honorata sceptrâ tenere manu.
 Stes ita magnanimus quod ubi tua regna gubernas,
 Terreat has partes hostica nulla manus.
 Augeat imperium tibi Christus et augeat annos,
 Protegat et nostras aucta corona fores.
 Sit tibi pax finis, domito domineris in orbe,
 Cunctaque sint humeris inferiora tuis.
 Sic honor et virtus, laus, gloria, paxque, potestas,
 Teque tuum regnum magnificare queant.
 Cordis amore boni, pie rex, mea vota paravi,
 Corpore cum nequii servio mente tibi.
 Ergo tuæ laudique tuo geniflexus honori
 Verba loco doni pauper habenda tuli
 Est tamen ista mei, pie rex, sententia verbi,
 Fine tui regni sint tibi regna poli.

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COMPLIMENTARY VERSES ON KING HENRY IV. 3

H. aquilæ pullus quo nunquam gratior ullus,
 Hostes confregitque tyrannica colla subegit.
 H. aquilæ cepit oleum quo regna recepit,
 Sic veteri juncta stipiti nova stirps redit uncta.

*Epistola brevis unde virtutes regiae morales ad sanum
 regimen ampliori memoria dirigantur.*

O recolende bone, pie rex Henrice, patrone,
 Ad bona dispone quos eripis a Pharaone. Nota de
justitia.
 Noxia depone quibus est humus hæc in agone
 Regni personæ quo vivant sub ratione.
 Pacem compone, vires moderare coronæ,
 Legibus impone frænum sine conditione,
 Firmaque sermone jura tenere mone.
 Rex confirmatus licet undique magnificatus,
 Sub Christo gratus, vivas tamen immaculatus. Nota de
regimine.
 Est tibi prælatus, comes et baro, villa, senatus,
 Miles et armatus, sub lege sua moderatus.
 Dirige quosque status, maneat quo pacificatus,
 Invidus, elatus, nec avarus erit sociatus.
 Sic eris ornatus, purus ad omne latus.
 Hæc ut amans quibit Gower, pie rex, tibi scribit;
 Quo pietas ibit, ibi gratia nulla peribit, Nota de
pietate.
 Qui bone describit, semet mala nulla subibit,
 Sed pius exhibitque Dei pietate redibit.
 Sic qui transibit, opus et pietatis adibit,
 Hunc Deus ascribit, quod ab hoste perire nequibit;
 Et sic finibit, quia pia vota bibit.
 Quanto regalis honor est tibi plus generalis,
 Tanto moralis virtus tibi sit specialis. Nota de
contem-
platione.
 Sit tibi carnalis in mundo regula qualis
 Est tibi mentalis in Christo spiritualis.
 Si fuerit talis, tua chronica perpetualis
 Tunc erit æqualis perfectaue materialis.
 Rex immortalis te regat absque malis.

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ADDRESS OF JOHN GOWER TO HENRY IV.

Electus Christi, pie rex Henrice, fuisti,
 Qui bene venisti cum propria regna petisti ;
 Tu mala vicistique bonis bona restituisti,
 Et populo tristi nova gaudia contribuisti.
 Est mihi spes lata quod adhuc per te renovata
 Succedent fata veteri probitate beata.
 Est tibi nam grata gratia sponte data.

O worthi noble kyng Henry the ferthe,
 In whom the glade fortune is befallē
 The poeple to governe uppon erthe,
 God hath the chose in comfort of ous alle,
 The worschipe of this lond, which was doun falle,
 Now stant upriht thurgh grace of thi goodnesse,
 Which every man is holde for to blesse.

The high God, of his justice allone,
 The right which longeth to thi regalie
 Declared hath to stonde in thi persone ;
 And more than God may no man justifie.
 Thi title is knowe uppon thin ancestrie,
 The londes folk hath ek thy riht affermed ;
 So stant thi regne, of God and man confermed.

Ther is no man mai seie in other wise
 That God him self ne hath the riht declared,
 Whereof the lond is boun to thi servise,
 Which for defalte of help hath longe cared ;
 But now ther is no mannes herte spared,
 To love and serve, and wirche thi plesance,
 And al is this thurgh Godes pourveiance.

¹ This poem was inserted in the old black-letter editions in folio of the collected works of Chaucer. It is here printed from a contemporary manuscript in the possession of his grace the duke of Sutherland.

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ADDRESS OF JOHN GOWER TO HENRY IV. 5

In alle thing which is of God begonne,
 Ther folwith grace, if it be wele governed ;
 Thus tellen thei whiche olde bookes conne,
 Whereof, my lord, y wot wel thou art lerned.
 Axe of thi God, so schalt thou nocht be werned
 Of no request, which is resonable ;
 Ffor God unto the goode is favorable.

King Salomon, which hadde at his axinge
 Of God what thing him was levest to crave,
 He ches wisdom unto the governynge
 Of Goddis folk, the whiche he wolde save,
 And as he ches it fel him for to have ;
 Ffor thurgh his wit, whil that his regne laste,
 He gat him pes and reste unto the laste.

Bot Alisaundre, as telleth his histoire,
 Unto the God besoghte in other weie,
 Of all the world to winne the victoie
 So that undir his swerd it might obeie ;
 In werre he hadde al that he wolde preie,
 The myghti God behight him that beheste,
 The world he wan, and had it of conqweste.

Bot thogh it fel at thilke time so,
 That Alisandre his axinge hath achieved,
 This sinful world was al paiene tho,
 Was non which hath the hibe God believed,
 No wonder was thogh thilke world was grieved,
 Thogh a tiraunt his pourpos mihte winne ;
 Al was vengauce and infortune of sinne.

Bot now the feith of Crist is come aplace
 Among the princes in this erthe hiere,
 It sit hem wel to do pité and grace ;
 Bot 3it it mot be tempred in manere ;
 Ffor as thei finden cause in the matiere,
 Uppon the point, what aftirward betide,
 The lawe of riht shal nocht be leid aside.

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So mai a kyng of werre the viage
 Ordeigne and take, as he therto is holde,
 To cleime and axe his rightful heritage
 In alle places wher it is withholde ;
 Bot other wise if God him silve wolde
 Afferme love and pes betwen the kynges,
 Pes is the beste above alle erthely thinges.

Good is teschue werre, and natheles
 A kyng may make werre uppon his right ;
 Ffor of bataille the final ende is pes.
 Thus stant the lawe, that a worthi knyght
 Uppon his trouthe may go to the fight ;
 Bot if so were that he myghte chese,
 Betre is the pees, of which may no man lese.

To stere peace oghte every man alyve,
 Ffirst for to sette his liege lord in reste,
 And ek these othre men that thei ne stryve,
 Ffor so this world mai stonden ate beste.
 What kyng that wolde be the worthieste,
 The more he myghteoure dedly werre cesse,
 The more he schulde his worthinesse encesse.

Pes is the chief of al the worldes welthe,
 And to the heven it ledeth ek the weie ;
 Pes is of soule and lif the mannes helthe
 Of pestilence, and doth the werre aweie.
 My liege lord, tak hiede of that y seie,
 If werre may be lefte, tak pes on honde,
 Which may not be withoute Goddis sonde.

With pes stant every creature in reste ;
 Withoute pes ther may no lif be glad ;
 Above alle othre good pes is the beste ;
 Pes hath him self when werre is al bestad ;
 The pes is sauf, the werre is ever adrad ;
 Pes is of al charitie the keie,
 Which hath the lif and soule for to weie.

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ADDRESS OF JOHN GOWER TO HENRY IV. 7

My liege lord, if that the list to seche
 The sothe ensamples that the werre hath wroght,
 Thou schalt wiel here of wise mennes speche,
 That dedly werre turneth into nocht.
 Ffor if these olde bokes be wel soght,
 Ther myght thou se what thing the werre hath do,
 Both of conqueste and conquerour also.

For vein honour, or for the worldes good,
 Thei that whilom the stronge werres made,
 Wher be thei now, bethenk wel in thi mod ;
 The day is gone, the nygth is derk and fade,
 Her cruauté, which mad hem thanne glade,
 Thei sorwen now, and zit have nocht the more ;
 The blod is schad, which no man mai restore.

The werre is modir of the wronges alle ;
 It sleth the prest in holi chirche at masse,
 Fforlith the maide, and here flour tofalle ;
 The werre maketh the grete citee lasse,
 And dothe the lawe his reules overpasse.
 There is no thing wherof meschef mai growe,
 Which is nocht caused of the werre, I trowe.

The werre bringth in poverte at hise hieles,
 Wherof the comon poeple is sore grieved ;
 The werre hath set his cart on thilke whieles,
 Wher that fortune mai nocht be believed.
 Ffor whan men wene best to have achieved,
 Fulle ofte it is al newe to beginne ;
 The werre hath no thing siker, thogh he winne.

Forthi, my worthi prince, in Crists halve
 As for a part, whos feith thou hast to guide,
 Leie to this olde sor a newe salve,
 And do the werre awei, what so betide ;
 Pouchace pes, and sette it be thi side,
 And suffre nocht thi poeple be devoured ;
 So schal thi name ever after stonde honoured.

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If eny man be now, or ever was,
 Azein the pes thi prevé counsellour,
 Lete God been of thi conseil in this cas,
 And putte awei the cruel werreour.
 Ffor God, which is of man the creatour,
 He wolde nocht men slowe his creature,
 Withoute cause of dedly forfeiture.

Wher nedeth most, behoveth most to loke;
 Mi lord, how so thi werres ben withoute
 Of time passed, who than hiede toke,
 Good were at hom to se riht wel aboute,
 Ffor evermor the werste is for to doute;
 Bot if thou myghtest parfit pes atteigne,
 Ther schulde be no cause for to pleigne.

Aboute a kyng good conseil is to preise,
 Above alle othre thinges most available;
 Bot ȝit a kyng withinne him self schal preise,
 And se the thinges that ben resonable;
 And theruppon he schal his wittes stable,
 Among the men to sette pes in evene,
 Ffor love of him which is the kyng of hevene.

Ha! wel is him that schedde never blod,
 Bot if it were in cause of rihtwisnesse.
 Ffor if a kyng the peril undirstod,
 What is to sle the poeple, thanne y gesse
 The dedly werres and the hevynesse,
 Wherof the pes distourbid is ful ofte,
 Schulde at som time cesse and wexe softe.

O kyng, fulfilled of grace and of knyghthode,
 Remembre uppon this point for Cristes sake;
 If pes be profred unto thi manhode,
 Thin honour sauf, let it nocht be forsake.
 Though thou the werres darst wel undirtake,
 Aftir reson ȝit tempre thi corage,
 For lich to pes ther is non avantage.

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ADDRESS OF JOHN GOWER TO HENRY IV.

9

My worthi lord, thenke wel how so befallē
 Of thilke lore, as holi bokes sein,
 Crist is the heved, and we ben membres alle,
 As wel the subjit as the sovereign;
 So sit it wel, that charité be plein,
 Which unto God him selve most accordeth,
 So as the lore of Cristes word recordeth.

In tholde lawe, er Crist him self was bore,
 Among the ten comandementz y rede
 How that manslaghtre schulde be forbore;
 Such was the wille that time of the Godhede;
 But aftirwards, whanne Crist tok his manhede,
 Pes was the ferste thing he let do crie
 Azein the worldes rancour and envie.

And er Crist wente out of this erthe hiere,
 And stigh to hevене, he made his testament,
 Wher he beqwath to his disciples there
 And gaf his pes, which is the fundament
 Of charité, withouten whos assent
 The worldes pes may never wel be tried,
 Ne love kept, ne lawe justefied.

The Jewes with the paiens hadden werre,
 Bot thei among hem self stode evere in pes;
 Whi schulde thanne oure pes stonde out of herre,
 Which Crist hath chose unto his oghne encres?
 Ffor Crist is more than was Moises,
 And Crist hath set the parfit of the lawe,
 The which scholde in no wise be withdrawe.

To give ous pes was cause whi Crist dide,
 Withoute pes may no thing stonde availed;
 Bot now a man mai sen on everi side,
 How Cristes feith is every dai assailed,
 With the paiens destrued, and so batailed
 That for defalte of help and of defence,
 Unethe hath Crist his dewe reverence.

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The righte feith to kepe of holy chirche,
 The firste point is named of knyghthode ;
 And everi man is holde for to wirche
 Uppon the point which stant to his manhode.
 Bot now, belas ! the fame is sprad so broode,
 That everi man this thing compleigneth,
 And zit ther is no man which help ordeigneth.

The worldes cause is waited over al,
 Ther ben the werres redi to the fulle,
 Bot Cristes oghne cause in special,
 Ther ben the swerdes and the speres dulle ;
 And with the sentence of the popes bulle,
 As for to do the folk paien obeie,
 The chirche is turned al another weie.

It is to wonder above any manny wit,
 Withoute werre how Cristes feith was wonne ;
 And we that ben uppon this erthe zit,
 Ne kepe it nocht as it was first begonne.
 To every creature undir the sonne
 Crist bad him self, how that we schulden preche,
 And to the folk his evangile teche.

More light it is to kepe than to make ;
 Bot that we founden made tofore the hond
 We kepe nocht, bot lete it lightly slake.
 The pes of Crist hath al tobroke his bond ;
 We reste our selve, and soeffrin every lond
 To slen ech other, as thing undefendid ;
 So stant the werre, and pes is nocht amendid.

Bot thogh the heved of holy chirche above
 Ne do not al his hole businesse
 Among the men to sette pes and love,
 These kynges oughten of here rightwissnesse
 Here oghne cause among hem self redresse ;
 Thogh Peters schip as now hath lost his stiere,
 It lith in hem that barge for to stiere.