

**A POEM ON OUR
SAVIOUR'S
PASSION**

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A poem on our Saviour's Passion by Mary Sidney

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MARY SIDNEY

**A POEM ON OUR
SAVIOUR'S
PASSION**

A Poem.

OR

OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION.

BY

MARY SIDNEY, COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.



From an Unpublished MS. in the British Museum.

WITH A PREFACE,

BY THE EDITOR.

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M.D.CCC.LXIII.

100. 0. 109.

Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse ;
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother ;
Death ! ere thou hast slain another
Learned, and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

BEN JONSON.



P R E F A C E.

Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and sister to the celebrated Sir Philip Sidney, was the daughter of Sir Henry Sidney, by Mary, the eldest daughter of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. The excellence of her private life is so well known that it is unnecessary to say more than that she was the object of the admiration and respect of the most eminent persons of the age in which she lived. She secluded herself in a great measure from the Court, and devoted her time to the cultivation of letters, and the practice of the domestic virtues.

It is believed that she was the authoress of many anonymous pieces which appeared in the miscellanies of the day. An Elegy on Sir Philip Sidney, in Spenser's "Astrophel," and a Pastoral Dialogue in praise of Astræa (Queen Elizabeth), in Davison's "Poetical Rhapsody," have been attributed to her pen. She also translated from the French the tragedy of "Antonie," which was then much admired, but has now almost fallen into oblivion, and she united with her brother,

Sir Philip, in translating the Psalms of David into English verse; a work which has always been esteemed of considerable merit, but their respective shares in the labour have never been ascertained with certainty. De Mornay's "Discourse on Life and Death" had also the honour of being done into English by her Ladyship's skilful pen.

Her longest work is the poem we now submit to the perusal of the public. It is on the sublime subject of Our Saviour's Passion. Horace Walpole, in his "Royal and Noble Authors," enumerating her various publications, merely mentions it as one of her works. Lodge, in his "Portraits of Illustrious Personages," gives extracts from the poem, but does not speak of it in very flattering terms. He admits, however, that amidst the general obscurity and subtlety of the style, "grand conceptions sometimes flash suddenly on us from this chaos."

On the fly-leaf of the Sloane MS., No. 1303, in the British Museum, is to be found this inscription: "*Sum liber Johannis Botterelli, Anno Domini 1600, Novembris 27.*" This volume, among other poems all written in the same hand, contains the present work, under the title of "The Countesse of Penbrook's Passion."

R. G. B.

Mary Sidney was born about the year 1550, and died at her house in Aldersgate Street, on the 25th of September, 1621.

OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION.

1

Where shall I finde that melanchollye muse
That never hearde of anye thing but mone,
And reade her passion that her pen doth use,
When shee and sorrowe sadlye sitt alone,
 To tell the world more than the world can tell,
 What fitts indeede most fitlye figured hell.

2

Let me not thinke once of the smallest thought,
Ne speake of lesse than of the greatest greife,
Where everye sense with sorrowe overwrought,
Lives but in death, dispayringe of reliefe,
 Whilst thus the harte with torment torne asunder,
 Maye of the world be cald the woefull wonder.

3

The dayes like night all darkned in distresse,
Pleasure become a subject all of payne,
The spyritt overprest with hevynesse,
While hopelesse horreur vexeth every vayne,
 Death shakes his dart, greife hath my grave preparede,
 Yet to more sorrowe is my spyritt sparde.

4

The owlye eye that not endures the light [deathe,
 The night crowes songe, that soundeth nought but
 The cockatrice that killeth with her sight,
 The poysoned ayre, that choakes the sweetest breathe,
 Thunders and earthquakes all together mett,
 These tell a litle how my life is sett.

5

Where woes dissolu'de to sighes, and sighes to teares,
 And everye teare to torment of the mynde,
 The myndes distresse unto those deadlye feares,
 That finde more death, than death itselfe can finde,
 Death to that life, that livinge can discrye,
 A litle more yet of my myserye.

6

Put all the woes of all the world together,
 Sorrowe and death sett downe in all their pride,
 Let myserye bringe all her muses hither,
 With all the sorrowes that the hart may hide,
 Then reade the fate but of my ruefull storye,
 And saye my greife hath gotten sorrowes glorye.

7

For nature's sicknesse sometyme may have ease,
 Fortune (though fickell) some tyme is a friende,
 The myndes affliction patience may appease,
 And death is cause that many tormentes ende,
 But ever sicke, crased, greiv'd, and living, dyinge,
 Thinke on the subject in the sorrowe lying.

8

To shew the nature of my payne (alas)
 Payne hath no nature to discrye my payne,
 But where that payne itselfe in payne doth passe,
 Thinke on vexations so in every vaine,
 That hopelesse helpes, this endlesse payne may tell,
 Save hell itselfe (but myne) there is no hell.

9

If sicknesse be a grounde of deadlye greife,
 Consuminge care hath caught me by the harte,
 If want of comforte, (hopelesse of releife)
 Be further woe: so weigh my inwarde smarte,
 If friendes unkindenesse, so my griefe is grounded,
 If causlesse wronged, so my harte is wounded.

10

If love refused, so reade on my ruin,
 If truth disgraced, so my sorrowe moved,
 If faith abused, the grounde my torment grewe in,
 If vertues scorned, so my death approved,
 If death delaying, so my hart perplexed,
 If livinge, dyinge, so my spyritt vexed.

11

My infante yeares misspent in childishe toyes,
 My ryper age in rules of little reason,
 My better yeares in all mistaken joyes,
 My present tyme, (O most unhappye season),
 In fruitelesse labor, and in endlesse love,
 O what a horroure hath my harte to prove.