



Poetry in Motion

History told through Verse and Song
Volume 1.1 (55 BC - AD 1199)

POETRY IN MOTION
HISTORY TOLD THROUGH VERSE
AND SONG

VOLUME 1.1: EARLY BRITAIN
(55 BC – AD 1199)

COMPILED BY
RACHEL E. NORTH



CHARLOTTE MASON BEEHIVE
MELTON MOWBRAY

2021

Sample

© Copyright 2021, Charlotte Mason Beehive.

Cover design by James North

Front cover art—Queen Boudicca by John Opie (1761-1807)

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without prior written permission from the publisher.

Charlotte Mason Beehive
charlottesmasonbeehive.co.uk

INTRODUCTION

ONE of my favourite ways to read history is through the medium of poetry. For centuries, history was relived in verse and in song, passed down orally from generation to generation, delighting one another with the tales of people and events; the good, the bad, and the ugly. History told in this way captures the emotions of the past in ways not always possible through prose or painting.

Charlotte Mason, of the Parents' National Educational Union (P.N.E.U.), espoused the virtues of reading poetry, and although as far as we know she never advocated for the specific reading of historical events through verse, we feel a living education could do nothing but benefit from its inclusion.

There are forty-two poems included in this collection, derived from a variety of sources, and including poems from the likes of C. M. Yonge, William Cowper, and H. W. Longfellow. Volume 1.1 covers Early Britain (55 BC – AD 1199), which was the history

period Miss Mason always assigned for first year students in Form IB.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Using this book as part of formal lessons is optional. Although all forty-two poems included are about people or events from Early Britain, not all poems will directly relate to the episodes your students read in their lesson books for this time period.

How you choose to incorporate the poems into your school lessons is completely up to you. If you have sufficient time after your student's narration is complete then it may be an enjoyable way to finish off the lesson. Do not in itself turn it into a lesson by trying to analyse the poem but if desired make light discussion of the content, comparing the narrative of the verse to that of the reading, or discussing the different ways that history is interpreted by different people.

Often there will not be enough time to read a poem as some are especially long. It

might be a good idea to include the poems periodically during your usual poetry-reading time, as and when those topics are being covered.

We do recommend, however, that parents/teachers read through the content in advance of presenting it to their students in order to evaluate the suitability of the verse and the length of time required to read and discuss it.

The poems also offer great content for recitation or copy work.

FOOTNOTES

Footnotes have been included to provide vocabulary assistance and/or explanation where necessary. These notes are mainly for the benefit of the parent/teacher and should not ordinarily be made into a lesson for the student. If a student would like to understand the poem more or has questions then the information may be provided but the poem should be read through at least

once first so as not to interrupt the flow of the verse.

We sincerely hope you find *Poetry in Motion: History told through Verse and Song, Volume 1.1* helpful, and that you will have a pleasant and engaging school year learning history through living books and poetry. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us through charlottesmasonbeehive.co.uk.

RACHEL E. NORTH,
JULY 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory Poem.....	9
Caractacus.....	11
Boadicea.....	16
The Roman Centurion's Song.....	19
O Weep Not For Him.....	23
The Eagles have Flown!.....	27
The Alleluia Battle.....	30
Sir Lancelot Du Lake.....	34
“Non Angli, Sed Angeli Sunt.”.....	40
The Mission of St. Augustine.....	43
King Edwin's Witenagemot.....	46
The Mother's Book.....	52
The Battle of Essendune.....	55
A Legend of Athelney.....	60
Alfred the Harper.....	63
The Discoverer of the North Cape.....	71
Edward the Martyr.....	78
The Sea-King's Grave.....	80
Dane Geld.....	84
The King and the Waves.....	87
The Battle of Hastings.....	92
A Legend of Hastings Field.....	97
The Curfew Song of England.....	101
The Norman Baron.....	104

Who Shall be King?.....	108
The Conqueror's Death.....	112
The Crusade.....	118
William Rufus.....	121
The Last Hunt of William Rufus.....	124
The Red King's Gone A-Hunting.....	129
The White Ship.....	135
The Battle of the Standard.....	138
The Martyrdom of St. Thomas.....	148
The Nameless Grave.....	153
Richard Cœur-de-Lion at his Father's Bier	159
Saladin's Gift.....	165
Saladin's Gift (2).....	168
The Siege of Jaffa.....	173
The Lament of the English for the Captivity of Cœur-de-Lion.....	180
The Return of Richard Cœur-de-Lion.....	185
Robin Hood and Allen-A-Dale.....	189
Robin Hood's Death and Burial.....	196

INTRODUCTORY POEM

LITTLE children in these pages

 You shall learn the tale of ages;
You shall learn the wondrous story
 Of our Britain's fame and glory.

You shall learn how many a war man—

 Kelt and Saxon, Dane and Norman—
Men of courage, might and grace,
 Blended all in Britain's race.

You shall learn how much you owe

 To your sires of long ago;
How they fought and died, that we
 Might be great and might be free;

How the waves that hemmed them round

 Were their highway; how they found
Rich new lands that grew to be
 Brighter Britains o'er the sea;

How they made our island yield

 Treasure from the mine and field;

How the labours of their hands
Filled the marts of many lands;

How the golden hoards of trade
Blessed the poor and freed the slave,
Raised the fallen, built the school,
So that Wisdom's power might rule.

Little children, think awhile
On your father's love and toil;
How they strove from age to age
To leave you this proud heritage.

So must you, when youth is done
And the work of life begun,
Thus right nobly play your part,
Serving Britain hand and heart.

EDWARD SHIRLEY

CARACTACUS

Caractacus, or Caradoc, a western British chief, after a brave resistance was taken captive and brought to Rome. He stood before Claudius with great dignity, and pleaded for his people, saying, as he looked at the grand buildings of Rome, that he wondered the Romans should covet the poor huts of the Britons.—
C.M. Yonge, *Historical Ballads*

BEFORE proud Rome's imperial throne

In mind's unconquered mood,
As if the triumph were his own,
The dauntless captive stood.
None, to have seen his free-born air,
Had fancied him a captive there.

Though, through the crowded streets of
Rome,

With slow and stately tread,
Far from his own loved island home,
That day in triumph led,—
Unbound his head, unbent his knee,
Undimmed his eye, his aspect free.

A free and fearless glance he cast
 On temple, arch, and tower,
By which the long procession passed
 Of Rome's victorious power;
And somewhat of a scornful smile
 Upcurled his haughty lip the while.

And now he stood, with brow serene,
 Where slaves might prostrate fall,
Bearing a Briton's manly mien
 In Cæsar's palace hall;
Claiming, with kindled brow and cheek,
 The liberty e'en there to speak.

Nor could Rome's haughty lord withstand
 The claim that look preferred,
But motioned with uplifted hand
 The suppliant should be heard,—
If he indeed a suppliant were
 Whose glance demanded audience there.

Deep stillness fell on all the crowd,
 From Claudius on his throne

Down to the meanest slave that bowed
At his imperial throne;
Silent his fellow-captive's grief
As fearless spoke the Island Chief:

“Think not, thou eagle Lord of Rome,
And master of the world,
Though victory's banner o'er thy dome
In triumph now is furled,
I would address thee as thy slave,
But as the bold should greet the brave!

“I might, perchance, could I have deigned
To hold a vassal's throne,
E'en now in Britain's isle have reigned
A king in name alone,
Yet holding, as thy meek ally,
A monarch's mimic pageantry.

“Then through Rome's crowded streets today
I might have rode with thee,
Not in a captive's base array,
But fetterless and free,—

If freedom he could hope to find,
Whose bondage is of heart and mind.

“But canst thou marvel that, freeborn,
With heart and soul unquelled,
Throne, crown, and sceptre I should scorn,
By thy permission held?
Or that I should retain my right
Till wrested by a conqueror’s might?

“Rome, with her palaces and towers,
By us unwished, unreft,
Her homely huts and woodland bowers
To Britain might have left;
Worthless to you their wealth must be,
But dear to us, for they were free!

“I might have bowed before, but where
Had been thy triumph now?
To my resolve no yoke to bear
Thou ow’st thy laurelled brow;
Inglorious victory had been thine,
And more inglorious bondage mine.

“Now I have spoken, do thy will;
 Be life or death my lot,
Since Britain’s throne no more I fill,
 To me it matters not.
My fame is clear; but on my fate
 Thy glory or thy shame must wait.”

He ceased; from all around up sprung
 A murmur of applause,
For well had truth and freedom’s tongue
 Maintained their holy cause.
The conqueror was the captive then;
 He bade the slave be free again.

B. BARTON

BOADICEA¹

Boadicea de Bwddey, the widow of the British chief of the Iceni, a midland tribe, was scourged by a Roman officer, and her daughters deprived of their father's inheritance. She raised a great revolt, but was defeated, and destroyed herself.—C.M. Yonge, *Historical Ballads*

WHEN the British warrior queen,
 Bleeding from the Roman rods,
Sought, with an indignant mien,
 Counsel of her country's gods,

Sage beneath a spreading oak
 Sat the Druid, hoary chief;
Ev'ry burning word he spoke
 Full of rage, and full of grief.

Princess! if our aged eyes
 Weep upon thy matchless wrongs,
'Tis because resentment ties
 All the terrors of our tongues.

1 This poem was written in the eighteenth century, when historical knowledge was less accurate tht at present; as such there are mistakes which we have pointed out.