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Author: Samuel Cobb

Author of introduction, etc.: Louis I. Bredvold

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Essays on Poetry and Language

No. 1

Samuel Cobb's
Discourse on Criticism
and
of Poetry
from
Poems on Several Occasions (1707)

With an Introduction by
Louis I. Bredvold

The Augustan Reprint Society
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Introduction

What little is known of the life of Samuel Cobb (1675-1713) may be found in the brief article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* by W.P. Courtney. He was born in London, and educated at Christ's Hospital and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he obtained the degrees of B.A., 1698, and M.A., 1702. He was appointed "under grammar master" at Christ's Hospital in 1702 and continued his connection with this school until his early

death. He had a reputation for wit and learning, and also for imbibing somewhat too freely. In his poetry he especially cultivated the style of the free Pindaric ode, a predilection which won him a mention without honor in Johnson's life of Pope (*Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, III, 227). Even the heroic couplets of his poem on "Poetry" aim rather at pseudo-Pindaric diffuseness than at epigrammatic concentration of statement. As a critic Cobb deserves attention in spite of his mediocrity, or even because of it. He helps to fill out the picture of the literary London of his time, and his opinions and tastes provide valuable side-lights on such greater men as Dennis, Addison, and Pope. "Of Poetry" belongs to the prolific literary type of "progress poems," in which the modern student finds illuminating statements as to how the eighteenth century surveyed and evaluated past literary traditions. The list of Cobb's publications in the *Cambridge Bibliography* suggests that he enjoyed some degree of popularity. His volume, *Poems on Several Occasions*, was published in 1707, and reprinted in enlarged form in 1709 and 1710. The reproduction herewith of the Preface "On Criticism" and the versified discourse "Of Poetry" is from a copy of the 1707 edition in the Newberry Library, in Chicago.

Louis I. Bredvold

University of Michigan

A DISCOURSE ON CRITICISM AND THE LIBERTY OF WRITING.

In a Letter to *Richard Carter Esq;* late of the *Middle-Temple*, now living in *Barbadoes*.

SIR,

The Muses are said to be the Daughters of Memory: A Poet therefore must lay down his Title to their Favour, who can be forgetful of a Friend, like You, whose polite Knowledge, instructive Conversation, and particular Generosity to my self, have left such strong Impressions upon my Mind, as defy the Power of Absence to remove them. I scarce believe Death it self can blot out an Idea so firmly imprinted. The Soul, when it leaves this earthly Habitation, and has no more Use for those Vertues, which were serviceable in the Conduct of human Life, such as Temperance, Fortitude and the like, will certainly carry Love and Gratitude along with it to Heaven. This may suffice to let the World know what Obligations you have laid upon me.

By this Letter (the room of which, for your sake I could willingly have supply'd) you will plainly see, that no Place, however remote, is able to secure you from the Zeal of a Friend, and the Vanity of a Poet.

For tho' retiring to the *Western Isles*,
At the long Distance of five thousand Miles,
You've chang'd *dear London* for your Native Seat,
And think *Barbadoes* is a safe Retreat;
You highly err: Nor is the *Wat'ry Fence*
Sufficient Guard against Impertinence.
The *Muse*, which smiles on jingling Bards, like Me,
Has always Winds to waft her o'er the Sea.
Blow on, ye Winds, and o'er th' *Atlantick Main*,
Bear to my Gen'rous Friend this thankful Strain.

You see, Sir, I have not left off that rhyming Trick of Youth; but knowing You to be a Gentleman who loves Variety in every thing, I thought it would not be ungrateful if I checquer'd my Prose with a little Verse.

After this Preamble, it is presum'd, that one who lives on the Other side of the Globe, will expect by every Pacquet-boat to know what is done on This. Since Your Departure, Affairs have had a surprizing Turn every where, and particularly in Italy; which Success of our Armies and Allies abroad, have given a manifest Proof of our wise Counsels at home. —Parties still run between High and Low. I shall make no Remarks on either; thinking it always more prudent, as well as more safe, to live peaceably under the Government in which I was born, rather than peevishly to quarrel with it.

But You will cry, Who expects any thing from the Politicks of a Poet? How goes the State of Parnassus? What has the Battle of Ramillies produc'd? What Battles generally do; bad Poets, and worse Criticks. I could not persuade my self to attempt any thing above six Lines, which had not been made, were it not at the Request of a Musical Gentleman. You will look upon them with the same Countenance you us'd to do on things of a larger Size.

Born to surprize the World, and teach the Great
The slippery Danger of exalted State,
Victorious *Marlbrô* to *Ramilly* flies;
Arm'd with new Lightning from bright ANNA's Eyes.
Wonders like These, no former Age has seen;
Subjects are *Heroes*, where a Saint's the *QUEEN*.

Mr. Congreve has given the World an Ode, and prefix'd to it a Discourse on the Pindaric Verse, of which more, when I come to speak on the same Argument: There are several others on that Subject, and some which will bear the Test; one particularly, written in imitation of the Style of Spencer; and goes under the Name of Mr. Prior; I have not read it through, but ex pede Herculem. He is a Gentleman who cannot write ill. Yet some of our Criticks have fell upon it, as the Viper did on the File, to the detriment of their Teeth. So that Criticism, which was formerly the Art of judging well, is now become the pure Effect of Spleen, Passion and Self-conceit. Nothing

is perfect in every Part. He that expects to see any thing so, must have patience till Dooms-day. The Worship we pay to our own Opinion, generally leads its to the Contempt of another's. This blind Idolatry of Self is the Mother of Errour; and this begets a secret Vanity in our Modern Censurers, who, when they please to think a Meaning for an Author, would thereby insinuate how much his Judgment is inferiour to their inlighten'd Sagacity. When, perhaps, the Failings they expose are a plain Evidence of their own Blindness.

For to display our Candour and our Sence,
Is to discover some deep Excellence.
The Critick's faulty, while the Poet's free;
They raise the *Mole hill*, who want *Eyes to see*.

Excrescences are easily perceiv'd by an ordinary Eye; but it requires the Penetration of a Lynceus to discern the Depth of a good Poem; the secret Artfulness and Contrivance of it being conceal'd from a Vulgar Apprehension.

I remember somewhere an Observation of St. Evremont (an Author whom you us'd to praise, and whom therefore I admire) that some Persons, who would be Poets, which they cannot be, become Criticks which they can be. The censorious Grin, and the loud Laugh, are common and easy things, according to Juvenal; and according to Scripture, the Marks of a Fool. These Men are certainly in a deplorable Condition, who cannot be witty, but at another's Expence, and who take an unnatural kind of Pleasure in being uneasy at their Own.

Rules they can write, but, like the *College Tribe*,
Take not that Physick which their Rules prescribe.
I scorn to praise a plodding, formal Fool,
Inspidly correct, and *dull* by Rule:
Homer, with all his *Nodding*, I would chuse,
Before the more exact *Sicilian Muse*.
Who'd not be *Dryden*; tho' his Faults are great,
Sooner than our Laborious *Laureat*?
Not but a decent Neatness, I confess,
In *Writing* is requir'd, as well as *Dress*.
Yet still in both the *unaffected Air*
Will always please the *Witty* and the *Fair*.

I would not here be thought to be a Patron of slovenly Negligence; for there is nothing which breeds a greater Aversion in Men of a Delicate Taste. Yet you know, Sir, that, after all our Care and Caution, the Weakness of our Nature will eternally mix it self in every thing we write; and an over curious Study of being correct, enervates the Vigour of the Mind, slackens the Spirits, and cramps the Genius of a Free Writer. He who creeps by the Shore, may shelter himself from a Storm, but likely to make very few Discoveries: And the cautious Writer, who is timorous of disobliging the captious Reader, may produce you true Grammar, and unexceptionable Prosodia, but most stupid Poetry.

In vitium culpæ ducit fuga, si caret arte.

A slavish Fear of committing an Oversight, betrays a Man to more inextricable Errours, than the Boldness of an enterprizing Author, whose artful Carelessness is more instructive and delightful than all the Pains and Sweat of the Poring and Bookish Critick.

Some Failings, like Moles in a beautiful Countenance, take nothing from the Charms of a happy Composure, but rather heighten and improve their Value. Were our modern Reflecters Masters of more Humanity than Learning, and of more Discernment than both, the Authors of the Past and Present Ages, would have no reason to complain of Injustice; nor would that Reflection be cast upon the best-natur'd Nation in the World, that, when rude and ignorant, we were unhospitable to Strangers, and now, being civiliz'd, we expend our Barbarity on one another. Homer would not be so much the Ridicule of our Beaux Esprits; when, with all his Sleepiness, he is propos'd as the most exquisite Pattern of Heroic Writing, by the Greatest of Philosophers, and the Best of Judges. Nor is Longinus behind hand with Aristotle in his Character of the same Author, when he tells us that the Greatness of Homer's Soul look'd above little Trifles (which are Faults in meaner Capacities) and hurry'd on to his Subject with a Freedom of Spirit peculiar to himself. A Racer at New-market or the Downs, which has been fed and drest, and with the nicest Caution prepared for the Course, will stumble perhaps at a little Hillock; while the Wings of Pegasus bear him o'er Hills and Mountains,

Sub pedibusq; videt nubes & sydera—

Such was the Soul of Homer: who is more justly admir'd by those who understand him, than he is derided by the Ignorant: Whose Writings partake as much of that Spirit, as he attributes to the Actions of his Heroes; and whose Blindness is more truly chargeable on his Criticks, than on Himself: who, as he wrote without a Rule, was himself a Rule to succeeding Ages. Who as much deserves that Commendation which Alcibiades gave to Socrates, when he compar'd him to the Statues of the Sileni, which to look upon, had nothing beautiful and ornamental; but open them, and there you might discover the Images of all the Gods and Goddesses.

Who knows the secret Springs of the Soul, and those sudden Emotions, which excite illustrious Men, to act and speak out of the Common Road? They seem irregular to Us by reason of the Fondness and Bigottry we pay to Custom, which is no Standard to the Brave and the Wise. The Rules we receive in our first Education, are laid down with this Purpose, to restrain the Mind; which by reason of the Tenderness of our Age and the ungovernable Disposition of Young Nature, is apt to start out into Excess and Extravagance. But when Time has ripen'd us, and Observation has fortify'd the Soul, we ought to lay aside those common Rules with our Leading strings; and exercise our Reason with a free, generous and manly Spirit. Thus a Good Poet should make use of a Discretionary Command; like a Good General, who may rightly wave the vulgar Precepts of the Military School (which may confine an ordinary Capacity, and curb the Rash and Daring) if by a new and surprizing Method of Conduct, he find out an uncommon Way to Glory and Success.

Bocalin, *the Italian Wit, among his other odd Advertisements, has this remarkable one, which is parallel to the present Discourse. When Tasso (says he) had presented Apollo with his Poem, call'd Giurasalemme Liberata; the Reformer of the Delphic Library, to whose Perusal it was committed, found fault with it, because it was not written according to the Rules of Aristotle; which affront being complain'd of, Apollo was highly incens'd, and chid Aristotle for his Presumption in daring to prescribe Laws and Rules to the high Conceptions of the Virtuosi, whose Liberty of Writing and Inventing, enrich'd the Schools and Libraries with gallant Composures; and to enslave the Wits of Learned Men, was to rob the World of those alluring Charms which daily flow'd from the Productions of Poets, who follow the Dint of their own unbounded Imagination. You will find the rest in the 28th Advertisement.*

The Moral is instructive; because to judge well and candidly, we must wean our selves from a slavish Bigotry to the Ancients. For, tho' Homer and Virgil, Pindar and Horace be laid before us as Examples of exquisite Writing in the Heroic and Lyric Kind, yet, either thro' the Distance of Time, or Diversity of Customs, we can no more expect to find like Capacities, than like Complexions. Let a Man follow the Talent that Nature has furnish'd him with, and his own Observation has improv'd, we may hope to see Inventions in all Arts, which may dispute Superiority with the best of the Athenian and Roman Excellencies.

Nec minimum meruère decus vestigia Græca Ausi deserere.—

It is another Rule of the same Gentleman, that we should attempt nothing beyond our Strength: There are some modern Milo's who have been wedg'd in that Timber which they strove to rend. Some have fail'd in the Lyric Way who have been excellent in the Dramatic. And, Sir, would you not think a Physician would gain more Profit and Reputation by Hippocrates and Galen well-studied, than by Homer and Virgil ill-copied?

Horace, who was as great a Master of Judgment, as he was an Instance of Wit, would have laid the Errours of an establish'd Writer on a pardonable Want of Care, or excus'd them by the Infirmary of Human Nature; he would have wondred at the corrupt Palates now a-days, who quarrel with their Meat, when the Fault is in their Taste. To reform which, if our Moderns would lay aside the malicious Grin and drolling Sneer, the Passions and Prejudices to Persons and Circumstances, we should have better Poems, and juster Criticisms. Nothing casts a greater Cloud on the Judgment than the Inclination (or rather Resolution) to praise or condemn, before we see the Object. The Rich and the Great lay a Trap for Fame, and have always a numerous Crowd of servile Dependants, to clap their Play, or admire their Poem.

For noble Scriblers are with Flattery fed,
And none dare tell their Fault who eat their Bread.

Dryden's Pers..

Juvenal shews his Aversion to this Prepossession, when his old disgusted Friend gives this among the rest of his Reasons why he left the Town,

—Mentiri nescio: librum
Si malus est, nequeo laudare & poscere.

To conquer Prejudice is the part of a Philosopher; and to discern a Beauty is an Argument of good Sense and Sagacity; and to find a Fault with Allowances for human Frailty, is the Property of a Gentleman.

Who then is this Critick? You will find him in Quintilius Varus, of Cremona, who when any Author shew'd him his Composure, laid aside the Fastus common to our supercilious Readers; and when he happen'd on any Mistake, Corrige sodes Hoc aiebat & hoc.

Such is the Critick I would find, and such would I prove my self to others. I am sorry I must go into my Enemies Country to find out another like him. Our English Criticks having taken away a great deal from the Value of their Judgment, by dashing it with some splenetick Reflections. Like a certain Nobleman mention'd by my Lord Verulam, who when he invited any Friends to Dinner, always gave a disrelish to the Entertainment by some cutting malicious Jest.

The French then seem to me to have a truer Taste of the ancient Authors than ever Scaliger or Heinsius could pretend to. Rapin, and above all, Bossu, have done more Justice to Homer and to Virgil, to Livy and Thucydides, to Demosthenes and to Cicero, &c. and have bin more beneficial to the Republick of Learning, by their nice Comparisons and Observations, than all the honest Labours of those well-meaning Men, who rummage musty Manuscripts for various Lections. They did not Insistere in ipso cortice, verbisq; interpretandis intenti nihil ultra petere, (As Dacier has it) but search'd the inmost Recesses, open'd their Mysteries, and (as it were) call'd the Spirit of the Author from the Dead. It is for this Le Clerc (in his Bibliotheque Choisie, Tom. 9. p. 328.) commends St. Evremont's Discourses on Salust and Tacitus, as also his Judgment on the Ancients, and blames the Grammarians, because they give us not a Taste of Antiquity after his Method, which would invite our Polite Gentlemen to study it with a greater Appetite. Whereas their Manner of Writing, which takes Notice only of Words, Customs, and chiefly Chronology, with a blind Admiration of all they read, is unpleasant to a fine Genius, and deters it from the pursuit of the Belles Lettres.

I shall say no more at present on this Head, but proceed to give you an Account of the following Sheets. What I have attempted in them is mostly of the Pindaric and the Lyric Way. I have not follow'd the Strophe and Antistrophe; neither do I think it necessary; besides I had rather err with Mr. Cowley, who shew'd us the Way, than be flat and in the right with others.

Mr. Congreve, an ingenious Gentleman, has affirm'd, I think too hastily, that in each particular Ode the Stanza's are alike, whereas the last Olympic has two Monostrophicks of different Measure, and Number of Lines.

The Pacquet-boat is just going off, I am afraid of missing Tide. You may expect the rest on the Pindaric Style. In the mean time I beg leave to subscribe myself,

Samuel Cobb.

Of POETRY.

1. Its Antiquity. 2. Its Progress. 3. Its Improvement.

A POEM.

Sure when the Maker in his Heav'nly Breast
Design'd a Creature to command the rest,
Of all th' *Erected Progeny of Clay*
His Noblest Labour was his *First Essay*.
There shone th' Eternal Brightness, and a Mind
Proportion'd for the Father of Mankind.
The Vigor of Omnipotence was seen
In his high Actions, and Imperial Mien.
Inrich'd with Arts, unstudy'd and untaught,
With loftiness of Soul, and dignity of Thought
To Rule the World, and what he Rul'd to Sing,
And be at once the Poet and the King.
Whether his Knowledge with his breath he drew,
And saw the Depth of Nature at a View;
Or, new descending from th' Angelick race,
Retain'd some tincture of his Native Place.

Antiquity of Poetry

Fine was the Matter of the curious Frame,
Which lodg'd his *Fiery Guest**, and like the same
Nor was a less Resemblance in his Sense,
His Thoughts were lofty, just his Eloquence.
Whene're He spoke, from his *Seraphick* Tongue
Ten Thousand comely Graces, ever young,
With new *Calliopes* and *Clio's* sprung.
No shackling Rhyme chain'd the free Poet's mind,
Majestick was His Style, and unconfind.
Vast was each Sentence, and each wondrous strain
Sprung forth, unlabour'd, from His fruitful Brain.

* The Soul according to the Platonists. So *Virgil*:
Aurai simplicis ig, nem.

But when He yielded to deluding Charms,
Th' Harmonious Goddess shun'd His empty Arms.
The Muse no more his sacred Breast inspir'd,
But to the Skies, her Ancient Seat, retir'd.
Yet here and there *Celestial Seeds* She threw,
And rain'd *melodious Blessings* as She flew.
Which some receiv'd, whom Gracious Heav'n design'd
For high Employments, and their Clay resin'd.
Who, of a *Species* more sublime, can tame
The rushing God, and stem the rapid Flame.
When in their breasts th' impetuous *Numen* rowls,
And with uncommon heaves swells their Diviner Souls.

Thus the Companion of the Godhead [Moses] sung,
And wrote upon those Reeds from whence he Sprung.
He, first of Poets, told how Infant Light,
Unknown before, dawn'd from the Womb of Night.
How Sin and Shame th' *Unhappy Couple* knew,
And thro' affrighted *Eden*, more affrighted, flew.
How God advanc'd his Darling *Abram's* fame,
In the sure Promise of his lengthen'd Name.
On *Horeb's* Top, or *Sinah's* flaming Hill
Familiar Heav'n reveal'd his Sacred Will.
Unshaken then *Seth's* stony Column stood,
Surviving the Destruction of the Flood.
His Father's Fall was letter'd on the Stone,
Thence Arts, Inventions, Sciences were Known.
Thence Divine *Moses*, with exalted thought,
In *Hebrew* Lines the *Worlds Beginning* wrote.

The Gift of Verse descended to the Jews,

The Progress of Poetry.

Inspir'd with something nobler than a Muse.
Here *Deborah* in fiery rapture sings,
The Rout of Armies, and the Fall of Kings.
Thy Torrent, *Kison*, shall for ever flow,
Which trampled o'er the Dead, and swept away the Foe.

With Songs of Triumph, and the Maker's praise,
With Sounding Numbers, and united Lays,
The Seed of *Judah* to the Battle flew,
And Orders of Destroying Angels drew
To their Victorious side: Who marching round
Their Foes, touch'd Myriads at the signal Sound,
By Harmony they fell, and dy'd without a Wound.
So strong is Verse Divine, when we Proclaim
Thy Power, Eternal Light, and Sing thy Name!

Nor does it here alone it's Magick show,
But works in Hell, and binds the Fiends below.
So powerful is the Muse! When *David* plaid,
The Frantick *Dæmon* heard him, and obey'd.
No Noise, no Hiss: the dumb Apostate lay
Sunk in soft silence, and dissolv'd away.
Nor was this Miracle of Verse confin'd
To *Jews* alone: For in a Heathen mind
Some strokes appear: Thus *Orpheus* was inspir'd,
Inchanting *Syrens* at his Song retir'd.
To Rocks and Seas he the curst Maids pursu'd,
And their strong Charms, by stronger Charms subdu'd.

Orpheus.

But *Greece* was honour'd with a Greater Name,
Homer is *Greece's* Glory and her Shame.
How could Learn'd *Athens* with contempt refuse,
Th' immortal labours of so vast a Muse?
Thee, *Colophon*, his angry Ghost upbraids,
While his loud Numbers charm th' Infernal Shades.
Ungrateful Cities! Which could vainly strive
For the Dead *Homer*, whom they scorn'd Alive.
So strangely wretched is the Poet's Doom!
To Wither here, and Flourish in the Tomb.

Homer.

Tho' *Virgil* rising under happier Stars,
Saw *Rome* succeed in Learning as in Wars.
When *Pollio*, like a smiling Planet, shone,
And *Cæsar* darted on him, like the Sun.
Nor did *Mecænas*, gain a less repute,
When Tuneful *Flaccus* touch'd the *Roman* Lute.

But when, *Mecænas*, will Thy Star appear
In our low Orb, and gild the *British* Sphere?
Say, art Thou come, and, to deceive our Eyes
Dissembled under *DORSET's* fair Disguise?
If so; go on, Great *Sackville*, to regard
The Poet, and th'imploring Muse reward.
So to Thy Fame a *Pyramid* shall rise,
Nor shall the Poet fix thee in the Skies.
For if a Verse Eternity can claim,
Thy Own are able to preserve thy Name.
This Province all is Thine, o'er which in vain
Octavius hover'd long, and sought to Reign.
This Sun prevail'd upon his Eagle's sight,
Glar'd in their Royal Eyes, and stop'd their flight.
Let him his Title to such Glory bring,
You give as freely, and more nobly sing.
Reason will judge, when both their Claims produce,
He shall his Empire boast, and Thou the Muse.
Horace and He are in Thy Nature joyn'd,
The Patron's Bounty with the Poet's Mind.

O Light of *England*, and her highest Grace!
Thou best and greatest of thy Ancient Race!
Descend, when I invoke thy Name, to shine
(For 'tis thy Praise) on each unworthy Line,
While to the World, unprejudic'd, I tell
The noblest Poets, and who most excel.
Thee with the Foremost thro' the Globe I send,
Far as the British Arms or Memory extend.

But 'twould be vain, and tedious, to rehearse
The meaner Croud, undignify'd for Verse
On barren ground who drag th'unwilling Plough,
And feel the Sweat of Brain as well as Brow.
A Crew so vile, which, soon as read, displease,
May Slumber in forgetfulness and ease,
Till fresher Dulness wakes their sleeping Memories.

Some stuff'd in Garrets dream for wicked Rhyme
Where nothing but their Lodging is sublime.
Observe their twenty faces, how they strain
To void forth Nonsense from their costive Brain.
Who (when they've murder'd so much costly time,
Beat the vext Anvil with continual chime,
And labour'd hard to hammer statutable Rhyme)
Create a *BRITISH PRINCE*; as hard a task,
As would a *Cowley* or a *Milton* ask,
To build a Poem of the vastest price,
A *DAVIDEIS*, or *LOST PARADISE*.
So tho' a Beauty of *Imperial Mien*
May labour with a Heroe, or a Queen,
The Dowdie's Offspring, of the freckled strain,
Shall cause like Travail, and as great a Pain.

Such to the Rabble may appear inspir'd,
By Coxcombs envy'd, and by Fools admir'd.
I pity Madmen who attempt to fly,
And raise their *Airy Babel* to the Sky.
Who, arm'd with Gabble, to create a Name,
Design a Beauty, and a Monster frame,
Not so the Seat of *Phoebus* role, which lay
In Ruins buried, and a long Decay.
To *Britany* the Temple was convey'd,
By Natures utmost force, and more than Human Aid.
Built from the *Basis* by a noble Few,
The stately Fabrick in perfection view.
While Nature gazes on the polish'd piece,
The Work of many rowling Centuries.

For Joyn'd with Art She labour'd long to raise
An *English* Poet, meriting the Bays.
How vain a Toil! Since Authors first were known
For *Greek* and *Latin* Tongues, but scorn'd their Own.

As *Moors* of old, near *Guinea's* precious Shore,
For glittering Brass exchang'd their shining Oar.
Involving Darkness did our Language shrowd,
Nor could we view the Goddess thro' the Cloud.

Sunk in a Sea of Ignorance we lay,
Till *Chaucer* rose, and pointed out the Day.
A joking Bard, whose antiquated Muse
In mouldy words could Solid sense produce.
Our *English Ennius* He, who claim'd his part
In wealthy Nature, tho' unskil'd in Art.
The sparkling Diamond on his Dunghil shines,
And golden fragments glitter in his Lines.
Which *Spencer* gather'd, for his Learning known,
And by successful gleanings made his Own.
So careful Bees, on a fair Summer's Day,
Hum o'er the Flowers, and suck the sweets away.
O had thy Poet, *Britany*, rely'd
On native Strength, and Foreign Aid deny'd!
Had not wild Fairies blasted his Design,
Mæanides and *Virgil* had been Thine!
Their Finish'd Poems He exactly view'd,
But *Chaucer's* steps *religiously* pursu'd.

Chaucer

Spencer

He cull'd, and pick'd, and thought it greater praise
T'adore his Master, than improve his Phrase;
'Twas counted Sin to deviate from his Page;
So sacred was th' Authority of Age!
The Coyn must sure for *currant Sterling* pass,
Stamp'd with old *Chaucer's Venerable Face*.
But *Johnson* found it of a gross *Alloy*,
Melted it down, and slung the Dross away
He dug pure Silver from a *Roman Mine*,

And prest his Sacred Image on the Coyn.
 We all rejoyc'd to see the pillag'd Oar,
 Our Tongue inrich'd, which was so poor before.
 Fear not, Learn'd Poet, our impartial blame,
 Such Thefts as these add Lustre to thy Name.
 Whether thy labour'd Comedies betray
 The Sweat of *Terence*, in thy Glorious way,
 Or *Catiline* plots better in thy Play.
 Whether his Crimes more excellently shine,
 Whether we hear the Consul's Voice Divine,
 And doubt which merits most, *Rome's Cicero*, or Thine.
 All yield, consenting to sustain the Yoke,
 And learn the Language which the Victor spoke.
 So *Macedon's Imperial Hero* threw
 His wings abroad, and conquer'd as he flew.
 Great *Johnson's Deeds* stand Parallel with His,
 Were *Noble Thefts*, *Successful Pyracies*.

Ben. Johnson.

Souls of a Heroe's, or a Poet's Frame
 Are fill'd with larger particles of flame.
 Scorning confinement, for more Land they groan,
 And stretch beyond the Limits of their Own.

Fletcher, whose Wit, like some luxuriant Vine,
 Profusely wanton'd in each golden Line.
 Who, prodigal of Sense, by *Beaumont's* care,
 Was prun'd so wisely, and became so fair.
 Could from his copious Brain new Humours bring,
 A *bragging Bessus*, or *inconstant King*.
 Could Laughter thence, here melting pity raise
 In his *Amyntors*, and *Aspasia's*.
 But *Rome* and *Athens* must the Plots produce
 With *France*, the Handmaid of the *English Muse*

Fletcher and Beaumont

Ev'n *Shakespear* sweated in his narrow Isle,
 And Subject *Italy* obey'd his Stile.
Boccace and *Cinthio* must a tribute pay,
 T'inrich his Scenes, and furnish out a Play.
 Tho' Art ne're taught him how to write by Rules,
 Or borrow Learning from *Athenian* Schools:
 Yet He, with *Plautus*, could instruct and please,
 And what requir'd long toil, perform with ease.
 By inborn strength so *Theseus* bent the Pine,
 Which cost *the Robber* many Years Design[*].

Shakespear.

Tho' sometimes rude, unpolish'd and undrest
 His Sentence flows, more careless than the rest.
 Yet, when his Muse, complying with his will,
 Deigns with informing heat his Breast to fill,
 Then hear him thunder in the Pompous strain
 Of *Æschylus*, or sooth in *Ovid's* vein.
 I feel a Pity working in my Eyes,
 When *Desdemona* by *Othello* dyes.
 When I view *Brutus* in his Dress appear;
 I know not how to call him too severe.
 His *rigid Vertue* there attories for all,
 And makes a Sacrifice of *Cæsar's* Fall.

* See Plutarch's Life of Theseus.

Nature work'd Wonders then; when *Shakespear* dy'd
 Her *Cowley* rose, drest in her gaudy Pride.
 So from great Ruins a new Life she calls,
 And Builds an *Ovid[*]* when a *Tully* Falls.

Cowley.

With what Delight he tunes his Silver-Strings,
 And *David's* Toils in *David's* numbers Sings?
 Hark! how he Murmurs to the Fields and Groves,
 His rural Pleasures, and his various Loves,
 Yet every Line so Innocent and Clear,
Hermits may read them to a Virgin's Ear.
 Unstoln *Promethean* Fire informs his Song,
 Rich is his Fancy, his Invention strong.
 His Wit, unfathom'd, has a fresh Supply,
 Is always flowing-out, but never Dry.

* Ovid was born the same year in which Cicero dy'd.

Sure the profuseness of a boundless Thought,
 Unjustly is imputed for a Fault.
 A Spirit, that is unconfin'd and free,

Should hurry forward, like the Wind or Sea.
Which laughs at Laws and Shackles, when a Vain
Presuming *Xerxes* shall pretend to Reign,
And on the flitting Air impose his pond'rous Chain.

Hail *English* Swan? for You alone could dare
With well-pois'd Pinions tempt th' unbounded Air:
And to your Lute *Pindaric* Numbers call,
Nor fear the Danger of a *threatned Fall*.
O had You liv'd to *Waller's* Reverend Age,
Better'd your Measures, and reform'd your Page!
Then *Britain's* Isle might raise her Trophies high,
And *Solid Rome*, or *Witty Greece* outvy.
The *Rhine*, the *Tyber*, and *Parisian Sein*,
When e're they pay their Tribute to the Main,
Should no sweet Song more willingly rehearse,
Than gentle *Cowley's* never-dying Verse.
The *Thames* should sweep his briny way before,
And with his Name salute each distant Shore.

Milton.

Then You, like Glorious *Milton* had been known
To Lands which Conquest has insur'd our Own.
Milton! whose Muse Kisses th' embroider'd Skies,
While Earth below grows little, as She Flies.
Thro' trackless Air she bends her winding Flight,
Far as the Confines of retreating Light.
Tells the *sindg'd Moor*, how scepter'd Death began
His Lengthning Empire o'er offending Man.
Unteaches conquer'd Nations to Rebel,
By Singing how their Stubborn Parents fell.

Now *Seraphs* crown'd with *Helmets* I behold,
Helmets of Substance more refin'd than Gold:
The Skies with an united Lustre shine,
And Face to Face th' Immortal Armies joyn.
God's *plated Son*, *Majestically gay*,
Urges his Chariot thro' the Chrystal-Way
Breaks down their Ranks, and Thunders, as he Flies,
Arms in his Hands, and Terrour in his Eyes.
O'er Heav'ns wide Arch the routed Squadrons Rore,
And transfix d Angels groan upon the *Diamond-Floor*.
Then, wheeling from *Olympus* Snowy top,
Thro' the scorch'd Air the giddy Leaders drop
Down to th' Abyss of their allotted Hell,
And gaze on the lost Skies from whence they Fell.

I see the Fiend, who tumbled from his Sphere
Once by the *Victor God*, begins to fear
New Lightning, and a Second Thunderer.
I hear him Yell, and argue with the Skies,
Was't not enough, Relentless Power! he cries,
Despair of better state, and loss of Light
Irreparable? Was not loathsom Night
And ever-during Dark sufficient Pain,
But Man must Triumph, by our Fall to Reign,
And Register the Fate which we Sustain?
Hence Hell is doubly Ours: Almighty Name
Hence, after Thine, we feel the Poet's Flame
And in Immortal Song renew Reviving shame.

O Soul *Seraphick*, teach us how we may
Thy Praise adapted to thy Worth display,
For who can Merit more? or who enough can Pay?
Earth was unworthy Your aspiring View,
Sublimer Objects were reserv'd for You.
Thence Nothing mean obtrudes on Your Design,
Your Style is equal to Your Theme Divine,
All Heavenly great, and more than Masculine.
Tho' neither Vernal Bloom, nor Summer's Rose
Their op'ning Beauties could to Thee disclose.
Tho' Nature's curious Characters, which we
Exactly view, were all eras'd to Thee.
Yet Heav'n stood Witness to Thy piercing sight,
Below was Darkness, but Above was Light:
Thy Soul was Brightness all; nor would it stay
In nether Night, and such a want of Day.

But wing'd aloft from sordid Earth retires
 To upper Glory, and its kindred-Fires:
 Like an unhooded *Hawk*, who, loose to Prey,
 With open Eyes pursues th' Ethereal Way.
 There, Happy Soul, assume thy destin'd Place,
 And in yon Sphere begin thy glorious Race:
 Or, if amongst the Laurel'd Heads there be
 A Mansion in the Skies reserv'd for Thee,
 There Ruler of thy Orb aloft appear,
 And rowl with *Homer* in the brightest Sphere;
 To whom *Calliope* has joyn'd thy Name,
 And recompens'd thy Fortunes with his Fame.

Tho' She (forgive our freedom) sometimes Flows
 In Lines too Rugged, and akin to Prose.
 Verse with a lively smoothness should be Wrote,
 When room is granted to the Speech and Thought.
 Like some fair Planet, the Majestick Song
 Should gently move, and sparkle as it rowls along.
 Like *Waller's* Muse, who tho' inchain'd by Rhime,
 Taught wondring Poets to keep even Chime.
 His Praise inflames my breast, and should be shown
 In Numbers sweet and *Courtly* as his Own.
 Who no unmanly *Turns* of Thought pursues,
 Rash Errours of an injudicious Muse.
 Such Wit, like Lightning, for a while looks Gay,
 Just gilds the Place, and vanishes away.
 In one continu'd blaze He upwards sprung,
 Like those *Seraphick* flames of which He Sung.
 If, *Cromwel*, he laments thy Mighty Fall
 Nature attending Weeps at the *Great Funeral*.
 Or if his Muse with joyful Triumph brings
 the Monarch to His Ancient Throne, or Sings
Batavians worsted on the Conquer'd Main,
 Fleets flying, and advent'rous *Opdam* Slain,
 Then *Rome* and *Athens* to his Song repair
 With *British* Graces smiling on his Care,
 Divinely charming in a Dress so Fair.
 As Squadrons in well-Marshal'd order fill
 The *Flandrian Plains*, and speak no vulgar Skill;
 So Rank'd is every Line, each Sentence such,
 No Word is wanting, and no Word's too much.
 As Pearls in Gold with their own Lustre Shine,
 The Substance precious, and the Work Divine:
 So did his Words his Beauteous Thoughts inchase,
 Both shone and sparkled with unborrow'd Grace,
 A mighty Value in a little Space.
 So the *Venusian Clio* sung of Old,
 When lofty Acts in well-chose Phrase he told.
 But *Rome's* aspiring *Lyrick* pleas'd us less,
 Sung not so moving, tho' with more Success.
 O *Sacharissa*, what could steel thy Breast,
 To Rob *Harmonious Waller* of his Rest?
 To send him Murm'ring thro' the *Cypress-Grove*,
 In strains lamenting his neglected Love.
 Th' attentive Forest did his Grief partake,
 And Sympathizing Oaks their knotted Branches shake.
 Each Nymph, tho' Coy, to Pity would incline;
 And every stubborn Heart was mov'd, but Thine.
 Henceforth be Thou to future Ages known;
 Like *Niobe*, a Monument of Stone.

Here could I dwell, like Bees on Flowry Dew,
 And *Waller's* praise Eternally pursue,
 Could I, like Him, in Harmony excel,
 So sweetly strike the Lute, and Sing so Well.

But now the forward Muse converts her Eye
 To see where *Denham*, and *Roscommon* fly,
 Cautiously daring, and correctly High.
 Both chief in Honour, and in Learning's Grace,
 Of Ancient Spirit, and of Ancient Race.
 Who, when withdrawn from Business, and Affairs,
 Their Minds unloaded of tormenting Cares,
 With soothing Verse deceiv'd the sliding Time,
 And, unrewarded, Sung in Noble Rhyme.

<i>Waller.</i>

Not like those Venal Bards, who Write for Pence,
Above the Vulgar were their Names and Sense,
The *Critick* judges what the *Muse* indites,
And Rules for *Dryden*, like a *Dryden*, Writes.
'Tis true their Lamps were of the smallest Size,
But like the *Stoicks*[*], of prodigious Price.
Roscommon's Rules shall o'er our Isle be Read,
Nor Dye, till Poetry itself be Dead.
Fam'd *Cooper's Hill* shall, like *Parnassus*, stand,
And *Denham* reign, the *Phæbus* of the Land.

* *Epictetus*.

Among these sacred and immortal Names,
A Youth glares out, and his just Honour claims;
See circling Flames, in stead of Laurel, play
Around his Head, and Sun the brighten'd Way.
But misty Clouds of unexpected Night,
Cast their black Mantle o'er th' immoderate Light.
Here, pious Muse, lament a While; 'tis just
We pay some Tribute to his sacred Dust.
O'er his fresh Marble strow the fading Rose
And Lilly, for his Youth resembled those.
The brooding Sun took care to dress him Gay,
In all the Trappings of the flowry *May*.
He set him out unsufferably bright,
And sow'd in every part his beamy Light.
Th' unfinish'd Poet budded forth too soon,
For what the Morning warm'd; was scorch'd at Noon.

Oldham.

His careless Lines plain Nature's Rules obey,
Like *Satyrs* Rough, but not Deform'd as they.
His Sense undrest, like *Adam*, free from Blame,
Without his Cloathing, and without his Shame,
True Wit requires no Ornaments of skill,
A Beauty naked, is a Beauty still.

Warm'd with just Rage he lash'd the *Romish* Crimes,
In rugged *Satyr* and ill-sounding Rhymes.
All *Italy* felt his imbitter'd Tongue,
And trembled less when sharp *Lucilius* Stung.
Here let us pass in Silence, nor accuse
Th' extravagance of his Unhallow'd Muse.
In *Jordan's* stream she wash'd the tainted Sore,
And rose more Beauteous than She was before.

Then Fancy curb'd began to Cool her Rage,
And Sparks of Judgment glimmer'd in his Page,
When the wild Fury did his Breast inspire,
She rav'd, and set the Little World on Fire.
Thus *Lee* by Reason strove not to controul
That powerful heat which o'er-inform'd his Soul.
He took his swing, and Nature's bounds surpast,
Stretch'd her, and bent her, till she broke at last.
I scorn to Flatter, or the Dead defame;
But who will call a Blaze a Lambent Flame?

Lee.

Terrour and Pity are allow'd to be,
The moving parts of Tragic Poetry.
If Pity soothes us, *Otway* claims our Praise;
If Terrour strikes, then *Lee* deserves the Bays.
We grant a Genius shines in *Jaffeir's* Part,
And *Roman Brutus* speaks a Master's Art.
But still we often Mourn to see their Phrase
An Earthly Vapour, or at Mounting Blaze.
A rising Meteor never was design'd,
T'amaze the sober part of Human kind.
Were I to write for Fame, I would not chuse
A Prostitute and Mercenary Muse.
Which for poor Gains must in rich Trappings go,
Emptily Gay, magnificently Low,
Like Ancient *Rome's* Religion, Sacrifice and Show.
Things fashion'd for amusement and surprize,
Ne'er move the Head, tho' they divert the Eyes.
The Mouthing Actors well-dissembled Rage,
May please the Young *Sir Foplings* on the Stage.
But, disingag'd, the swelling Phrase I find
Like *Spencer's* Giant sunk away in Wind.

Otway.

It grates judicious Readers when they meet
 Nothing but jingling Verse, and even Feet.
 Such false, such counterfeited Wings as these,
 Forsake th' unguided Boy, and plunge him in the Seas.
Lee aim'd to rise above great *Dryden's* Height,
 But lofty *Dryden* keeps a steady Flight.
 Like *Dædalus*, he times with prudent Care
 His well-wax'd Wings, and Waves in Middle Air.
 The Native Spark, which first advanc'd his Name,
 By industry he kindled to a Flame.
 The proper Phrase of our exalted Tongue
 To such Perfection from his Numbers sprung.
 His Tropes continu'd, and his Figures fine,
All of a Piece throughout, and all Divine.
 His *Images* so strong and lively be,
 I hear not Words alone, but Substance see;
 Adapted Speech, and just Expressions move
 Our various Passions, Pity, Rage and Love.
 I weep to hear fond *Anthony* complain
 In *Shakespeare's* Fancy, but in *Virgil's* Strain.

Dryden.

Tho' for the Comick, others we prefer,
 Himself[*] the Judge; nor do's his Judgment Err.
 But Comedy, 'tis Thought, can never claim
 The sounding Title of a Poem's Name.
 For Raillery, and what creates a Smile
 Betrays no lofty Genius, nor a Style.
 That *Heav'nly Heat* refuses to be seen
 In a Town-Character and Comick Mien.

* See Preface to
Aurengzebe.

If we would do him right, we must produce
 The *Sophoclean Buskin*; when his Muse
 With her loud Accents fills the list'ning Ear,
 And *Peals* applauding shake the Theater.

They fondly seek, Great Name, to blast thy Praise,
 Who think that Foreign Thanks produc'd thy Bays.
 Is he oblig'd to *France*, who draws from thence
 By *English* Energy, their Captive Sense?
 Tho' *Edward* and fam'd *Henry* Warr'd in vain,
 Subduing what they could not long retain:
 Yet now beyond our Arms the Muse prevails,
 And Poets Conquer where the Hero fails.

This does superiour excellence betray;
 O could I Write in thy Immortal Way!
 If Art be Nature's Scholar, and can make
 Such vast improvements, Nature must forsake
 Her Ancient Style; and in some grand Design
 She must her Own Originals decline,
 And for the Noblest Copies follow Thine.
 Pardon this just transition to thy Praise,
 Which Young *Thalia* sung in Rural Lays.

As Sleep to weary Drovers on the Plain
 As a sweet River to a thirsty Swain,
 Such *Tityrus's* charming Number show,
 Please like the River, like the River flow.
 When his first Years in mighty Order ran,
 And cradled Infancy bespoke the Man,
 Around his Lips the *Waxen Artists* hung,
 And drop'd ambrosial Dew upon his Tongue.
 Then from his Mouth harmonious Numbers broke,
 More sweet than Honey from a hollow Oke.
 Pleasant as streams which from a Mountain Glide,
 Yet lofty as the Top from whence they slide.

Long He possess th' Hereditary Plains,
 Admir'd by all the Herdsmen and the Swains.
 Till he resign'd his Flock, opprest with cares,
 Weaken'd by num'rous Woes, and grey with Years.
 Yet still, like *Ætna's Mount*, he kept his Fire,
 And look'd like beauteous Roses on a Brier.
 He smil'd, like *Phoebus* in a Stormy Morn,
 And sung, like *Philomel* against a Thorn.

Here *Syren of sweet Poesy*, receive

That little praise my unknown Muse can give.
Thou shalt immortal be, no Censure fear
Tho' angry *B*— *more* in Heroicks jeer.

A Bard, who seems to challenge *Virgil's* Flame,
And would be next in Majesty and Name.
With lofty *Maro* he at first may please;
The Righteous *Briton* rises by degrees.
But once on Wing, thro' secret Paths he rows,
And leaves his Guide, or follows him too close,
The *Mantuan* Swan keeps a soft gentle Flight,
Is always Tow'ring, but still Plays in Sight.
Calm and Serene his Verse; his active Song
Runs smooth as *Thames's* River, and as strong.
Like his own *Neptune* he the Waves confines,
While *Bl— re* rumbles, like the King of Winds.
His flat Descriptions, void of Manly Strength,
Jade out our Patience with excessive length.
While Readers, Yawning o'er his *Arthurs* see
Whole Pages spun on one poor *Simile*.
We grant he labours with no want of Brains,
Or Fire, or Spirit; but He spares the Pains,
One happy Thought, or two, may at a Heat
Be struck, but Time and Study must compleat
A Verse, sublimely Good, and justly Great.
It call'd for an Omnipotence to raise
The *World's Imperial Poem* in Six Days.
But Man, that offspring of corrupting Clay,
Subject to Err, and Subject to Decay:
In Hopes, Desires, Will, Power, a numerous Train,
Uncertain, Fickle, Impotent and Vain:
Must tire the Heav'nly Muse with endless Prayer,
And call the smiling Angels to his care.
Must sleep less Nights, *Vulcanian* Labours prove,
Like *Cyclops*, forging Thunder for a *Jove*.
With Flame begin thy Glorious Thoughts and Style,
Then Cool, and bring them to the smoothing File.
If You design to make Your Prince appear
As perfect as Humanity can bear.
Whom Vertues at th' expence of Danger please,
Deaf to the *Syrens* of alluring ease.
No Terrours Thee, *Achilles*, could invade,
Nor Thee, *Ulysses*, any Charms persuade.
This must be done, if Poets would be Read,
Who seek to emulate the Sacred Dead.

Thus in bright Numbers and well polish'd Strains
Virgilian Addison describes *Campaigns*.
Whose Verse, like a proportion'd Man, we find,
Not of the *Gyant*, nor the *Pygmy* kind.
Such Symmetry appears o'er all the Song,
Lofty with justness, and with Caution strong.

This *Congreve* follows in his Deathless Line,
And the *Tenth Hand* is put to the Design.
The Happy boldness of his Finish'd Toil
Claims more than *Shakespear's* Wit, or *Johnson's* Oil.
Sing on, *Harmonious Swan*, in weeping strains,
And tell *Pastora's* Death to mournful Swains.
Or with more pleasing Charms, with softer Airs
Sweeten our Passions, and delude our Cares.
Or let thy *Satyr* grin with half a Smile,
And jeer in *Easy Etherege's* Style.
Let *Manly Wycherly* chalk out the Way,
And Art direct, where Nature goes astray.
'Tis not for Thee to Write of Conqu'ring Kings,
The Noise of Arms will break thy Am'rous Strings.

The *Teian Muse* invites Thee from above
To lay Thy Trumpet down, and sing of Love.
Let *MONTAGUE* describe *Boyn's* swelling Flood
And purple Streams fatned with Hostile Blood.
O Heavenly Patron of the needy Muse!
Whose powerful Name can nobler heat infuse.
When You *Nassau's* bright Actions dar'd to see,
You was the *Eagle*, and *Apollo He*.

But when He read You, and Your Value knew,
He was the *Eagle*, and *Apollo* You.
Both spoke the Bird in her *Æthereal* height,
The *Majesty* was *His*, and *Thine* the *Flight*.
Both did *Apollo* in His Glory shew,
The Silver *Harp* was *Thine*, and *His* the *Bow*,

So may *Pierian Clio* cease to fear,
When *Honour* deigns to sing, and *Majesty* to hear!
So may she favour'd live, and always please
Our *Dorset's*, and Judicious *Normanby's*!

Nor does the *Coronet* alone defend
The Muses Cause: The *Miter* is Her Friend.
Can we forget how *Damon's* lofty Tongue
Shook the glad Mountains? how the Valleys rung
When *Rochester's Seraphick Shepherd* Sung.
How *Mars* and *Pallas* wept to see the Day
When *Athens* by a Plague dispeopled lay.
What Learning perish'd, and what Lives it cost!
Sung with more Spirit than all *Athens* lost.
Nor can the *Miter* now conceal the Bays,
For still we view the *Sacred Poet's* praise.
So tho' *Eridanus* becomes a Star
Exalted to the Skies, and shines afar,
Below he loses nothing but his Name,
Still faithful to his Banks, his Stream's the same.

But smile, my Muse, once more upon my Song,
Let *Creech* be numbred with the Sacred Throng.
Whose daring Muse could with *Manilius* fly,
And, like an *Atlas*, shoulder up the Sky.
He's mounted, where no vulgar Eye can trace
His Wondrous footsteps and mysterious race.
See, how He walks above in mighty strains,
And wanders o'er the wide *Ethereal* Plains!
He sings what Harmony the Spheres obey,
In Verse more tuneful, and more sweet than they.

'Tis cause of Triumph, when *Rome's* Genius shines
In nervous *English*, and well-worded Lines.
Two Famous *Latins*[A] our bright Tongue adorn,
And a new *Virgil*[B] is in *England* born.
An *Æneid* to translate, and make a new,
Are Tasks of equal Labour to pursue.

A. *Lucretius* and *Manilius*.

B. Mr. *Dryden's* *Virgil*.

For tho' th' Invention of a Godlike Mind
Excels the Works of Nature, and Mankind;
Yet a well-languag'd Version will require
An equal *Genius*, and as strong a Fire.
These claim at once our Study and our Praise,
Fam'd for the Dignity of Sense and Phrase.
These gainful to the Stationer, shall stand
At *Paul's* or *Cornhill*, *Fleetstreet* or the *Strand*.
Shall wander far and near, and cross the Seas,
An Ornament to *Foreign Libraries*.

Hail, Glorious Titles! who have been my *Theme*!
O could I write so well as I esteem!
From her low Nest my humble Soul shou'd rise
As a young *Phoenix* out of Ashes flies
Above what *France* or *Italy* can shew,
The Celebrated *Tasso*, or *Boileau*.

Come You, where'er you be, who seek to find
Something to pleasure, and instruct your Mind:
If, when retir'd from Bus'ness, or from Men,
You love the *Labour'd Travels* of the Pen;
Imploy the Minutes of your vacant Time
On *Cowley*, or on *Dryden's* useful Rhyme:
Or whom besides of all the Tribe you chuse,
The *Tragick*, *Lyrick*, or *Heroick* Muse:
For they, if well observ'd, will strictly shew
In *Charming Numbers*, what is false, what true,
And teach more good than *Hobbs* or *Lock* can do.

Hail, ye *Poetick Dead*, who wander now
In Fields of Light! at your fair Shrines we bow.

Freed from the Malice of Injurious Fate,
Ye blest Partakers of a happier State!
Whether Intomb'd with *English Kings* you sleep,
Or Common Urns your Sacred Ashes keep:
There, on each Dawning of the tender Day,
May Tuneful Birds their pious Off'rings pay!
There may sweet Myrrh with Balmy Tears perfume
The hallow'd Ground, and Roses deck the Tomb.

While You, Who live, no frowning Tempest fear,
Sing on; let *Montague* and *Dorset* hear.
In Stately Verse let *William's* Praise be told,
WILLIAM rewards with Honour and with Gold.
No more of *Richelieu's* Worth: Forget not, Fame,
To change *Augustus* for Great *William's* Name.
Who, tho' like *Homer's Jupiter*, he sate,
Musing on something eminently great
And ballanc'd in his Mind the World's important Fate;
Lays by the vast Concern, and gladly hears
The loud-sung Triumphs of his Warlike Years.
Whether this Praise to *Stepny's* Muse belong,
Or *Prior* claim it for *Pindarick Song*.
The sleeping Dooms of Empire were delay'd,
And Fate stood silent while the Poet play'd.
The double Vertue of *Nassovian Fire*
At once the Soldier and the Bard inspire.
The Hero listen'd when the Canons rung
A Fatal Peal, or when the Harp was strung,
When *Mars* has Acted, or when *Phoebus* Sung.

O cou'd my Muse reach *Milton's* tow'ring Flight,
Or stretch her Wings to the *Mæonian* Height!
Thro' Air, and Earth, and Seas, I wou'd disperse
His Fame, and sing it in the loudest Verse.
The rowling Waves to hear me shou'd grow tame,
And Winds should calm a Tempest with his Name
But we must all decline: The Muse grows dumb,
Not weary'd with his Praise, but overcome.
Who shall describe Him? or what Eye can trace
The Matchless Glories of his Princely Race?
What Prince can equal what no Muse can praise?
No Land but *Britain*, must pretend to shine
With Gods and Heroes of an equal Line.
So may this Island a new *Delos* prove,
Joyn[*] Young *Apollo* to the *Cretan Jove*!
What Bloom! what Youth! what Hopes of future Fame!
How his Eyes sparkle with a Heav'nly Flame!
How swiftly *Gloster* in his Bud began!
How the *Green Hero* blossoms into Man!
Smit with the Thirst of Fame, and Honour's Charms,
To tread his Uncle's Steps, and shine in Arms:
See, how he Spurs, and Rushes to the War!
Pale Legions view, and tremble from afar,
What Blood! what Ruin! Thrice unhappy They
Who shall attempt him on that fatal Day.
Edwards and *Harry's* to his Eyes appear
In Warlike form, and shake the glitt'ring Spear.
At *Agincourt* so terrible they stood,
So when *Pictavian* Fields were dy'd with Blood.
The Royal Youth with Emulation glows,
And pours thick Vengeance on his ghastly Foes.
Troops of Commission'd Angels from the Sky,
Unseen, above Him, and about Him, Fly.
O'er *England's* Hopes their flaming Swords they hold,
And wave them, as o'er Paradise of Old.
Nor shall they cease a Nightly Watch to keep,
But, ever waking, bless him in his Sleep.
Their Golden Wings for his Pavilion spread,
Their softest Mantles for his Downy Bed,
Defend the Sacred Youth's Imperial Head.

After whose Conquests, and the Work of Fate,
The Arts and Muses on his Triumph wait.
The Streams of *Thamisis*, exulting, Ring,
When fair *Augusta's* lofty *Clio's* Sing
Granta and *Rhedycina's* Tuneful Throng

* *The Duke of Glouceiter.*
Here the Author laments
he prov'd so bad a
Prophet.

Fill the resounding Vales with Learned Song.

Live, Heav'nly Youth, beyond invidious Time,
Adorning Annals, and immortal Rhyme.
Thy Glories, which no Malice can obscure,
Bright as the Sun, shall as the Sun endure.
But on thy Fame no envious spots shall prey,
Till *English* Sense and Valour shall decay.
Till Learning and the Muses Mortal grow,
Or *Cam* or *Isis* shall forget to Flow.

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