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JOHN OLDMIXON

AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM

(1728)

INTRODUCTION

BY

R. J. MADDEN, C.S.B.

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INTRODUCTION

[Pg i]

John Oldmixon's *Essay on Criticism*, like his *Reflections on Dr. Swift's Letter to the Earl of Oxford, about the English Tongue*,^[1] provides evidence to support Dr. Johnson's description of its author as a "scribbler for a party," and indicates that Oldmixon must have been devoted to gathering examples of what appeared to him to be the good and bad in literature.

The story of the appearance of the *Essay on Criticism* in 1728 should begin in 1724, when Oldmixon published in one volume his *Critical History of England, Ecclesiastical and Civil*. Dr. Zachary Grey's criticism of this book was answered by Oldmixon in 1725 in *A Review of Dr. Zachary Grey's Defence of our Ancient and Modern Historians*. In 1726 a two-volume edition of the *Critical History of England* appeared with the 1725 edition of the *Review of Dr. Zachary Grey's Defence* appended to the first volume. In the preface to the second volume of the *Critical History* Oldmixon referred to the *Essay on Criticism*, stating that it was ready for the press, but that since it would have made the second volume too large, it would be published at a later date. The *Essay*, he stated, was to prepare the public for his translation of Abbe Bouhours' *La Manière De Bien Penser*. It was not, however, until 1728 that the *Essay* reached the public. Besides appearing separately, it was appended, in place of the now removed answer to Dr. Grey, to the

"third" edition of the *Critical History*.^[2] There is no reference to the addition of the *Essay* in the preface to the first volume, but its appearance and addition is referred to in the preface to the second volume.

Oldmixon seems to have had more than one purpose for writing the *Essay*; one of them is made quite clear in the second paragraph:

I shall not, in this *Essay*, enter into the philosophical Part of Criticism which *Corneille* complains of, and that *Aristotle* and his Commentators have treated of Poetry, rather as *Philosophers* than Poets. I shall not attempt to give Reasons why Thoughts are *sublime, noble, delicate, agreeable*, and the like, but content my self with producing Examples of every Kind of right Thinking, and leave it to Authors of more Capacity and Leisure, to treat the Matter *à Fond*, and teach us to imitate our selves what we admire in others.

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The remarks concerning the English need for guidance in "right thinking" are obviously intended to prepare a public for Oldmixon's translation of Bouhours' *La Manière De Bien Penser*. Following the method of Bouhours, who was in turn following Longinus, Oldmixon gives examples from English literature of the various divisions of "right thinking" and, also like Bouhours, he includes specimens of failures in this art. The bad examples he presents provide ample evidence that the *Essay* was also serving a Whig polemical purpose, for they are drawn from such writers as Clarendon, Pope and, in particular, Laurence Echard. The tone and nature of Oldmixon's remarks on Echard, whose *History* he had already criticized at length in the second volume of the *Critical History*, can be seen in this explanation of his general treatment of that author:

I must sincerely acknowledge, that it was not for Want of Will, that I did not mention what is beautiful in our Historian, but for Want of Opportunity.

Oldmixon's remarks on Pope's *Homer* are sometimes laudatory, but more often patronizing; the criticism of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* is quite pointed:

I dare not say any Thing of the last *Essay on Criticism* in Verse, but that if any more curious Reader has discovered in it something new, which is not in Dryden's *Prefaces, Dedications*, and his *Essay on Dramatick Poetry*, not to mention the *French Criticks*, I should be very glad to have the Benefit of the Discovery.

The rift between Pope and Oldmixon can perhaps be dated from the publication by the latter in 1714 of the "Receipt to make a cuckold" with great apologies for its indecency. Oldmixon continued to tempt satiric fate in the ensuing years, and one wonders if, when seeking a substitute for the *Dunciad* in the "last" *Miscellany* of 1728, Pope may not have remembered Oldmixon's announcement in 1726 of his intention to publish an *Essay on Criticism* which was to be written after the manner of Bouhours. It is not impossible that this was one of many influences acting upon Pope to organize the "high flights of poetry" he had been collecting over the years for a Scriblerian project. Oldmixon appears, with Gildon and Dennis, among the porpoises in Chapter VI of *Peri Bathous*, and the presentation of some of the material in the *Bathous*, although more directly indebted to Longinus, does bring Oldmixon's *Essay* to mind.

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It would seem that Oldmixon felt that more than the porpoises referred to him, for in his translation and adaptation of Bouhours' *La Manière De Bien Penser*, which he published under the title of *The Arts of Logic and Rhetorick* later in 1728, the references to Pope are much harsher, and Swift also comes under more pointed attack. *Gulliver's Travels, A Tale of A Tub* (already censured by Oldmixon in his *Reflections on Dr. Swift's Letter*), the *Essay on Criticism*, *Windsor Forest* and the *Homer* are the objects of bitter criticism. In the concluding pages of *The Arts of Logic and Rhetorick* Oldmixon wrote:

This delicate Author [Pope] has written a *rhiming Essay on Criticism*, and made himself merry with his Brethren in a notable Treatise call'd the *Art of Sinking*, to which he and his Partner S—t, have contributed, more than all the rest of their contemporary writers, if *Trifling* and *Grimace* are not in the high Parts of Writing.... What a Precipice is it from Locke's Human Understanding to Swift's Lilliput and Profundity!... there might have been Hopes of rising again; but we sink now like Ships laden with Lead, and must despair of ever recovering the Height from which we have fallen.^[3]

As we move from Oldmixon's *Essay on Criticism* to Pope's *Peri Bathous* and on to *The Arts of Logic and Rhetorick*, we perhaps hear the stretching of the spring on a trap, that snapped in the 1735 edition of the *Dunciad*, in which Oldmixon replaced Dennis as the "Senior" diver "Who but to sink the deeper, rose the higher."^[4]

The *Essay on Criticism* is, however, more than an example of the inter-relation of literature and politics in the eighteenth century; and it is more than a step on the way to its author's immortalizing in lead. It presents, albeit not very imaginatively, a statement of many of the literary theories and attitudes of the Augustan period. However brief and incomplete, the remarks about the language of poetry and upon the effects of certain literary passages are of interest as imperfect exercises in a type of practical criticism. The material used by Oldmixon and the literary references he makes indicate, as do many of his other writings, that, although he was a "scribbler for a party," he was a man of some literary sense, taste and intelligence.

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NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The *Reflections on Dr. Swift's Letter* was reprinted with an introduction by Louis Landa by the Augustan Reprint Society, no. 15 (1948).
2. The issue which appeared separately is the same as that which was appended to the first volume of the *Critical History*, save for the price, 1s. 6d, printed on the title page.
3. John Oldmixon, *The Arts of Logic and Rhetorick* (London, 1728), pp. 416-17.
4. Cf. *Dunciad* A, II, ll. 271-78, and *Dunciad* B, II, ll. 283-90, in James Sutherland, ed., *The Dunciad* in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, Vol. V, 2nd ed. (London, 1953). Oldmixon was less prominent in the 1728 edition (*Dunciad* A, II, ll. 199-202); when he was elevated to a higher level of dullness he was succeeded in his original place by Leonard Welstead (*Dunciad* B, II, ll. 207-10).

AN

ESSAY

ON

CRITICISM

As it regards

Design, Thought, and Expression,

In PROSE and VERSE.

***By the AUTHOR of the Critical
History of ENGLAND.***



LONDON:

Printed for J. PEMBERTON, at the *Golden-Buck* in *Fleet-Street*.

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AN
ESSAY
ON
CRITICISM;

As it regards

***Design, Thought, and Expression,
in Prose and Verse.***

I am very far from any Conceit of my own Ability, to treat of so nice a Subject as this, in a Manner worthy of it; but having frequently observed what Errors have been committed by both Writers and Readers for want of a right Judgement, I could not help collecting some loose Hints I had by me, and putting them into a little Form, to shew rather what I would do than what I can do; and to excite some happier Genius, to give us better Lights than we have hitherto been led by, which is said with great Sincerity, and without the least Mixture of Vanity or Affectation.

I shall not, in this *Essay*, enter into the philosophical Part of Criticism which *Corneille* complains of, and that *Aristotle* and his Commentators have treated of Poetry, rather as *Philosophers* than *Poets*. I shall not attempt to give Reasons why Thoughts are *sublime, noble, delicate, agreeable*, and the like, but content my self with producing Examples of every Kind of right Thinking, and leave it to Authors of more Capacity and Leisure, to treat the Matter a *Fond*, and teach us to imitate our selves what we admire in others.

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Aristotle, Horace, Bossu, Boileau, Dacier, and several other Criticks, have directed us right in the Rules of Epick and Dramatick Poetry, and *Rapin* has done the same as to *History*, and other Parts of polite Learning. Several Attempts have been made in *England* to instruct us, as well as the *French* have been instructed; but far from striking out any new Lights, our *Essays* are infinitely short of the Criticisms of our Neighbours. They teach us nothing which is not to be found there, and give us what they take thence curtailed and imperfect. 'Tis true, they have drest up their Rules in Verse, and have succeeded in it very well. There is something so just and beautiful in my Lord *Roscommon's* Essay and Translation of *Horace's Ars Poetica*, as excels any Thing in *French* within the like Compass. I have read the late Duke of *Buckingham's* Essay very often, but I don't think it such a perfect Piece as *Dryden* represents it, in his long and tedious Dedication to that noble Lord before the *Æneis*. There are many Things very well thought in it, and they do not seem to be much the better for the Poetry; which is so prosaick, that if the Rhimes were pared away, it would be reduced to downright Prose. Indeed *Horace's* Epistle to the *Piso's* is not much more poetick; and I do not think, that the modern Criticks, like the Oracles of Old, give the greater Sanction to their Rules, for that they are put into Rhime.

I dare not say any Thing of the last *Essay on Criticism* in Verse, but that if any more curious Reader has discovered in it something new, which is not in *Dryden's Prefaces, Dedications*, and his *Essay on Dramatick Poetry*, not to mention the *French* Criticks, I should be very glad to have the Benefit of the Discovery.

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I was strangely surprised to meet with such a Passage, as what follows, in the Writings of so good an Author as Sir *Robert Howard*. *Preface to Duke of Lerma*: "In the Difference of Tragedy and Comedy, there can be no Determination but by the *Taste*; and whoever would endeavour to like or dislike by the Rules of others, he will be as unsuccessful as if he should try to be perswaded into a Power of believing, not what he must, but what others direct him to believe."

Thus are *Aristotle, Horace*, and all that have commented on them; thus are *Boileau*, the Lord *Roscommon*, the Duke of *Bucks*, and all the modern Criticks, confounded with a Word or two, and the Rules of Writing rendered useless and ridiculous.

The Rules laid down by those great Criticks are not to be valu'd, because they are given by *Aristotle, Horace, &c.* but because they are in Nature and in Truth. *Homer, Sophocles*, and *Euripides*, wrote before *Aristotle*, and the Observations he made upon their Poems, were to shew us how they succeeded by a happy Imitation of Nature, and without such Imitation there can be no Poetry; but according to Sir *Robert Howard's* Assertion, that only which a Man likes is good; and if you are pleas'd with seeing or hearing any Thing unnatural or even monstrous,

it is preferable to what is just and true, to the *Venus of Medicis*, or the most perfect *Madonna in Italy*. Thus a wrong Taste is as good as a right one, and the Smell of a Pole-cat to be preferr'd to that of a *Civet*, if a Man's Nose is so irregular. After this Rate, there never was a Poet who could write up to the *Frenchman's Ladder-dance*, or *Rich's Harlequin*; and whereas Sir *Robert* says, we may as well believe, because others do, as judge, because *Aristotle*, *Horace*, &c. do, there is no Agreement in the Proposition, or it is not rightly stated; for we do not judge so because *Aristotle* and *Horace* did so judge; but because it is in Nature and in Truth, and they first shew'd us the Way to find it out.

Criticism is so far from being well understood by us *Englishmen*, that it is generally mistaken to be an Effect of Envy, Jealousy, and Spleen; an invidious Desire to find Faults only to discredit the Author, and build a Reputation on the Ruin of his. [Pg 4]

One has great Reason to think so, when the Critick looks only on one Side; when he hunts after little Slips and Negligences, and will not, or cannot see, what is beautiful and praise-worthy. If an historical or poetical Performance can no sooner acquire Applause, than he falls upon it without Mercy, neglects every Thing commendable in it, and skims off the Filth that rises on the Top of it; one may be sure his Jealousy is piqu'd, and he is alarm'd for fear every Encrease of Honour to another should be a Diminution of his own Glory; such Sort of Criticism is easily learnt. A Wen or Mole in the Face is sooner perceiv'd than the Harmony of Features, and the fine Proportion of Beauty; or, as *Dryden* says,

*Errours like Straws upon the Surface flow,
He who would search for Pearls must dive below.*

This Thought is borrow'd from the Lord *Bacon*; who, speaking of Notions and Inferences what may be applied to Families, says, *Time is like a River in which Metals and solid Substances sink, while Chaff and Straw swim on the Surface*. Such borrowing as *Dryden's* is highly commendable; he has paid back what he borrowed with Interest, and it can by no Means deserve the Scandal of *Plagiarism*. I cannot doubt, but Mr. *Addison* in the sublime Thought, where he represents the Duke of *Marlborough* in the Heat of the War:

Rides in the Whirlwind, and directs the Storm;

did nor forget these two Lines of *Boileau* to the King:

*Serene himself the stormy War he guides,
And o'er the Battle like a God presides.*

I shall all along, through this Discourse, take the Liberty to pass from one Subject to another as the Hint offers, without any Method, according to the Freedom of *Essays*. Mr. *Dryden* excuses this Freedom, by the Example of *Horace's* Epistle to the *Piso's*, which is immethodical and I must excuse my self by Mr. *Dryden's*—

The Taste and Appetite of these straw Criticks, may justly be compar'd to Ravens and Crows, who neglecting clean Food, are always searching after Carrion.

Horace's Rule is very well worth observing, when we are about to give Judgement on a Poem or History, where the *Will* is not concern'd: [Pg 5]

Ubi plura nitent in Carmine non ego paucis
Offendor maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura.

*When in a Poem most are shining Thoughts,
I'm not offended if I find some Fau'ts;
Such as are Slips of Negligence, or where
The Poet may through humane Frailty erre.*

As it is much easier to discern Blemishes than Beauties, so is it to censure than to commend, as the Duke of *Buckingham* tells us:

*Yet whatsoe'er is by vain Criticks thought,
Praising is harder much than finding Fau't:
In homely Pieces ev'n the Dutch excel,
Italians only can draw Beauty well.*

Such Criticks need not be in Pain, if a Poem or History makes its Way in the World a little; if it is not good, it will lose Ground of it self faster than it got it. If imperfect Pieces have gain'd Credit, and kept it for some Time, it was not for what was bad in them, but what, if not really good, was at least agreeable. *Dryden's* Translation of *Virgil* was generally liked for the Diction and Versification, though it was dislik'd on Account of Equality and Truth; and to have made a *Critick* upon it, as *Milbourn* did, without doing justice to his Numbers and Language, shew'd the Spirit of the Man was more engaged in it than his Judgement. All Criticisms on *Dryden's* Language and Numbers are in Defiance of *Horace's* Rule above-mention'd, because there is no Body but knows that it was impossible for *Dryden* to make an ill Verse, or to want an apt and musical Word, if he

took the least Care about it. I could very easily mark out a thousand Slips and Negligences of that Kind in his *Virgil*; yet for all that, there are more good Verses in that Translation than in any other, if Mr. *Pope's Homer* is not to be excepted.

It has been often said by very good Judges, that *Cato* was no proper Subject for a Dramatick Poem: That the Character of a Cynick Philosopher, is very inconsistent with the Hurry and Tumult of Action and Passion, which are the Soul of Tragedy. That the ingenious Author miscarried in the Plan of his Work, but supported it by the Dignity, the Purity, the Beauty, and the Justness of the Sentiments and the Diction.

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This was so much the Opinion of Mr. *Maynwaring*, who was generally allow'd to be the best Critick of our Time, that he was against bringing the Play upon the Stage, and it lay by unfinish'd many Years. Mr. *Maynwaring* highly approv'd of the Sentiments and the Diction, but did not fall in with the Design. That it was play'd at last was owing to Mr. *Hughes*, who wrote the *Siege of Damascus*, a Tragedy. He had read the Four Acts, which were finished, and rightly thought it would be of Service to the Publick, to have it represented at the latter End of Queen *Ann's* Reign, when the old *English* Spirit of Liberty was as likely to be lost as it had ever been since the Conquest. He endeavour'd to bring Mr. *Addison* into his Opinion, which he did so far as to procure his Consent, that it should be acted if Mr. *Hughes* would write the last Act, and he offer'd him the Scenary for his Assistance, excusing his not finishing it himself on Account of some other Avocations. He prest Mr. *Hughes* to do it so earnestly, that he was prevail'd upon and set about it. But a Week after, seeing Mr. *Addison* again with an Intention to communicate to him what he had thought of it, he was agreeably surpris'd at his producing some Papers, where near half of the Act was written by the Author himself, who took Fire at the Hint that it would be serviceable, and upon a second Reflection went thorough with the Fifth Act: Not that he was diffident of Mr. *Hughes's* Ability, but knowing that no Man could have so perfect a Notion of his Design as himself, who had been so long and so carefully thinking of it. I was told this by Mr. *Hughes*, and I tell it to shew that it was not for the *Love* Scenes, that Mr. *Addison* consented to have his Tragedy acted, but to support the old *Roman* and *English* Publick Spirit, which was then so near being suppressed by Faction and Bigotry. The most cunning of their Leaders were sensible of it, and therefore very dexterously stole away the Merit of the Poem, by applauding the Poet, and patronizing the Action and Actors. It is therefore obvious, that a severe Critick may find a Colour for his Severity, with Respect to the *Design* of the Play, but that will not hinder its captivating every one that sees or reads it. The Graces and Excellencies, both of Thought and Expression, do much more deserve our Admiration and Applause, than the Deficiency in the Fable deserves Censure. However, as to *Dryden's Virgil* and *Cato*, ask those that admire the one or the other what it is that pleases them? And I doubt it will be found to be the very Places, which should have most displeas'd, where *Dryden* offended most against the Character of Epick Poetry by imitating *Ovid's* Softness, and an eternal *Jeu des Mots*, *Playing upon Words*, and where *Cato* suspends the Action and Passion of the Scene to teach the Audience, Philosophy and Morality.

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It is common for the most discreet and delicate Authors to take Care of themselves, when they are treating of any of the Sciences. You will always find the Divine, the Lawyer, the Mathematician, the Astrologer, the Chymist, the Mechanick, &c. reserving to themselves the Merit of their particular Sciences when they are discoursing of the Arts in general. A merry Instance of this in the *Astrologer* is mention'd by the very learned *Gregory* out of *Albumazer*, who asserted, that all Religions were govern'd by the Planets; the *Mahometan* by *Venus*, the *Jewish* by *Saturn*, and the *Christian* by the *Sun*: Nay, he adds, that one *Guido Bonatus* a *Gymnosophist* affirms in his Parallels, that *Christ himself was an Astrologer, and made use of Elections*. The *Spectator*, with all his Modesty, has discover'd something of this Self-love in that of the Sciences, and could not help giving into this Infirmary. Every one knows what a fine Talent he had for Writing, and particularly how beautiful his Imagination was, and how polite his Language. Himself was not a Stranger to it; and we therefore read in the *Spectator*, N^o 291; *I might further observe, that there is not a Greek or Latin Critick, who has not shewn, even in the Stile of his Criticisms, that he was Master of all the Elegance and Delicacy of his native Language*. Here does this excellent Author forbid any one's Claim to the Character of a Critick, who is not like himself Master of the Delicacy and Elegance of his native Tongue; though I am apt to believe, that as a Man may be a very good Judge of Painting without being himself a Painter, so he may make very good Criticisms in Poetry and Eloquence, without being a Poet or an Orator. What would have become of our famous Critick *Rymer*, whom Mr. *Dryden* has so much commended, and so much abused, if his Criticisms must not pass, on Account of his not being Master of the Elegance and Delicacy of our Language, as it does not appear he was by his Translation of *OVID's* Epistle from *Penelope* to *Ulysses*.

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*Here skulk'd Ulysses.
Your Sword how Dolon no nor Rhesus 'scap'd,
Banter'd the One, this taken as he napp'd.
Whatever Skippers hither come ashore,
For thee I ask and ask them o'er and o'er.
Perhaps to her your dowdy Wife define
Who cares no more, so that her Cupboard shine:
Who revel in your House without Controul,
And eat and waste your Means our Blood and Soul.*

The *Bantring* and *Napping*, the *Skipper*, the *Dowdy Wife*, the *Cupboard*, the *Means*, and the *Blood* and *Soul*, agree admirably with the Royal Characters of King *Ulysses* and Queen *Penelope*,

and the courtly Manner of *Ovid. Radcliff's Letter*, from the Skipper's Wife of *Newcastle* to her Husband at *St. Catherine's*, can hardly have more of the Burlesque in it.

The Truth is, Mr. *Addison*, in the above Quotation, has a Fling upon the Author of the Critick upon his *Cato. A few general Rules extracted out of the French Authors, with a certain Cant of Words, have sometimes set up an illiterate heavy Writer, for a most judicious and formidable Critick*. I know no Instance wherein that Gentleman loses his Temper so much as in this. There were but three Authors in our Time who were *Criticks* by Profession, *Rymer, Dennis, and Gildon*. *Rymer* is own'd by himself to be a masterly Critick: He himself knew Mr. *Dennis* did not want Learning; and as to Fire, he has perhaps rather too much of it, than too little. I can't help thinking, that the Ode he writ on *Dryden's* Translation of the 3d Book of the *Georgicks*, in *Tonson's* Fourth Miscellany, deserv'd a kinder Word than illiterate or heavy.

STANZA II.

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*Sometimes of humble rural Things
My Muse, which keeps great Maro still in sight,
In middle Air with varied Numbers sings;
And sometimes her sonorous Flight
To Heaven sublimely wings.
But first takes Time with Majesty to rise
Then, without Pride, divinely great
She mounts her native Skies;
And Goddess-like retains her State
When down again she flies.*

The Passage, taken out of the *Spectator*, could not relate to *Gildon*, because of the *French Cant*, which he did not affect, nor understand. It is plain therefore, it must refer to the Critick upon *Cato*; which shews us, that as conscious as the most modest Man may be of his own Insufficiency; yet, when it is in Dispute, he cannot always preserve his Insensibility. *Cato* is a very good *Dramatick Poem*, and so was the *Cid*; yet the best *Critick* that ever was written in *French*, was that upon the *Cid*, as *La Bruyere* observes.

In another of the *Spectators*, we meet with something which proves to us, that a Man may have as much Modesty as Mr. *Addison*; and yet be very jealous of losing any Part of the Glory which is due to him. Every one knows, that though he was a Master of Eloquence, he never attempted to speak in Parliament, but it was with some Confusion; and what he said, did not answer the Expectation which had been raised by the Character of his Writings. Himself takes notice of this, not as an Infirmary, but as the Effect of Caution and Art. *Spectator*, N^o 231, Cicero tells us, that he never liked an Orator, *who did not appear in some little Confusion at the Beginning of his Speech; and confesses, that he himself never entered upon an Oration without Trembling and Concern. It is indeed a Kind of Deference which is due to a great Assembly. The bravest Man often appears timorous upon these Occasions, as we may observe that there is generally no Creature more impudent than a Coward*. I hope I shall not be thought invidious, or to endeavour to lessen the Veneration, which all, who love polite Learning, owe to the Memory of the *Spectator*; yet I could not but take notice, how sensible the most Discreet are in Point of Rivalship in Fame. What else can one think of the *Spectator's* Saying in the Dedication of the Eighth Volume: *I need not tell you, that the free and disengaged Behaviour of a fine Gentleman, makes as many aukward Beaux, as the Easiness of your Favourite Waller hath made insipid Poets*. Though the *fine Gentleman* may be applied to Mr. *Waller*, and the *aukward Beaux* to the insipid Poets; yet the Comparison cannot hold, without doing an Injury to Mr. *Waller's* Merit. The *Beaux* may be aukward, by imitating what you call a *fine Gentleman*, who is generally distinguish'd by some Affectation; but no Poet can be insipid by imitating Mr. *Waller's* Easiness, if he has any Portion of his Wit and Gallantry. The *Spectator's* Manner was not very different from Mr. *Waller's*, as to Easiness; and I have as often heard it wished, that there was more Fire in his own Poetry, as that there was more in Mr. *Waller's*. Two of the politest Authors in *Europe*, of the last Age, *St. Evremont* and *La Fontaine*, had such an Esteem for Mr. *Waller*, that it is strange he meets with no better Quarter at Home. Those two famous *French* Wits us'd to call him another *Anacreon*; and the Criticks have not yet complained, that ever *Anacreon* taught any Poet to be insipid. Mr. *Addison* is so far from thinking that *Waller* had any such Infection about him, that he wishes he had lived to have sung in Praise of King *William*, the sublimest Subject that ever was offered to a Muse, by how much the Deliverer of Nations from Slavery is a more godlike Character, than to have subjected and enslaved them, as did *Alexander* and *Cæsar*.

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*The Courtly Waller next commands my Lays,
Muse, tune thy Verse with Art to Waller's Praise.
While tender Airs, and lovely Dames inspire
Soft melting Thoughts, and propagate Desire;
So long shall Waller's Strains our Passion move,
And Sacharissa's Beauties kindle Love.
Thy Verse, harmonious Bard, and flatt'ring Song,
Can make the Vanquish'd great, the Coward strong:
Thy Verse can shew ev'n Cromwell's Innocence,
And complement the Storms that bore him hence.
Oh! had thy Muse not come an Age too soon,
But seen great Nassau on the British Throne,*

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*How had his Triumphs glitter'd in thy Page,
And warm'd thee to a more exalted Rage.
What Scenes of Death, &c.*

So little Danger is there of learning to be insipid by imitating *Waller*, that he is praised by the Editor of *St. Evremond's Works*, for the Elevation of his Genius, *Mr. Edmond Waller; s'est generally fait admirer par l'Elevation de son Esprit.*

I do not in this *Essay* aim at any Thing more, than, as I have said before, to put several critical Hints, which I had collected, together, and not to form a regular Discourse, but take them as they come in my way.

If the *Spectator*, by the Passage above-mentioned, insinuates that a Man must be able to perform himself in an Art, to be a good Judge of the Performances of others; consequently, that I ought to be a masterly Historian, to make Remarks on *Mr. Echard's History*, he divests me at once of the Right I pretend to in the following Treatise. Let us therefore enquire into the Reason of this Reflection.

Horace, whom no *English Author* could understand better than the *Spectator*, as appears by his admirable Translation, teaches us otherwise,

Munus & Officium, nil scribens ipse, docebo.

Yet without writing, I may teach to write.

[*Rosc.*

Dacier's Notes upon Hippocrates, as I have been informed by my worthy Friend *Dr. Allen*, are much better than any others, though made by Men of the *Faculty*, which *Dacier* did not profess. *Monsieur Corneille*, the greatest Genius in *France* for Tragedy, wrote *Examens* of his Pieces, which, like *Dryden's Prefaces*, were adapted to the several Tragedies, and very often clashed with one another, as the Subject required: but because he would prevent as much as possible any Attack of Criticism, he declares in one of his Discourses, *That the Knowledge which is acquired by Study and Speculation, is of little or no Use without Experience.* Thus an Author must produce a Tragedy himself, before he presumes to criticise on another's. If it be the same Thing in History too, I began at the wrong End, and should have written three or four Folio Histories, before I had presum'd to make Remarks on *Archdeacon Echard's*, this would bear very hard upon me, and I must beg Leave to enquire a little whether the Case be really so or not.

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Monsieur Dacier is so far from being of *Corneille's* Opinion, that he thinks a Man who never did write a Tragedy, may criticise on another's Poem the better for that he never wrote himself. *Nay, I do not know*, says he in his Preface to *Aristotle, whether he who has written Dramatick poems, is so proper to explain the Rules of the Art, as he, who never wrote any: For it would be a Miracle if the former were not seduced by Self-love; whereas the latter is disinterested, and the more likely to be an impartial Judge.* Again, *if it was necessary to be a good poet to make Criticisms on Poetry, we should never have had any Critick at all; for I do not know one Critick upon Poetry, that was himself a Poet.* By this one would think, that he did not look upon *Rapin* as a Critick in Poetry, for he wrote a Poem on *Gardening. Menage* makes as little of him as *Dacier*; yet *Dryden* says, were all the Writings of other Criticks lost, *Rapin's Works* alone would be sufficient to teach us the whole Art of Criticism. We all know *Aristotle* and *Horace* wrote upon Epick Poetry and Tragedy, yet neither of them ever wrote a Tragedy or Epick Poem; and perhaps neither of them would have succeeded if he had. *Rymer* made one poor Attempt that Way in his *Edgar*: But, as if it had been written only to prove that a Man may judge well of an Art, without being a Performer, like an ill-built Ship, it sunk in the very launching, and seem'd to be written only to be damned.

The *Guardian* seconds the *Spectator*, and forbids any one to criticise, that cannot write to Perfection. *If I find by his own Manner of Writing, that he is heavy and tasteless, I throw aside his Criticisms with a secret Indignation, to see a Man without Genius or Politeness, dictating to the World on Subjects which I find are above his Reach.* Thus *Mr. Rymer*, the best Critick we had till then, and all his Rules, are void and of no Effect; He has cancelled them with a Dash of his Pen. If a Man must not only have Politeness, but a Genius, what will become of *Aristotle* and *Longinus, Bossu* and *Dacier*? They were all polite Writers, but have not discover'd that they had Genius. I ever had as little Opinion of heavy tasteless Criticks as the *Spectator* or *Guardian*, yet I never could endure an arbitrary Judgement; for, what else is *tasteless* and *heavy* without Proof? But then, that Proof could not be produced without the *Criticisms*, which, let them be ever so poor, are often more easily despis'd than answer'd.

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I was always convinced by Example, that a Critick may have a just Taste, without being a Poet; and that the Indignation the *Guardian* speaks of, is never provoked, unless a weak Place is hit upon: As, in the low Phrase, *A galled Horse winces when you touch the Sore.* In three or four Lines, we have *tasteless, heavy, dogmatical, stupid Macer and Mundungus* all of the poor Criticks. Had they been really such stupid Creatures, they could not have given such Offence. Hard Words shew Anger more than Indignation, and we are apt to conjecture, that the Poets would not be so angry with the Criticks, if they were not afraid of them. The Concern of the former is wonderfully generous; they are not in Pain for what the Criticks say of their Errours and Failings, but for the Heaviness and Stupidity of their Criticisms. Thus in the lowest Life, we shall often hear one angry Woman cry out of another, *I do not matter what she said of me, but to see the Impudence of the Slut.* *Macer* and *Mundungus* are taken from *Mr. Congreve's Epistle to Sir Richard Temple*;

If the *Guardian* had the Critick upon *Cato* in his Thoughts, when he quoted those Verses, which I suppose he had, why does he mention rhiming Criticisms? That Author wrote his Rules and Remarks always in Prose, so did *Rymer*; what then do they all mean by *rugged Verse*? The Lord *Roscommon's* Poetry is Harmony it self. The last Essay upon Criticism in Verse was not then written. There remains only the late Duke of *Buckingham's* Poetical Essay, of Note enough to be remembered by Mr. *Congreve*: That could not be named, without offending *good Breeding*, a Term very often made use of by two elegant Authors; who, I much question, had never the Education of a Dancing-Master. However, Poetry and Criticism are perfect Levellers, and no Man can plead Privilege in the Court of *Parnassus*; what then is the Meaning of the next Lines after *Mundungus*?

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*Well do they play the careful Critick's Part,
Instructing doubly by their matchless Art:
Rules for good Verse they first with Pains indite,
Then shew us what are bad by what they write.*

The *Guardian* and *Spectator* would not do the Poets the Honour to name them; but we know who are the Criticks which are *thrown aside* by them; for no Body but Mr. *D*— and Mr. *G*— made Remarks upon their Writings, and both of them did. I do not say with that Politeness and Elegance, which the *Spectator* and *Guardian* have laid down, as the sole Characteristicks of good Talk and Judgement; though one may almost as well say, that a Man cannot have good Sense and Wit, without good Cloaths and a genteel Air. I must needs own, that I think most of their Criticisms very just, though had they been still juster than they are, I would not have been the Author of them, without taking Notice of Beauties, as well as finding of Faults, there being much more Room for the former than the latter.

It is very plain, the *Spectator* highly stomached the Remarks which were made on his Writings, and is not very candid in his Reasoning, to render his Opponents contemptible, which was the surest Way of disarming them. *These Criticks fall upon a Play, not because it is ill written, but because it takes*: This is not the whole Truth. It is not because it *takes*, but because it takes for those very Things which should have damned it *Durfey's Boarding-School*, and his *Marriage-Hater match'd*, took with a Vengeance, though the two greatest Pieces of Wit in them, were *Miss's Bread and Butter*, and *Mynheer's Muff*. *Settle's* Tragedies took for the Noise, the Show, and the Rhime. No Play, that was not supported by poetical or political Party, which most *taking* Plays have been, ever took more than *Settle's Heir of Morocco*, in which there is not one good Thought or Expression. Again, *several of these Criticks have laid it down as a Maxim, that whatever Dramatick Poem has a long Run, must of Necessity be good for nothing*, which is a Misrepresentation. The *Orphan*, *Venice Preserv'd*, *Tamerlane*, &c. had *long Runs*, and *run still*; yet no Critick has dared to say they did not deserve it: But whoever will owe his Reputation to *taking* only, must be contented to roll with *Settle*, *Durfey*, and many other Poets, that *took* in their Turn. Could any thing be more monstrous, than to determine the Merit of *Nixon's Prophecy*, and the *Spectator*, by the Run of the Papers. The former, a Maggot given to the Rabble, bore more Editions in Ten Weeks, than the latter has done in Ten Years.

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I would not be understood in this, or any thing else, to endeavour to lessen the Opinion the People have generally and justly of the *Spectator's* Perfections: I verily believe, there is no Production of the Mind, ancient or modern, where are to be found more Wit, Politeness, fine Raillery, good Sense, Learning, and Eloquence; but what I have said, is to shew, that great Wits as well as little have their Passions, their Piques and Prejudices, when the least Blemish is discovered in their Glory. In the same *Spectator*, we have another Hint, that no Body ought to criticise on that Author's Writings, unless he could write as elegantly as himself, which effectually cuts off all *Criticism*. *These professed Criticks cannot put ten Words together with Elegance, or common Propriety*. What an arbitrary Way of arguing is this? These Criticks are Smatterers; *They vilify only the Productions that gain Applause; the Blemishes they descry are imaginary; their Arguments are far fetched; Their Works are like those of the Sophists, they are thought deep, because unintelligible; they instruct the People in Absurdities*. Would the *Spectator* allow this positive Air in any other Writer? How does it appear that one Word of all this is true? *Ipse dixit*. That must satisfy, though he is in this Case too much a Party, to be a Judge. *These Criticks are led themselves into Absurdities, by not considering, That there is sometimes a greater Judgement shewn in deviating from the Rules of Art, than adhering to them*. The Word *sometimes* here would make every right Argument wrong, and every Truth Falsehood, because *sometimes* there may be an Exception to a general Rule. Why, does he not tell us, wherein himself, or any one else shewed his Judgement in deviating from the Rules of Art? The *Critical Smatterers* do not charge him in those Places where Judgement was shewn in such deviating, but where the Want of Judgement appeared in it. I shall have occasion to touch this Subject a little elsewhere; though I hope what I have said here, is enough to prove that just *Criticisms* are not the Productions of Ignorance and Envy, as the *Spectator* intimates; but that they are, on the contrary, useful and necessary to be a Check on the greatest Genius's, who want the Rein much more than the Spur; and what, in a few Years, would become of all good Writing, if those great Genius's could impose their very Blemishes on the World for the most shining Beauties?

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The *Spectator* gives us another Mark, by which we may discover a Critick, who has neither Taste nor Learning, and that is, *He seldom ventures to praise any Passage in an Author, which has not*

been before received and applauded by the Publick. If this Remark had been infallible and universal, it must have deprived the *Spectator* himself of the two greatest Beauties in all his Quotations out of *Milton* which are in every one's Mouth. The One in the sublime Kind in the Speech to the *Sun*.

*Oh then, that with surpassing Glory crown'd,
Look'st from thy sole Dominion like the God
Of this new World.—*

The Other in the tender Kind. *Adam* to *Eve*.

*Her Hand soft touching whisper'd thus, Awake
My Fairest, my espous'd, my best belov'd,
Heavens last, best Gift, my ever new Delight;
Awake.*

which had before been a thousand Times repeated as the Perfection of *English* Poetry, in their several Kinds. And the Author, who shall have occasion to quote them as such after the *Spectator*, will not discover his Want of Taste or Learning by it. Very just is his Observation, *A true Critick ought to dwell rather upon Excellencies than Imperfections, &c.* But as this has Relation chiefly to those Compositions which require Genius, Judgement and Eloquence; and consequently, cannot relate to Mr. *Echard's* History of *England*, we shall now say no more of it.

That I may not be guilty of the Fault I blame in others, the neglecting of Beauties, and falling unmercifully upon the Blemishes of Authors. I must sincerely acknowledge, that it was not for Want of Will, that I did not mention what is beautiful in our Historian, but for Want of Opportunity. What Part of his Performance should I have applauded! Is it the *Design*! The Author does not himself pretend, that it is regular, if by *Design* in *History*, we are to understand the *Plan* as in *Poetry*: He will not deny, but that his Method is too much diversified, and too confused; sometimes it is *General History*, sometimes *Annals*, sometimes a *Diary*, sometimes *Biography*; all which he seems to think he has sufficiently provided against, by dividing the whole Work into *Sections*, and putting Pales between his Paragraphs. This Confusion will be easily pardoned by his Readers, there being hardly one in a Thousand that knows the Difference between *Biography* and *History*, or between an *Annalist* and an *Historian*; or who does not take *Buck's* *Richard III*, or *Cambden's* *Queen Elizabeth*, to be as much of the historical Kind, as *Samuel Daniel's* History of *England*, which is the only *English* History that has the least Appearance of Uniformity and Regularity of Design.

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Ne Sutor ultra Crepidam, is in nothing a more necessary Maxim, than in the Productions of the Mind. It is not because a Man can write a Sonnet, an Elegy, nay, an Ode, or a Dramatick Poem, that therefore he can succeed in Epick; though we in *England* are apt to confound all Sorts of Poetry and Poets, and to think that there is but one and the same Genius necessary for all of them. Thus it is, that you often hear the Question in Company, which is the best Poet, *Virgil* or *Horace*, *Milton* or *Waller*, *Dryden* or *Wycherley*, *Congreve* or *Row*. It is the same Thing in History: If a Man is able to abridge a Dictionary, to collect and compile Memoirs; in a Word, if he can put a Tale together, he is immediately an Historian, though Story-telling and History are as different as a *Madrigal* and a *Pindarick Ode*.

History is designed to instruct Mankind by Example, to shew what Men were by what they did, and from particular Instances to form general Lessons in all the various Stations of Life; and our Historian has so far a just Conception of its Dignity and Use, that he speaks of his own Performance as if he had formed a regular noble Design, with a regular and noble View, and executed it with equal Beauty and Perfection. Very great Talents are requisite to succeed in it, especially that of Judgement, to relate only what is worth relating, and to make proper Reflections upon Events for the Instruction of the Reader. *Nothing is more necessary for an Historian, says Pere Rapin, than Judgement: Nothing requires so much Sense, so much Reason, so much Wit, so much Wisdom, and other good Qualities, as History, to succeed in writing it; and above all, Un Heureux Naturel, a happy Genius, which endowed with all these Qualifications, will not do without, Un Grand Commerce du Monde, a great Knowledge of the World. Pere Bouhours, whom Mr. Addison thought the most judicious and penetrating of all the French Criticks, has an admirable Remark on the Reflections of Historians, in his Maniere de bien penser. The Historian ought to shine most in his Reflections: Nothing is so irregular as to reflect falsely on Events that are true.* He mentions a pleasant Instance of a *French* Priest, who said in a Sermon, *The Heart of Man being of a triangular Figure, and the World of a round one; It is plain, that all worldly Greatness cannot fill the Heart of Man.* We have been told a thousand Times, that the *Presbyterians* had a Quarrel with King *Charles* the First, and that those who had a Quarrel with him, took him and cut off his Head. The Fact is true as to the Quarrel, but nothing can be more false, than that the *Presbyterians* beheaded him. The Fact is true, that the Act of Toleration put a Stop to the Persecuting of Dissenters; but the Reflection from it, *That the Church was in Danger*, is false. If I would rifle the *Grand Rebellion*, and Mr. *Echard's* History, I might have the Honour of being Author of a Folio too, by taking from them Examples of this Kind; and I cannot but think, if the Archdeacon had duely weighed the Difficulties inseparable from his Undertaking, the indispensable Duty of Sincerity and Truth, and the great Talents necessary for an Historian, he would have transferred the Work to another, not a Dealer in Records only, from whom one can expect nothing but the naked Facts without Form or Order, without Ornament, or even cloathing; very proper for Evidence in Tryals at Law, but too rude and unpolished for the Beauty and

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Elegance of History: Yet I am satisfied, there is not one Man in a Thousand in *England*, but thinks there are no Writers so fit to make Historians as your Record Keepers and Library Keepers, who are just as necessary in such Work as Masons and Carpenters are in Architecture, and no more in Comparison with the Architect, than the *Axe* or the *Chissel* are in Comparison with them. *An excellent Historian*, says Mons. *Pellisson*, Pref. to *Sar. ought to have a general Knowledge of the World and of Affairs, and a subtle and penetrating Wit, to distinguish the true Causes of humane Actions, from the Pretexts and Colours which are given them.* Thus our Historian should have distinguish'd Archbishop *Laud's* natural Pride and Severity, from that Piety and Zeal which are the *Pretexts and Colours* that are given them. He should also have distinguish'd the Pique and Partiality in the Grand Rebellion from Truth and Sincerity, which are the *Pretexts and Colours*. Again,

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Tacitus, said he, wrote *Sine studio Partium & Ira*; if the same may be said of the two Historians in Question, I have done them much Wrong. The late Earl of *Shaftsbury*, in his Letter of *Enthusiasm*, has this Expression: *We have few modern Writers, who, like Xenophon or Cicero, can write their own Commentaries, and the raw Memoir Writings, and uninformed Pieces of modern Statesmen full of their own interested and private Views, will, in another Age, be of little Service to support their Memory or Name, since already the World begins to sicken with them.*

It is somewhat strange, that Mr. *Echard* should not be so well acquainted with the Weakness of the vulgar Humour in *England*, as a Foreigner; who was so sensible of the Peoples Fondness to hear Stories, that he excuses those of a better Taste amongst them, who cannot relish such as relate to Ghosts, Devils, Prophecies, and the like, with which the Archdeacon's History abounds. The Author of the *Paris Journal des Sçavans*, speaking of *English* History Writers, and their bringing in Prophecies and strange Stories, says, *Granting it to be true, it is not so much to be attributed to their Want of Skill, as to their Compliance with the Humour of the People, that attend too much to Prophecies, and are too much affected with Tales;* which Humour our Historian has rather indulged than discountenanced, and it must surely be for Want of Judgement, after the indulging them in it, had been so much exploded. The *French* Historian *Maimbourg* participates of the same Character, and his Zeal for the Church, could not procure him a better one abroad, than what was given him in *Italy*, that he was among Historians, what *Momus* is among the Gods, *only to tell Tales;* with which the Vulgar are as well contented, as with Relations that are truly historical. But we should be as cautious of reading such Histories, as *Menage* tells us he was of reading *Morrer's*, for Fear we should remember them. *Collier* knew better than *Menage*, and therefore translated *Morrer's* three Folio's into *English*, as a rich Store for the Memories of his Countrymen.

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Having so little Reason to commend the Historian for his *Design*, I should make him amends in the Sentiments, if there was the least Room for it. It is true, in History, if the Facts are fairly related, the Sentiments must be brought along with them, and the Author is not accountable for them as in Poetry: But if the Sentiments do not correspond with the Facts; if Meekness and Holiness are seated to give Judgement in the *High Commission* and *Star Chamber* Courts; if Piety is mounted on Horseback with the Lord High Treasurer's Staff in her Hand; if the most noble Characters are ascribed to Persons engaged in the most unjustifiable Actions, we may depend upon it, these Persons, either did not think, or did not act as they are represented, and consequently that the History is false and vicious: The Historians Reflections upon Events are entirely his own, and we shall see in the following Pages, how wise and how weighty they are: But as they bear all on one Side, like an ill ballasted Ship, it is much, if in the Course of a few Years, it does not overset the History.

There is no greater Vice in Historians, than poor and common Reflections. The Poverty of the Archdeacon's appears in the *After Wit*, which makes a good Part of them; and the *Vulgarisms*, which will be further explain'd as Occasions often.

Indeed we do not enough acquaint ourselves in *England*, with what Father *Bouhours* calls the *Manner of Right Thinking*, in his Treatise before mentioned; which *Fontenelle* recommends as one of the most agreeable and useful Books in the *French* Tongue: We have nothing like it in *English*, or in any other Language antient or modern, Wit and Humour, Wit and good Sense, Wit and Wisdom, Wit and Reason, Wit and Craft; nay, Wit and Philosophy, are with us almost the same things. How often have I heard it said, there is a great Deal of Wit in *Homer*, a great Deal of Humour in *Virgil*. We take all Thoughts in the Gross; the Sublime, the Grand, the Noble, the Pretty, the Agreeable, the Fine, the Delicate, are all alike witty with us; and the Vulgar are ignorant of all other Distinction, but that of a *Jest* and a *Bull*. Sir *Samuel Garth*, who was extremely fond of Father *Bouhours's* Treatise, did often wish that it was translated, and the Examples the *French* Critick takes from *Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish* and *French* Authors, not to be turned into *English*, but *English* Examples to be put instead of them. I am satisfied nothing would be of more Advantage towards the Refinement of our Manner, both of Thinking and Writing. I know the Undertaking would be very difficult, and the greatest Part of the Difficulty be to preserve the Spirit and Turn of Thought in the *English* Examples, to make it answer Father *Bouhours's* Remarks. Who is there, that does not take a sublime Thought, a noble Thought, a grand Thought, to be synonymous Terms, though they differ from one another, almost as much as from the Agreeable and the Delicate. I am my self afraid to attempt any Thing like Examples of Kinds, and probably my Conceptions of them may be wrong; what they are I shall offer them to the Reader, with the Caution and Submission which becomes me in a Matter so intricate and nice.

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The first Example of the *Sublime* is so well known, that if there was any other so good in any

other Author, I should not have made use of it. It is in the 7th Chapter of *Longinus*. We will not borrow it from *Boileau*, because we are forbidden by the *Spectator* to make Use of a Quotation which has been made Use of before. Dr. *Gregory*, in the Preface to his Works, printed about sixty Years ago, at what Time *Boileau* had not thought of translating *Longinus*, writes thus: Dionysius Longinus, one that knew what belonged to Expression; having first of all cast a Scorn upon his *Homer*. The Translator does not dwell much upon this, says *Τῶν Ἰουδαιῶν θεομοθέτης that the Law-givers of the Jews, Οὐχ ὁ τυχὼν ἀνὴρ, no ordinary Man, was in the Right when he brought in his God*, saying, Γενέσθω φῶς, καὶ ἐγένετο

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*Let there be Light,
And there was Light.*

But least it may be said, the *Spectator* has entered a Caveat against my using any Quotation, which he or any one else had used, I shall add another Instance of the Sublime taken out of the same divine Book the Bible, that has not been blown upon:

*He spake,
And it was:
He commanded,
And it stood firm.*

The whole *Psalms* xxxiii is full of the *Sublime*:

*By the Word of the Lord were the Mountains made,
And all the Host of them by the Breath of his Mouth.*

What in all profane Learning comes up to the *Sublime* in the xxxviiiith Chapter of *Job*, where the Almighty is introduced speaking to him out of the Whirlwind:

*Gird up thy Loins like a Man, for I will demand of thee.
Where wast thou when I laid the Foundations of the Earth?
Declare, If thou hast Understanding.
Who laid the Measures thereof?
Who hath stretched the Line upon it?
Whereupon are the Foundations thereof fastened? or,
Who laid the Corner Stone?
When the Morning Stars sang, and the Sons of God shouted for Joy!*

Happily imitated by *Milton*.

—————Up he rode,
Follow'd with Acclamations, and the Sound
Symphonious of ten thousand Harps, that tuned
Angelick Harmonies, the Earth, the Air
Resounding. Thou rememberest; for thou heardest
The Heavens, and all the Constellations ring:
The Planets in their Stations listening stood,
While the bright Pomp ascended jubilant.
Open ye everlasting Gates: They sung,
Open ye Heavens, your living Doors; Let in
The great Creator from his Work returned
Magnificent, his Six Days Work, a World.

Of the sublime Kind is the Ode in the *Spectator*, N^o 465; being a Paraphrase on that of the *Psalmist*. The Heavens declare:

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*The spacious Firmament on high,
With all the blue Ethereal Sky;
And spangled Heavens, a shining Frame,
Their great Original proclaim.*

Some very scrupulous Persons may be apt to object against the third Line as an Anteclimax, the *spangled Heavens* having much more Lustre than *shining Frame*. The following *Stanza* is extremely sublime:

*What tho' in solemn Silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial Ball;
What tho', nor real Voice, nor Sound
Amid their radiant Orbs be found,
In Reason's Ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious Voice;
For ever singing as they shine,
The Hand that made me is divine.*

I cannot omit here some Lines of Mr. *Waller's* upon the Holy Scriptures, where there is more of the Sublime than in all other Books whatsoever.

*The Græcian Muse has all their gods surviv'd,
Nor Jove at us, nor Phœbus is arriv'd;
Frail Deities, which first the Poets made,
And then invok'd to give their Fancies Aid.
Yet, if they still divert us with their Rage,
What may be hop'd for in a better Age,
When not from Helicon's imagin'd Spring,
But sacred Writ we borrow what we sing?
This with the Fabrick of the World begun
Elder than Light, and shall out-last the Sun.*

There are not ten finer Verses together in Mr. *Waller's* Poems, yet he wrote them when he was above fourscore Years old.

Are not these two Verses of a Manuscript Poem in the sublime Kind? the young Author, a Lad at *Eaton* School, wrote it on the Birth of his Royal Highness the Duke of *Cumberland*:

*Gods how he springs like Whirlwinds charg'd with Fire,
He lays War waste, and Makes the World retire.*

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And these Verses out of *Tamerlane*:

*The dreadful Business of the War is over,
And Slaughter, that from yester Morn till Even,
With Gyant Steps past striding o'er the Field
Besmear'd, and horrid with the Blood of Nations,
Now weary sits among the mangled Heaps,
And slumbers o'er her Prey.*

I cou'd easily fill many Volumes of Quotations out of the Antients and Moderns, in all the Kinds of Thinking; but as I am doubtful of the Success of my Attempt, so the Fewer I insert, the Less I shall offend.

The *French* perhaps have been a little too scrupulous and exact in dividing the *Noble* and the *Grand* in the Manner of Thinking. However, as to the Noble, let us see whether this Passage borrow'd of Scripture by *Milton*, will not serve for an Instance:

*All Night he will pursue, but his Approach,
Darkness defends between till Morning Watch,
Then thro' the fiery Pillar and the Cloud,
God looking forth will trouble all his Host,
And craze their Chariot Wheels; when, by Command,
Moses once more, his potent Rod erects
Over the Sea: The Sea his Rod obeys
On their embattled Ranks, the Waves return,
And overwhelm their War.*

There would be no End of it, if one should go about to enumerate such Instances as these out of *Milton*. His Poem of *Paradise lost* is so full of them, that almost out of one Book one might collect as many such noble Passages, as out of all the *Æneis*; and I would add the *Ilias* too, if I understood *Greek* half so well as the Translator.

Among the many Sketches of the glorious Character of King *William* in that of *Tamerlane*, Mr. *Row* has this, which I take to be a very noble Image:

*No Lust of Rule, the common Vice of Kings;
No furious Zeal inspir'd by hot-brain'd Priests:
Ill hid beneath Religions specious Name,
E'er drew his temp'rate Courage to the Field.
But to redress an injur'd Peoples Wrongs,
To save the weak One from the strong Oppressour
Is all his End of War; and when he draws
The Sword to punish, like relenting Heav'n,
He seems unwilling to deface Mankind.*

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The Opposition in the following Passage, carries with it its own Application:

————As oft regardless
*Of plighted Faith, with most unkingly Baseness
Without a War proclaim'd, or Cause pretended,
He has t'ane Advantage of their absent Arms
To waste with Sword and Fire their fruitful Fields,
Like some accursed Fiend, who 'scap'd from Hell,
Poisons the balmy Air thro' which he flies,
He blasts the bearded Corn, and loaded Branches,
The lab'ring Hind's best Hopes, and marks his Way with Ruin.*

Is there not something noble in what Mr. *Waller* says to the Duke of *Monmouth*, at his Return from suppressing a Rebellion in *Scotland*:

*But seeing Envy like the Sun does beat,
With scorching Rays, on all that's high and great,
This, ill requited Monmouth, is the Bough
The Muses send to shade thy conqu'ring Brow;
Lampoons like Squibs may make a present Blaze,
But Time and Thunder pay Respect to Bays.*

I hope I may make Use of Part of Mr. *Addison's* Translation of the *Justum & Tenacem* of *Horace*. The Translator having done me the Honour to render it in *English* at my Request:

*The Man resolv'd and steady to his Trust,
Inflexible to Ill, and obstinately just;
May the rude Rabble's Insolence despise
Their senseless Clamours, and tumultuous Cries.
The Tyrant's Fierceness he beguiles.
And the stern Brow, and the harsh Voice defies,
And with superiour Greatness smiles.*

Again,

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*Should the whole Frame of Nature round him break
In Ruin and Confusion hurl'd,
He unconcern'd would hear the mighty Crack,
And stand secure amidst a falling World.*

*Si fractus illabatur Orbis,
Impavidum ferient Ruinæ.*

Is not this noble Thought the Original of that which ends the noted *Siloloquy* of *Cato*:

*The Soul secure in his Resistance smiles
At the drawn Dagger, and defies its Point:
The Stars shall fade away, the Sun himself
Grow dim with Age, and Nature sink in Years?
But thou shalt flourish in immortal Youth,
Unhurt amidst the War of Elements,
The Wrecks of Matter, and the Crush of Worlds.*

The two Verses quoted out of *Horace*:

Si fractus, &c.

are not so well imitated by the Gentleman that turned *Cato's Siloloquy* into *Latin*, as to defy a Comparison;

*Orbesque fractis ingerentur orbibus
Illæsa tu sedebis extra fragmina*

But not to be always running back to the Antients, let us have Recourse to the Moderns, particularly *Quillet*, and we shall find something in this Kind of Thinking. *Tons. Callip.* p. 72.

*As far as thou may'st Nature's Depths explore
Still inexhaustible, thou find'st the Store;
Thee let the Order she observes suffice,
What Laws controul our Earth, and what the Skies.
Mark how a thousand starry Orbs on high
Around the Void with equal Motion fly;
Mark how the huge Machine one Order keeps,
And how the Sun th' Etherial Champian sweeps.
Both Earth and Air with genial Heat he warms,
Gives ev'ry Grace, and every Beauty forms;
Whether around the lazy Globe he rolls.
Or Earth is whirl'd about him on her Poles;
God is the Mover, God the living Soul,
That made, that acts, that animates the Whole.
Hence with thy Atoms, Epicurus; hence:
Was all this wond'rous Frame the Sport of Chance!
Of Solids, they, 'tis true, the Matter make,
Can Matter from itself its Figure take!
Can the bright Order in the World we see,
The blind Effect of wanton Fortune be!
Did jumbling Atoms form the various Kind
Of Beings, or did one Almighty Mind?
Guess what you will, you must at last resort*

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To a first Cause, and not to Chance's Sport.
This Cause is God———

I must not omit this *Noble Thought* of *Milton's*:

*Then crown'd, again their golden Harps, they took
Harps ever tun'd, that glitt'ring by their Side
Like Quivers hung, and with Preamble sweet
Of charming Symphony, they introduce
The sacred Song, and waken Raptures high:
No one exempt, no Voice but well cou'd joyn
Melodious Part, such Concord is in Heav'n.*

Having mention'd so many noble Thoughts in Verse, I shall conclude this Article, with a very plain but very noble one in Prose, the Saying of *Leonidas* to *Xerxes*: *If you had not been too powerful and too happy, you might have been an honest Man.*

Tho' it is a very hard Matter to distinguish the *Grand* from the *Noble* in the Manner of Thinking, yet we shall endeavour it by the following Examples; and sure nothing can be more *Grand*, than the Saying of *Alexander the Great*, to the Greatest of his Captains *Parmenio*, *Darius*, King of *Persia*, having offer'd the *Macedonian* Monarch half *Asia* in Marriage with his Daughter *Statira*. As for me, says *Parmenio*, *if I were Alexander, I would accept of these Offers: And so would I*, reply'd that Prince, *if I were Parmenio*. But why should we be always dealing in *Heroicks*, and running back into Antiquity to borrow Example from the Conquerors of the World. Why may not we propose one in the lowest Life, which will at the same Time prove, that the Excellencies of both Thought and Expression are in Nature, and not in the Rules of Art only. A Sergeant of the Guards, *What a terrible Fall is this, from Alexander the Great, to a Sergeant of the Guards!* who was in the last Attack upon the Castle of *Namur* in King *William's* War, after he had fir'd his Grenades at the Enemy behind the Palisadoes, leapt over them, and had been slaughter'd, had not a *French* Officer prevented it. The Sergeant being a Prisoner in the Castle was sent for by the Governour Count *Guiscard*, and the Mareschal *de Boufflers*. The Latter demanding how he durst attempt to leap the Palisadoes with the Enemy behind them, when he could hardly have done it had there been none? *Perhaps, Sir, I might not*, reply'd the brave *English* Soldier, *but there is nothing too difficult for me to come at my Enemy*. A Saying worthy of *Alexander* or *Cæsar*, of *Marlborough* or *Eugene*.

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I have seen something like these Verses of Mr. *Waller's*, quoted as in the grand Way of Thinking:

*Great Maro could no greater Tempest feign,
When the loud Winds usurping on the Main,
For angry Juno labour'd to destroy
The hated Relicks of confounded Troy.*

But the Image, as grand as it is, does not seem to be so noble as the Instances before-mentioned; there is too much Terrour in it to participate of that Kind of Thought, which is not confident with what is terrible.

I cannot help thinking there is something *Grand* in this *Epitaph*:

*Underneath this Marble Hearse,
Lies the Subject of all Verse;
Sidney's Sister, Pembroke's Mother,
Death 'ere thou hast kill'd another,
Fair and learn'd, and good as she,
Time shall throw a Dart at thee.*

To descend to the lower Kinds, we meet with what Father *Bouhours* calls *Pensées Jolliées* pretty Thoughts; and we have of that Kind too in *English*, perhaps to a greater Degree of Excellence, than is to be found in any other Language; especially those Verses in the *Spectator*, which are said there to be Originals, as indeed they are, and inimitable. I question whether a Poet might not as easily imitate *Milton* or *Butler*. There are ten *Stanza's*, and they all of a like pretty, and natural Turn with the

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IIIId STANZA.

*The Fountain that wont to run sweetly along,
And dance to soft Murmurs the Pebbles among;
Thou know'st little Cupid, if Phœbe was there,
'Twere Pleasure to look at, 'twere Musick to hear:
But now she is absent I walk by its Side,
And still as it murmurs do nothing but chide;
Must you be so chearful, while I go in Pain,
Peace there with your Bubbling, and hear me complain.*

How the *French* may compare with us, as to this *pretty* Manner, let us see by a Comparison. *Menage* says, that this *Triolet*, as he calls it, a Sort of low Poetry where one or two Verses are repeated three Times, was the King of *Triolet's*, and written by the famous Mons. *Ranchin*:

Le premier Jour de May
Fut le plus Heureux de ma Vie,
Le beau Design que je formay
Le premier Jour de May.

*The first Day of the Month of May
Was the Happiest of my Life,
Ah the fair Design I form'd
The first Day of the Month of May.
Then saw you, then I lov'd,
If you like this fair Design,
The first Day of the Month of May
Was the Happiest of my Life.*

Now let us see what an *English* Poet has said on the First of *May*; and tho' there is in it hardly any Thing but Words, and those Words rustick to Affectation; yet they are *Prettiness* itself compared to Mons. *Ranchin's* Guardian, N^o 124:

I.

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*Oh the charming Month of May,
Oh the charming Month of May,
When the Breezes fan the Treeses,
Full of Blossoms fresh and gay.*

II.

*Oh what Joys our Prospects yield!
Charming Joys our Prospects yield!
In a new Livery, &c.*

III.

*Oh how fresh the Morning Air!
Charming fresh the Morning Air! &c.*

Tho' there is little Meaning here, yet the Dancing of the Words and the Sprightliness of the Images, make it a prettier Lyrick than our *Italian* Opera's can produce.

According to my Conception nothing can be prettier than this Thought of *Buchanan*.

*Ilia mihi semper presenti dura Neæra;
Me, quoties absum, semper abesse dolet;
Non desiderio, nostro non mœret Amore,
Sed se non nostro posse Dolore frui.*

*Cruel, when I am present, she appears;
As often as I'm absent she's in Tears:
Not that Neæra wishes my Return,
To see me love her, but to see me mourn.*

These Verses of Mr. *Waller* are, methinks, as pretty as they are gallant:

*Phillis, why should we delay
Pleasures shorter than the Day!
Cou'd we, which we never can,
Stretch our Lives beyond their Span;
Beauty like a Shadow flies,
And our Youth before us dies.
Or would Youth and Beauty stay,
Love hath Wings, and will away.
Love hath swifter Wings than Time, &c.*

Notice has been taken of the Prettiness of these Verses in *Dryden's* Fable of the *Cock* and the *Fox*. [Pg 31]

The *Cock* speaks to his Wife Dame *Partlet*:

—————*See my Dear
How lavish Nature hath adorn'd the Year;
How the pale Primrose and the Violet spring,
And Birds essay their Throats, disus'd to sing:
All these are ours, and I with Pleasure see
Man strutting on two Legs, and aping me.*

Madam *Dacier* takes Notice of a very pretty Circumstance in *Sappho's* Hymn to *Venus*, translated into *Latin* by *Catullus*, and into *English* by Mr. *Philips*.

*Thou once didst leave Almighty Jove,
 And all the golden Roofs above:
 The Carre thy wanton Sparrows drew,
 Hov'ring in Air, they lightly flew.
 As to my Bow'r, they wing'd their Way
 I saw their quiv'ring Pinions play:
 The Birds dismiss, while you remain,
 Bore back their empty Carre again.*

The Circumstance that renders it so pretty, according to the *Critical Lady*, is *Venus's* dismissing her Sparrows and her Carre, and shewing she did not intend to make *Sappho* a Court-Visit, but to dwell with her some Time. There's another Ode of *Sappho*, which is preserved in *Longinus*, and translated by *Boileau*. It is in the sublime Kind, and shews the Violence of Love.

*From Vein to Vein I feel a subtle Flame,
 When e'er I see thee, run thro' all my Frame:
 And as the Transport seizes on my Mind,
 I'm dumb, and neither Tongue nor Voice can find.
 A Mist of Pleasure o'er my Eyes is spread,
 I hear no more, and am to Reason dead;
 Pale, breathless, speechless, I expiring lie,
 I burn, I freeze, I tremble, and I die.*

In the *Spectator*, N^o 388. is a Paraphrase on the second Chapter of *Solomon's* Song.

STANZA IV.

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*I faint, I dye, my lab'ring Breast
 Is with the mighty Weight of Love opprest.
 I feel the Fire possess my Heart,
 And Pain convey'd to ev'ry Part:
 Thro' all my Veins the Passion flies,
 My feeble Soul forsakes its Place;
 A trembling Faintness seals my Eyes,
 And Paleness dwells upon my Face.*

To descend again to the lower Kinds of Thinking, I shall conclude the Pretty with these Verses of Mr. *Prior's* on the Squirrel in the Cage:

*Mov'd in the Orb, pleas'd with the Chimes,
 The foolish Creature thinks he climbs.
 Bus here or there, turn Wood or Wire
 He never gets two Inches higher.
 So fares it with those merry Blades,
 That frisk it under Pindus Shades.
 In noble Songs, and lofty Odes,
 They tread on Stars, and talk with gods;
 Still dancing in an airy Round,
 Still pleas'd with their own Verses Sound;
 Brought back how fast soe'er they go,
 Always aspiring, always low.*

Agreeable Thoughts may be also reckon'd among the Natural, the Soft, and the Tender; all which in the general Acceptation, are also taken for Wit. This Speech of *Eve's* to *Adam* in the *Paradise Lost*, has an Agreeableness which cannot be match'd in the most Tender of our Lyrick or Elegiac Poets:

*With thee conversing, I forget all Time,
 All Seasons and their Change, all please alike:
 Sweet is the Breath of Morn, her Rising sweet
 With Charm of earliest Birds, pleasant the Sun
 When first on this delightful Land he spreads
 His orient Beams, on Herb, Tree, Fruit and Flow'r,
 Glistring with Dew: Fragrant the fertile Earth
 After soft Show'rs, and sweet the Coming on
 Of grateful Evening mild: Then silent Night
 With this her solemn Bird, and this fair Moon,
 And these the Gems of Heaven, her starry Train.
 But neither Breath of Morn, when she ascends
 With Charm of earliest Birds; nor rising Sun
 On this delightful Land, nor Herb, Fruit, Flow'r,
 Glistring with Dew, nor Fragrance after Showers,
 Nor grateful Evening mild, nor silent Night
 With this her solemn Bird; nor walk by Moon,
 Or glittering Star Light, without thee is sweet.*

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To speak poetically one would think every Verse was turn'd and polish'd by the *Loves* and the *Graces*. Indeed all the Conversation between the first Bridegroom and his Bride, in this Poem, is exquisitely agreeable and tender, except the very Incident of the Fall.

I take the Verses in *Waller*, address'd to *Amoret*, to be of the agreeable Kind:

*Fair, that you may truly know
What you unto Thyrsis owe;
I will tell you how I do
Sacharissa love, and you.*

*Joy salutes me, when I set
My blest Eyes on Amoret;
But with Wonder I am strook;
While I on the Other look.*

*If sweet Amoret complains,
I have Sense of all her Pains:
But for Sacharissa I
Do not only grieve, but die. &c.*

I could give many Instances of agreeable Thoughts but of *Dryden's* Fables, especially that of *Cymon* and *Iphigenia*, which had been taken notice of long enough before the *Spectator* was thought of; and I do not think it fair, that he should engross all the *Beaux Endroits*, because he printed them first. The Rusticity of *Cymon*, and even his Stupidity, has something in it very agreeable in the Image, which is the pure Nature that we meet with there:

*It happen'd on a Summer's Holy-day,
That to the Greenwood Shade he took his Way;
His Quarter-Staff, which he cou'd ne'er forsake,
Hung half before, and half behind his Back;
He trudg'd along unknowing what he sought,
And whistled as he went for Want of Thought.*

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There is not a more natural Picture in Language than this. Of the same Kind is that of *Iphigenia* sleeping by the Fountain: The very Numbers express the Wantonness of the Wind so livelily, that we feel the Air, and are fanned by it while we read them, which I think has had the good Luck to escape Observation:

*Her Bosom to the View was only bare;
The fanning Wind upon her Bosom blows;
To meet the fanning Wind her Bosom rose;
The fanning Wind, and purling Streams continue her Repose.* }

Mr. *Dryden* was 68 Years old when he wrote this Fable, which I have always taken for a Master-piece, with Respect to natural Thoughts, which are always agreeable, and harmonious Numbers. The Reader will perceive, that I do not forbear quoting fine Passages, because they are in the *Spectator*. I cannot allow of his Forestalling the Market; and besides, I take his Example to be preferable to his Precept. Himself does not stick to quote even from himself; as,

N^o 91. Sidley *has that prevailing gentle Art, &c.*

And again,

N^o [400.] Sidley *has that prevailing gentle Art, &c.*

Guard 110. Motto—Non ego paucis,
Offendor maculis.

Spec. 291. Motto—Non ego paucis,
Offendor maculis.

This however I will declare in my own Behalf, that I have quoted nothing from him which he has quoted from *Milton* or *Dryden*, but what I had before collected my self as remarkable Passages in their several Kinds of Thinking.

What follows, taken out of Mr. *Charles Hopkins's* Verses to the Earl of *Dorset*, is of the agreeable Kind:

*As Nature does in new-born Infants frame
With their first Speech their careful Forstrer's Name,
Whose needful Hands their daily Food provide,
And by whose Aid they have their Wants supply'd:
You are, my Lord, the Poet's earliest Theme,
And the first Word he speaks is Dorset's Name.*

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Were not the next Verses written on a Tomb Stone, they wou'd be very *agreeable*. They are *Ben*

Johnson's:

*Underneath this Stone doth lie
As much Virtue as cou'd die:
Which when alive did Vigour give
To as much Beauty as cou'd live.*

Is not this Picture of *Venus* in *Palamon* and *Arcite* of the same Kind:

*The Goddess self some noble Hand had wrought,
Smiling she seem'd, and full of pleasing Thought,
From Ocean, as she first began to rise,
And smooth'd the ruffled Waves, and clear'd the Skies.
She trod the Brine, all bare below the Breast,
And the green Waves, but ill conceal'd the Rest:
A Lute she held, and on her Head was seen
A Wreath of Roses red, and Myrtles green:
Her Turtles fan'd the buxom Air above,
And by his Mother stood an Infant Love
With Wings display'd.-----*

These Verses out of *Dryden's St. Cecilia's Ode* are very agreeable:

*Softly sweet in Lydian Measures
Soon he sooth'd his Soul to Pleasures,
War, he sung, is Toil and Trouble,
Honour but an empty Bubble.
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying;
If the World is worth thy Winning,
Think, Oh think, it worth enjoying.*

But as the finest Meats are most apt to surfeit, so too many agreeable Thoughts together may flatten upon the Palate: And I shall only add an Instance in Prose, taken out of *Mr. Waller's Letter* to the Lady *Lucy Sydney*, on the Marriage of her Sister the Lady *Dorothy*, who was his *Sacharissa*.

May my Lady Dorothy, if we may yet call her so, suffer as much, and have the like Passion for this young Lord, whom she has preferred to the Rest of Mankind, as others have had for her; and may this Love before the Year goes about, make her taste of the first Curse impos'd upon Woman-kind, the Pains of becoming a Mother. May the First-born be none of her own Sex; and may she that always affected Silence and Retiredness, have the House fill'd with the Noise and Number of her Children. May she, at last, arrive at that great Curse much declin'd by fair Ladies, Old Age, &c. [Pg 36]

Under the Character of *Father Bouhours's* fine Thoughts may be put these Verses of *Mr. Waller's*, alluding to his gallant Poems upon *Sacharissa*, and the Story of *Phœbus* and *Daphne*.

*Yet what he sang in his immortal Strain,
Tho' unsuccessful, was not sung in Vain:
All but the Nymph that should redress his Wrong
Attend his Passion, and approve his Song;
Like Phœbus, thus acquiring unsought Praise,
He caught at Love, and fill'd his Arms with Bays.*

Much of the same Kind is this of the Lord *Landsdown's* on the same Subject:

*Thy Beauty, Sidney, like Achilles Sword,
Resistless stands upon as sure Record;
The foremost Herce, and the brightest Dame
Both sung alike shall have their Fate the same.*

This Part of *Mr. Prior's* Prologue spoken before the late Queen, is in the fine Way of Thinking:

*Let the young Austrian then her Terrours bear,
Great as he is, her Delegate in War.
Let him in Thunder speak to both his Spains,
That in these dreadful Isles a Woman reigns:
Whilst the bright Queen does on her Subjects show'r,
The gentle Blessings of her softer Pow'r,
Gives sacred Morals to a vicious Age,
To Temples Zeal, and Manners to the Stage;
Bids the chaste Muse without a Blush appear,
And Wit be that, which Heaven and she may hear.*

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Of what Kind shall we take this Image in *Spencer* to be:

*His haughty Helmet, horrid all with Gold,
Both glorious Brightness and great Terror bred;
For all the Crest a Dragon did enfold
With greedy Paws, and over all did spread
His golden Wings; his dreadful hideous Head,
Close couched on the Bever, seem'd to throw,
From flaming Mouth, bright Sparkles fiery red, &c.*

This of Cowley is finely thought:

*Now all the wide extended Sky,
And all th' harmonious Worlds on high,
And Virgil's sacred Work shall dye.*

And this of Waller to Queen *Henrietta Maria*:

*A brave Romance who would exactly frame,
First brings his Knight from some immortal Dame,
And then a Weapon and a flaming Shield,
Bright as his Mother's Eyes, he makes him wield.
None might the Mother of Achilles be,
But the fair Pearl and Glory of the Sea.
The Man to whom Great Maro gives such Fame,
From the high Bed of heavenly Venus came.
And our next Charles, whom all the Stars design
Like Wonders to accomplish, springs from thine.*

And this to *Zelinda*:

*Fairest Piece of well form'd Earth,
Urge not thus your haughty Birth;
The Pow'r, which you have o'er us, lies,
Not in your Race, but in your Eyes.*

And these Verses of Mr. *Addison* to the Lord *Hallifax*:

*Oh Liberty, thou Goddess heav'nly bright!
Profuse of Bliss, and Pregnant with Delight;
Eternal Pleasures in thy Presence reign,
And smiling plenty leads thy wanton Train.
Eas'd of her Load, Subjection grows more light,
And Poverty looks chearful in thy Sight:
Thou mak'st the gloomy Face of Nature gay,
Giv'st Beauty to the Sun, and Pleasure to the Day.*

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These four Verses, Part of the late Duke of *Buckingham's* Poem upon *Hobbes*, contain, as I conceive, a fine Thought:

*But such the Frailty is of humane Kind,
Men toil for Fame, which no Man lives to find;
Long rip'ning under Ground this China lies;
Fame bears no Fruit, till the vain Planter dies.*

But the next Verses contain a false Thought, if I have a Right Conception of it:

*And Nature tir'd with his unusual Length
Of Life, which put her to her utmost Strength;
So vast a Soul, unable to supply,
To save herself, was forc'd to let him die.*

Whatever it is we understand by Nature, we can have no such Idea of it, as to imagine Mr. *Hobbes* cou'd have been too hard for it.

These Verses of Mr. *Waller*, on *Westminster-Abbey* escaping a Fire, are finely imagined:

*So Snow on Ætna does unmelted lie,
Whence rolling Flames, and scatter'd Cinders flie:
The distant Country in the Ruin shares,
What falls from Heaven the burning Mountain spares.*

Tho' some of these *fine* Thoughts are very nearly allied to the Noble, yet one may easily perceive, that there is not so much Dignity, tho' there may be as much Beauty in the One as in the Other. Thus also, as to delicate and agreeable Thoughts, they are as nearly related; but a Thing may be agreeable which is not delicate, tho' it cannot be delicate, but it must be agreeable: An agreeable Thought expresses it self entirely; a delicate One leaves something to the Readers Imagination which is very flattering.

As in this beauteous old Verse of *Chaucer's*, preserv'd in *Dryden's*, *Palamon* and *Arcite*:

Had *Chaucer* said, *Up rose the Sun*, and then *up rose Emily* brighter than the Sun, *Emily* and the Reader would have been entertain'd with only a common Complement; but now the Reader fills up the Thought himself, and imagines that the Sun rose to prepare the Way for something brighter than himself: *Up rose Emily*.

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Mr. *Dryden*, in another place,

Now Day appears, and with the Day the King,

imitates *Chaucer*, but the Delicacy is lost, for there is nothing more to be understood by it, as there is in this Couplet of his to the Dutchess of *Ormond* upon her going to *Ireland* before the late Duke,

*As Ormond's Harbinger, to you they run,
For Venus is the Promise of the Sun.*

There the Reader fills up the Comparison himself, and consequently cannot but be pleas'd, as we are apt to be, with every thing which we do our selves.

The Delicacy of Thought is recommended to us by the *Spectator*, in this beautiful Passage out of *Milton*, where after the most dismal Prospect of Death, which the Heart of Man was ever terrify'd with, *Adam* is presented with one of the gayest Scenes with which it ever was delighted.

—————*When from the Tents, behold
A Bevy of fair Women richly gay,
In Jems and wanton Dress. To the Harp they sang
Soft amorous Ditties, and in Dance came on.
The Men, tho' Grave, ey'd them, and let their Eyes
Rove without Rein, 'till in the amorous Net
First caught they lik'd, and each his liking chose.
And now of Love they treat, till the Evening Star
Love's Harbinger appear'd; then all in Heat
They light the Nuptial Torch, and bid invoke
Hymen: Then first to Marriage Rights invok'd.
With Feast and Musick, all the Tents resound;
Such happy Interview, and fair Event
Of Love and Youth not lost: Songs, Garlands, Flowers,
And charming Symphonies attach the Heart
Of Adam. —————*

The Reader takes in the Infection all along in Reading as *Adam* does in seeing, and imagines at the End of the Description the Pleasure of *Adam's* Imagination.

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Is there not Delicacy in these Verses of Mr. *Walters* upon a Lady's *Girdle*, which leave the Reader much more to be imagin'd than is exprest.

*No Monarch but would give his Crown,
His Arms might do what this has done.
My Joy, my Grief, my Hope, my Love,
Did all within this Circle move;
A narrow Compass, and yet there
Dwells all that's good, and all that's fair.
Give me but what this Ribbon bound,
Take all the Rest the Sun goes round.*

Father *Bouhours*, in his *Maniere de bien penser*, besides these several Kinds of Thoughts, has the *true*, the *beautiful*, the *soft*, the *natural*, the *simple*, the *gay*, and many more, which has spun the Subject so very fine, that it will not endure handling but by very tender Fingers.

True Thoughts and false Thoughts are often confounded, especially, if there's any Point, Glittering or Glaring in the Latter. Something like distinguishing the one from the other is attempted in the *Guardian*, N^o 110. But I cannot help thinking that it does not deserve the Recommendation with which it is introduced in that Paper. We are told, the Remarks are very curious and just, and must of Consequence conclude, the Applause which the Author sinks, because 'twas in favour of himself, was so too. A very pretty Way of returning a Compliment which he could not accept of without Offence to his Modesty; but, I humbly conceive, the Remarks are not very curious, if they are just; the same having been made a Hundred times before the publishing of them in the critical Letter; and whoever would be at the Trouble of taking *Dryden* and *Lee's* Tragedies to pieces, would find enough of the like Curiosities.

The first is, *Lee* makes one of his Persons a *Cartesian* Philosopher, 2 or 3000 Years before *Descartes* was born: Why did not the Critick remember this too in the same Tragedy *Oedipus*?

—————*As oft I have at Athens seen,
The Stage arise, and the big Clouds descend.*

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Several Hundred Years before there was such a Thing heard of as a Stage at *Athens*.

The next Thing this Critick takes notice of, is *Dryden's* making *Cleomenes* a *Copernican* 2000 Years before *Copernicus's* Time. The Rest of the Criticisms turn upon the Improbability that *Don Sebastian* King of *Portugal* understood Latin, tho' he never prayed to God in any other Language; or that the Emperor of *Barbary* had ever heard of the Names of *Bacchus*, *Cupid*, *Castor*, and *Pollux*, or the Mufti of *Archimedes*, tho' we are credibly informed, that most of the Greek and Roman Learning was translated into *Arabick*; and it is well known that the *Arabians* were the greatest Encouragers of Arts and Sciences for three or four Centuries, when they were buried all over Christendom under the Rubbish of Monkery and Barbarism; and the Revivers of Learning were obliged to them for their Translations and Comments, which were turned into *Latin* out of *Arabick*. I have not only read of a Translation of *Aristotle* with Comments by *Aben Rois*, and of *Euclid* by *Nassir Eddyn*, with Notes, but of an *Arabick Ovid*, where the Fable is the Foundation of the Work, and several other Classicks in the *Arabick* Tongue. How easy would it be to fill up such Critical Epistles as that in the *Guardian* with as just and curious Remarks out of the best Epick Poets! How has *Chaucer* confounded the Sacred *Scripture* History with Pagan Fables:

*There by the Fount Narcissus pin'd alone:
There Sampson was, and wiser Solomon:
Medea's Charms were there.*

Dryden from Chauc.

Ariosto does the same in the xxxii Book of *Orlando Furioso*:

*Joshua's Day seemed shorter than the same,
Shorter did seem the false Amphytrion's Night.*

Harrington.

The same does *Tasso*, *Canto* iv of his *Jierusamme*:

*There where Cileno's foul and loathsome Rout;
The Sphinges, Centaurs; there where Gorgon's fell,
There howling Scilla's, yawling round about:
There Serpents hiss, there seven mouth'd Hydra's yell,
Chimera there spues Fire and Brimstone out,
And Polyphemus blind suporteth Hell.*

Fairfax.

All understood of the Hell, which is the Punishment of the Damned, according to the Christian Theology, and here confounded with the fabled Empire of *Pluto*. *Spencer* too mixes *Scripture* History with the Fable: *Canto* ix.

*The Years of Nestor nothing were to his,
Ne yet Methusalem, tho' longest liv'd;
For he remembred both their Infancies.*

Nay Milton himself adorns the *Pandæmonium* with Dorick Pillars, while *Adam* and *Eve* lived in the *Bowers* of Paradise before Man had a House to put his Head in:

—————*Pilasters round
Were set, and Dorick Pillars overlaid
With golden Architrave.*

He also borrows the Rivers of the Hell of the Heathens for his Christian Poem:

*Abhorred Styx, the Flood of deadly Hate,
Sad Acheron of Sorrow, black and deep,
Cocytus nam'd, of Lamentation loud
Heard on her rueful Stream. Fierce Phlegeton,
Whose Waves of torrent Fire inflame with Rage.
Far off from these a flow and silent Stream
Lethe the River of Oblivion rolls;*

Which

Medusa with Gorgonian Terror guards.

It has been hinted elsewhere, that 'tis ungenerous to criticise on *Dryden's* Conduct and Sentiments, which 'tis plain he varied at Pleasure, and wrote like a great Original, whose Example was to be a Rule to others, and himself to take Rules from none; but it is not true, as we read in the above-cited *Guardian*, *That his very Faults have more Beauty in them, than the most elaborate Compositions of many more correct Writers*: For I will repeat some few Lines that are monstrous, and then let the Reader judge how they can be beautiful.

'Tis false, she is not ill, nor can she be;

She must be chaste, because she's lov'd by me.

———*I'll squeeze thee like a Bladder,
Or make thee groan thy self away in Air.*

*She who dares love, and for that Love dares die,
And knowing this, dares yet love on, am I.*

*Good Heaven thy Book of Fate before me lay,
But to tear out the Journal of this Day.*

*But take what Friends, what Armies thou canst bring,
What Worlds, and when you are united All,
Then I will thunder in your Ears; she shall.*

———*Fight, love, despair;
And I can do all this, because I dare.*

*What are ten thousand Subjects, such as they?
If I am scorn'd, I'll take my self away.*

*Thou shalt not wish her thine, thou shalt not dare
To be so impudent as to despair.*

*There's not a Star of thine dares stay with thee,
I'll whistle thy tame Fortune after me.*

I cannot repeat any more of it: These are Mr. *Dryden's* Faults, in which, according to the *Guardian*, there are more Beauties than in the most elaborate Pieces of more correct Writers. I confess it grieves me to mention such Enormities as these are: For no Man can do more justice to Mr. *Dryden's* fruitful Imagination, and harmonious Versification than my self: But it does not therefore follow, that even Error in him is more beautiful than Regularity in others.

It I had more Room, and more Leisure, I should have endeavour'd to explain the Difference between the several Ways of Thinking. Some of them I have attempted, and I hope it may stir up a greater Genius, to do in *English* as Pere *Bouhours* has done in *French*, which would introduce a beautiful and just Manner both in Thought and Expression. It would then be known why it is that Archbishop *Tillotson* and Bishop *Sprat* are both esteem'd Masters of the *English* Language; why Sir *William Temple*, and Sir *Roger L'Estrange*, the *Tatler*, and the *Spectator*, are generally spoken of as fine Writers; though their Manner is as different as their Faces. Every Thing that pleases in Writing is with us, as I have already hinted, resolved into Wit, whether it be in the Thought or the Expression. *Nay some*, says the *Spectator*, *carry the Notion of Wit so far, as to ascribe it to Puns and Quibbles, and even to external Mimickry, and to look upon a Man as an ingenious Person that can resemble the Tone, Gesture, or Face of another.* With such admirable Judges as these, Sir *Isaac Newton's* Discourse of *Fluxions* is very witty, as the Machine called the *Orrery* was said to be very wittily contrived. With these *Estcourt*, *Penkethman*, and even *Norris* are Wits, as the *Spaniards* take the *Apes* to be, and that they won't speak because they would not work. I have known two or three Actors who got into Vogue by Grimace only, and acting Parts that had neither Wit nor Sense in them.

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Every one of the Kinds of right Thinking has its opposite, as every Virtue has its Vice; and the Sublime especially is apt to be mistaken in the Pomp and Puffiness of Description. Of this Kind is that Passage, where Mr. *Eachard* describes the Sea-Fight between the *English* and the *Dutch*, in the Time of the *Rump*.

"The Battle grew so fierce and so furious, that there were scarce any Thing to be seen but Masts overturn'd into the Sea, *Splinters* flying on all Sides, *Sails* rent and torn in Pieces, Cables and Cordage cut in sunder: *How it terrifies one!* In one Place a *Vessel* boarded, and in a Moment the Men chased off or blown up with the Decks into the Air. *Four or Five Hundred Men would not have made a Figure dreadful enough unless the Wooden Decks had gone along with them.* And in another was seen a Ship swallow'd up by the Waves with several Hundreds of Men, and the Sea turn'd red with Human Gore, and cover'd with dead Bodies, and floating Parts of scatter'd Ships. *What's the Reason that we freeze in the midst of so much Fire? This is what the French call the Cold and the Puerile Stile.* Again; All which instead of dismaying the Combatants, serv'd only to excite their Rage, and enflame them to a more cruel and implacable Slaughter; and the continual Outcries of miserable wounded Wretches render'd them but the more bloody minded, and rous'd them to a more cruel and remorseless Revenge. The rising Coasts on both Sides the Channel were violently shaken with the resounding Thunders of the roaring Guns, and those engag'd seem'd to be involv'd in the Wreck of Nature."

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This Fight was over against the Island of *Portland*, and I really believe the pronouncing of these Words, *roaring Guns, resounding Thunders, rising Coasts, Wreck of Nature*, among the Rocks under the Light-houses, would have as good an Effect with the Help of *Eccho*, as a Broadside at Sea, which the Historian assures us at the same Time shook the Hills of *England* and *France*. Whence comes it that we read all this without the least Emotion, where there is so much Affectation to move? Are we not so stun'd with the Sound that the Sense is lost in it, and we are no more concern'd than at the Sight of a Storm in a Half-penny Picture? *Dryden* lets us a little

into this Secret in his *Preface to Troil. and Cress.* He is speaking of the puffy Style, *the common Practice of those Writers, who not being able to infuse a natural Passion into the Mind, have made it their Business to ply the Ears, and to stun their Judges by the Noise.* A better Judge than Mr. *Dryden* has directed us in this Matter.

*The Words, which in Magnificence abound,
Grow tedious oft, and lose themselves in Sound.*
Rosc.

This Way of Writing is much more easy than that which is truly great and sublime, as in Liquors, 'tis easier to give them Ferment and Froth, than Spirit and Purity. *There are more Authors,* says *Dryden*, who can make a *pompous Description, than who can write with an equal and natural Stile.* He adds, that *Shakespear* himself did not distinguish *the blown puffy Stile from true Sublimity;* which could not wholly be attributed to the Time, because we meet with the true Sublimity very often in *Spencer* and *Fairfax*, who were both Contemporaries with *Shakespear*, and *Spencer* much the elder. Two Lines of Sir *John Denham's*, on a like Subject with that of *Echard*, fills one with Horrour and Amazement.

*Tost by a Whirlwind of tempestuous Fire,
A Thousand Wretches in the Air expire.*

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Mr. *Addison* observes after *Pere Bouhours*, That *it is impossible for any Thought to be beautiful, which is not just, and has not its Foundation in the Nature of Things: That the Basis of all Wit is Truth, and that no Thought can be valuable, of which good Sense is not the Ground-work.* Therefore when Mr. *Echard* writes his *Oxcellency* for his *Excellency*, speaking of the Parliament's General the Earl of *Essex*, the *Tyrannical* Parliament for the *Triennial* Parliament, the *New Noddle* for the *New Model* with respect to the Army, and the like, we are not to be imposed upon by him, and to take it upon his bare Word for Wit. Neither is there any Wit at all in his burlesquing such Phrases as these; *Presence of God, Seeking the Lord, Call of God, Jesus Christ,* &c. Which he also would impose upon us for Witicisms.

His Descriptions are not all so lofty and sounding as that of the *Sea-Fight*, particularly when he paints *Oliver Cromwel*, without his Breeches, running away from the Cavaliers in his *Drawers* only, and then turning back upon them and beating them. Of this Kind is the incomparable Picture of the Aldermen *Gloucester*: *Their Visages were pale, lean, and ugly; their Cloaths strange and unusual; their Voices pert, shrill, and fearless; Ambassadors from the godly City of Gloucester.* His Similes are not more elevated, especially that where he compares the *Silent* and *Victorious* General Monk to a Cat, and General *Lambert* to a Mouse. He watched him as a Cat watches a Mouse, a singular Proof of his Perfection in Eloquence, which naturally leads us to *Expression*, and I doubt not the Historian thinks a finer Historical Stile than his own is not to be met with.

As in Thoughts so in Expression, we in *England* are apt to confound all the various Kinds under the general Terms of good Language, and a fine Stile. The Sublime, the Natural, the Didactick, the Narrative, the Tragick, the Comick, the Polite, the Affected, are seldom rightly distinguish'd, and the latter very often mistaken for the Polite. The Admirers of Mr. *Echard's* History do, doubtless, take what follows to have as much of the Sublime in it as the *English* Tongue is capable of. It introduces the glorious Reign of King *Charles II.*

Having gone through a stormy and tempestuous Season of various Misery, we arrive at a sudden Brightness and Splendour, a most unexpected Order, and glorious Calm and Sunshine. The Splendour and Brightness harder to be born than the preceeding Clouds and Darkness. What is Stormy and Tempestuous? what Brightness, Sunshine, and Splendour? What Clouds and Darkness? but other Words for the same Things, and instead of Amplification comes under the Denomination of another Figure very common in such puffy Rhetorick, call'd *Tautology*, which I am afraid the Historian and his Admirers mistake for the Sublime, there being but very few that can distinguish Sound from Sense, or Wind from Spirit. *Let a Discourse be never so fine,* says *Rapin*, *it loses its worth when 'tis out of its Place, and appears affected.* Affectation in Stile has the same Effect with ordinary Judges as Affectation in Air has with Women and Fops. It passes upon them for Politeness; and Delicacy, tho' there is nothing more vicious in Language. I might fill a Volume with Examples of this Vice, taken out of the Earl of *Clarendon*, and the Archdeacon's Histories, but as I had never troubled my self about them, had there been nothing in them but Want of Method, and an affected Stile, I shall content my self with two or three Observations only, which are sufficient to convince all those that can judge right; and as for others, I have not Leisure nor Words enough to attempt it.

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He says the Sight of the *Gloucester* Aldermen at once *gave Mirth to the most severe Countenances, and Sadness to the most cheerful Hearts.* What Idea can one have of these *Cavaliers*, as he expresses himself, but that of some Idiots whom we have seen to laugh and cry in a Breath. He has two Expressions about Mines, which are very extraordinary, both as he is a *Naturalist* and as he is an *Orator*: The one is the *Brass-Mine* in *Cumberland*, the only *Brass-Mine* that ever was, or ever will be in the World. A *Copper-Mine* might have been found out there, and a Mine of *Lapis calaminaris*, which put together, would produce *Brass* enough, if there were Ore enough. Where he speaks of the Cleanliness of his Writing, he intimates, that he is one of those who *dive into the rich Mines of Nature.* What can one imagine about diving better than that of a Duck and a Dog in a Pond, or Boys in the *Bath*? To dive into a Mine, methinks, is like running a Man's Head into a Rock. If he had said he had been digging in the rich Mines of Nature, one

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might have expected some Mettal to have come of it, of one Sort or another. When the Parliament, that brought in King *Charles II*, met the first Time, Mr. *Echard* says, *We are now arrived at the VAST Day*, which I humbly conceive to be beyond Conception, and a strange Specimen of the Author's Talent in Elocution. He had a mind to make this Day something *prodigious* and *uncommon*, and therefore swells it up with an Epithet which bursts in the Operation. VAST might have been proper, if he had been speaking of the Ton of *Heidelbergh*, or Admiral *Russe's* Punch Bowl at *Lisbon*: But under what Figure will he put Day for the Word VAST to become it well? Doctor *Littleton* in his Dictionary makes VAST to be *huge, burly, wide, broad, large*, and what is much less for the Archdeacon's Purpose, *misshapen, ill-favoured, desolate, insatiable, outrageous*; put Day to ever a one of them, and see how the Coat fits. Mr. *Bailey* in his very good Dictionary is contented with two or three Interpretations only, as a *huge Day*, a *spacious Day*. *Ludlow*, I believe, would have followed *Littleton*, and then for VAST would have understood *desolate Day, ill-shapen Day, insatiable Day*; so dangerous is it for People to meddle with Words which they do not understand. Of all the Blunders in Expression which are to be avoided, there was the best Provision made against this that could be, if a Man had had the least Acquaintance with the politer Authors, Monsieur St. *Evreumont* having written a Dissertation on this very Word VAST, and whoever reads it, will pity a Writer who could fall into so gross an Error, if there were no Malice in what he had written. I suppose that almost all Mr. *Echard's* Readers have taken this VAST in the Sense he intended for *Important*, and if he had said this *Mountainous Day*, it would have done as well: They would have expected a Birth from the Mountain, and the Arch-Deacon's History is a Labour of the same Kind.

As we in *England* are apt to confound Sentiments and Expressions, so we do the same by Talents, and think if a Man can make a *School-Book* or two, he can write a History. *Jeremiah Collier* wrote a *short View of the Stage*, which sold wonderfully, and immediately the Booksellers hir'd him to write Three Histories in Folio: And I question not but, because Sir *Isaac Newton* has outdone all Philosophers in his Treatise of *Fluxions*, they would employ him in *Heroick* Poetry, if he were young enough, and would be employ'd by them. There was a *Pertness* in *Collier's* Stile, which was mistaken for Vivacity, and tho' there cannot be any Thing more affected, yet it recommends his *Essays, Views, &c.* as somewhat in the Perfection of our Language. I wonder Dr. *Felton* should forget him, when he mentions Sir *Roger L'Estrange*, Mr. *Trap*, and other masterly Writers. You cannot name *Collier's Views, Essays, &c.* in Company, but some body or other immediately cries out, *Ay! that's Fine*. Wonderful fine, as will be seen presently.

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In his Essays he has this Expression, *A Man may act an Excellency for the Satisfaction if Significancy*, which has the same Effect in Prose, as it is observ'd of some good Verses, that the *Smoothness* or *Roughness* of the Numbers are an Image of the Roughness or Smoothness of the Thing. You can hardly pronounce these Words without a prim Look, and screwing up your Mouth with the Affectation of a Girl at a *Boarding-School*. Would one imagine that this was said by the same Author in another place; *Nothing is more nauseous than to be affected*: And yet see further, *Don't let Miss suffer her Heels to get too much into her Head*, not to say any Thing about the *Attitude*, which would be very extraordinary in a Picture. Again, *Seeing and Hearing are the most creditable Senses; the Brain has an unpromising Aspect*, which cannot be known without Dissection. What Idea does this leave upon the Mind? or this, *A PRINCE made but a lame Figure in Comparison with our APOSTLE*. One would think *Collier* had Prince *Prettiman* and the *Spanish Fryer* in his Head when he wrote it. He is so fond of this Conceit, that he endeavours to prove, in his Essay on Theft, and elsewhere, that our Saviour's Disciples were Men of Quality, well-born, and well-bred, and if they did fish at any time, 'twas only for their Pleasure. As the *Barber* of *Northampton* told *Estcourt*, He was a Doctor by Profession, and shav'd only for his Diversion. But *Collier* seems to have less Regard for his Brotherhood in the last Centuries, when he informs us that by Queen *Elizabeth's* Injunctions a Clergyman could not marry till he had made his Complaint against Celibacy before two Justices of the Peace, and gain'd their Consent, and the *good Will of the Master or Mistress where the Damsel serv'd*, by which he gives us to understand, that soon after the Reformation the Priests Wives were all *Abigail's*.

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Collier's Dialogues serve two principal Ends, the one to carry on an Argument the more freely and loosely; and the other, which is not the least, to give himself a fat Figure in his own Picture, for he himself is the Man who has always the best of the Dispute.

*Well, I can't stand the Force of your Argument:
You are smart, you have brought your self well off.*

Thus he conquers his *Alphius*, and compels him to own, *That the Priests are an independant State*; and thus Boys build Houses of Cards to blow them down when they have done. What a Parcel of Flowers and Graces might one pick up in his Writings, if it was more a *propos*, such as *Slender Difficulty, Lean Temper, touchy Point, Cheek by Joule, to con over, to be Uppish, Intents and Purposes, to glitter upon the Senses, Enrichments, renverse, Deconcert, bigger Entertainment of the Soul, don't, on't, can't, won't, 'tis, it's, at's*, and the frequent Use of Proverbs.

*Where there's Life there's Hope.
One Swallow makes no Summer, &c.*

The Use of Proverbs is so far from giving Disgust in common Conversation, especially in the Country, that 'tis look'd upon to be Wit as well as Mimickry, Buffoonry, Pun, Quibble, &c. and you would be star'd at if you should object against either of them as the effect of Ignorance or Folly.

The *Spectator* takes Notice that Puns made a considerable Figure on the Banks of *Cam*, and Proverbs must needs do no less on the Banks of *Isis*, when so great a Scholar as *Edward Llwyd* set the Example, two in one Paragraph.

Rome was not built in a Day.
Better late than never.

On laisse aux Discours du Peuple les manieres de s'appliquer en Proverbes. 'Tis for the Vulgar only to express themselves by Proverbs. But what are Proverbs, &c. to *Collier's* huddling of Metaphors, a Vice in Eloquence which is hardly taken Notice of in *English* Writings; *To be always pouring in Oil, is the Way to overset the Flame and extinguish the Lamp: If you lay a Country constantly under Water, you must spoil the Soil.* Here Fire and Water most lovingly agree together to do the same Business. *To overset a Flame* is a fine Way of speaking, and as easily to be conceiv'd, as to overset a Cockboat or a *Wherry*. Again, *I fancy we shall sift the Gentleman to the Bran, and make him run the Gauntlet before he gets clear.* The *Bran* Gentleman having run the Gauntlet, we will add one Instance more, and have done with his Metaphors; *They will glean up the best Thoughts, they will draw of the Spirit of the Argument when the Mine has been work'd by such Hands.* The *Gleaner*, the *Chymist*, and the *Miner*, are at once at work for him in the same short Sentence. If the Writer or Reader's Head can be clear under such Operations, it will be a Wonder. The *Spectator* has a Remark on this Subject, equally pleasant and judicious: *Thus I have known a Heroe compar'd to a Thunder-bolt, a Lion, and the Sea, all and each of them proper Metaphors for Impetuosity, Courage, and Force; but by bad Management it hath so happen'd, that the Thunder-bolt hath overflow'd the Banks, the Lion has been darted through the Skie, and the Billows have roll'd not of the Lybian Desert;* neither of which is so bad as *Collier's* burning and drowning the same Thing at the same Time.

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The *Declamatory* Stile, another great Vice in Eloquence, is the Characteristick of these *Essays*; tho' I question not but it is thought to be the very Cream of the Discourse. If 'tis excuseable any where it is in Country Pulpits, where, if a Parcel of Words are well put together, we should not be too scrupulous about the Sense. *Then Commerce must give way to Religion, Baptism sway the Indenture, and the Gospel govern the Exchange.* Are not the Gospel, Baptism, and Religion, the Exchange, Indenture, and Commerce, the same Things in the *Contrast*. I am far from affecting a foreign Word when we have as good a one of our own, much less when we have a better; and *Attitude* and *Contrast* may be supplied by *Posture* and *Opposition*, if the Reader pleases; out the former was used for Decorum sake, the idea being too gross when in an *English* Dress. The Author is again declaiming: *It may be the Failing of Drunkenness is imperceptible in the single Instance, 'twill rise in the Sum; To go always a little out of the Way makes a strange Mistake upon the progress; A Grain will grew to a Burthen by Addition; To be always dipping an Estate, is the Way to turn Beggar; A Drop that's perpetually pelting Will make a Stone give way.* How new, how eloquent is all this, and that which comes after! He is preaching to the Booksellers about selling *Arian* Books, *Sceptical* Books, *Books of Divorce*, *Impotence*, &c. *Whatever they think on't, Atheism and Lewdness is the most fatal Mortality;—The Plague of the Heart the most frightful Distemper—Infection is safer lodged in the Veins, than in the Will—A Man had much better be poyson'd in his Blood, than in his Principle.* The Stream is the same still, but as a Boar pisses it comes by Spirits. Again, *Are we never to do any Thing without a Majority; If we are govern'd by Numbers, we shall live strangely; If you go to Poll, Sense and Conscience will lose it in most Cases.* Of all the Modern Criticks, who have given us Rules, Dr. *Felton* upon the *Classicks* is the Author, who seems to have stood most upon his own Legs: Others have learnt much of the *French*, and have been much blam'd for it by those who have and have not read their Books. *Rymer* confesses the *French* began the *Art of Criticism* among the Moderns: *They fell not to it in earnest*, says he, in his Preface to *Rapin*, *till the Royal Academy was founded, and Cardinal Richelieu encourag'd and rally'd all the scatter'd Wits under his Banner: Then Malherbe reform'd their ancient licentious Poetry.* *Malherbe* died Seven Years before the *Royal Academy* was thought of; however he did begin the Reformation of the *French* Poetry, and was happily follow'd by *Voiture*, *Sarazin*, *Maynard*, *Godeau*, &c. The *Academy* have indeed assum'd to themselves the sole Glory of refining the *French* Tongue, tho' they can by no means engross the Merit of it. *Malherbe* began it before they had a Being, and several eminent *French* Authors have written since, who were not of the *Academy*, as St. *Evremont*, *Menage*, &c. But there's something pleasant in the Complements that are paid to it, and the *Antiquaries* have found out just such another Society in *Rome*, under the Patronage of *Augustus*, to refine the *Roman* Language, which, by the way, had been refined before by *Terence*, *Lucretius*, *Cicero*, *Hortensius*, and their Contemporaries, at the latter End of the Republick. The Learned *Antiquaries* go so far as to name the *Roman Academicians*,

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Mecænas,
Pollio,
Plotius, Valgius,
The Two *Messala's,*
The Two *Bibulus's,*
Piso, the Father,
Servius, Fulvius,
Tibullus,
Horace.

Ovid perhaps was left out because he was in Exile at *Tomos*; but why could they not have put in *Livy*, *Propertius*, &c. They have given this Academy, the Temple and Library of *Apollo*, to meet

and study in, and it is pretended, that *Horace's* Epistle to the *Piso's* was written by Direction of the Academy, and if there had ever been such an Academy at all, one might the sooner have given Credit to it. The *French* Academy set an Example to other learned and ingenious Men, to make themselves Masters of their own Language, and the Encouragement they met with from *Lewis XIV* produced an Age of Poets, Orators, and Criticks. The latter have done more towards explaining the *Classicks* than had been done before from the *Augustan* Age to their own. They threw Pedantry and Jargon out of their Writings, and render'd them as polite as judicious. Such are the Criticisms of *Rapin, Bossu, Segrais, Boileau, Bouhours, and Dacier*, who are all read with like Profit and Pleasure; and this is the Reason of the frequent Use of them, and not an Affectation of foreign Phrases, and technical Cant, as is insinuated by such as never read, or never understood them, and by such too as have not only both read and understood them, but have learnt of them all the Reading they have, and yet make use of no other Names than *Quintillian, Longinus, Donatus, Eustathius*, and the Ancients. This is very common, and I could easily prove it upon those who have charg'd others with Ignorance and Illiterature. The Reading *French* Authors is inconceivably beneficial to such as do not understand *Latin* so well as Mr. *Dryden*, and *Greek* so well as Mr. *Pope*: They will learn as much of the *Greek* History from *Ablancourt's Thucydides*, and of the *Latin* from *Du Ryer's Livy*, as they could from the Originals. And as to the Poets, they had better read *Madam Dacier's Homer*, and *Segrais's Virgil*, which they do understand, than the Original *Homer* and *Virgil* which they do not. My Lord *Roscommon* owns of the *French*,

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*The choicest Books that Rome or Greece have known,
Their excellent Translators made their own.*

And tho' in all Translations the Spirit and Beauty of the Original must in a great measure be lost by Transfusion, yet in History especially you are sure to have the Method, the Facts, and the Politicks, tho' you have not the Strength and Ellegance of the Style. *Dryden* tells the late Duke of *Bucks*, in the Dedication to his *Virgil; Impartially Speaking, the French are as much better Criticks, as they are worse Poets*. The Latter is incontestable; and not to mention *Milton*, who is above all Parallel. They have nothing of *Epick* Poetry so good as our King *Arthur*; neither are their *Cornelle* and *Racine* a Match for our *Shakespear* and *Otway*. They have no Body to name against *Wycherley, Etherege, Shadwel, Congreve, Vanburgh, Steel. Moliere*, the best of their Comick Poets, could write *Scapius, Dandins, Sganarelles*, and all Kinds of Farce perfectly well; but for Wit and Humour, Repartee, Polite Conversation, for what the Criticks call the *Vis Comica*, you must have recourse to the *English* Comedies, if you would know what it is. A *French Marquis*, as *Moliere* shew'd him upon his Stage, would only make a very good Taylor upon ours. They have no *Hopkins* for Elegy, no *Philips* for Pastoral: *Scarron* will hardly serve for a *Ralpho* to our *Hudibras*. In the *Ode*, I think, *Malherbe* is at least equal to *Cowley*, and *Voiture* and *Sarazin* are not behind our *Suckling* and *Waller*, in the gallant Way: Nor is our *Prior* behind their *La Fontaine* for Taletelling. On the other Hand, I am afraid we must allow, that we have no Translation in *English* equal to *Seagrais's Virgil* for Intelligence of the Original, and a correct as well as harmonious Diction, especially if the Character given of it by *Ruæus* is just. Did we look into other Sciences, we should find our selves more than a Match for them; What Names have they to set against our *Newton* and *Halley* in the Mathematicks, and our *Sydenham* and *Willis* in *Physick*. They have no *Bacon*, no *Boyle* in Philosophy. In History indeed they have a *Varillas* and a *Maimbourg* for our *Nelson* and *Brady*, and doubtless the Royal Historiographers will, in the History of *Lewis XIV*, come up to the *Grand Rebellion*, and Mr. *Echard's* History for Impartiality and Truth. If I were a *Frenchman* I should make a Start here, and cry out, What is their *Tureune* and their *Conde* to our *Marlborough*, and their Great *Monarch*, who took Pleasure in Slaughter and Devastation, to our Glorious King *George*, whose only Care and Delight is to maintain Liberty and Peace.

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Dr. *Felton* declares we began to refine our Language much sooner than the *French*, and that the Writers in Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign are far preferable to *Shakespear, Fletcher, Waller, Suckling, May, Sands*, and all the Writers from the *Gunpowder* Plot to the Restoration. He will not be advis'd by the best Critick in Poetry, as he represents him. Mr. *Dryden*, who speaking of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, writes thus; *I am apt to believe the English Language in them arrived to its Perfection*: They wrote between the Beginning of King *James I* and the Reign of King *Charles II*, a Period in which Dr. *Felton* makes the *English* Language to have declin'd; though, if I were permitted to give Judgement, I should continue the Improvement of our Tongue till the Time of the *Spectator*, and the Translation of *Homer*, where, I think, it is in the greatest Purity and Elegance, and that one of the first deplorable Signs of its Declension was even the Discourse upon the *Classicks*. *Dryden* himself continues the good Taste till the Opening of the Long Parliament 1640, when, if you'll believe him, the Muses were struck dead at a Blow, abandon'd to a barbarous Race of Men, Enemies of all good Learning, such as *Selden, Whitlock, Bathurst, Wilkins*, and the immortal *Milton*. This Passage should have been transplanted into the two famous Histories of those Times, publish'd since King *William's* Death, particularly that of the *Grand Rebellion*, which Dr. *Felton* protests is the most impartial one that ever was written; but it is very well it does not stand in need of his Certificate, for there would have been great Exception taken against his Authority. As good a Word as the Doctor gives Mr. *Dryden* as a *Critick*, *Dryden* out-does him in his own Panegyrick.

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*Let Dryden with new Rules our Stage refine,
And his great Models form by this Design.*

This Piece of Modesty in Verse is excelled by another in Prose; *Our present Poets*, himself the

Top of them, *have far surpass all the antient and modern Writers of other Countries.*

Thus has he put himself above *Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, Horace, Corneille, Racine, Boileau, &c.* Notwithstanding we were so happy in Mr. *Dryden's* Criticisms, Doctor *Felton* is of Opinion the Art is not brought enough to Perfection among us; and therefore earnestly sollicitates Sir *Richard Steel* to write Comments upon *Homer* and *Virgil*, as Mr. *Addison* has done upon *Milton*. I am satisfied Sir *Richard Steel* did not keep his Countenance if ever that Passage of the Doctor's came in his Way. I will not say the same of Mr. *Trap*, who, they tell me, is a Poet by his Place, or a *made* Poet, better by half than one born so; but if Doctor *Felton* had foreseen that the ingenious Gentleman would have came off as He did with *Virgil*, and in what a sad Place Doctor *Swift* would find his Translation, I believe he would have postpon'd the Encomium, *What a polite Critick may do if he pleases*, says the Doctor, *and in how different an Aspect Criticism appears, when formed by Men of Parts and Fire, we may see in Mr. Trap*; and the Encomium continues for a Page or two: But the aforesaid Translation having cut the Matter short, I will repeat no more of it.

Cowley was in as great Vogue 60 or seventy Years ago, as any Composer or Translator of our Time has been, and Doctor *Felton* without knowing that his Character is worn, informs us, that his *Davideis* is as good an Epick Poem as the *Ilias*, that his Lyricks are as good as *Pindar's* or *Horace's*, that he wrote Elegies as well as *Tibullus*, Epistles as well as *Ovid*, Pastorals as well as *Theocritus*; and that his *Cutter of Colmanstreet* is as good a Comedy as the *Adelphi of Terence*. The Doctor's own Words are; *He rivalled the Greek and Latin Poets in every Thing but Tragedy*. His saying so is the more remarkable, for that he had seen the Preface to *Dryden's* Fables, wherein that incomparable Critick, as he terms him, says *Cowley* is sunk in his Reputation, and the late Duke of *Bucks* in his Essay acknowledges as much:

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*Cowley might boast to have perform'd his Part,
Had he with Nature joyn'd the Rules of Art:
But ill Expression gives sometimes Allay
To noble Thoughts—————
Tho' All appears in Heat and Fury done,
The Language still must soft and easy run.*

Doctor *Felton* in Praise of Criticism tells us, with equal Elegance and Perspicuity, *If the Rules had not been given, we had not been troubled with many fewer Writers*: And in the Pursuit of his own excellent Work, he declares, *He has tempered the Briskness of Thought with the Sedateness of Judgement*. The *French* have their *Pensees Brusques*, but the Doctor could not fall so low as that. *Brusque* signifying *blunt, rash*, and the like. This *Briskness* is, I suppose, more agreeable to the Conception of a certain Bookseller, who being written to by a certain Squire for a *brisk History*, sent him by the next Carrier that of *Don Quixot*. This was thirty Years ago, before we were so well furnished with *brisk Histories* as we have been since.

I take *brisk* in our Tongue to be to *lively*, as *pert* is to *witty*. But I cannot depend on my own Judgement; the Translator of *Homer* having used *Briskness* in the same Sense as Doctor *Felton* uses it: *Heaven and Earth became engaged in the Subject, by which it rises to a great Importance, and is hastened forward into the briskest Scenes of Action*. If that Author could bear the least Objection to any Thing that belongs to him, I would ask the Reader whether he does not fancy there is some Affectation in the Expression. But let that pass; if we are rightly informed, the Word *Brisk* is in the *Teutonick Friesch*, which is in plain English *Frisk*, and then for the Gods and Demi-gods to frisk up and down the Field of Action, or the Doctor to frisk up and down his Closet is very indecorous. The Duke of *Buckingham* in the *Rehearsal* seems to take *Brisk* in the latter Sense, as when Thunder and Lightning act their Parts on the Stage. The former says, I am the *bold Thunder*, the latter the *brisk Lightning* I. And not at all to derogate from the Character of Lightning, which has been so serviceable to all Sorts of Poetry and Poets, I cannot help confirming my Opinion by a very common Simile, and saying *As brisk as bottled Ale*.

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Among all the Refiners of our Tongue, 'tis the vulgar Notion, that Sir *Roger L'Estrange* was most eminent. True it is, Doctor *Felton* owns he was good for nothing but *Banter* and *Railing*; for that is what we in *England* generally mean by *Raillery*. Tho' *Smith* and *Johnson* in the *Rehearsal* are not the most lively Characters; yet their Dialogue with *Bayes* is what the *French* call *Raillery*. We in *England* do mean very often the Dialogue of *Billingsgate*, where it is common enough to hear one Fish-Woman cry to another, *No more of your Raillery*, which is there the worst Sort of *Railling*; and for that and *Banter* the Doctor assures us *L'Estrange* was most proper. The same say I, and that he understood no more of true Eloquence than he did of *Greek*, out of which the Booksellers hired him to translate *Josephus*, and he did it from the *French* Translation. The Philosopher *Seneca's* Works he pretended to translate from the *Latin*, and I wish Mr. *Trap* would translate the following Phrases in his *Seneca's Morals* back into that Tongue again, *One good Turn is the shoeing Horn to another. He does me Good in spite of my Teeth. After a Matter of eight Years; and this into Greek for Esop's Fables, The Moon was in a heavy Twitter*. Yet I'm satisfied these fine Sayings are some of those that gained him the Reputation of being a polite Writer of *English*: I have heard that about the Moon very much commended, which shews that we are not sufficiently sensible how mean Words debase a Thought. *There's nothing*, says *Boileau*, *which debases a Discourse more than mean Words. A mean Thought exprest in noble Terms, is generally better than the most noble Thoughts exprest in mean Terms*. I know no greater Instance of the ill Effect of mean Terms, than what we find in two Verses of Mr. *Montague's* Epistle to the Lord *Dorset* on King *William's* Victory at the *Boyne*. 'Tis in the greatest Heat of that glorious Action, and in the Middle of the *Sublime*, which is not wanting in that Poem.

*Stop, stop, brave Prince! What does your Muse, Sir, faint!
Proceed, pursue his Conquest. Faith I can't.*

Mr. Philips's Poems, the *splendid Shilling* and *Cyder*, are full of Instances where mean Thoughts are raised by noble Expressions, and they are wonderfully pleasing; as in *Cyder*; this of the *Pear-Tree*. [Pg 59]

*What tho' the Pear Tree rival not the Worth
Of Ariconian Products, yet her Freight
Is not contemn'd, and her wide branching Arms
Best screen thy Mansion from the fervent Dog,
Adverse to Life. The wintry Hurricanes
In vain employ their Roar; her Trunk unmov'd,
Breaks the strong Onset, and controuls their Rage;
Chiefly the Bosbury, whose large Increase,
Annual in sumptuous Banquets, claims Applause.
Thrice acceptable Beverage! could but Art
Subdue the floating Lee, Pomona's self
Would dread thy Praise, and shun the dubious Strife.
Be it thy Choice, when Summer Heats annoy,
To sit beneath her leavy Canopy,
Quaffing rich Liquids, Oh! how sweet t'enjoy
At once her Fruits, and hospitable Shade.*

I have never met with any Author who so happily imitated the manner and stile of *Milton* as *Philips* has done, and there seems to be hardly any other Difference than that of the Subjects they wrote of.

What I have quoted out of *L'Estrange* is nothing to the Delicacy of a modern Writer of Plays, who without Wit, Language, Learning, or Manners, wrote three or four Farces, which took as much as *Pradon's* in *France*; but the *English* have not recollected themselves so soon as the *French* did; for *Pradon* out-liv'd the Vogue he was in, and became a greater Jest than ever he had made. What think ye of our Poet's Delicacy and Wit, who in a gallant Letter to his Mistress, tells her, *He's gall'd with riding, Love is forging Darts in his Belly; he's a Dog in a Doublet, &c.* There's a deal of graver Nonsense with it, but it being mostly *Blasphemy*, I dare not repeat it. This Author had his Portion of temporary Fame. *Ogilvy* had his Day, and *Dryden* says:

*Fame, like a little Mistress of the Town,
Is gain'd with Ease; but then she's lost as soon.*

However, as long as the Credit lasts, these temporary Authors bear the Port of the greatest Genius, are clapt and star'd at, as those Merchants who are driving in their Coaches to Bankrupcy, have generally the best Equipage. What are become of the *Marots*, the *Ronsards*, the *Scuderies* of our neighbour Nation, yet these Writers were infinitely superiour to what most of our taking Authors have been. Could any Body have thought that Sir *Richard Baker's* Chronicle would ever have past from the Justice's Hall Window to the Butler's Cellar, or that *Cowley's* Mistress would have lost all her Charms in thirty Years Time, and become a Cast-Off for City Prentices and Lawyers Clerks, to say nothing of *Orinda*, *Flatman*, &c. Yet these Writers were Originals which raises their Merit much above all Sorts of Translators, and it ought to be a Lesson to all Poets and Historians, whether first Hand or second Hand, to pay the World for their Applause with Modesty, which is the surest Way to keep it in a good Humour; *Since 'tis Posterity only*, says *Boileau*, *which sets a Value upon all Writings, you must not, as admirable as you take a modern Author to be, presently put him upon a Level with those Writers who have been admired for so many Ages, because one cannot be sure his Works will pass with Glory to the next. Indeed without going far for Examples, How many Authors have we seen admired in our Age, whose Glory is vanished in a very few Years. How were Balzac's Works admired thirty Tears ago?* So much that Cardinal *Richelieu* at the same Time that he was meditating the universal Monarchy for the Crown of *France*, wrote in Vindication of them. The Bishop of *Rochester* did the same for *Cowley*; but neither the Cardinal nor the Bishop could defend them from the Fate of all Temporary Authors. Neither *Cowley* nor *Balzac* are now any more mentioned in *France* or *England*. And the main Reason why they lost their Credit was for want of duly considering what their particular Talents were adapted to; for that they had both very great Talents is universally acknowledged, *Mons. de Balzac a passe toute sa vie a ecrire des lettres, dont il n'a jamais pu attraper le veritable Charectere. Balzac spent all his Time in writing Letters, but could never hit the true Character. Cowley applied himself to Poetry, and never enough knew the Power and Harmony of Numbers. He had a great deal too much Wit to charm his Mistress with his Passion.* Very few of us are let into this Secret. We cannot believe that a Poet can have too much Wit, and indeed the Offence given that Way is not very common. The last Duke of *Bucks* rightly instructs us: [Pg 60]

*Another Fault which often does befall,
Is when the Wit of some great Poet shall
So overflow, as to be none at all.* }

Again,

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This probably was a Rebuke to the Author of the *Plain-Dealer* and *Country-Wife*, who has transgressed in this kind as much as any Body, and was the best able to do it. The Author of the *Relapse* is not entirely free from this Censure, nor the Authors of *Love for Love*, and the *Funeral*. But it will not be more surprising than it is true, that *Peter Motteux* declared he had taken a great deal of pains with a Character in a Farce of his, to bring it within the Duke of *Buckingham's* Rule in those Places where he told me he had given it too much Wit. Mr. *Walsh*, one of the greatest Criticks of our Nation, observes, that the Softness, Tenderness, and Violence of Passion, are wanting in Mr. *Cowley's* Love Verses, insomuch that he *could hardly fancy he was in Love when he wrote them*. Pref. to *Lett.* Yet there were Variety and Learning enough in them, and more Wit than in all our witty Poets since the Restoration, excepting those above-mentioned. Mr. *Wycherly*, who wrote as good Comedies as any in the *English*, or any other Tongue, did not value himself so much upon them as on a Folio of as bad Verses as any. *Creech* having had Success in *Lucretius*, was put upon translating *Horace*, and it is said by *Dryden*, that he might lose so much of his Reputation, as to prevent Rivalship. Nay, *Butler*, tho' he knew the Follies of Mankind so perfectly well, did not perceive that there is no greater Folly than to undertake what one is not fit for, and was persuaded to let *Hudibras* translate *Ovid*. On this Rock many Authors have split, who would have succeeded had they consulted their Talents, and taken the right Course: but it is a general Maxim with us in *England*, Verses are Verses. He that can write one Thing, can write another, and till our Taste is so refined, that we can distinguish the Good and the Bad in the various Kinds of Thinking, Writers will not be at the Pains to consult their Talents, but content themselves with pleasing their own Fancy, or that of the Publick, by which Means, like Flies, they make a buzzing for a Day or two, and are forgotten for ever. The *Spectator* very judiciously animadvertes on this Weakness: *Our general Taste in England is for Epigram, Turns of Wit, and forced Conceits, which have no manner of Influence, either for the bettering or enlarging the Mind of him who reads them, and have been carefully avoided by the greatest Writers, both among the Antients and Moderns.* He adds after Mr. *Dryden*, *The Taste of most of our English Poets is extremely Gothick, which I have endeavoured to banish in several of my Speculations.*

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Another remarkable Observation of Dr. *Felton's* is, that the *best Performers are the best Judges*. He has only *Horace* against him of the Antients, and *Dacier* of the Moderns, as is already observed in this Essay. I believe no Body will deny, but Mr. *Walsh* before-mentioned was one of our best Judges of Regularity and Wit, yet hardly any Body will say he was one of our best Performers. There's nothing more common with small Genius's and small Judges, than to demand of all Criticks *to write themselves* before they criticise upon others Writings. They would stare if it should be said, that *Dursey* knew no more of Poetry than he did of Philosophy, nor of *English* than of *Hebrew*; though it is very true, if it be understood of the Art of Poetry, and the Beauty of Language; yet, that he was a Performer, is I doubt not well known to the Doctor, and well approved of. To teach us good Language by Example, Dr. *Felton* expresses himself thus elegantly and unaffectedly. *When I wrote these Sheets, my Lord Landsdown's Poems lay dispersed up and down in the Miscellanies; but some kind Hand, as for Instance the Bookseller, upon a very laudable Motive, hath assembled those scattered Stars, and added another Lyre to the Constellation;* which, though it is meant, to do singular Honour to those Poems, must have an ill Effect in astronomical Observations; it makes thirteen to the Dozen in the twelve Houses, and must cause as much Confusion, as two Signs of the Harp in a short Lane. The Modesty of the following Passage adds as much to its Merit as to the Truth of it: *If I offered any Thing which is not commonly observed, I hope it will not be interpreted any Singularity, but such as may render your Lordship more eminent and distinguished in the World;* and having taught his noble Pupil what he should imitate, he gives him warning what he should avoid, and that is the Reading any Thing written by a *Presbyterian*: *What crude indigested Volumes! How many tedious Sheets without Argument or Consistency, are the Writings of some of the Dissenters!* whom does he mean, such as *Bates, Manton, How, Pool, Clarkson, Alsop, &c.* He and some other good Church-Criticks make *Presbyterianism* to be a Sort of *Hellebore*, if you do but snuff it up in your Nose you run mad immediately. Thence it is, that the *Presbyterians* are termed *Fanatici*, by the learned and sober Writers of our two famous Universities. Is it expected, that every Orthodox Doctor should know as much as Bishop *Stillingfleet*, or write as well as Archbishop *Tillotson*? Where is the Reason or Justice of censuring a Body of Men for the Enthusiasm and Ignorance of a few? Would this Doctor suffer the Tables to be turn'd, and a Judgement to be made of the Writings of good Church-men, by the Argument and Consistency of the Works, with which the learned World are obliged by those of the Country Clergy, whose Pieces can crawl to the Press, whether in Prose or Verse, Meditations or Hymns. I do verily believe he did not think of Dr. *Bates*, when he fell thus furiously on Dissenters, or had ever seen any of his Writings, which are as polite as the Politest of our Age; the Sentiments as pious, as great, as noble, and as just, according to the Subject, and the Language as pure and as harmonious. What can be more so, than this Passage of his *Harmony of the divine Attributes*, speaking of the Fall of *Adam*: *Prodigious Pride! He was scarce out of the State of Nothing, no sooner created but he aspired to be as God; not content with his Image, he would rob God of his Eternity to live without End; of his Sovereignty to command without Dependance; of his Wisdom to know all Things without Reserve. Infinite Insolence! that Man the Son of Earth, forgetful of his Original, should usurp the Prerogatives, which are essential to the Deity, and set himself up a real Idol, was a Strain of the same Arrogancy which corrupted the Angels.* This is what Dr. *Felton* calls *Presbyterian Crudity*. It is strange, but it is true, that there is a Narrowness of Soul, and a Conceit in some of our Ecclesiasticks founded on the Establishment which we do not meet with in others; nay, not in those who pretend to Supremacy and Infallibility. Father *Bouhours*, though as zealous a Jesuit as

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any in *France*, yet had so just a Notion of every one's Merit in polite Learning, that he freely owns the Refinement of the *French* Tongue, and the *French* Manners was owing to those of the reformed Religion, even to *Presbyterians*. *Nous devons aux dernieres Heresies une partie de l'Embellissement de notre Langue, & de la politesse de notre Siecle.*

And another *French* Bigot tells us; *One of their Historians has observed, that the pretended Reformers began to speak well and write well, and were the First that shewed their Way to others.* They were all of them *Presbyterians*:

————Parvos femando libellos
Suocratis populumq; rudem amorcando parolis.

Our *Staunch* Criticks will not allow, that a *Presbyterian* ever had or could have any Wit or any Eloquence, though it was only to make an ill Use of it. No, no Body must be well-born or well-bred, that is without the Pale. No Man must be brave, nor Woman beautiful. The Men are all painted with cropt Hair, and the Women with Forehead-Cloaths, unless they assent and consent. No Wit, no Language, no Honour, nor any Thing that's good, is to be had any more than Matrimony without a Licence. *Vide Grand Rebellion*, and Mr. *Echard's History of England*.

I am so very well entertain'd with *Dryden's Virgil*, that I am glad to meet with any Excuse for his Translation; and would allow Dr. *Felton's*, that *the Faults are to be ascribed partly to some Defects of our Language*; if the Doctor himself, a few Lines before, had not said of the same Language, *that it is capable of all the Beauty, Strength, and Significancy of the Greek and Latin*. The Faults which have been generally found with *Dryden* as to *Virgil*, have been his mistaking or altering the Sense of the Original, and turning the *Epick* Stile into *Elegiack*. I doubt not but the *English* Tongue has Expression for *English* Sentiments, let them be ever so great and sublime; but I may very well doubt whether it has Diction equal to the Strength and Dignity of the *Ilias*, without the Helps *Milton* made use of, as compounding of Words and reviving some old Teutonicks, which would look very uncouthly among the Softnesses and Gingles of our fine Writers of late.

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I wish the Doctor had explain'd how he would have us to understand him, when he informs us, that to translate well is more difficult than to write well; by which he intimates, that to form a Fable for a great and important Action, to mark the Characters with suitable Sentiments, to conduct the One and maintain the Other with Art and Elevation diversify'd with proper Episodes; through such a Work as the *Ilias*, is so far from being the principal Part of an *Epick* Poem that it is no Part at all; for with all this the Translator has nothing to do. The Labour and Merit of it, according to Dr. *Felton*, consist in the Language and Verses, in finding Words to express the Action and Sentiments, and to adorn those Words with Numbers and Harmony. This is all that is necessary in a Translation; and being also but some Parts of the Original, it cannot be more difficult to do a Part than to do the Whole. Can one suppose, that to write such a History as Mr. *Echard's* from printed Books, written Books, from the Hearsay and Report of Men, Women and Children, is more difficult than to contrive and write such a One as the *Cassandra* of *Calprenade*? or in plain *English*, that to invent and tell a Story, is much easier than the bare telling it only? It needs no Reflection. If the Version of *Homer* had been born when he wrote, he must of Consequence have preferr'd it to the *Ilias*, which would have cost the Translator's Modesty, as much as Sir *Richard Steele's* to be put upon a Comment on *Homer* and *Virgil*. My Lord *Roscommon* has explain'd this Matter to us sufficiently:

*Though Composition is the nobler Part,
Yet good Translation is no easy Art.*

Monsieur *Maucroix*, who translated *Cicero* into *French*, writes thus of translating to Monsieur *Boileau*: *You have told me more than once, that Translation is not the Way to Immortality*; and he excuses his meddling with it, on Account of his Want of Application and Knowledge: As to Immortality it is to be question'd, whether that was the main Thing our Translators had in View. It will not be deny'd, but that *Dryden's* Bookseller put him upon translating *Virgil*, by the Temptation of so much a Line. And other Undertakers pay well enough to make a mortal Life a little comfortable, it is not much Matter whether the Work be immortal or not. *Ogilby* however is sure of Immortality; for though his Translations are as dead as his Carcass, yet he will be remember'd in good Satyr for the Badness of them. My *Author*, says Monsieur *Maucroix*, *is learned for me, the Topicks are all digested, the Inventing and Disposing are none of my Business; I have nothing to do but to utter my self.* Which Utterance is much more difficult, as Dr. *Felton* will have it, than to study, to digest, to invent, to dispose, and to utter too. I do not suppose, that a Man ever applied himself to Translation, if he felt in himself any of the heavenly Fire which animates a great Genius, or was ambitious of Fame by the Merit of an *Epick* Poem. It must be own'd, that Judgement is requisite in Translation as well as Composition, not only to preserve the Spirit of the Original, but also to make Choice of such a One as the Translator may be best able to manage. Mr. *Charles Hopkins* was Master of this Secret; and instead of attempting *Homer* or *Virgil*, he contented himself with *Ovid*, and succeeded to Admiration. *Hopkins* knew, that the Manners and Sentiments in *Ovid* were natural and universal, which must please in all Ages; whereas, but a very few can relish the Quarrels and Battles, which are the main Subject of the *Ilias*. The Learned have explained to us, for what it is that our Adoration is due to *Homer*: For the Unity and Greatness of his Fable, the Variety and Dignity of his Characters, and his sublime Thought and Expression; I dare not say Diction and Sentiments, because the *Spectator* has disgraced the Use of technical Terms, by calling it Cant; and

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supposing, that those who use them, do it to disguise their Ignorance, and shew their Vanity in critical Phrase.

I should be glad to know, which it is of all *Homer's* before-mention'd Excellencies, that has so delighted the Ladies, and the Gentlemen who judge like Ladies; or whether ever a One of those Excellencies has been at all distinguished from the Other; or whether there is any Possibility of expressing the Sublime of the *Greek* Tongue in our Language. As to the Sentiments, which are a principal Part of Epick Poetry, they may be translated; we very probably think much after the same Manner the *Greeks* did, though we do not speak so. The Passions are the same in all humane Nature; and probably the Expression of them, by so great a Master of our Tongue as the Translator of *Homer*, may gain as much as it may lose by the Translation. But the Mischief of it is, these Sentiments are that Part of the *Ilias* which the Criticks have made most bold with:

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*For who, without a Qualm, hath ever look'd
On holy Garbage, though by Homer cook'd?
Whose railing Heroes, and whose wounded gods,
Make some suspect he snores as well as nods.
But I offend—*

Roscom.

Dormitat Homerus; that *Homer* sometimes sleeps, was said before by *Horace*. The *Spectator* informs us, that *Homer* is censured by the Criticks, for his Defect as to the Sentiments in several Parts of the *Ilias* and *Odyssees*. However, it is most certain, that the Translation of *Homer* must have pleased Ladies and Gentlemen by these very Sentiments, or by the Translator's beautiful Diction and Versification. But then all the great Parts of Epick Poetry are lost to them, especially those that depend on the Dignity and Strength of Expression, which will not be pretended to be entirely preserved in the *English* Version.

Reading *Dacier* a few Days since, I was extremely surprised at a Criticism of his on a Translation of *Homer*, by a much greater Critick than himself, even *Horace* his Master, who has thus translated the Beginning of the *Odyssey*:

Dic mihi, Musa, virum, captæ post tempora Trojæ,
Qui mores Hominum Multorum vidit & Urbes.

*Muse, sing the Man, who after Troy was taken
The Manners of many Men and Cities saw.*

I have aimed to be literal here, the better to explain *Dacier's* Remarks. *There are considerable Faults in this Translation*, says *Monsieur Dacier*, *he has forgotten the Epithet πολυτροπον, which marks Ulysses's Character; he neglects the Circumstance that makes us most concern'd for him, ὅς μαλα πλάγχθη, who wandered a long Time, he says in a loose Way, after the Taking of Troy; whereas, it is in Homer after having ruined Troy.* Now, if *Horace*, who had studied and admired *Homer* so much, as to make him a Pattern for all future Writers of *Heroick* Poems, could mistake three Times in translating two Lines, what a Discouragement must it have been to those who knew how he had succeeded in attempting it? 'Tis true, no Poet will ever undertake a Translation with more Advantage than the last Translator of *Homer* had; for besides Eight or Ten Versions in *Latin, Italian, French, &c.* there are Three or Four in *English*; a Prose Translation by *Madam Dacier*, and a Cart-load of Comments in all Languages. I am satisfy'd so good a Versifyer as the Translator of the *Ilias* might with those Helps, have made a very good Translation, without understanding any more *Greek* than my self; and nothing in the World could have been more easy, than out of one Commentator to have corrected another, and to have alter'd and amended the Reading in the Name of any of the Criticks, from *Eustathius* down to *Dacier*. I do not boast of being Master of *Greek* enough to read *Homer* with so much Pleasure in the Original as I could do in a good Version, and it is much to be question'd, whether every one that can read him in the Original do understand what they read: Several Ladies and Gentlemen have subscribed for *Chaucer* of the *Christ-Church* Edition, but I doubt very much whether they understand him or not, and whether a great many, who can read *Greek*, do really know what they read. One of the greatest Masters of the *Greek Tongue*, in our Time, has often question'd whether there were Twenty Men in *England* who understood the Strength, Beauty, and Elegance of that Language, tho' there are a Thousand that pretend to it. He represented it as a Study for a Man's Life, and I am confirm'd in this Judgement by what *Menage* tells us of himself, and others upon this Subject. 'Tis well known *Menage* wrote several Things in *Greek*, particularly some Odes in Imitation of *Anacreon*, which are not thought inferiour to the *Teian* Poet's; *J'ay toujours fait beaucoup de cas de ceux qui savent le grec, &c.* He always highly valued those that understood *Greek*. He does not mean to construe and parse it as Boys do at School, which is the most of what we find in those who pretend to be Masters of it. *Without this Language*, continues he, *a Man can't be said to be more than half Learned: Monsieur Cotelier, Monsieur de Treville, and Monsieur Bigot, are the only Men in France, who can read the Greek Fathers in the Original.* I suppose the Fathers are not so difficult as *Homer* with respect to the Tongue at least; for the Language of Poetry is peculiar to it, a made Language compounded and metaphorical. If it be so, the Translation of the *Ilias*, from the *Greek* of *Homer*, must shew the Translator to be a greater Master of the *Greek* Language than all the Learned Men in *France* except Three, and all the Learned Men in *England* except about Twenty. For my own Part, I confess, I make bold with all Kinds of Versions to help me out in Originals, and am not ashamed to do as *Menage* did; *I own I do not understand Pindar enough*, says he, *to take Pleasure in him.* I have heard *Pindar* quoted a Hundred Times by

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Persons who were very far from being so modest as *Menage*, and fully satisfy'd themselves that they understood him as well as the *Græcians*, to whom he read his *Odes*, tho' I suspected the contrary. *Menage*, again; *I never read a Greek Author without having before read the Translation.*

I do not insinuate any thing to depreciate the Translator of *Homer's* excellent Performance, which, as I have observ'd, has the Merit of the most pure and harmonious Diction and Versification; but to hint a little of the Confusion of our Taste, and the Irregularity of our Judgement, which like Things for Beauties which they have not, and not for those which they have. Thus the Version of *Homer* is lik'd as a Translation of the best *Epick* Poem that ever was written, and not for the Softness and Sweetness of the *Elegy*, which are every where to be met with, as where the God *Apollo* appears in the Shape of *Agenor*:

*Flies from the furious Chief in this Disguise,
The furious Chief still follows as he flies.*

This is what the *French* call *Jeu des Mots*, playing upon Words, and what *Dryden's Virgil* is full of, tho' he knew as well as any Body that it was a Fault: *The Turn of Thoughts, and Words*, says he, *is the chief Talent of the French; but the Epick Poem is too stately to receive such little Ornaments*, which would have been in Perfection in a Version of *Ovid*, and very little agrees with *Waller* in his Epistle to my Lord *Roscommon*;

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*Well sounding Verses are the Charm we use,
Heroick Thoughts, and Virtue to infuse:
Things of deep Sense, we may in Prose unfold,
But they move more, in lofty Numbers told:
By the loud Trumpet, which our Courage aids,
We learn that Sound, as well as Sense, perswades.*

In these Things our Taste is strangely confin'd: provided the Verses run smoothly, and the Language is soft and harmonious, we think it is fine: Let the Subject be a *Boreas*, or a *Zephyr*: Nay, I do not question but the Couplet I quoted out of the *English Homer* is reckon'd one of the finest of the Version by Ladies, and Gentleman who judge like Ladies, and who are the Nine in Ten of all Readers of Poetry. I confess, I am much more pleas'd with the following Verses, as rough and rumbling as they are, because they participate of the Roughness of the Thing which is imag'd to us,

*Jumping high o'er the Shrubs of the rough Ground,
Rattle the clattering Cars, and the shockt Axles bound.*

When such assimilating the Sound to the Sense is not affected 'tis very agreeable; but when there is any Force or Affectation in it, 'tis puerile and distasteful.

The following Description of the Poetical Fire, which several Poets were enflam'd with, seems to be somewhat deficient, and to want farther Explanation; especially where the Translator tells us, *MILTON'S Fire is like a Furnace, but Shakespear's like a Fire from Heaven: VIRGIL'S like a Kenning-Glass, and Lucan's and Statius's like Lightning.* The *Kenning-Glass* should have given me no Manner of Disturbance: But why is *Milton's Celestial Fire* compar'd to that which destroy'd the *Three Children*; the Fire of a Furnace is boisterous and voracious, consuming whatever is within its Reach. *Milton's Fire*, like that of the Sun, warms and enlivens; and if ever any was fetch'd from Heaven, 'twas that, which shines with so much radiant Brightness throughout his whole Poem. I was the more shockt with this Misrepresentation of *Milton's Fire*, for that there's something burlesque in the very Expression, a *Furnace*, and one can't help being jealous that this Passage of *Hudibras* might give the Hint for it.

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*Talgol, who had long possess't
Enflam'd Rage in glowing Breast,
Which now began to rage, and burn as
Implacably as Flame in Furnace.*

Tho' I am very far from taking *Dryden* to be a perfect Master of Criticism, yet I do not think his Deficiency proceeded from Want of Judgement so much as from Inconsistency and Vanity, and an Opinion that he was Tyrant of *Parnassus*, and might govern by Will and Pleasure instead of Law and Reason. I have observed elsewhere that he adapts his Prefaces to the Circumstances of every Play and Poem, and very often contradicts in one what he had said in another: Nay, in his Essay on *Dramatick Poetry*, the Contradiction is within a few Lines of the Assertion, as thus; *There is no Theater in the World has any Thing so absurd as the English Tragi-Comedy*, which he confirms by this Verse;

Atq; ursem & Pugiles media inter Carmina poscunt.

And a little after; *I cannot but conclude, to the Honour of our Nation, that we have invented, encreased, and perfected, a more pleasant Way of Writing than was ever known to the Antients or Moderns of any Nation, which is Tragi-Comedy. One of the most monstrous Inventions*, says the *Spectator*, *that ever enter'd into the Poet's Thought. An Author might as well think of weaving the Adventures of Æneas and Hudibras into one Poem, as of writing such a motley Piece of Mirth and Sorrow.* Whatever others thought of Mr. *Dryden's* Criticisms, he did himself full

Justice, and seem'd to despise all other Criticks at the same Time that he laid himself most open to them. *These little Criticks do not well consider what the Work of the Poet is, and what the Graces of a Poem; the Story is the least Part of either.* Pref. to *Moch-Astrol.* Against him is every Critick, ancient and modern, from *Aristotle* to *Rimer*, and more than all of them against him is his own self. In another Place he writes thus; *The Fable is without doubt the chief Part of a Tragedy, because it contains the Action, and the Action contains the Happiness or Misery, which is the End of Tragedy. Without the Fable the Poet, who had otherwise good Manners, Sentiments, and Diction, would no more have made a regular Poem, than a Painter would have made a good Picture that had mingled Blue, Yellow, Red, and other Colours confusedly together.* I do not mention these Things to lessen Mr. *Dryden's* great Character as a Poet; but to shew how well Dr. *Felton* could judge of it, when he recommended him to us as a Critick. Against Mr. *Dryden*, as to the *Story, is Rapin*, who he assures us would *be alone sufficient, were all other Criticks lost, to teach a-new the Rules of Writing.* Against his *Rapin* we find the Translator of *Homer* in an extraordinary Manner in his Notes on the Fifth *Iliad*. I hope it did not arise from any Resentment for that Jesuit's reflecting on those Poets who seem to place the Essence of Poetry in fine Language, and smooth Verse, to which he ascribes its present Decay. *As if the Art consisted only in Purity and Exactness of Language: This indeed pleased well, and was much to the Advantage of Women that had a Mind to be tampering in Writing Verse: They found it their Concern to give Vogue to this Kind of Writing, of which they were as capable as the most Part of Men: For all the Secret was no more than to make some little easy Verses, in which they were content if they cou'd dress some soft passionate Thoughts, &c.* The most of our modern Poets being interested in this Affair, I shall say no more of it.

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I have hinted more than once, that such Poets, and their Admirers, almost always mistake Affectation for Beauty, and I wonder the Translator of *Homer* should give them the least Countenance by his Example; for I am very much deceiv'd if there is a more affected Period in the *English* Tongue than what follows: *Nothing is more lively and Picturesque than the Attitude of Patroclus is describ'd in; The Pathetick of his Speech is finely contrasted by the Fierce of Achilles.* Again, *There's something inexpressibly riant in the Compartments of Achilles's Shield.* In the *Spectator*, N^o 297. you read thus: *The last Fault which I shall take notice of in Stile, is the frequent Use of technical Words or Terms of Art.* The bringing in more *French* Words to soften and enervate our Stile is of very ill Consequence. The Translator, besides *Riant*, has also *Traits, ensanguin'd,* &c. I doubt, the Last is hardly a Word in any other Language, and does not at all enrich our own. *Dryden*, in an Epistle to the Earl of *Orrery*, has this Remark upon it: *I wish we might at length leave to borrow Words of another Nation, which is now a Wontonness in us, not a Necessity: But so long as some affect to speak, there will not be wanting others, who will have the Boldness to write them.*

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If I might make Use of the Word *Contrast*, nothing can be more so than Affectation and Simplicity; and the Translator seems, either not to have a just Notion of the Latter, or to have a very ill Opinion of it: For without distinguishing between Simplicity and Negligence, he affirms, *That Simplicity is a Word of Disguise for a shameful unpoetical Neglect of Expression*, he makes no Exception in this general Charge. And thus one of the greatest Beauties of both Thought and Expression is rendered one of the greatest Deformities. Father *Bouhours* asserts, that *Simplicity contributes the most of any Thing to make a Stile perfect;* and again, *The Holy Scripture, the Stile of which is, at the same Time, so simple and so sublime.*

Mr. *Addison* has treated of the noble Force of Simplicity as it relates to Thought; and in the following Verses, if I am not mistaken, the Simplicity of Expression as well as Thought is noble:

*So chear'd he his fair Spouse, and she was chear'd;
But silently a gentle Tear let fall
From either Eye, and wip'd them with her Hair.
Two other precious Drops, that ready stood
Each in their chrystal Sluice, he 'ere they fell
Kist, as the gracious Signs of sweet Remorse,
And pious Awe, that fear'd to have offended.*

It is certain, Simplicity, as well as other Virtues in Speech, has its Vice, and that is Meanness which falls naturally into Burlesque, as this Line:

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Then he will talk—good gods! How he will talk.

Which the *Spectator* speaks of as inexpressibly beautiful for its Simplicity, though I think one can hardly repeat it with a grave Tone; and when I have heard it pronounced on the Stage in a burlesque Way, as it is in *The Plot and No Plot*; it has never fail'd of a hearty Laugh and Clap. *Spectator*, N^o 39. *There is a Simplicity in the Words, which out-shines the utmost Pride of Expression;* and he attributes it to the Break, *good gods!* He also informs us, that the Thought is at once *natural, soft, passionate, and simple.* It would have been well for us, if the learned Critick had told us in what this Thought is *simple*, in what *passionate*, in what *soft*, and in what *natural*, there being so few Words to express it; and I cannot help thinking, that it is but one fond Rant of an amorous Woman. True it is, Simplicity is not of it self very wordy, but methinks the Break, *good gods!* has more of the *Passionate* in it, than of the *Simple* or the *Soft*; and may be as well used in Anger as in Love, as well in a Fright as in a Transport. It would have gone a good Way in explaining the different Kinds of Thought, if the judicious Author had distinguished them in this Line; for there are not so many Kinds in one Verse in all Father *Bouhours's* *Maniere de bien*

penser. I would not be mistaken here, nor be charged with Ostentation, in setting up my Judgement in Opposition to the *Spectator's*; from whose Writings and Lessons, I have learned more than from all other Authors. I only offer it as an Instance, that the Best of our Criticks do not seem to have gone to the Bottom of this Subject. It never enter'd into the Heads of Writers and Readers in General, that Thought was any Thing but Thought, or Stile any Thing but Stile, or that there were any other Terms or Distinctions for them, but the Good and the Bad, as is already hinted; nor were they at all sensible of my Lord *Roscommon's* Meaning in these Verses:

*Whose incoherent Stile, like sick Men's Dreams,
Varies all Shapes, and mixes all Extrems.*

The same may be said of Thought.

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I want very much to be informed, whether there is a perfect Agreement of Thought in these several Quotations out of *Homer*, or how they must be understood so as not to contradict one another. The first Couplet is against *Wine*:

*Inflaming Wine, pernicious to Mankind,
Unnerves the Limbs, and dulls the noble Mind.*

The next Couplet is for Wine:

*With Thracian Wines recruit thy honour'd Guests,
For happy Counsels flow from sober Feasts.*

What follows taken out of the *Notes* upon *Homer* is against Wine. *What Hector says against Wine in the two first Verses has a great Deal of Truth in it: It is a vulgar Mistake to imagine the Use of Wine, either raises the Spirits or encreases Strength.*

The next Words are for Wine:

*Then with a plenteous Draught refresh his Soul,
And draw new Spirits from the generous Bowl.*

Again for Wine:

*For Strength consists in Spirits and in Blood,
And those are ow'd to generous Wine and Food.*

And the Translator's Observation, that the moderate Use of Wine does not raise the Spirits, is not the truer, because it is said by *Hector*, the Son of *Priam*. Father *Sirmond*, a sober reverend as well as learned Priest says quite another Thing:

Si bene commemini causæ sint quinque bibendi,
Hospitis Adventus, præsens Sitis, atque futura,
Et Vini bonitas, & quælibet altera Causa.

If all be true, &c.

Whoever reads an Author with Exactness cannot fail of meeting with several Passages, where Self-love, Humour, Party, or Complexion, are uppermost. Thus a good Catholick will never have a good Word for a Heretick, nor a *Puritan* for a *Papist*. Dr. *Ch*— will never speak well of Punch, nor Dr. *Mand*— of Watergruel. He who writes well is jealous of him who judges well, and he who judges well envies him who writes well. The *Swifts* turn every Thing into Grimace, the *Whistons* into Mathematicks, and whatever touches an Author's own Taste, he is always recommending to his Reader.

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We all remember how the Duke of *Malborough* was treated by the blessed Peace-makers for beating their Friends the *French*. *Delight in War* was a Mark set upon him in a most solemn Manner, and a memorable Instance of our Wisdom and Gratitude. There is a Paraphrase upon it in the Version of *Homer*; and when the Application is made will turn the *Epick* into Satyr.

*Curs'd is the Man, and void of Law and Right,
Unworthy Property, unworthy Light;
Unfit for publick Rule or private Care,
That Wretch, that Monster who delights in War;
Whose Lust is Murder, and whose horrid Joy
To tear his Country, &c.*

To *tear* a Country is very much in Heroicks. The Image of *Discord* has good Lines in it; but methinks they would not have been the Worse, if they had been heated a little in *Milton's* Furnace:

*Discord, dire Sister of the slaughtering Pow'r,
Small at her Birth, but rising ev'ry Hour;
While scarce the Skies her horrid Head can bound,
She stalks on Earth, and shapes the World around:
The Nations bleed, where e'er her Steps she turns,*

I refer to the Judgement of the Reader, whether the following Image of Discord taken from a modern burlesque Poem, has not more of the Epick in it:

Non tulit invisæ speciem Discordia Pacis,
Ilicet horrentes ad fibila concitat hydros,
Ulcisci jubet Ira nefas. Spumantia felle
Ora tument, micat ex oculis ardentibus Ignis.

*Discord enrag'd at the Approach of Peace
Made her Snakes hiss, and urg'd to dire Revenge.
Her foaming Mouth of horrid Poison full,
From her red Eyes she darted Flakes of Fire.*

The new invented Words made use of by the Translator of *Homer* are well enough chosen, and well warranted by the Practice of the greatest Poets, such as *Moveless, Instarr'd, Inurn'd, Conglobe, Deathful, Fountful, Lengthful*.

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*But if you write of Things abstruse and new,
Words of your own inventing may be us'd.*

Roscom.

I have mention'd some of the Helps which were prepared for the Translator of the *Ilias*. But Dr. *Felton* informs us, Dr. *Busby* would not allow of Notes; a very curious Remark That. It is not impossible, but Dr. *Busby* himself might have read and taught *Homer* 50 Years as a *Grammarian*, without understanding him as a Poet. A Portion of that Genius which inspir'd the Author is requisite for the Reader to see all the Beauties that are in a Poem. I believe the Lord *Roscommon's* Judgement will be preferred to that of both those Doctors:

*Search every Comment that your Care can find,
Some here, some there, may hit the Poet's Mind.*

If the Translator of *Homer* search'd every Comment, his Labour was more than *Herculean*. I own my self extremely edify'd by what he says of Antiquaries; applying a Saying of my Lord *Bacon's* to them: *In General they write for Ostentation not for Instruction, and their Works are perpetual Repetitions*. The Reason is plain, they have no Fund of their own, they must therefore borrow from those that have. It is necessary there should be such Men, but the Dryness and Barrenness of their Studies are inconsistent with a lively Fancy and a good Taste; and I know not which of the Antiquaries deserve most to be rever'd by us, those that would restore lost Words, Letters, and Points, or those that would recover lost Fable or History. To know exactly where *Brute* built his *Palace Royal*, where *Bladud* set up his *Laboratory* would be something; as also to prove, that *Cassibelan* liv'd where my Lord *Essex* now does at *Cashiobury*; or that *Constantine the Great* was a *Yorkshire* Man; which Things have been attempted, would be as much to the Glory of the Students in Antiquity, as to find out a lost *Comma*, or restore a Letter to a Word that was robb'd of it 1500 Years ago. But as for our Monkish Antiquaries, and the Monastick Learning, it seems to be reserv'd for the Improvement of those, whose Minds, like barren Soils, will never bear without dunging. They are always turning up the Ruins of old Convents, and hope like the Cock to find a Jewel in the Dunghill. They dig for holy Water-Pots and Crucifixes, as greedily as the modern *Romans* dig for Medals, Images, and Urns. To know whether such an Abbey was founded in the Papacy of Pope *Joan* or Pope *Boniface*, in what Dormitory such a Monk slept, and in what Penitentiary such a Nun was disciplined, must needs be very edifying. But most of all the Deciding of historical Debates by old Charters, which, with a little curious Examination, will be found to be forged ones. Many of this Kind are printed by *Dugdale*, as I shall have Occasion to remark elsewhere. If these Antiquaries could fix the same Authority on *Monkish* Writings, as we are told of *Homer's*, that the Claims of two Cities to certain Limits, were determined by what he said of them in his *Ilias*, it would be worth every one's while to read the Monks instead of the Classicks; And I doubt not Dr. *Felton* would have succeeded better if he had given us Instruction in the Monkish Learning, than he has done in the *Classical*. But since their Writings prove nothing but their Ignorance and Superstition, I believe Men of Taste and Genius will be so generous as to leave such hidden Treasures to enrich those, whose Invention and Judgement lie under the Calamity of the most extream Poverty. There is nothing but Labour and Patience requisite to acquire a Mastery in these Studies, whether the Matter collected be good or bad, 'tis the same Thing if it be Old, if it be *Teutonick* or *Runick*, *Danish* or *Saxon*, that's sufficient. A Man who has any Warmth in his Imagination, and any Delicacy in his Taste, cannot be always raking in the Rubbish of barbarous Ages, and groping in *Gothick* Darkness. A good Proof of the small Talent necessary for this Work is, that there hardly ever was an Author among these Monkish Antiquaries, but his Language was as barbarous as his Subject. Such Sort of Scholarship is, I own, very serviceable to those that know how to make a good Use of others Labours; but the Merit of the Scholar consists rather in the Goodness of his Eyes, and the Strength of his Head, than in the Fineness of his Genius, or the Regularity of his Judgement. I am apt to think the Translator of *Homer* had not the Admirers of these Antiquities in his Thoughts, but refer'd to the Criticks and Commentators on the *Greek* and *Roman* Authors: For he says, in another Place, *To talk of the Genius of an Ancient, as Macrobius did, is at once the cheapest Way of shewing our own Taste, and the shortest Way of criticising the Wit of others*. This must be only meant of those whom Mr. *Dryden* calls *Dutch* Commentators, of those that do by the Classicks, as Correctors of

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the Press do by their Copies, and instead of applying themselves to the Sense stick close to the Letters, and look out for *Dele's* and *Addenda's*. This they call correcting and restoring the Text; and it is much to be fear'd, that by this restoring and correcting of the Commentators, and the Mistakes, Blunders and Negligences of the Copiers, we have few or no Books of the Antients in their original Purity and Perfection. However, there is Perfection enough left in the Classical Writings to prove, That what the Translator of *Homer* says, does not relate to the Classics themselves, but to those that make an ill Use of them, and under their Name and Authority insult the Moderns. The Lord *Bacon* says somewhere, that what we call the Antiquity was the Youth of the World, and that we are properly the Antients as the Inhabitants of an older World, and having made infinite Improvements in all the most useful Parts of Learning.

I dare not say, there is a Quibble in the Expression of so illustrious a Writer, but I must always take the Authors that wrote 1500 or 2000 Years ago to be the Antients; and one may very well Question, whether there was not as much useful Learning lost in twelve or thirteen Centuries of Barbarism and Ignorance, as has been discover'd, or rather recovered in two or three of the last Ages.

The Antiquaries the Translator speaks of would do Wonders, if they would make it out that the Letter sent to the King of *Edessa*, and the Passage in *Josephus's* Book XVIII, relating to our Saviour, are genuine, with several other Particularities, which are much insisted upon by Ecclesiastical Writers. The *Spectator* has told us something too of Antiquity, which wants the Confirmation of the Antiquaries, and that is a Quotation out of a Manuscript in the *Vatican Library*, where *Longinus* is made to say, *Paul of Tarsus, the Patron of an Opinion not fully proved, must be reckon'd among the best Græcian Orators*. This must be a downright Forgery: *Longinus* surely knew the *Greek* Tongue too well, to cry up the Eloquence of a Writer in it, who, as *St. Jerome* says, did not understand *Grammar*, and mentions the Places where he err'd, *Propter Imperitiam Artis Grammaticæ*. See *Gregory* on the *Septuagint*. It were to be wished, that the Ecclesiastical Writers, even of the earliest Centuries, had suffer'd nothing to escape them that was improbable, if not incredible. 'Tis also much wanted to have further Proof of the Ceasing of Oracles at the Nativity of our Saviour, and that *Virgil* prophesy'd of it in his fourth Eclogue. We should be still more oblig'd to them, if they would prove, that the *Siby's* Verses are a Prophecy of the same Thing, which Things are generally asserted in the Writings of the Ecclesiasticks. As to Oracles *Lucian* tells us, Answers were given in his Time, that of the Emperor *Commodus* 160 Years after, *Juvenal* makes their Ceasing to be only 100 Years after:

————Delphis Oracula cessant.

Theodore writes, that *Julian* the Apostate received an Answer from *Apollo* at *Delphos*, 300 Years after the Birth of our Saviour. All which may be seen in Bishop *Potter's Greek Antiquities*, a most excellent Book; and if we had more such Antiquaries as that learned Prelate's and Mr. *Basil Kennet's* who wrote the *Antiquities of Rome*, we might at the same Time improve ourselves both in antient and polite Learning. These being, I think the two most valuable Pieces of the Kind in any Language. As the middle Way is safest in all Things, so as to the Antients to run them down as *Perrault* has done, or cry them up as *Boileau* is perhaps equally dangerous, and out of the Medium. Whatever Advantages we have had of the Antients, probably they had the same of those that preceded them. This we know, that the *Latins* borrow'd as much from the *Greeks* as we have borrow'd from them; and it would be no difficult Matter to prove, that in all the Branches of polite Literature, the Moderns, particularly the *English*, have excell'd the Antients in as many as the Antients excelled them.

The Passage of my Lord *Bacon's* before cited, gave Occasion to Monsieur *Perrault*, to bring in that noble Author for an Evidence on his Side against the Antients: But *Boileau* vindicates him in this Point; and Father *Bouhours*, as another Instance of his excellent Judgement, declares he prefers the Lord Chancellor *Bacon* before the most celebrated Names of Antiquity. *Rapin* calls him the greatest *Genius of England*, and he has not more Glory from his own Countrymen than from the learned Men in *France*.

I expect no Quarter from the Dealers in monastick Learning, in Heraldry, and Genealogy, who generally doat upon them even to Frenzy. *Du Val* in his Geography informs us, that there is a Nation in *America*, bordering on the River of the *Amazons*, where old Women go off better than young; under a Notion, that the Knowledge of the One is preferable to the Vigour and Beauty of the Other. Thus these Men please themselves more with the Dryness and Gravity of Antiquity, than with a beautiful Imagination, and the Charms of Eloquence. I believe their Opinion will not have many Followers, nor their Example be much imitated. However, when such an Antiquary as the great *Selden* appears in the World, the Instruction it will receive from him, more than makes amends for the Labour and Time which others lose in hunting after worthless Manuscripts, forg'd Charters, and monkish Fables. The learned and polite Dr. *Bathurst* of *Oxford*, wrote an admirable Poem on the Death of *Selden*:

*So fell the sacred Sibyl, when of Old
Inspir'd with mere than mortal Breast could hold:
The gazing Multitude stood doubtful by,
Whether to call it Death or Extasy:
She silent lies, and now the Nations find
No Oracles, but i' th' Leaves she left behind.*

Selden etant sans Contredit le plus docte des Anglois moderns. 'Tis said by a *Frenchman* and a

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Papist; but as much as *Selden* was an Oracle, and a Glory to our Country, Archbishop *Laud* his Brethren would have thrust his learned Head into a Pillory, if they could have come at him. I don't know whether it was for his History of *Tythes* or not; but that would have been hard after he had been so fully answer'd by Doctors of both Universities; who, however, were not, *Les plus Doctes des Anglois modernes*. Judicious Antiquaries ever were, and ever will be in Esteem. Those that meddle with Things solid and useful. None of the Pretenders to this Sort of Knowledge, are more despicable than such as deal in old Terms and Phrases, who generally affect a Contempt for those that are in present Use as weak and effeminate. The Emperor *Augustus* could not bear these Men, any more than *Punster's* whom he heartily despis'd. The Spectator, N^o 470. has with much Pleasantry animadverted on those Criticks in Readings, and has brought in the *Cotton Library, Aldus, Scaliger, Scioppius, Salmasius*, the elder *Stephens*, and a Heap of old Manuscripts, to clear up the Difficulties in certain Lyrick Verses, about a *Shape, an Eye, Wit, Charms, Corinna and Belvedera*.

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As scrupulous and as curious as these *Antiquaries* would be thought to be, one might fill Volumes with Examples of the most notorious Mistakes and Blunders in the Writings of the most learned among them; which are not taken notice of to lessen the Credit they have worthily acquir'd, but to shew the Infirmary of humane Nature, which will always be attended with Errours, and never arrive at Perfection as we have elsewhere observ'd after *Horace*:

———*Non ego Paucis, &c.*

But in such Authors, what is good more than atones for what is not so, and 'tis only where a Writer shews a Defect in Will as well as Judgement, that he renders himself blame-worthy, especially in History. Several of these Blunders are collected by *Marville* in his *Melange, &c.* 'Tis remark'd of *Pliny*, that in translating *Democritus*, he says, the Camelion is like a Crocodile, and altogether as big—The *Crocodalos* of *Democritus* is in the *Jonick* Dialect, a *Lizard*, which may be about some ten thousand Times less than a Crocodile, and yet a great many Times bigger than a *Camelion*. *Euty chius* speaking of *Eusebius* of *Cesarea*, surnamed *Pamphilus*, calls him *Eusebius*, Bishop of the City of *Phili*. *Quintus Curtius* mistakes *Arabia Fælix* for *Arabia Deserta*. He confounds the *Euxine* with the *Caspian* Sea, and makes the Rivers *Tygris* and *Euphrates* run through *Media*, which they never enter'd. Mr. *Simon*, in his critical History, takes *Suna* and *Fratela*, two Officers of the *Gothick* Army, for two *German* Ladies. The Life of *Charlemagne*, written by *Acciaïoli*, having been often joyn'd with *Plutarch's* Lives, was published by *Vicellius* as written by *Plutarch*, who liv'd 6 or 700 Years before *Charlemagne*. *Gerard Vossius* affirms, that the Society of the *Sorbonne* was instituted by *Robert*, Brother of *S. Lewis* King of *France*, instead of *Robert* surnamed *Sorbonne* from the Place of his Nativity. *Pallavicini* in his History of the Council of *Trent*, says *Lansac*, the *French* Ambassador, was Knight of the Order of the Holy Ghost, which was not instituted till twenty Years after; but what has particular Relation to us *Englishmen* is the Charge against *Dodwel*: *Dodowel dans ses Dissertations sur Saint Cyprien prend la Ville d'Olympe pour une Olympiade*, takes the City *Olympus* for an *Olympiade*, the Name of the Place where, for the Date of the Year when it was done, which is Matter of much Humiliation to all such as believe it impossible for so learned and orthodox a Man to commit so great an Oversight; and plainly proves to us, that those who write of what past 1000 or 2000 Years ago, are as likely to err, as those who write of what past three or fourscore Years ago. Whoever has a Curiosity to see more of the *Blunderings*, which the most learned are charg'd with, such as the *Port Royal, Baronius, Vasquez, Du Cange, Varillas, L'Abbé, &c.* may have full Satisfaction in *Marville's Melange, p. 208. & seq.* taken from a Book written by *Boileau's* Uncle, entituled, *Colloquium Criticum de Sphalmætis viromum in re literaria illustrium*. Of what Size would the Book be, if we should examine with the same Exactness, *Nalson, Heylin, Wharton, Collier, Dugdale, Brady*, the *Grand Rebellion*, the *Histories, &c.* And collect and publish the Errours, both of the Will and the Judgement. Nor are these Names by any Means more illustrious, than those we meet with in the *Colloquium*.

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The Translator of *Homer* has an Excuse for Mr. *Dryden*, which is much more generous than just: He says, *His Haste in Writing ought not to be imputed to him as a Fault, but to those who suffer'd so noble a Genius to lie under the Necessity of it*. Mr. *Dryden's* Genius did not appear in any Thing more than his *Versification*; and whether the Criticks will have it ennobled for that *Versification* only, is a Question. The Translator seems to make a good *Genius* and a good Ear to be the same Thing. *Dryden* himself was more sensible of the Difference between them, and when it was in Debate at *Will's* Coffee-house, what Character he would have with Posterity; he said, with a sullen Modesty, *I believe they will allow me to be a good Versifier*. If we will believe Mr. *Dryden*, he did not lie under the Necessity of Haste: In several of his Dedications and Prefaces, he has declared, He never wanted. When he renounced his Allegiance to King *William*, and disqualified himself for keeping the Laureat's Place with that of Historiographer, he had a Pension from the then Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of *Dorset*, which was an Instance of Generosity that is rarely to be met with in the History of *Lewis XIV*, who paid more to Poets and Historians than all the Princes of *Europe*. His Bounty has been extoll'd, even by those whom his Bigotry had banish'd, yet he seldom let it extend to any of the Reformed Religion, let their Merit be ever so great. Mademoiselle *le Fevre*, afterwards Madam *Dacier*, dedicated a Book to that Prince, and the Duke *de Montausier* introduc'd her at Court; but the King would not accept of the Book, nor admit that his Name should be put before the Epistle.

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The Duke, whose Character had some Bluntness in it, said, *Sir, Is this the Way to encourage Learning: The Lady deserves well of your Majesty and the Publick, and if you will not reward her your self, suffer me to give her 100 Pistoles, I matter not whether I am paid again:* or Words to

that Effect. This Learned Lady was far from being an Enemy to the Government as *Dryden* was, and he did not stick to shew it upon all Occasions, even when he was pension'd by my Lord Chamberlain. The Truth is, he was like fond Fathers who can see no Faults in their Children; and as to his hasty Writing, 'tis pretty well known that as easy as his Verses appear to be, he came hard by them: He thought it a good Day's Work if he could finish 40 Verses a Day; and some learned *Antiquaries*, I suppose from a *MSS.* of *Virgil's* Amanuensis, assure us, that *Maro* wrote as many, and drawing them off the *Lee* afterwards, in his Poetical Limbeck, reduced them to Ten. *Godeau*, Bishop of *Vence*, us'd to write 2 or 300 Verses a-day. I my self paid a Visit once to a Verse-maker in an Afternoon, and saw 200 political Verses on his Table, which he told me he had written since Dinner: By this Dispatch he soon furnish'd out a *Folio*. *Dryden* was so far from spying Blemishes in his Works, that he often took them for Beauties, and particularly what the *Italians* call *Concetti*. This noted Rant in the *Conq. Gran*.

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I, alone am King of Me.

is happily imitated by him in his *State of Innocence*:

I my self am proud of Me.

But to criticise on *Dryden's* Prefaces and Plays is a much greater Labour than to copy them all over, and equally ungenerous and impertinent: If any one will compare his *Fall of Man* with *Milton's* Paradise lost, he will quickly perceive to which of them it is that the *noble Genius* is to be apply'd; and if it belongs to *Milton*, some other Epithet should be thought of for *Dryden*.

I have already observ'd, that I did not intend to form a regular Discourse, and I think I have kept pretty well to my Intention: If the Reader misses any Thing of Instruction by it, he will find it made up in Entertainment. The Variety will excuse the Want of Method in a Subject not so capable of it as where the Matter is certain and well known. I wish I were able to give Examples of all Father *Bouhour's* several Kinds of Thoughts out of *English* Authors, but Examples are much nicer Work than Precepts. Every one may agree that a Thing ought to be so done, but saw that it is so done. Men's Idea's of the same Things, vary in the Reflection as much as their Views do in Prospect, according to the Light they appear in. Dr. *Felton* makes a Trifle of it in one Part of his Preface, and an insuperable Difficulty in another. *I might, at once, with the Trouble only of Transcribing, have adorn'd the Work, and diverted the Reader.* Contrary to this, he says, *If any Body is pleas'd to try, he will hardly find it practicable to illustrate these Rules by Examples.* The Quotations, which he had before term'd transcribing only, are not so easy as he imagin'd to be done with Beauty and Judgement, was he sure of writing out nothing but what was as much to the Purpose as if it had been made for it, otherwise he might have transcrib'd puffy Thoughts for sublime, trifling Thoughts for pretty, affected Thoughts for agreeable; in short, false Thoughts for fine ones, and I am afraid that would have been his Misfortune, had he attempted it. In his Preface he blames *Tully* for quoting himself, and *Aristotle* for being dry; but as he has not gone much beyond the Latter in his Criticisms, nor the Former in his Eloquence, so I believe their Reputation will not be much the worse for him, and it had been better if the Doctor had follow'd the Direction of *Quintillian*, Modesto tamen & Circumspecto judicio, &c. *People should speak with a great deal of Modesty and Circumspection of such great Men, for it may happen, as it very often does, that they condemn what they do not understand.*

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I am apprehensive enough that this Undertaking will be censur'd as an Effect of Vanity and Arrogance, and I am well enough acquainted with the Spirit of the People I have to deal with,

Genus irritabile Vatum.

But I please my self with the Reflection, that I have not mingled the least Spice of Malice in the Composition, as it relates to Criticism, and am so far from being vain and arrogant, that I frequently and sincerely declare, my chief Design was to excite some more capable Writer to do what I knew my self incapable of; and if any such Person shall, by exposing my Errours, give the World a true Light, I will not only gratefully follow it, but rejoyce at it, and take hold or the Opportunity to have my Share of the Instruction, if it comes from clean Hands, and is not defil'd with ill Manners and ill Language: Such tutoring I shall despise, and it being very common for Authors to have as good an Opinion of themselves as of any Body else, I shall not think any Name of Authority enough to justify either Insolence or Scurrility. About 40 Years ago there was a Student at *Oxford*, who acquir'd a good Hand at a Fiddle; but, falling afterwards into Melancholy, he grew averse to Musick, and could not be prevail'd upon by his Friends to touch it: They had but one Way to excite him to it, and that was for some unskilful Hand to take his Violin and scrape upon it; he would then immediately snatch it away from him, and, in a Kind of Resentment, give it the utmost Elegance of Sound and Harmony. I freely own I had this Man's Example in my Head when I began this Essay, and should the Success be the same, the End of it is answer'd.

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I cannot close this Essay without taking Notice of the Perverseness of Men, who pretend to Wit and Judgement, towards one another: It appears mostly in Pretenders, and is very well markt by *Boileau*, in these two Verses translated by Mr. *Dennis*, and equal to the Original:

*Thus one Fool lolls his Tongue out at another,
And shakes his empty Noddle at his Brother.*

It was not so when Judgement and Wit were something more than Pretence only, when they were

in the Height of Excellence, under the Patronage of *Augustus*. My Lord *Roscommon*, in his Preface to *Horace's Art of Poetry* writes thus: *I am below the Envy of the Criticks, but if I durst, I would beg them to remember, that Horace ow'd his Favour and his Fortune to the Character given of him by Virgil and Varius; that Fundanius and Pollio are still valued by what Horace say of them, and that in that Golden Age there was a good Understanding among the Ingenious; and those who were the most esteem'd were the best natur'd.* Dryden has made the same Observation: *Certainly, the Poets of Ovid's Age enjoy'd much Happiness in the Conversation and Friendship of one another. The antient Criticks, says the Spectator, are full of the Praises of their Contemporaries. They discover Beauties which escap'd the Observation of the Vulgar, and very often find out Reasons for palliating and excusing such Slips and Oversights, as were committed in the Writings of eminent Authors.* Mr. *Addison* has imitated them in his Remarks upon *Milton's Paradise Lost*; but it must be allowed that the Task was made very easy, and the Beauties shine so brightly, that there's no taking one's Eye off of them. It has also been wish'd, that the two or three Slips in Expression which he quotes out of *Milton* had been excused, as they might have been by observing, that if there's a Pun in the *Paradise Lost*, 'tis the Devil that makes it.

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One of the surest Signs, that the Wits of the past and present Age, *English* and *French*, are not of the Size of those of the Age of *Augustus*, is their Jealousies and Broils. The *Spectator* has this Remark, N^o 409; *I cannot think, that Corneille, Racine, Moliere, Boileau, La Fontaine, Bruyere, Bossu, or the Dacier's, would have written so well as they did, had they not been Friends and Contemporaries.* 'Tis said very much in Favour of good Nature, and therefore is very agreeable: But I Question, whether Emulation, and sometimes even Resentment, may not produce very good Effects in the Works of the Ingenious. *Facit Indignatio versus. Godeau, Vaugelas, Malherbe*, were Men of great Merit; and so were also, *Maynard, La Mothe Le Vayer, and Costar*; yet they wrote against one another with some Acrimony.

'Tis Envy and Spleen, that produce a Set of Writers in *England*, call'd *Answerers*, whose Modesty may be conceived by some of their Titles, *The best Answer that ever was*. Part 1st. *The best Answer that ever was*. Part the 2d. *A better Answer than the best Answer*. The *Unanswerable Answer*, by *Lesley* and others. You can't publish a *Pamphlet* or *Essay*, but it is immediately snapt at to be answer'd: Nay, Dr. *Halley's* Calculation of the Eclipse in a Half-sheet had two or three *political* Answers.

The Itch of Answering is so great, that some Authors have taken it in Dudgeon, not to have been thought worthy of an Answer; and to prevent such Disgrace a second Time, have written on Purpose that they might answer themselves. I have heard, that the learned and ingenious *Robinson Crusoe* is in the Number of these.

How can it be expected, that Men of Passions, worldly Minds, and Lay-men should escape this Infection, when the Fathers themselves in the first Ages of the *Church*, could not help writing against one another, with as much Sharpness as any modern Writers. St. *Jerom*, in Particular, is charg'd with this Weakness, in his Writings against *Lactantius*, St. *Ambrose*, St. *Hilary*, *Didymus*. 'Tis said, that *he spar'd neither Antients nor Moderns*; no not the inspir'd Elders that translated the Septuagint: Himself having translated the Bible into *Latin*, and he seem'd to be as fond of his Works as are other Translators.

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Our Neighbours, the *French*, have not been altogether free from this Humour of *Answering*, or rather writing against one another; as will appear by the following List of a dozen Authors of a Side; most of them of the *French* Academy; and I might name as many more of equal Rank:

<p><i>Balzac,</i> <i>Godeau,</i> <i>Vaugelas,</i> <i>Chapelain,</i> <i>Ablancourt,</i> <i>Menage,</i> <i>Costar,</i> <i>Malherbe,</i> <i>Voiture,</i> <i>Bossu,</i> <i>Corneille,</i> <i>Richelet,</i></p>	<p>} Written against by</p>	<p><i>Pere Goulu, Theophile.</i> <i>Maynard, Vavas seur.</i> <i>La Mothe Le Vayer.</i> <i>Boileau, Ligniere.</i> <i>Marole.</i> <i>Pere Bouhours.</i> <i>Girac.</i> <i>Costar.</i> <i>Richelet.</i> <i>Perrault.</i> <i>Dacier.</i> <i>Furetiere.</i></p>
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As the most delicate Praise is that which has the *Face* of Satyr, so the most delicate Satyr is that which has the Face of Praise. Of the latter Kind are the Verses to the honourable *Edward Howard* on his *incomparable* and *incomprehensible* Play. Those Verses were written by the Duke of *Buckingham*, the Lord *Dorset*, Mr. *Waller*, and others. Of the former Kind are several of *Voiture's* Letters to the Prince of *Conde*, and *Boileau's* to the Duke *de Vivonne* in Imitation of them. Indeed we must allow, that the *French* do understand the *Belle Raillerie* better than we do, at least for the Generality, there being some Authors in *English*, that have succeeded in fine Raillery as well as the *French*. Thus did Archbishop *Tillotson* treat *Sergeant* the *Popish* Priest: Thus Bishop *Sprat* handled *Sorbiere*; and Dr. *Burnet* of the Charter-house treated one *Warren* who had attack'd his *Theory*. If our Answerers could write as they did, they would both divert and instruct us. But we

have already explained what they mean by Raillery. They know not how to parry like good Fencers, and therefore knock down like Cudgel Players.

The last Word puts me in Mind of a lower Order of Criticks, which are rarely heard of within the Sound of *Bow-Bell*; and these are your *Etymologists* and your *Orthographists*, who turn to *Rider* or *Holy Oak* for the Derivation of Words, and have the learned *Garretson* and other Helps for Spelling: But I know not whether this Essay may travel far enough into the Country to be of any Use; and besides, I have not conversed enough with those Criticks that deal in Words and Letters only, to be Master of the Subject, which is generally learn'd by such as make a Penny of it in Conversation by laying Wagers, the Power and Test of all rural Argument.

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I must own the *Etymologists* are by much the greater Men of the Two than the *Orthographists*. I do affirm this, not only because it is necessary to know the Roots of Languages, but because it is a greater Mark of Scholarship, and has the Sanction of the most learned Universities. The profoundest of our own Antiquaries have, in Favour of the University of *Oxford*, found out an Etymology, that may match with the famous One of *Diaper Napkin*: From whence comes King *Pepin*. Bishop *Stillingfleet* informs us, that the Champions for the Antiquity of *Oxford* say, that the old Name is *British*, and it is read somewhere *Iren* which should be read *Icen*, and that again *Ychen*, and that *Rydychen*, and *Rydychen* in the *British* Tongue is *Vadum Boum* in *Latin*, and that in *English*, *Oxenford*, *Oxford*, and *Oxon*. Such wonderful Discoveries are made by the venerable Antiquaries. *Iren* runs the Gauntlet through three Languages *Irish*, *Welsh*, and *Latin*, before it drops into *English*, but considering there is more *Greek* in the *Welsh* Tongue than there is *Latin*, it may make Work for great Scholars, to shew their Scholarship in settling the Matter as it should be with a Salvo for the Rights of the University of *Cambridge*.

The Learned in *France* have an Etymology almost as good as that of *Oxford* from *Iren*, which is the Word *Cemetiere* a Church-yard; They derive it from the *Latin* Word *cum* with, and *mittere* to put, as much as to say the dead Bodies are put together in one burying Place. Thus the Boxes at the *Opera* are a *Cemetiere* or Church-yard, because the Ladies and Gentlemen are put with one another there, and thus by Virtue of the same Etymology, the Place where People are born and where they are bury'd are all one, from *Cum* with, and *Mittere* to put, as I have heard, that the same Word serves for Life and Death in one of the oriental Languages.

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As to *Orthography*, the only Passage I have read in a polite Author concerning it is that of *Boileau*, who taxes *Perrault* with false Spelling, by putting an *s* in one Word, and leaving out an *s* in another. By putting an *s* into the Word *Contemples*, it lost the Imperative Mood which is *Contemple*; and by leaving out an *s* in the Word *Casuiste*, written *Casuite*, it became no Word at all. When Moods and Tenses, Numbers and Cases, Substantives and Adjectives, suffer by *Orthography*, the curious Country-man has reason to cry out, otherwise the Printer may be answerable for the Spelling.

After all that has been said of the *Sublime*, &c. perhaps the Criticks do make more of Things than is necessary, or in Nature: Tho' Poets pretend to Inspiration, and cry out, *The god, the god*, they are, in the Main, but meer Men, and have their Tricks and Quirks to keep up the Reputation of that Art: Nay, like other Professions, they would have us believe, that there's Mystery in it too; not, I suppose, as Divines understand it, but in the vulgar Sense, as it is understood when we say, the Trade or Mystery of a *Cordwainer*. Some of these Poetical Mysteries are as follow.

We are told that this Verse of *Homer's* Third *Iliad* was said, by *Alexander the Great*, to be the best in all the Poem:

Great in the Wars, and great in Arts of Sway.

Methinks our *Gazette* Men, and *Courant* Men, express themselves every whit as well, when in Honour of a defunct General, whose Activity had long furnish'd them with Matter for their News-Books, they tell us, He was great alike in the Camp, and in the Cabinet, which easily runs into as good a Verse as the other.

Great in the Camp, and in the Cabinet.

The next best Verses that ever were, are *Boileaus*; and they were said to be the best in all his Works, by *La Fontaine*: The Subject is the *French* King's setting up Lace-making at *Roan*.

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Et nos voisins frustrez de ces tributs serviles,
Que paiat a leur Art, le Luxe de nos Villes.

*No more by foreign Tributes are we griev'd,
Which, from our Luxury, alien Arts receiv'd.*

Why these are better Verses than all other best Verses, is the Mystery we are speaking of, and like that of the Free-Masons, it cannot be unfolded but by a Brother; nay, one may suspect of this Mystery what is justly suspected of that; they do not tell it us, for fear we shou'd laugh at it.

Of this Kind, doubtless, is the famous Couplet, taken out of Sir *John Denham's* *Coopers-Hill*, which *Dryden* says, are the two best Verses in the *English* Tongue:

*Tho' Deep, yet clear; tho' Gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without Rage, without o'erflowing full.*

He said he would not reveal the Secret why they were the best Verses, but left it as a Riddle to Posterity. I dare say, there are a Thousand as good Verses in Mr. *Pope's Homer*; if by good Verses he means smooth ones, and one would think Three such Monysyllables as *Yet, Not, Dull*, all together, was enough to set aside the Claim of that Line.

Having said so much already of my honest Intention In this *Essay*, I must, at last, refer it to the Judgement of the Reader, and whatever it is, shall receive it with Pleasure, when it is given with Candour.

If he approves of what I have said, I cannot but be pleased with having given some few Hints to another.

If he does not approve of it, 'twill please me still more to receive new Light my self.

Since this *Essay* was finish'd, I have seen a Book written by a *French* Gentleman, which has been receiv'd with much Civility; and as that Gentleman is commanded to make Remarks on our Manners in *England*, he will not do us Justice unless he puts the Reception his Book has met with, among the Instances of our Humanity to Strangers.

I must own I have not learnt a good deal by it, and the Reading of it has not excited any Impatience in me to read any new *Heroick* Poem. I have long despair'd to see another good *Dramatick*, and much more an *Epick* Poem in *English*, and cannot hope now to see one in *French*, which never yet was seen: However, I wish so well to all such generous Enterprizes, that I think it barbarous to give them the least Discouragement.

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My Objections to this Gentleman's Criticisms are for what he says too ill of *Milton's* Poem, and too good of *Clarendon's* History, which he highly commends for the fine Characters, tho' he seems not to understand them, or not to have inform'd himself sufficiently of the Facts on which they are founded. He assures us the Lord *Clarendon* has *unravell'd all the Springs of the Civil Wars*. I pass by the Expression to *unravel a Spring*, for that probably it sounds better in the *French* Idiom than in the *English*: But the Sense of it is not true in Fact. *He has drawn, at full Length, the pictures of those whose Ambition shook the Foundation of his Country*. He has drawn them at full Length indeed, but as *Milton* drew his shadowy Beings, *Death, Sin, Chaos*, by the Extent of his Imagination, and with little Regard to Historical Likeness, or copying after Nature; his Pictures on the King's Side being to a Man, all so many Heroes; on that of the Parliament so many *Scoundrels*; which was impossible to be true: For, besides that it was not in the Course, so it was not in the Nature of the Thing, that so many heroical Persons should take Party for Oppression and Superstition, and so many Blockheads and Poltrons espouse the Cause of Religion and Liberty.

But I do not wonder that this Critick is so extreamly civil to the Author of the *History of the Rebellion*. He censures *Milton* for drawing the Pictures of *Death* and the *Devil* with so much Deformity. *Satan, Sin, and Death*, must needs *shock the Readers of a delicate Taste*. As if it was possible for the Imagination to paint any Thing so ugly as the Devil is in every One's Conception, and that the more shocking such Painting is, it was not the more natural, as being the more conformable to the Idea which every one has conceiv'd of the Original. 'Tis true, the *Devil* and *Death* are not Subjects to touch the *Delicacy* of Readers, but are extreamly proper to move Horror and Detestation, which are there the Moral of that Divine Poem. If the Scene of *Paradise* was opening, the Reader might have expected something to have touch'd his *Delicacy*; but when he came, as in *Milton*, to the Gates of Hell *wide open*, he certainly should have left his *Delicacy* behind him. *Hans Holben's* *Death's Dance* is a merry Piece, but was no more proper to admit of *Delicacy* than the Droll Pieces of *Heemskirk*; and it would not be more extravagant to put Perfumes among the Ingredients of a *Stink-Pot*, than to put *Delicacy* in a Picture of the Devil. One of the most masterly Pieces of the greatest Matter of the *Lombard* School, a Carcass on a Butcher's Stall with the Gutts and Garbage about it, was much admir'd by the *Italians*, whose *Delicacy* is exemplary to other Nations; whence one may conclude, that whatever Subject has Truth and Likeness in it according to Nature, or our Conception of it, will always please, as an exact: and lively Imitation. I shall take no more Notice of the Criticisms on *Milton* in this Place, nor perhaps in any other; but I can never read the Remarks of the Criticks on the *Paradise Lost*, without calling to Mind the Boast of King *Alphonso*, who criticising on the Form of the *Creation*, said, *If he had been consulted in it, it should have been more perfect*.

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FINIS.



Transcriber's Notes

The following printer's errors have been corrected:

- Page ii. "What" changed to "Want" (not for Want of Will)
"Maniere" changed to "Manière" (La Manière De Bien Penser)
- Page 2. "they they" changed to "they" ("for that they are put into Rhime")
- Page 3. "Aristtotle" changed to "Aristotle" (given by *Aristotle, Horace, &c.*)
- Page 7. "Spectator" emphasized (The *Spectator*, with all his Modesty)
"parricularly" changed to "particularly" (and particularly how beautiful his Imagination was)
"Spectator" emphasized (read in the *Spectator*, N^o 291)
- Page 8. "*Catherines*" changed to "*Catherine's*" (her Husband at *St. Catherine's*)
- Page 12. "Aristtotle" changed to "Aristotle" (We all know *Aristotle*)
"Aristtottle" changed to "Aristotle" (what will become of *Aristotle*)
- Page 16. "Spectator" emphasized (The *Spectator* gives us another Mark)
"Spectator" emphasized (deprived the *Spectator* himself)
- Page 22. "Spectator" emphasized (the *Spectator* has entered a Caveat)
"geat" changed to "great" (The great Creator from his Work returned)
- Page 23. "Spectator" emphasized (the Ode in the *Spectator*, N^o 465)
"Phæbus" changed to "Phœbus" (*Phœbus* is arriv'd)
- Page 28. "Spectator" emphasized (especially those Verses in the *Spectator*)
- Page 31. "Jove" emphasized (Thou once didst leave Almighty *Jove*,)
"Spectator" emphasized (In the *Spectator*, N^o 388)
- Page 32. "Agreeble" changed to "Agreeable" (Agreeable Thoughts may be also reckon'd)
- Page 33. "Spectator" emphasized (before the *Spectator* was thought of)
- Page 34. "Spectator" emphasized (because they are in the *Spectator*)
"N^o Sidley" changed to "N^o [400.] Sidley" (missing number supplied)
- Page 39. "llght" changed to "light" (They light the Nuptial Torch)
- Page 40. "mady" changed to "many" (the *gay*, and many more)
- Page 41. "Cilenos" changed to "Cileno's" (There where *Cileno's* foul and loathsome Rout;)
- Page 42. "*Which*" changed to "Which" (Which / *Medusa* with *Gorgonian* Terror)
- Page 44. "*the Spectator*" changed to "the *Spectator*" (*Nay some*, says the *Spectator*)
"Stile" changed to "Stile." (the Puerile Stile.)
"inftead" changed to "instead" (instead of dismaying the Combatants)
- Page 48. "mishapen" changed to "misshapen" (Purpose, *misshapen, ill-favoured*)
"Interpretions" changed to "Interpretations" (two or three Interpretations only)
- Page 53. "*Piso's*" changed to "*Piso's*" (the *Piso's* was written by Direction of the Academy)
"aod" changed to "and" (with like Profit and Pleasure)
"*Ablancourt's Thucydides*" changed to "*Ablancourt's Thucydides*"
- Page 54. "*Du Ryer's Livy*" changed to "*Du Ryer's Livy*"
"*Segrais Virgil*" changed to "*Seagrais's Virgil*"
- Page 56. "*Pindars*" changed to "*Pindar's*" (as good as *Pindar's* or *Horace's*)
- Page 58. "Philosoper" changed to "Philosopher" (The Philosopher *Seneca's* Works he pretended)

Page 59. "Philip's" changed to "Philips's" (Mr. *Philips's* Poems, the *splendid Shilling* and *Cyder*)

"Ariconian" emphasized (Of *Ariconian* Products)

"Philps" changed to "Philips" (stile of *Milton* as *Philips* has done)

Page 60. "ourtaking" changed to "our taking" (to what most of our taking Authors have been)

Page 66. "Spectator" emphasized (the *Spectator* has disgraced the Use)

Page 68. "Translator" changed to "Translation" and "Translation" changed to "Translator" (undertake a Translation with more Advantage than the last Translator)

"no" changed to "to" (down to *Dacier*)

Page 69. "tonjours" changed to "tousjours" (J'ay tousjours fait beaucoup de cas)

Page 73. "Spectator" emphasized (In the *Spectator*, N^o 297. you read thus)

Page 74. "goods" changed to "gods" (the Break, *good gods!* has more)

"Spectator" emphasized (Which the *Spectator* speaks of as inexpressibly beautiful)

"Spectator" emphasized (Laugh and Clap. *Spectator*, N^o 39)

"*Bouhours*" changed to "*Bouhour's*" (in one Verse in all Father *Bouhour's*)

Page 75. "quælibet" changed to "quælibet" (Et Vini bonitas, & quælibet altera Causa.)

Page 76. "*Whiston's*" changed to "*Whistons*" (the *Whistons* into Mathematicks)

Page 83. "suth" changed to "such" (such as the *Port Royal*)

"Histories" emphasized (the *Grand Rebellion*, the *Histories*, &c.)

Page 87. "hy" changed to "by" (very well markt by *Boileau*)

"Spectator" changed to "*Spectator*" (*The antient Criticks*, says the *Spectator*)

The following errors were not corrected, as they likely reflect Oldmixon's own ignorance of Greek:

Page 22. "Γενέσθω" should be "Γενηθήτω"

Page 68. "ὄς μαλα πλάγχθη" should be "ὄς μάλα πολλά πλάγχθη"

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