

Some Ingenious Thoughts

APULEIUS calls those neck-kerchiefs so glassy fine, (may I so express myself?) which in veiling, discover the beautiful bosom of a woman, *ventum textilem*; which may be translated *woven air*. It is an expression beautifully fanciful.

A Greek poet wrote this inscription for a statue of Niobe—

The Gods, from living, turned me to stone;
Praxiteles, from stone, restored me to life.

P. Commire, a pleasing writer of Latin verse, says of the flight of a butterfly,

Florem putares nare per liquidum æthera.

It FLIES, and swims a *flower* in liquid air!

Voiture, in addressing Cardinal Richelieu, says,—How much more affecting is it to hear one's praises from the mouth of the *people*, than from that of the *poets*.

Cervantes, with an elevation of sentiment, observes that one of the greatest advantages which princes possess above other men, is that of being attended by servants as great as themselves.

—————Lususque salesque,
Sid lectos pelago, quo Venus orta, sales.

This is written by a modern Latin poet; but the thought is also in Plutarch, in the comparison of Aristophanes and Menander; “In the comedies of Menander there is a natural and divine salt, as if it proceeded from that sea where Venus took her birth.” This beautiful thought, observes Monnoye, has been employed by seven or eight modern writers.

Seneca, amongst many strained sentiments, and trivial points, has frequently a happy thought. As this on *anger*: “I wish that the ferocity of this passion could be spent at its first appearance, so that it might injure but *once*: as in the case of the bees, whose sting is destroyed for ever at the first puncture it occasions.”

Aristænetus says of a beauty, that she seemed most beautiful when dressed; yet not less beautiful when undressed. Of two beauties he says, “they yielded to the Graces only in number.”

Menage has these two terse and pointed lines on the portrait of a lady—

“Ce portrait ressemble à la belle,
Il est insensible comme elle!”

In this portrait, my fair, thy resemblance I see;
An insensible charmer it is—Just like thee!

A French poet has admirably expressed the instantaneous sympathy of two lovers. A princess is relating to her *confidante* the birth of her passion:

“Et comme un jeune cœur est bientôt enflammé
Il me vit, et m’aima, je le vis, je l’aimai.”

Soon is the youthful heart by passion moved
He saw, and loved me—him I saw, and loved.

Calderon is more extravagant still; he says on a similar occasion—

“I saw and I loved her so nearly together, that I
do not know if I saw her before I loved her, or
loved her before I saw her.”

An old French poet, Pichou, in his imitation of Bonarelli’s *Filli de Sciro*, has this ingenious thought. A nymph is discovered by her lover, fainting under an umbrageous oak—the conflict of beauty and horror is described by a pretty conceit—

“Si l’amour se mouroit, on diroit, le voici!
Et si la mort aimoit, on la peindroit ainsi.”
If Love were dying, we should think him here!
If Death could love, he would be pictured thus!

The same lover consents at length that his mistress shall love his rival, and not inelegantly expresses his

feelings in the perplexed situation:

“Je veux bien que ton ame un double amour
s’assemble
Tu peux aimer sans crime Aminte et Nise ensemble.
Et lors que le trepas finira mes douleurs
Avoir pour l’un des feux, et pour l’autre des pleurs.”

Yes, with a double love thy soul may burn
Oh ’tis no crime to love Aminte and Nise!
And when in my last hour my grief shall close,
Give one your fires, and give the other tears!

It was said of Petronius, that he was *pura impuritas*; purely impure. *Pura*, because of his style; *impuritas*, because of his obscenities.

Quam multa! quam paucis! is a fine expression, which was employed to characterize a concise style pregnant with meaning.

How tenderly does Tasso, in one verse, describe his *Olindo*! So much love and so much modesty!

“Brama assai, poco spera, nulla chiede.”

An exquisite verse, which Hoole entirely passes over in his version, but which Fairfax’s finer feeling preserves:

“He, full of bashfulness and truth,
Loved much, hoped little, and desired nought.”

It was said of an exquisite portrait, that to judge by the eye it did not want speech; for this only could be detected by the ear.

Manca il parlar; di vivo altro non chiedi:
Ne manca questo ancor, s'agli occhi credi.

Perrault has very poetically informed us, that the ancients were ignorant of the circulation of the blood—

“————Ignoroit jusqu'aux routes certaines
Du meandre vivant qui coule dans les veines.”

Unknown to them what devious course maintains
The live meander flowing in their veins.

An Italian poet makes a lover, who has survived his mistress, thus sweetly express himself—

“Piango la sua morte, e il mia vita.”
Much I deplore her death, and much my life.

It has been usual for poets to say, that rivers flow to convey their tributary streams to the sea. This figure, being a mark of subjection, proved offensive to the patriotic Tasso; and he has ingeniously said of the river Po, because of its rapidity—

“Pare
Che porti guerra, e non tributo al mare.”
See rapid *Po* to Ocean's empire bring
A *war*, and not a *tribute*, from his spring!