

Dédicace de Calisto

Auteur : Crowne, John

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Les folios

En passant la souris sur une vignette, le titre de l'image apparaît.

5 Fichier(s)

Informations éditoriales

Titre complet de la pièce*Calisto, or, The Chaste Nymph, the Late Masque at Court as it was frequently presented there, by several Persons of Great Quality, with the Prologue and the Songs betwixt the Acts*

Auteur de la pièceCrowne, John

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Contributeurs

- Borfotina, Adelina (Stagiaire)
- Lochert, Véronique (Responsable de projet)

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To Her Highness, the
Lady MARY,

Eldest Daughter of His Royal Highness

THE DUKE.

MADAM,

Being unexpectedly called out of my Obscurity, to the Glory of serving your Highness, (and indeed the whole Court) in an Entertainment so considerable as this, my fears and amaze were such as (I believe) Shepherds and Herdsmen had of old, when from their Flocks and Herds they were call'd to Prophesie to Kings. I knew not how to interpret the meaning of that Command, which laid on such feeble shoulders, a burden too heavy for the strongest to bear. Fain would I have shrunk back again into my former shades, and hid my self in my Native Obscurity; but fearing to dispute with Oracles, and resist Heavenly Powers, I adventur'd on dangerous Obedience, knowing that if I must perish, it was better to perish a Martyr, than a Criminal. But recollecting my self, I remembered that Divine Commands were Presages rather of Favour, than Ruine; That when Heaven prest any to his Wars, he gave 'em Courage, as well as Pay: This made me hope, that in the glorious Work to which I was called, I should be inspired.

A 23

And

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And this I thought it my duty to believe, when I remembered in whose Service I was employ'd, in the Service of a Princess; over whose great and victorious Father, a glorious Genius alwayes hover'd, assisting the meanest of his Followers, when engaged in Services of this, of what kind soever; and sure (I thought) he will not neglect me, now I serve so fair, so excellent, and so considerable a part of him; now I am under the shadow of his wings, I shall partake of his influence. This made me think it a sin to despair, and thrust me on with all the boldness and giddiness (but, to my sorrow, not with the exalted Raptures) of one inspired: For, after all, it was not with me according to my Faith. This Poem favours too little of Inspiration, and too much of my own weak and assisted self: Nay, as it was first written, it came even short of my self; and sure that must be a wretched thing which wants the perfection I can give it. And though no man is to blame for having no more Wit than he has, yet he is an ill-manner'd Churl, who will not spend his whole stock to entertain such a Guest. For my defects and inequalities, Nature alone must answer, (and I am heartily sorry for them) but I must, with all submission, charge your Highness with being the occasion of my latter Offence. If you will invite your Self to the greatest Table in England, and not give 'em time to prepare, you will not find an Entertainment fit for you. A Poem, is a thing, consists of many and different Images; and though a Man's Estate be but small, yet if it lies in many hands, it will require time to get it in. Nature her self proceeds always slowly, and gradually, to Perfection; nay, we find
Heaven

The Epistle Dedicatory

Heaven pondering and consulting, when he was to make
a Creature in which he meant to bestow Excellence. I
will not pretend, that I have Materials in me, to have
formed a Poem of such perfection, as so great an Occasion
required; but I am certain I could have written some-
thing more worthy of your Highness's Favor, and the
great Honor to which this was preferred, had I had time
enough allowed me to ripen my Conceptions. But (Madam)
if your Highness did expect, I should have audited
Thoughts as fast as your own, and made you speak as excel-
lently as you think, you then laid a task on me too great
for any thing but an Angel. For none can have Angeli-
cal Thoughts, but they who have Angelical Virtues; and
none do, or ever did, in so much Truth, come so near the
perfection of Angels as your Self, and your young Princely
Sister, in whom all those Excellencies shine, which the best
of us can but rudely paint. But, Madam, what need was
there of that perfection of Wit, the Charms of your Per-
son, Truth, and Mien, the Lustre of your high Quality,
and the extraordinary Grace that attended every thing
you said and did, spoke to the Eyes and Souls of all that
saw you, in a Language more Divine than Wit can in-
vent, in a Language wherein Nature entertain'd 'em
with her own Ingenuity, and by a thousand charming Ex-
pressions so took up all their attention, that the best of Wri-
ters could not have made you speak any thing, your An-
dience would have been at leisure to regard, or for which
they would have descended from one moment's pleasure of
admiring you. The foresight of this, made Fortune, who
always loves to favor the least deserving, throw the
honour

The Epistle Dedicatory.

honour of this service to me, I believe there was no need of Excellence in a Writer, when there was so much in you; and since the best of Writers would not have appeared considerable, indulged her humor in selecting the worst. A favor, which in many respects excels me above all my Contemporaries, and will make the World judge me, though not the best, the happiest Writer of the Age.

But, Madam, as it is the Fate of all things to be subject to inconsistency, and neither happiness nor misery last long, especially when in Extremes: This Poem, made like the first Man, by the Command, and for the Service of a Divinity, (almost out of nothing too) and placed at the instant of its formation, in a Paradise of Happiness and Honor, now driven from its blest Estate, and its ever flourishing Gardens, is going to wander round the World, in a condition of Poverty, Misery, and Exile; where, in stead of its past Felicities, the many Visions of Heaven, when the sovereign Glories of the Isle descended frequently to visit (and seem'd to recreate themselves in) its Bowers; in stead of the extreme Lustre it received from the most graceful action of your Highness, of the Princess Anne your Sister, and of the other young Ladies, which like so many beautiful Angels attended you, it is now condemned to Want and Nakedness, to starve under the cold wind of Censure, to all the sufferings that the Native of a rich and happy Soyle, must expect when banisht to cold and barbarous Regions. In this condition, forced by its misery, and bound by the duty of a Creature, it makes this humble Sacrifice of itself to
your

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your Highness, to beg such a share of your Protection and Favor, as may enable it to live in a condition, becoming a Creature which had once the Honor to be so near to you, and to receive such particular Graces from you. Your Highnesses Favor will yet make it spend its dayes in Honor, revive with pleasure the remembrance of the past Glories, and give an immortality, not only to this poor Poem, but to the (otherwise) most obscure name of,

MADAM,

Your Highnesses most humble

And most devoted Servant,

John Crowne