

Bell's
BRITISH THEATRE;
TRAGEDIES.



Mortimer del.

Hall Sculp^t

(L O N D O N)

Printed for John Bell near Exeter Exchange in the Strand, and C. Etherington at York. Nov. 6th 1776.

B E L L's

BRITISH THEATRE.

VOLUME THE FIFTH.

B E L L's

BRITISH THEATRE,

Consisting of the most esteemed

ENGLISH PLAYS.

VOLUME THE FIFTH.

Being the Third VOLUME of TRAGEDIES.

CONTAINING

- ALL for LOVE, by Mr. DRYDEN.
- The ORPHAN, by Mr. T. OTWAY.
- TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA, by Mr. THOMSON.
- GEORGE BARNWELL, by Mr. LILLO.
- ISABELLA, altered from SOUTHERNE.

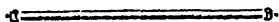
L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN BELL, near *Exeter Exchange*, in the
Strand, and C. ETHERINGTON, at *York*.

*J. Roberts del.**Published for Balls British Theatre Aug: 22th 1776.**Thornthwaite Sculp^t*

*M^{rs} HARTLEY, in the Character of CLEOPATRA.
I'll die, I will not bear it.*

BELL'S EDITION.



ALL FOR LOVE;

OR, THE
WORLD WELL LOST.

A TRAGEDY,

As written by Mr. DRYDEN.

DISTINGUISHING ALSO THE

VARIATIONS OF THE THEATRE,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

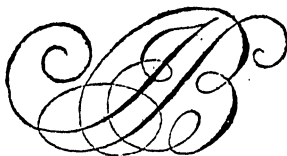
Theatre-Royal in Dury-Lane.

Regulated from the Prompt-Book,

By PERMISSION of the MANAGERS,

By Mr. HOPKINS, Prompter.

*Facile est verbum aliquod ardens (ut ita dicam) notare: idque restinctis
animorum incendiis irridere.* CICERO.



L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN BELL, near Exeter-Exchange, in the Strand,
and C. ETHERINGTON, at York.

MDCCLXXVI.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THOMAS Earl of DANBY,

Viscount LATIMER, and Baron OSBORNE of KIVETON
in YORKSHIRE;Lord High Treasurer of England, one of his Majesty's most honourable Privy-Council, and Knight of the most noble order
of the Garter, &c.

My LORD,

THE gratitude of poets is so troublesome a virtue to great men, that you are often in danger of your own benefits: for you are threatened with some epistle, and not suffered to do good in quiet, or to compound for their silence whom you have obliged. Yet, I confess, I neither am, nor ought to be surprized at this indulgence; for your Lordship has the same right to favour poetry, which the great and noble have ever had.

Carmen amat, quisquis carmine digna gerit.

There is somewhat of a tie in nature betwixt those who are born for worthy actions, and those who can transmit them to posterity: And though ours be much the inferior part, it comes at least within the verge of alliance; nor are we unprofitable members of the common-wealth, when we animate others to those virtues which we copy and describe from you.

'Tis indeed their interest, who endeavour the subversion of governments, to discourage poets and historians; for the best which can happen to them is to be forgotten: But such, who, under kings, are the fathers of their country, and by a just and prudent ordering of affairs preserve it, have the same reason to cherish the chroniclers of their actions, as they have to lay up in safety the deeds and evidences of their estates: for such records are their undoubted titles to the love and reverence of after ages. Your Lordship's administration has already taken up a considerable part of the English annals; and many of its most happy years are owing to it. His Majesty, the most knowing judge of men, and the best master, has acknowledged the ease and benefit he receives in the incomes of his treasury, which you found not only disordered but exhausted. All things were in the confusion of a chaos, without form or method, if not reduced beyond it, even to annihilation: so that you had not only to separate the jarring elements, but (if that boldness of expression might be allowed me) to create them. Your enemies had so embroiled the management of your office, that they looked on your advancement as the instrument of your ruin. And as if the clogging of the revenue, and the confusion of accounts, which you found in your entrance, were not sufficient, they added their own weight of malice to the public calamity, by testifying the credit which should cure it: your friends, on the other side, were only capable of pitying, but not of aiding you: no counsel or counsel was remaining to you, but what was founded on your distress: and that, indeed, was your security: for your diligence, your constancy, and your prudence, wrought more surely within, when they were not disturbed by any outward motion. The highest virtue is best to be trusted with itself, for assistance only can be given by a genius superior to that which it assists. And 'tis the noblest

kind of debt when we are only obliged to God and nature. This then, my Lord, is your just commendation, that you have wrought out yourself a way to glory, by those very means that were designed for your destruction : you have not only restored but advanced the revenues of your master, without grievance to the subject : and as if that were little yet, the debts of the Exchequer, which lay heaviest both on the Crown and on private persons, have, by your conduct, been established in a certainty of satisfaction. An action so much the more great and honourable, because the case was without the ordinary relief of laws ; above the hopes of the afflicted, and beyond the narrowness of the treasury to redress, had it been managed by a less able hand. 'Tis certainly the happiest, and most unenvied part of all your fortune, to do good to many, while you do injury to none : to receive at once the prayers of the subject, and the praises of the prince : and by the care of your conduct, to give him means of exerting the chiefest, (if any be the chiefest) of his royal virtues : His distributive justice to the deserving, and his bounty and compassion to the wanting. The disposition of princes towards their people, cannot better be discovered than in the choice of their ministers ; who, like the animal spirits betwixt the soul and body, participate somewhat of both natures, and make the communication which is betwixt them. A king, who is just and moderate in his nature, who rules according to the laws, whom God made happy by forming the temper of his soul to the constitution of his government, and who makes us happy, by assuming over us no other sovereignty than that wherein our welfare and liberty consists : A prince, I say, of so excellent a character, and so suitable to the wishes of all good men, could not better have conveyed himself into his people's apprehensions, than in your Lordship's person ; who so lively expresses the same virtues, that you seem not so much a copy, as an emanation of him. Moderation is doubtless an establishment of greatness ; but there is a steadiness of temper, which is likewise requisite in a minister of state : So equal a mixture of both virtues, that he may stand like an isthmus betwixt the two encroaching seas of arbitrary power and lawless anarchy. The undertaking would be difficult to any but an extraordinary genius, to stand at the line, and to divide the limits ; to pay what is due to the great representative of the nation, and neither to inhance, nor to yield up, the undoubted prerogatives of the crown. These, my Lord, are the proper virtues of a noble Englishman, as indeed they are properly English virtues : no people in the world being capable of using them, but we who have the happiness to be born under so equal, and so well-poised a government : a government which has all the advantages of liberty beyond a common-wealth, and all the marks of kingly sovereignty, without the danger of a tyranny. Both my nature, as I am an Englishman, and my reason, as I am a man, have bred in me a loathing to that specious name of a republic ; that mock appearance of a liberty, where all who have not part in the government, are slaves ; and slaves they are of a viler note than such as are subjects to an absolute dominion. For no christian monarchy is so absolute, but 'tis circumscribed with laws : but when the executive power is in the law-makers, there is no farther check upon them ; and the people must suffer without a remedy, because they are oppressed by their representatives. If I must serve, the

number of my masters, who were born my equals, would but add to the ignominy of my bondage. The nature of our government, above all other, is exactly suited both to the situation of our country, and the temper of the natives : an island being more proper for commerce and for defence, than for extending its dominions on the continent : for what the valour of its inhabitants might gain, by reason of its remoteness, and the casualties of the seas, it could not so easily preserve : And therefore, neither the arbitrary power of one in a monarchy, nor of many in a common-wealth, could make us greater than we are. 'Tis true, that vaster and more frequent taxes might be gathered, when the consent of the people was not asked or needed ; but this were only by conquering abroad to be poor at home : and the examples of our neighbours teach us, that they are not always the happiest subjects whose kings extend their dominions farthest. Since therefore we cannot win by an offensive war, at least a land-war, the model of our government seems naturally contrived for the defensive part : and the consent of a people is easily obtained to contribute to that power which must protect it. *Felices nimium bona si sua norint, Angliæ !* And yet there are not wanting male-contents among us, who surfeiting themselves on too much happiness, would persuade the people that they might be happier by a change. 'Twas indeed the policy of their old fore-father, when himself was fallen from the station of glory, to seduce mankind into the same rebellion with him, by telling him, he might yet be freer than he was : that is, more free than his nature would allow, or (if I may so say) than God could make him. We have already all the liberty which free-born subjects can enjoy ; and all beyond it is but license. But if it be liberty of conscience which they pretend, the moderation of our church is such, that its practice extends not to the severity of persecution, and its discipline is withal so easy, that it allows more freedom to dissenters than any of the sects would allow to it. In the mean time, what right can be pretended by these men to attempt innovations in church or state ? Who made them the trustees, or (to speak a little nearer their own language) the keepers of the liberty of England ? If their call be extraordinary, let them convince us by working miracles ; for ordinary vocation they can have none to disturb the government under which they were born, and which protects them. He who has often changed his party, and always has made his interest the rule of it, gives little evidence of his sincerity for the public good : 'tis manifest he changes but for himself, and takes the people for tools to work his fortune. Yet the experience of all ages might let him know, that they who trouble the waters first, have seldom the benefit of the fishing : as they who began the late rebellion, enjoyed not the fruit of their undertaking, but were crushed themselves by the usurpation of their own instrument : neither is it enough for them to answer, that they only intend a reformation of the government, but not the subversion of it : on such pretences all insurrections have been founded ; 'tis striking at the root of power, which is obedience. Every remonstrance of private men, has the seed of treason in it ; and discourses which are couched in ambiguous terms, are therefore the more dangerous, because they do all the mischief of open sedition, yet are safe from the punishment of the laws. These, my Lord, are con-

considerations which I should not pass so lightly over, had I room to manage them as they deserve: For no man can be so inconsiderable in a nation, as not to have a share in the welfare of it; and if he be a true Englishman, he must at the same time be fired with indignation, and revenge himself as he can on the disturbers of his country. And to whom could I more fitly apply myself, than to your Lordship, who have not only an inborn, but an hereditary loyalty? The memorable constancy and sufferings of your father, almost to the ruin of his estate for the royal cause, were an earnest of that, which such a parent and such an institution would produce in the person of a son. But so unhappy an occasion of manifesting your own zeal in suffering for his present majesty, the providence of God, and the prudence of your administration, will, I hope, prevent. That as your father's fortune waited on the unhappiness of his sovereign, so your own may participate of the better fate which attends his son. The relation which you have by alliance to the noble family of your lady, serves to confirm to you both this happy augury. For what can deserve a greater place in the English chronicle, than the loyalty and courage, the actions and death of the general of an army fighting for his prince and country? The honour and gallantry of the earl of Lindsey, is so illustrious a subject, that 'tis fit to adorn an heroic poem; for he was the proto-martyr of the cause, and the type of his unfortunate royal master.

Yet, after all, my Lord, if I may speak my thoughts, you are rather happy to us than to yourself: for the multiplicity, the cares, and the vexations of your employment, have betrayed you from yourself, and given you up into the possession of the public. You are robbed of your privacy and friends, and scarce any hour of your life you can call your own. Those who envy your fortune, if they were not good-nature, might more justly pity it; and when they see you watched by a crowd of suitors, whose importunity 'tis impossible to avoid, would conclude with reason, that you have lost much more in true content, than you have gained by dignity; and that a private gentleman is better attended by a single servant, than your Lordship with so clamorous a train. Pardon me, my Lord, if I speak like a philosopher on this subject; the fortune which makes a man uneasy, cannot make him happy: and a wise man must think himself uneasy, when few of his actions are in his choice.

This last consideration has brought me to another, and a very reasonable one for your relief; which is, that while I pity your want of leisure, I have impertinently detained you so long a time. I have put off my own business, which was my dedication, till 'tis so late, that I am now ashamed to begin it: and therefore I will say nothing of the poem, which I present to you, because I know not if you are like to have an hour, which, with a good conscience, you may throw away in perusing it: and for the author, I have only to beg the continuance of your protection to him, who is,

My Lord,

your Lordship's, must obliged,
most humble, and most
obedient servant,

JOHN DRYDEN.

P R E F A C E.

THE death of Antony and Cleopatra, is a subject which has been treated by the greatest wits of our nation, after Shakspeare: and by all so variously, that their example has given me the confidence to try myself in this bow of Ulysses amongst the crowd of suitors; and withal, to take my own measures, in aiming at the mark. I doubt not but the same motive has prevailed with all of us in this attempt; I mean the excellency of the moral: for the chief persons represented, were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate. All reasonable men have long since concluded, that the hero of the poem, ought not to be a character of perfect virtue; for, then, he could not, without injustice, be made unhappy; nor yet altogether wicked, because he could not then be pitied: I have therefore steered the middle course; and have drawn the character of Antony as favourably as Plutarch, Appian and Dion Cassius would give me leave: The like I have observed in Cleopatra. That which is wanting to work up the pity to a greater height, was not afforded me by the story: for the crimes of love which they both committed, were not occasioned by any necessity or fatal ignorance, but were wholly voluntary; since our passions are, or ought to be, within our power. The fabrick of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it; and the unities of time, place and action, more exactly observed, than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is the only of the kind without episode, or under-plot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it. The greatest error in the contrivance seems to be in the person of Octavia: for, though I might use the privilege of a poet, to introduce her into Alexandria, yet I had not enough considered, that the compassion she moved to herself and children, was destructive to that which I reserved for Antony and Cleopatra; whose mutual love being founded upon vice, must lessen the favour of the audience to them, when virtue and innocence were oppressed by it. And, though I justified Antony in some measure, by making Octavia's departure to proceed wholly from herself, yet the force of the first machine still remained; and the dividing of pity, like the cutting of a river into many channels, abated the strength of the natural stream. But this is an objection which none of my critics have urged against me; and therefore I might have let it pass, if I could have resolved to have
been

been partial to myself. The faults my enemies have found, are rather cavils concerning little and not essential decencies, which a master of the ceremonies may decide betwixt us. The French poets, I confess, are strict observers of these punctilio's: They would not, for example, have suffered Cleopatra and Octavia to have met, or if they had met, there must only have passed betwixt them some cold civilities, but no eagerness of repartee for fear of offending against the greatness of their characters, and the modesty of their sex. This objection I foresaw, and at the same time contemned; for I judged it both natural and probable, that Octavia, proud of her new-gained conquest, would search out Cleopatra to triumph over her; and that Cleopatra thus attacked, was not of a spirit to shun the encounter: and 'tis not unlikely, that two exasperated rivals should use such satire as I have put into their mouths; for after all, though the one were a Roman, and the other a queen, they were both women. 'Tis true, some actions, though natural, are not fit to be represented; and broad obscenities in words, ought in good manners to be avoided: expressions therefore are a modest cloathing of our thoughts, as breeches and petticoats are of our bodies. If I have kept myself within the bounds of modesty, all beyond it is but nicety and affectation; which is no more but modesty depraved into a vice: they betray themselves who are too quick of apprehension in such cases, and leave all reasonable men to imagine worse of them, than of the poet.

Honest Montaigne goes yet farther: *Nous ne sommes que ceremonie; la ceremonie nous emporte, & laissons la substance des choses. Nous nous tenons aux branches & abandonnons le trone & le corps. Nous avons appris aux dames de rougir, oyans seulement nommer ce qu'elles ne s'aigent aucunement à faire: nous n'osons appeller à droit nos membres, & ne craignons pas de les employer à toute sorte de debauché. La ceremonie nous défend d'exprimer par paroles les choses licites & naturelles, & nous l'en croyons; la raison nous défend de n'en faire point d'illicites & mauvaises, & personne ne l'en croit.* My comfort is, that by this opinion my enemies are but sucking criticks, who would fain be nibbling e'er their teeth are come.

Yet in this nicety of manners does the excellency of French poetry consist: their heroes are the most civil people breathing; but their good-breeding seldom extends to a word of sense: all their wit is in their ceremony; they want the genius which animates our stage; and therefore 'tis but necessary when they cannot please, that they should take care not to offend. But as the civillest man in the company is commonly the dullest, so these authors, while they are afraid to make you laugh or cry, out of pure good manners, make you sleep. They are so careful not to exasperate a critic, that they never leave him any work; so busy with the broom, and make so clean a riddance, that there is little left either for censure or for praise: for no part of a poem is worth our discommending, where the whole is insipid; as when we have once tasted of palled wine, we stay not to examine it glass by glass. But while they affect to shine in trifles, they are often careless in essentials. Thus their Hippolytus is so scrupulous in point of decency, that he

will rather expose himself to death, than accuse his step-mother to his father ; and my critics, I am sure, will commend him for it : but we of grosser apprehensions, are apt to think that this excess of generosity, is not practicable but with fools and mad-men. This was good-manners with a vengeance ; and the audience is like to be much concerned at the misfortunes of this admirable hero : but take Hippolytus out of his poetic fit, and I suppose he would think it a wiser part, to set the saddle on the right horse, and chuse rather to live with the reputation of a plain-spoken honest man, than to die with the infamy of an incestuous villain. In the mean time we may take notice, that where the poet ought to have preserved the character as it was delivered to us by antiquity, when he should have given us the picture of a rough young man, of the Amazonian strain, a jolly huntsman, and both by his profession, and his early rising, a mortal enemy to love, he has chosen to give him the turn of gallantry, sent him to travel from Athens to Paris, taught him to make love, and transformed the Hippolytus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolyte. I should not have troubled myself thus far with French poets, but that I find our Chedruex critics wholly form their judgments by them. But for my part, I desire to be tried by the laws of my own country ; for it seems unjust to me, that the French should prescribe here till they have conquered. Our little sonnet-tiers who follow them, have too narrow souls to judge of poetry. Poets themselves are the most proper, though I conclude not the only critics. But till some genius as universal as Aristotle, shall arise, who can penetrate into all arts and sciences, without the practice of them, I shall think it reasonable that the judgment of an artificer in his own art, should be preferable to the opinion of another man : at least where he is not bribed by interest, or prejudiced by malice ; and this, I suppose, is manifest by plain induction : for, first, the crowd cannot be presumed to have more than a gross instinct of what pleases or displeases them : every man will grant me this ; but then, by a particular kindness to himself, he draws his own stake first, and will be distinguished from the multitude, of which other men may think him one. But, if I come closer to those who are allowed for witty men, either by the advantage of their quality, or by common fame, and affirm, that neither are they qualified to decide sovereignly, concerning poetry, I shall yet have a strong party of my opinion ; for most of them severally will exclude the rest, either from the number of witty men, or at least of able judges. But here again they are all indulgent to themselves : and every one who believes himself a wit, that is, every man, will pretend at the same time to a right of judging. But to press it yet farther, there are many witty men, but few poets, neither have all poets a taste of tragedy. And this is the rock on which they are daily splitting. Poetry, which is a picture of nature, must generally please : but 'tis not to be understood, that all parts of it must please every man ; therefore is not tragedy to be judged by a witty man, whose taste is only confined to comedy. Nor is every man who loves tragedy a sufficient judge of it : he must understand the excellencies of it too, or he will only prove a blind admirer, not a critic. From hence it

comes,

comes, that so many satires on poets, and censures of their writings, fly abroad. Men of pleasant conversation, (at least esteemed so) and indued with a trifling kind of fancy, perhaps helped out with some smattering of Latin, are ambitious to distinguish themselves from the herd of gentlemen, by their poetry ;

*Rarus enim fermè sensus communis in illâ
Fortunâ.*

And is not this a wretched affectation, not to be contented with what fortune has done for them, and sit down quietly with their estates, but they must call their wits in question, and needlessly expose their nakedness to public view ? Not considering that they are not to expect the same approbation from sober men, which they have found from their flatterers after the third bottle ? If a little glittering in discourse has passed them on us for witty men, where was the necessity of undeceiving the world ? Would a man who has an ill title to an estate, but yet is in possession of it, would he bring it of his own accord to be tried at Westminster ? We who write, if we want the talent, yet have the excuse that we do it for a poor subsistence ; but what can be urged in their defence, who not having the vocation of poverty to scribble, out of mere wantonness, take pains to make themselves ridiculous ? Horace was certainly in the right, where he said, That no man is satisfied with his own condition. A poet is not pleased because he is not rich ; and the rich are discontented, because the poets will not admit them of their number. Thus the case is hard with writers : if they succeed not, they must starve ; and if they do, some malicious satire is prepared to level them for daring to please without their leave. But while they are so eager to destroy the fame of others, their ambition is manifest in their concernment : some poem of their own is to be produced, and the slaves are to be laid flat with their faces on the ground, that the monarch may appear in the greater majesty.

Dionysius and Nero had the same longings, but with all their power they could never bring their business well about. 'Tis true, they proclaimed themselves poets by sound of trumpet ; and poets they were, upon pain of death to any man who durst call them otherwise. The audience had a fine time on't, you may imagine ; they sat in a bodily fear, and looked as demurely as they could : for 'twas a hanging matter to laugh unseasonably ; and the tyrants were suspicious, as they had reason, that their subjects had them in the wind ; so every man in his own defence set as good a face upon the business as he could : 'twas known before-hand that the monarchs were to be crowned laureats ; but when the show was over, and an honest man was suffered to depart quietly, he took out his laughter which he had stifled, with a firm resolution never more to see an emperor's play, though he had been ten years a making it. In the mean time, the true poets were they who made the best markets, for they had wit enough to yield the prize with a good grace, and not contend with him who had thirty legions : they were sure to be rewarded if they confessed themselves bad writers, and that was somewhat better than to be martyrs for their reputation. Lucan's example was enough to teach them manners ; and after he was put

to death, for overcoming Nero, the emperor carried it, without dispute, for the best poet in his dominions: no man was ambitious of that grinning honour; for if he heard the malicious trumpeter proclaiming his name before his betters, he knew there was but one way with him. Mæcenas took another course, and we know he was more than a great man, for he was witty too: but finding himself far gone in poetry, which Seneca assures us was not his talent, he thought it his best way to be well with Virgil and with Horace; that at least he might be a poet at the second hand; and we see how happily it has succeeded with him; for his own bad poetry is forgotten, and their panegyrics of him still remain. But they who should be our patrons, are for no such expensive ways to fame: they have much of the poetry of Mæcenas, but little of his liberality. They are for procuring themselves reputation in the persons of their successors, (for such is every man, who has any part of their soul and fire, though in a less degree.) Some of their little Zanies yet go further; for they are persecutors even of Horace himself, as far as they are able, by their ignorant and vile imitations of him; by making an unjust use of his authority, and turning his artillery against his friends. But how would he disdain to be copied by such hands! I dare answer for him, he would be more uneasy in their company, than he was with Crispinus their forefather in the Holy Way; and would no more have allowed them a place among the critics, than he would Demetrius the mimick, and Tigellius the buffoon;

———*Demetri, teque Tigelli,
Discipulorum inter jubet plorare cathedras.*

With what scorn would he look down on such miserable translators, who make doggrel of his Latin, mistake his meaning, misapply his censures, and often contradict their own? He is fixed as a landmark to set out the bounds of poetry,

———*Saxum, antiquum ingens
Limes agri posuit sicut ut discerneret arvis :*

But other arms than theirs, and other sinews are required, to raise the weight of such an author; and when they would toss him against their enemies,

*Gemma lalant, gelidus concrevit frigore sanguis,
Tum lapis ipse, viri vacuum per inane volutus
Nec spatium evasit tutum, nec pertulit ictum.*

For my part, I would wish no other revenge, either for myself or the rest of the poets, from this rhiming judge of the twelve-penny gallery, this legitimate son of Sternhold, than that he would subscribe his name to his censure, or (not to tax him beyond his learning) set his mark: for should he own himself publicly, and come from behind the lion's skin, they whom he condemns would be thankful to him, they whom he praises would chuse to be condemned; and the magistrates whom he has elected, would modestly withdraw from their employment, to avoid the scandal of his nomination. The sharpness of his satire, next to himself, falls most heavily on his friends, and they ought never to forgive him for commending them perpetually the wrong way, and sometimes by contra-

ries.



ries. If he have a friend whose hastiness in writing is his greatest fault, Horace would have taught him to have minced the matter, and to have called it readiness of thought, and a flowing fancy; for friendship will allow a man to christen an imperfection by the name of some neighbour virtue :

Vellem in amicitia sic erraremus ; & isti

Errori, nomen virtus posuisset honestum.

But he would never have allowed him to have called a slow man hasty, or a hasty writer a slow drudge, as Juvenal explains it :

Canibus pigris scabieque venusta

Levibus, & siccae lumentibus ora lucernæ

Nomen erit, pardus, tygris, leo, si quid adhuc est

Quod fremit in terris violentius.

Yet Lucretius laughs at a foolish lover, even for excusing the imperfections of his mistress :

Nigra μέλιχος ἐστὶ, immunda & fætida αἴσχος

Balba liqui non quit, τραυλιζέι ; muta pudens ἐστ, &c.

But to drive it, *ad Æthiopem cygnum*, is not to be indured. I leave him to interpret this, by the benefit of his French version on the other side, and without farther considering him, than I have the rest of my illiterate censors, whom I have disdained to answer, because they are not qualified for judges. It remains that I acquaint the reader, that I have endeavoured in this play to follow the practice of the antients, who, as Mr. Rymer has judiciously observed, are and ought to be our masters. Horace likewise gives it for a rule in his art of poetry,

Vox exemplaria Græca

Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.

Yet, though their models are regular, they are too little for English tragedy ; which requires to be built in a larger compass. I could give an instance in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which was the master-piece of Sophocles ; but I reserve it for a more fit occasion, which I hope to have hereafter. In my style, I have professed, to imitate the divine Shakespeare ; which that I might perform more freely, I have disincumbered myself from rhyme. Not that I condemn my former way, but that this is more proper to my present purpose. I hope I need not to explain myself, that I have not copied my author servilely. Words and phrases must of necessity receive a change in succeeding ages : but 'tis almost a miracle that much of his language remains so pure ; and that he who began dramatic poetry amongst us, untaught by any, and as Ben. Johnson tells us, without learning, should, by the force of his own genius perform so much, that, in a manner, he has left no praise for any who come after him. The occasion is fair, and the subject would be pleasant to handle the difference of styles betwixt him and Fletcher, and wherein, and how far they are both to be imitated. But since I must not be over-confident of my own performance after him, it will be prudence in me to be silent. Yet I hope I may affirm, and without vanity, that by imitating him I have excelled myself throughout the play ; and particularly, that I prefer the scene betwixt Antony and Ventidius in the first act, to any thing which I have written in this kind.