

1

To sing of wars, of captains, and of kings,
Of cities founded, commonwealths begun,
For my mean pen are too superior things:
Or how they all, or each, their dates have run;
Let poets and historians set these forth,
My obscure lines shall not so dim their work.

2

But when my wondering eyes and envious heart
Great Bartas' sugared lines do but read o'er,
Fool I do grudge the Muses did not part
'Twixt him and me that overfluent store;--
A Bartas can do what a Bartas will,
But simple I according to my skill.

3

From school-boys tongues no rhetoric we expect,
Nor yet a sweet consort from broken strings,
Nor perfect beauty where's a main defect:
My foolish, broken, blemished Muse so sings;
And this to mend, alas, no art is able,
'Cause nature made is so, irreparable.

4

Nor can I, like that fluent, sweet-tongued Greek
Who lisped at first, in future times speak plain;
By art he gladly found what he did seek--
A full requitl of his striving pain.
Art can do much, but this maxim's most sure:
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

5

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits.
A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong;
For such despite they cast on female wits,

If what I do prove well, it won't advance--
They'll say it was stolen, or else it was by chance.

6

But shure the ancient Greeks were far more mild,
Else of our sex why feignéd they those Nine,
And Posey made Calliope's own child?
So 'mongst the rest they placed the Arts Divine.
But this weak knot they will full soon untie--
The Greeks did naught but play the fools and lie.

7

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are.
Men have precenency, and still excell.
It is but vain unjustly to wage war,
Men can do best, and women know it well.
Preëminence in all and each is yours--
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

8

And oh, ye high flownquills that soar the skies,
And ever with your prey still catch your praise,
If e'er you deign these lowly lines your eyes,
Give thyme or parsley wreath; I ask no bays.
This mean and unrefiné ore of mine
Will make your glistening gold but more to shine.