John Dryden, â??To Henry Higden, Esq; On his Translation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenalâ?•

Description

JOHN DRYDEN

â??To Henry Higden, Esq; On his Translation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenalâ?•

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 lashâ??d, at least,
And turnâ??d them out of office with a jest.
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,
Thoâ?? *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 authorâ??s rage.
But yours, who livâ??d in more degenerate times,
Was forcâ??d to fasten deep, and worry crimes.
Yet you, my friend, have temperâ??d him so well,
You make him smile in spite of all his zeal:
An art peculiar to yourself alone,
To join the virtues of two styles in one.
Oh! were your authorâ??s principle receivâ??d,
Half of the labâ??ring world would be relievâ??d:
For not to wish is not to be deceivâ??d.
Revenge wouâ??d into *charity* be changâ??d,
Because it costs too dear to be *revengâ??d*:
It costs our *quiet* and *content of mind*,
And when â??tis compassâ??d, leaves a sting behind.
Suppose I had the better end oâ?? thâ?? staff,
Why should I help thâ?? ill-naturâ??d world to laugh?
â??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;
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*,
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 â??most powerful of all Roman satiric poetsâ?• (*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 â??lampoons,â?• satirists (*OED*).

4 *durst not* That is, â??daredâ?• not (*OED*).

7 *drolls* â??A funny or waggish fellow; a merry-andrew, buffoon, jester, humoristâ?• (*OED*).

9 *fop* â??A foolish person, a foolâ?• (*OED*).

13 *Court of Chancery* â??Court of equity to provide remedies not obtainable in the courts of common lawâ?• (*Britannica*).

14 *Horace* (65 BC-8BC), â??Latin lyric poet and satiristâ?• (*Britannica*).

16 *yours* â??Juvenalâ?• [Publisherâ??s note].

32 *fray â??*A disturbance, *esp.* one caused by fighting; a noisy quarrel, a brawlâ?• (*OED*).

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

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