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Original Poems And Translations, By John Dryden, Esq; Now First Collected and Publish'd together, In Two Volumes

Containing Translations, Epistles, Prologues, Epilogues, Elegies, Epitaphs, And Songs

Dryden, John

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To my Honoured Friend Sir Robert Howard, on his Excellent Poems.

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Your Foes are ſuch, as they, not you, have made,
And Virtue may repel, tho' not invade.
Such Courage did the antient Heroes ſhow,
Who, when they might prevent, wou'd wait the Blow:
With ſuch aſſurance as they meant to ſay,
We will o'ercome, but ſcorn the ſafeſt way.
What further fear of danger can there be?
Beauty, which captives all things, ſets me free.
Poſterity will judge by my Succeſs,
I had the *Grecian* Poet's Happineſs,
Who, waving Plots, found out a better way;
Some God deſcended, and preſerv'd the Play.
When firſt the Triumphs of your Sex were ſung
By thoſe old Poets, *Beauty* was but young,
And few admir'd the native Red and White,
'Till Poets dreſs'd them up, to charm the ſight:
So *Beauty* took on truſt, and did engage
For Sums of Praiſes 'till ſhe came to Age.
But this long-growing Debt to Poetry
You juſtly, Madam, have diſcharg'd to me,
When your Applauſe and Favour did infuſe
New Life to my condemn'd and dying Muſe.

To my Honoured Friend Sir ROBERT HOWARD, *on his Excellent Poems.*

AS there is Muſick uninform'd by Art
In thoſe wild Notes, which with a merry Heart
The Birds in unfrequented Shades expreſs,
Who, better taught at home, yet pleaſe us leſs:
So in your Verſe a native Sweetneſs dwells,
Which ſhames Compoſure, and its Art excells.

Singing,

Singing no more can your soft numbers grace,
Than Paint adds Charms unto a beauteous Face.
Yet as, when mighty Rivers gently creep,
Their even Calmness does suppose them deep;
Such is your Muse: No Metaphor swell'd high
With dangerous boldness lifts her to the Sky:
Those mounting Fancies, when they fall again,
Shew Sand and Dirt at bottom do remain.
So firm a Strength, and yet withal so sweet,
Did never but in *Samson*'s Riddle meet.
'Tis strange each Line so great a weight should bear,
And yet no sign of Toil, no Sweat appear.
Either your Art hides Art, as *Stoicks* feign
Then least to feel, when most they suffer Pain;
And we, dull Souls, admire, but cannot see
What hidden Springs within the Engine be:
Or 'tis some Happiness that still pursues
Each Act and Motion of your Graceful Muse.
Or is it Fortune's Work, that in your Head
The curious * Net that is for Fancies spread,
Lets thro' its Meshes every meaner Thought,
While rich *Ideas* there are only caught?
Sure that's not all; this is a piece too fair
To be the Child of Chance, and not of Care.
No Atoms casually together hurl'd
Could e'er produce so beautiful a World.
Nor dare I such a Doctrine here admit,
As would destroy the Providence of Wit.
'Tis your strong *Genius* then which does not feel
Those Weights, wou'd make a weaker Spirit reel.
To carry weight, and run so lightly too,
Is what alone your *Pegasus* can do.

---

* Rete Mirabile.

Great

Great *Hercules* himself cou'd ne'er do more,
Than not to feel those Heav'ns and Gods he bore.
Your easier Odes, which for Delight were penn'd,
Yet our Instruction make their second End:
We're both enrich'd and pleas'd, like them that wooe
At once a Beauty, and a Fortune too.
Of Moral Knowledge Poesy was Queen,
And still she might, had wanton Wits not been;
Who, like ill Guardians, liv'd themselves at large,
And, not content with that, debauch'd their Charge.
Like some brave Captain, your successful Pen
Restores the Exil'd to her Crown again:
And gives us hope, that having seen the Days
When nothing flourish'd but Fanatick Bays,
All will at length in this Opinion rest,
" A Sober Prince's Government is best.
This is not all; your Art the way has found
To make th' Improvement of the richest Ground,
That Soil which those Immortal Laurels bore,
That once the Sacred *Maro*'s Temples wore.
Elisa's Griefs are so express'd by you,
They are too Eloquent to have been true.
Had she so spoke, *Æneas* had obey'd
What *Dido*, rather than what *Jove* had said.
If Funeral Rites can give a Ghost Repose,
Your Muse so justly has discharged those,
Elisa's Shade may now its wandring cease,
And claim a Title to the Fields of Peace.
But if *Æneas* be oblig'd, no less
Your Kindness great *Achilles* doth confess;
Who, dress'd by *Statius* in too bold a Look,
Did ill become those Virgin Robes he took.
To understand how much we owe to you,
We must your Numbers, with your Author's, view;

Then

Then we ſhall ſee his Work was lamely rough,
Each Figure ſtiff, as if deſign'd in Buff:
His Colours laid ſo thick on every place,
As only ſhew'd the Paint, but hid the Face.
But as in perſpective we Beauties ſee,
Which in the Glaſs, not in the Picture, be;
So here our Sight obligingly miſtakes
That Wealth, which his your Bounty only makes.
Thus vulgar Diſhes are, by Cooks diſguis'd,
More for their dreſſing, than their ſubſtance priz'd.
Your curious * Notes ſo ſearch into that Age,
When all was Fable but the Sacred Page,
That, ſince in that dark Night we needs muſt ſtray,
We are at leaſt miſ-led in pleaſant way.
But what we moſt admire, your Verſe no leſs
The Prophet than the Poet doth confeſs.
Ere our weak Eyes diſcern'd the doubtful Streak
Of Light, you ſaw Great *Charles* his Morning break.
So skilful Seamen ken the Land from far,
Which ſhews like Miſts to the dull Paſſenger.
To *Charles* your Muſe firſt pays her duteous Love,
As ſtill the Antients did begin from *Jove*.
With *Monk* you end, whoſe Name preſerv'd ſhall be,
As *Rome* Recorded † *Rufus*' Memory,
Who thought it greater Honour to obey
His Country's Intereſt, than the World to ſway.
But to write worthy things of worthy Men,
Is the peculiar Talent of your Pen:
Yet let me take your Mantle up, and I
Will venture in your Right to Propheſy.

---

* *Annotations on* Statius.

† *Hic ſitus eſt* Rufus, *qui pulſo vindice quondam*
Imperium aſſeruit non ſibi, ſed Patriæ.