

John Dryden, "To Henry Higden, Esq; On his Translation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal"

Description

JOHN DRYDEN

“To Henry Higden, Esq; On his Translation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal”

À

The Grecian wits, who satire first began,
 Were pleasant pasquins on the life of man;
 At mighty villains, who the state opprest,
 They durst not rail, perhaps; they lash^{ed}, at least,
 And turn^{ed} them out of office with a
 jest. 5
 No fool could peep abroad, but ready stand
 The drolls to clap a bauble in his hand.
 Wise legislators never yet could draw
 A *fop* within the of reach of *common law*;
 For posture, dress, grimace and affectation, 10
 Tho^{se} *foes to sense*, are harmless to the *nation*.
 Our last redress is dint of *verse* to try,
 And *satire* is our *Court of Chancery*.
 This way took Horace to reform an age,
 Not bad enough to need an author^s rage. 15
 But yours, who liv^{ed} in more degenerate times,
 Was forc^{ed} to fasten deep, and worry crimes.
 Yet you, my friend, have temper^{ed} him so well,
 You make him smile in spite of all his zeal:
 An art peculiar to yourself alone, 20
 To join the virtues of two styles in one.
 Oh! were your author^s principle receiv^{ed},
 Half of the lab^{ring} world would be reliev^{ed}:
 For not to wish is not to be deceiv^{ed}.
 Revenge wou^{ld} into *charity* be chang^{ed}, 25
 Because it costs too dear to be *reveng^{ed}*:
 It costs our *quiet* and *content of mind*,
 And when ^{tis} compass^{ed}, leaves a sting behind.
 Suppose I had the better end o^{ur} th^{is} staff,
 Why should I help th^{is} ill-natur^{ed} world to laugh? 30
^{Tis} all alike to them, who get the day;
 They love the spite and mischief of the *fray*.

No; I have curâ€™d myself of that *disease*;
Nor will I be provokâ€™d, but when I please:

But let me half that *cure* to you

restore; 35

You give the *salve*, I laid it to the *sore*.

Our kind relief against a rainy day,
Beyond a tavern, or a tedious play,
We take your book, and laugh our spleen away.

If all your *tribe*, too studious of *debate*, 40

Would cease false hopes and titles to create,
Led by the *rare example* you begun,
Clients would fail, and *Lawyers* be undone.

NOTES:

Title *Henry Higden* (fl. 1686-1693), poet, dramatist, translator; as a member of Middle Temple, he was also a barrister. Drydenâ€™s poem was one of three celebratory verses published in the front matter of Higdenâ€™s *A Modern Essay on the Tenth Satyr of Juvenal* (London, 1687); *Juvenal* (b. 55-60? CE, d. in or after 127 CE), the most powerful of all Roman satiric poets (Britannica).

1 Grecian wits The most well-known early Greek satirists included Aristophanes (446 BC-386 BC), and Lucian (c. 125-after 180).

2 pasquins Composers of lampoons, satirists (QED).

4 durst not That is, dared not (QED).

7 drolls A funny or waggish fellow; a merry-andrew, buffoon, jester, humorist (QED).

9 fop A foolish person, a fool (QED).

13 Court of Chancery "Court of equity to provide remedies not obtainable in the courts of common law" (Britannica).

14 Horace (65 BC-8BC), Latin lyric poet and satirist (Britannica).

16 yours Juvenalâ€™s [Publisherâ€™s note].

32 fray A disturbance, esp. one caused by fighting; a noisy quarrel, a brawl (QED).

SOURCE: *Original Poems, and Translations, in Two Volumes, vol. II* (Edinburgh, 1776), pp. 215-16 [Google Books]

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