

Dédicace de *The Indian Emperor*

Auteur : Dryden, John

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Les folios

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Auteur de la pièce Dryden, John

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To the most Excellent and most Illustrious
P R I N C E S S

A N N E,

Dutchess of *Monmouth* and *Bucclugh*, Wife to
the most Illustrious and High-born Prince
J A M E S Duke of *Monmouth*.

May it please your Grace,

THE Favour which Heroick Plays have lately found upon our Theatres, has been wholly derived to them from the Countenance and Approbation they have received at Court. The most Eminent Persons for Wit and Honour in the Royal Circle having so far owned them, that they have judged no way so fit as Verse to entertain a Noble Audience, or to express a noble Passion. And amongst the rest which have been written in this kind, they have been so indulgent to this Poem, as to allow it no inconsiderable Place. Since, therefore, to the Court I owe its Fortune on

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the Stage ; so, being now more publickly exposed in Print, I humbly recommend it to your Grace's Protection, who by all knowing Persons are esteem'd a principal Ornament of the Court. But though the Rank which you hold in the Royal Family, might direct the Eyes of a Poet to you, yet your Beauty and Goodness detain and fix them. High Objects, 'tis true, attract the Sight ; but it looks up with Pain on Craggy Rocks and Barren Mountains, and continues not intent on any Object, which is wanting in Shades and Greens to entertain it. Beauty, in Courts, is so necessary to the Young, that those who are without it, seem to be there to no other Purpose than to wait on the Triumphs of the Fair ; to attend their Motions in obscurity, as the Moon and Stars do the Sun by Day : Or, at best, to be the Refuge of those Hearts which others have despised ; and, by the Unworthiness of both, to give and take a miserable Comfort. But as needless as Beauty is, Virtue and Honour are yet more. The Reign of it without their Support is unsafe and short, like that of Tyrants. Every Sun which looks on Beauty, wastes it ; and, when once it is decaying, the Repairs of Art are of as short Continuance, as the after Spring, when the Sun is going further off. This, *Madam*, is its ordinary Fate ; but yours which is accompanied by Virtue, is not subject to that common Destiny. Your Grace has not only a long time of Youth in which to flourish, but you have likewise found the Way by an untainted Preservation of your Honour, to make that perishable Good more lasting. And if Beauty, like Wines, could be preserved by being mix'd, and embodied with others of their own Nature, then your Grace's would be immortal, since no Part of *Europe* can afford a Parallel to your Noble Lord, in masculine Beauty, and in Goodliness of Shape. To receive the
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the Blessings and Prayers of Mankind, you need only to be seen together: We are ready to conclude that you are a Pair of Angels sent below to make Virtue amiable in your Persons, or to sit to Poets when they would pleasantly instruct the Age, by drawing Goodness in the most perfect and alluring Shape of Nature. But though Beauty be the Theme, on which Poets love to dwell, I must be forced to quit it as a private Praise, since you have deserved those which are more publick. For Goodness and Humanity, which shine in you, are Virtues which concern Mankind: And by a certain Kind of Interest all People agree in their Commendation, because the Profit of them may extend to many. 'Tis so much your Inclination to do Good, that you stay not to be ask'd; which is an Approach so nigh the Deity, that human Nature is not capable of a nearer. 'Tis my Happiness that I can testify this Virtue of your Grace's by my own Experience; since I have so great an Aversion from soliciting Court-Favours, that I am ready to look on those as very bold, who dare grow rich there without Desert. But I beg your Grace's Pardon for assuming this Virtue of Modesty to myself, which the Sequel of this Discourse will no way justify. For in this Address I have already quitted the Character of a modest Man, by presenting you this Poem as an Acknowledgment, which stands in need of your Protection; and which ought no more to be esteem'd a Present, than it is accounted Bounty in the Poor, when they bestow a Child on some wealthy Friend, who will better breed it up. Off-springs of this Nature are like to be so numerous with me, that I must be forced to send some of them abroad; only this is like to be more fortunate than his Brothers, because I have landed him on an Hospitable Shore. Under your Patronage *Montezuma* hopes he is more safe than in

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his Native *Indies* : And therefore comes to throw himself at your Grace's Feet ; paying that Homage to your Beauty, which he refused to the Violence of his Conquerors. He begs only that when he shall relate his Sufferings, you will consider him as an *Indian Prince*, and not expect any other Eloquence from his Simplicity, than what his Grievs have furnish'd him withal. His Story is, perhaps, the greatest, which was ever represented in a Poem of this Nature ; (the Action of it including the Discovery and Conquest of a new World.) In it I have neither wholly follow'd the Truth of the History, nor altogether left it : But have taken all the Liberty of a Poet, to add, alter, or diminish, as I thought might best conduce to the Beautifying of my Work : It being not the Business of a Poet to represent Historical Truth, but Probability. But I am not to make the Justification of this Poem, which I wholly leave to your Grace's Mercy. 'Tis an irregular Piece, if compared with many of *Corneille's*, and, if I may make a Judgment of it, written with more Flame than Art ; in which it represents the Mind and Intentions of the Author, who is with much more Zeal and Integrity, than Design and Artifice,

M A D A M,

October 12,
1667.

Your Grace's most Obedient

and most Obliged Servant,

JOHN DRYDEN.