

Classic Poetry Series

Mercy Warren
- poems -

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Mercy Warren(1728 - 1814)

Mercy Otis Warren was born in Barnstable, Massachusetts, where she lived until 1754, when she married James Warren and moved to Plymouth, Massachusetts. Her husband and her brother James Otis were both involved in local politics, and their home became a place for revolutionary meetings.

Mercy played her part in supporting the revolution in 1772 with the publication of her play *The Adulateur*, the first in a long line of similar propagandistic pieces published anonymously.

Warren continued to write and publish after the war, issuing a volume of poetry under her own name in 1790 *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* and in 1805 publishing her three-volume *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* which contain more than twelve hundred pages, and became very popular with the revolutionaries and New Englanders.

John Adams Monarchical Ideas

SIR:- You complain that I have asserted that a partiality for monarchy appeared in your conduct. This fact you deny, and entreat me to bring forward the evidences which I suppose will warrant the assertion. The assertion was not founded on vague rumor, nor was it the result of any scattered and dubious expressions through your Defence of the American Constitutions that might warrant such a suspicion, but from my own judgment and observation soon after your return from Europe in the year 1788. There certainly was then an observable alteration in your whole deportment and conversation. Many of your best friends saw, felt, and regretted it. If time has not weakened your memory you will recollect many instances of yourself. I will remind you of a few. Do you not remember an interview at Cambridge soon after your return from England, when his lady and myself met you walking up to Mr. Gerry's? We stopped the carriage, and informed you that Mrs. Gerry and myself were engaged to take tea with Madam Winthrop. You returned and took tea with us at the house of that excellent lady. You will remember that Mr. Gerry's carriage was sent for me in the edge of the evening. You took a seat with me, and returned to Mr. Gerry's. Do you not recollect, sir, that in the course of conversation on the way you replied thus to something that I had observed?-'It does not signify, Mrs. Warren, to talk much of the virtue of Americans. more We are like all other people, and shall do like other nations, where all wellregulated governments are monarchic.' I well remember my own reply, 'That a limited monarchy might be the best government, but that it would be long before Americans would be reconciled to the idea of a king.' Do you not recollect that, a very, short time after this, Mr. Warren and myself made you a visit at Braintree? The previous conversation, in the evening, I do not so distinctly remember; but in the morning, at breakfast at Mercy your own table, the conversation on the subject of monarchy was resumed. Your ideas appeared to be favorable to monarchy, and to an order of nobility in your own country. Mr. Warren replied, 'I am thankful that I am a plebeian.' You answered: 'No, sir, you are one of the nobles. There has been a national aristocracy here ever since the country was settled,-your family at Plymouth, Mrs. Warren's at Barnstable, and many others in very many places that have kept up a distinction similar to nobility.' This conversation subsided by a little mirth. Do you not remember that, after breakfast, you and Mr. Warren stood up by the window, and conversed on the situation of the country, on the Southern States, and some principal characters there? You, with a degree of passion, exclaimed, 'They must have a master; ' and added, by a stamp with your foot, 'By God, they shall have a master.' In the course of the same evening you observed that you 'wished to see a monarchy in this country and an hereditary one too.' To this you say I replied as quick as lightning, 'And so do I

too.' If I did, which I do not remember, it must have been with some additional stroke which rendered it a sarcasm. You added with a considerable degree of emotion that you hated frequent elections, that they were the ruin of the morals of the people, that when a youth you had seen iniquity practised at a town meeting for the purpose of electing officers, than you had ever seen in any of the courts in Europe. These conversations were not disseminated by me,-we were too much hurt by the apparent change of sentiment and manner; they were concealed in our own bosoms until time should develop the result of such a change in such a man. Is not the above sufficient to warrant everything that I have said relative to your monarchic opinions ? Had you recollected the conversations alluded to above, you would not I have asserted on your faith and honor that every sentiment in a paragraph you refer to is 'totally unfounded.' On your return from Europe it was generally thought that you looked coldly on your Republican friends and their families, and that you united yourself with the party in Congress who were favorers of monarchy; that the old Tories, denominating themselves Federalists, gathered round you. And did not your administration while in the presidential chair evince that you had no aversion to the usages of monarchic governments? Sedition, stamp, and alien laws, a standing army, house and land taxes, and loans of money at an enormous interest were alarming symptoms in the American Republic. Your removal from the chair by the free suffrages of a majority of the people of the United States sufficiently evinces that I was not mistaken when I asserted that 'a large portion' of the inhabitants of America from New Hampshire to Georgia viewed your political opinions in the same point of light in which I have exhibited them, and considered their liberties in imminent danger, without an immediate change of the Chief Magistrate. However, I never supposed that you had a wish to submit again to the monarchy of Great Britain, or to become subjugated to any foreign sovereign. An American monarchy with an American character at its head would, doubtless, have been more pleasing to yourself. The veracity of an historian is his strongest base; and I am sure I have recorded nothing but what I thought I had the highest reason to believe. If I have been mistaken I shall be forgiven; and, if there are errors, they will be candidly viewed by liberal-minded and generous readers. PLYMOUTH, MASS., 28 July, 1807.

Mercy Warren

The Death Of Parson Caldwell's Wife

THE outrage of innocence in instances too numerous to be recorded, of the wanton barbarity of the soldiers of the King of England, as they patrolled the defenceless villages of America, was evinced nowhere more remarkably than in the burnings and massacres every that, marked the footsteps of the British troops as they from time to time ravaged the State of New Jersey. In their late excursion they had trod their deleterious path through a part of the country called the Connecticut Farms. It is needless to particularize many instances of their wanton rage and unprovoked devastation in and near Elizabethtown. The places dedicated to public worship did not escape their fury; these were destroyed more from licentious folly than any religious frenzy or bigotry, to which their nation had at times been liable. Yet through the barbarous transactions of this summer nothing excited more general resentment and compassion than the murder of the amiable and virtuous wife of a Presbyterian clergyman, attended with too many circumstances of grief on the one side and barbarism on the other to pass over in silence. This lady was sitting in her own house with her little domestic circle around her and her infant in her arms, unapprehensive of danger, shrouded by the consciousness of her own innocence and virtue, when a British barbarian pointed his musket into the window of her room, and instantly shot the her through the lungs. A hole was dug, the body thrown in, and the house of this excellent lady set on fire and consumed with all the property it contained. Mr. Caldwell, her affectionate husband, was absent; nothing had ever been alleged against his character, even by his enemies, but his zeal for the rights, and his attachment to his native land. For this he had been persecuted, and for this he was robbed of all that he held dear in life, by bloody hands of men in whose benevolence and politeness he had had much confidence until the fated day when this mistaken opinion led him to leave his beloved family, fearless of danger and certain of their security, from their innocence, virtue, and unoffending amiability. Mr. Caldwell afterward published the proofs of this cruel affair, attested on oath before magistrates by sundry persons who were in the house with Mrs. Caldwell and saw her fall back and expire immediately after the report of the gun. 'This was,' as observed by Mr. Caldwell, 'a violation of tender feeling; without provocation, deliberately committed in open day; nor was it ever frowned on by the commander.' The catastrophe of this unhappy family was completed within two years by the murder of Mr. Caldwell himself by some ruffian hands. His conscious integrity of heart had never suffered him to apprehend any personal danger, and the melancholy that pervaded all on the tragical death of his lady, who was distinguished for the excellence and respectability of her character, wrought up the resentment of that part of the country to so high a pitch that the most timid were aroused to deeds of

desperate heroism. They were ready to swear, like Hannibal against the Romans, and to bind their sons to the oath of everlasting enmity to the name of Britain.

Mercy Warren

To An Amiable Friend Mourning The Death Of An Excellent Father

LET deep dejection hide her pallid face,
And from thy breast each painful image rase;
Forbid thy lip to utter one complaint,
But view the glories of the rising saint,
Ripe for a crown, and waiting the reward
Of watching long the vineyard of the Lord.

The generous purpose of his zealous heart,
Truth to enforce, and knowledge to impart,
Insures his welcome on the unknown shore,
Where choirs of saints and angel forms adore.
A seraph met him on the trackless way,
And strung his harp to join the heavenly lay.

Complain no more of Death's extensive power,
Whose sceptre wafts us to some blissful shore;
Where the rough billows that roll o'er the head,
That shake the frame, and fill the mind with dread,
Are hush'd in silence, and the soul serene
Looks back delighted on the closing scene.

Happy, thrice happy, that exalted mind,
Who, leaving earth and all its cares behind,
Has not a wish to ruffle or control
The equal temper of his tranquil soul,
Who, on a retrospect, is safe within;
No private passion, nor a darling sin,
Can check his hope, when death's insatiate pow'r
Stands hovering on the last decisive hour.

Then weep no more, my friend, but all resigned,
Submit thy will to the Eternal Mind,
Who watches o'er the movements of the just,
And will again reanimate the dust!
Thy sire commands, suppress the rising sigh,
He wipes the tear from thy too filial eye,
And bids thee contemplate a soul set free,

Just safe escaped from life's tempestuous sea.

Mercy Warren

Woman's Trifling Needs

AN inventory clear of all she needs Lamira offers here; Nor does she fear a rigid Cato's frown When she lays by the rich embroidered gown, And modestly compounds for just enough- Perhaps, some dozens of more flighty stuff; With lawns and lustrings, blond, and Mechlin laces, Fringes and jewels, fans and tweezer-cases; memory Gay cloaks, and hats of every shape and size, Scarfs, cardinals, and ribbons of all dyes; With ruffles stamped, and aprons of tambour, Tippetts and handkerchiefs, at least three score; With finest muslins that fair India boasts, And the choice herbage from Chinesan coasts; (But while the fragrant hyson leaf regales, Who'll wear the homespun produce of the vales? For if 'twould save the nation from the curse Of standing troops; or-name a plague still worse- Few can this choice, delicious draught give up, Though all Medea's poisons fill the cup.) Add feathers, furs, rich satins, and ducares, And bead-dresses in pyramidal shapes; Sideboards of plate and porcelain profuse, With fifty dittos that the ladies use; If my poor treach'rous has missed, Ingenious T_I shall complete the list. So weak Lamira, and her wants so few, Who can refuse?- they're but the sex's due. In youth, indeed, an antiquated page Taught us the threatenings of an Hebrew sage 'Gainst wimples, mantles, curls, and crimping-pins; But rank not these among our modern sins; For when our manners are well understood, What in the scale is stomacher or hood? 'Tis true, we love the courtly mien and air, The pride of dress and all the debonair; Yet Clara quits the more dressed negligee, And substitutes the careless Polanee; Until some fair one from Britannia's court, Some jaunty dress or newer taste import; This sweet temptation could not be withstood, Though for the purchase paid her father's blood. Can the stern patriot Clara's suit deny? 'Tis Beauty asks, and Reason must comply.

Mercy Warren