

"On the 3. of September, 1651"

By Katherine Philips

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On the 3. of September, 1651, ^{September}

1 As when the glorious Magazine, ^{Magazine} of Light
2 Approches to his Canopy of Night
3 He with the new splendour clothes his dying Rays,
4 And double brightness to his Beams conveys;
5 And (as to brave, ^{Brave} and check, ^{Check} his ending fate)
6 Puts on his highest look in's lowest state,

7 Drest in such terrour as to make us all
8 Be Anti-Persians , ^{Anti-Persians} and adore his Fall;
9 Then quits the world depriving it of Day,
10 While Every Herb and Plant does droop away:
11 So when our gasping English Royalty
12 Perceiv'd her Period, ^{Period} was now drawing nigh,
13 She summons her whole strength to give one blow,
14 To raise her self, or pull down others too.
15 Big with revenge and hope she now spake more
16 Of terror than in many months before;
17 And musters her Attendants, or to save
18 Her from, or else attend her to, the Grave:
19 Yet but enjoy'd the miserable fate
20 Of setting Majesty, to die in State.
21 Unhappy Kings, who cannot keep a Throne,
22 Nor be so fortunate to fall alone!
23 Their weight sinks others: Pompey could not fly, ^{Pompey} ,
24 But half the World must bear him company;
25 And captiv'd Sampson , ^{Sampson} could not life conclude,
26 Unless attended with a multitude.
27 Who'd trust to greatness now, whose food is air, ^{nAir} ,
28 Whose ruine sudden, and whose end despair?
29 Who would presume upon his Glorious Birth,
30 Or quarrel for a spacious share of Earth
31 That sees such Diadems, ^{Diadems} become so cheap,
32 And Heros tumble in a common heap?
33 Oh give me Vertue then, which sums up all,
34 And firmly stands when Crowns and Scepters fall.

Footnotes

September On September 3rd, 1651, Oliver Cromwell and his men defeated Charles II and the Royalists in the battle of Worcester, the last major battle of the English Civil War.

Magazine A storehouse or repository. In military use, a storeroom for arms and explosives (Oxford English Dictionary).

Brave To defy (Oxford English Dictionary).

Check to stop sharply (Oxford English Dictionary)

Anti- Persians had the reputation of being sun-worshippers. Anti-Persians, therefore, would be anti-sun, Persians depicted here as though they were rooting for it to set (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Period An end, a conclusion; the point of completion of a process (OED).

Pompey Pompey, a Roman statesman and general, was a popular figure in literature for his spectacular fall from power. After Caesar defeated him in the Battle of Pharsalus, concluding the civil war, Pompey fled to Egypt, where he was assassinated by Lucius Septimius, his former colleague.

Sampson In the Bible, Sampson ("man of the sun"), a Judge of the ancient Israelites and blessed with superhuman strength, was taken captive and tortured by the Philistines after Delilah betrayed him. He took his revenge during a well-attended sacrifice, when he was summoned to give a performance and instead destroyed the temple's columns, killing himself and all of the Philistines within.

nAir Who survives on nothing or who has false hope.

Diadems Crowns (Oxford English Dictionary).