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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

London, 1743

To my Friend Mr. Motteux, on his Tragedy called Beauty in Distress.

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To my Friend Mr. MOTTEUX, *on his Tragedy called* Beauty in Distress.

'TIS hard, my Friend, to write in such an Age,
As damns, not only Poets, but the Stage.
That sacred Art, by Heav'n itself infus'd,
Which *Moses, David, Solomon* have us'd,
Is now to be no more: The Muses' Foes
Wou'd sink their Maker's Praises into Prose.
Were they content to prune the lavish Vine
Of straggling Branches, and improve the Wine,
Who, but a Madman, wou'd his thoughts defend?
All wou'd submit; for all but Fools will mend.
But when to common Sense they give the lye,
And turn distorted words to blasphemy,
They give the Scandal; and the Wise discern,
Their Glosses teach an Age, too apt to learn.
What I have loosely, or prophanely, writ,
Let them to Fires, their due desert, commit:
Nor, when accus'd by me, let them complain:
Their Faults, and not their Function, I arraign.
Rebellion, worse than Witchcraft, they pursu'd;
The Pulpit preach'd the Crime, the People ru'd.
The Stage was silenc'd; for the Saints wou'd see
In Fields perform'd their plotted Tragedy.
But let us first reform, and then so live,
That we may teach our Teachers to forgive:
Our Desk be placed below their lofty Chairs;
Ours be the Practice, as the Precept theirs.
The Moral Part, at least, we may divide,
Humility reward, and punish Pride;
Ambition, Int'rest, Avarice accuse:
These are the Province of a Tragick Muse.

These