LETTER XLII

To the Author of the Satyr call’d, The True-born English-man.

Your favour to our Sex in your Satyr, engages our Friendship; for you tax Us only with Noise and Pride; the first, the Mark of a Fool; and the last, the Sin of Lucifer: And had you convers’d with Ladies, doubtless you had spar’d us even there. Having therefore profess’d Friendship, I doubt not but you will allow us Freedom. You are certainly very modest in reciting but one Instance from Mr Cowley, where he detects the Crimes of the Age in general, and begins the Paragraph, “But in this thankless World”, whereas you might have found Thousands from Divines and Moralists, more to your purpose, without that unlucky word “World”, and so better have wrested their meaning, as fixing the Crimes to this Isle alone. You say you are no Dutch-man. No certainly; for (tho’ figuratively) you lash them most severely. For why do you detect incivility to strangers, but to put us in mind of Their Kindness to the English at Amboyna? Their Brutality to all Foreigners in their own Country? Their Insultings when here, whilst our Servants, and eat our Bread? How do you lash them, when you expose Drunkenness, one of the Heroines of their Nation, without which no Bargain is made, no Marriage consummated, in which all their honourable Duels are perform’d at Snick and Snee, and all their Courage in Battles inspir’d by Bacchus? Whilst, you say, the English eat lustily, which strengthens the Nerves, gives no False Fire, and shews them more the Sons of Mars. When you tax Us with not being grateful to my Lord P---d, what is it but notoriously to lash Them for Ingratitude? For ’tis well known my Lord was but a private Gentleman, by few known, during the Crisis of the Revolution. That which remark’d him, was the Negotiation with France, which equally with Us concern’d all the Confederates in general, but the Dutch in particular, who receiv’d the Honour of that Transaction from his being their Country-man: yet what Titles hath he had from this Government! What a vast Estate from the English Revenue, though a Stranger to us! What Ingratitude was it in the Dutch in not out-doing us! And how much more, in doing Nothing for him! As for the extravagant Conceptions you say we had then of him, it is all News to us; none ever thought but we had divers as full Statesmen, nor look’d on that Transaction but as an effect of his Majesty’s Wisdom; that my Lord was only the Trunk through which the King spake, for doubtless his Instructions were limited. You say, the Dutch were pay’d, curs’d, and sent back. What Nation does not discharge Foreigners their Territories when they have no farther use of them? And perhaps (they being most Artificers, who by means of their Pay underwork’d our Poor) the Sufferers might curse them. However, they were paid: but they left Us to pay a vast Army, sent to defend their Country. But ’twill be objected, it was for our own Security. And so was their assisting us; for had not we been disentangled to assist them (the alone End of their Aid), where had Holland been by this? For I will challenge the World to shew one instance of their generous Aid, where Self was not at bottom. But you farther sharply lash them, and say positively, page 9, That the Devil governs them by Avarice; a Vice which includes Ingratitude, and all baseness of Spirit. But for the Honour of the English, you make them still the Race of the Conquerours; allow them Fierce as the Britains, Brave as the Romans; more inclin’d to Save than to Conquer; Humblest when Rich, Gentlest in Command; Forgiving injuries, &c. And though you challenge us to prove Ten
Families from the Saxons, to make amends you can find but one ancient Family in Holland; nay, you say our very Clime gives new Blood and Manners to the worst that come here. Thus far no Dutch-man. But then again Dutch-man all over. You are angry the Dutch were sent back: but why? You answer in alluding to the Conquest of King William the First, in express words, viz. He did not send his Dutch-men back, but canton’d out the Country to his Men, and made Lords of a parcel of Rascals. Who can blame your Anger for your Disappointment, having the like pretensions to Peerage? Besides, had you been English, you had not certainly (how true soever) publish’d your own Parents to have descended of Rakes. Your discretion must be allow’d for going back but Two thousand Years to enquire of Britannia if she knew English men; for had you gone back t’other Two thousand years, there had been none but Noachians, and so you had brought all the World under the same Predicament with the English. But ’tis excessive absurd to make a Name a Subject for Satyr, being only a Mark of Distinction; no Man ever priding in a Name, but in the Acts annex’d to it. As ridiculous is that Position,

“A True-born English-man’s a Contradiction.”

What! Because he cannot prove Two thousand years descent? Whereas in all Nations, when a Man is Naturaliz’d, his Son is as true-born of that Country, as the most Ancient of it; as formerly a Citizen of Rome, now a Gentleman of Venice, &c. But whilst you exclaim against Us for a Mixture, you say the same of the Roman Empire, when the most Famous in the World, page 11, That Gauls, Greeks, Lombards, &c. were contain’d in the Name of Roman; nay, that the Scotch are mix’d with all the World. By consequence all the World then are mix’d as well as We. You say, page 24, “England borrows or makes all her Nobility :” and are not all the Nobility in the World made at home or abroad? As for their Descent, all know the King is the Fountain of Honour, and Vertue the Subject-matter: if thence one is created Noble, certainly his Progeny are as truly so, as (after all your pains to prove your own Forefathers Scoundrels) your self must be such. But, after so much labour to lessen the Honour of the English, by shewing their base Extract, in page 59 you allow our Ancestors to be Heroes. After that, that it signifies nothing to us what they were: so the scope of your Satyr hath been against just Nothing. The whole Poem indeed is fram’d of Contradictions. You say, page 31, we have every Grace but Charity, page 32, that we always take less freely than we give; which doublets shews the noblest inclination to Charity. So that now you have allow’d us every Grace, what is become of your Satyr in the mean time? You say, page 32, the English are ill-natur’d; That their Favour is never to be recovered by any Merit, if once lost. In the very next page, that “they are never angry long;” and in page 34, that “they forget and forgive Injuries.” In page 10 you make the Innocency of the Britains to be the occasion of their being conquer’d; in the very same page you make the Devil of Ingratitude to be the first occasion. In page 25 they are terrible, bold, and fierce; in page 33, both their Brains and Passions are cool. But it were endless to recite all of this kind. Then for your Stile, (not to mention your stately beginning with an old Saw) ’tis a hotch-potch of Satyr, Panegyrick, Heroick, and Burlesque. As to the strength of the Sense, I will only pull out the following from much of the like, because by the change of the Letter you put an Emphasis upon it, to shew it the more remarkable and study’d Nonsense, page 34:
Forgetting and forgiving Injury;
Which may be true, thus rightly understood,
Forging ill turns, and forgetting good.

Where forgetting and forgiving ill turns, if rightly understood, means forgiving and forgetting both ill and good turns. Fine Logick! As to your Rhime, Mr. Cowley says he does not allow in himself to end with two the same Syllables, not even in the most licentious Pyndarick Strain; and tho’ he does it, ’tis still with a third to answer both; but he utterly disallows of it in all other Poetry. Yet you, in page 4, make “contend” rhime to “pretend”; and in near twenty places more in the same manner; which is nauseous, especially where there is not more force to mitigate the Offence. To pass over your Verses with Badgers Feet, and infinite more things inconsistent with true Poetry. Some fancy it a Work of great labour as to the Historical part: but I, in your defence, told them, two hours reading in the Book from Prideaux’s Papers wou’d give you every hint, and two more at Billingsgate all the Satyr, which consists in calling Rascal, Rake, Scoundrel, Sot, Whore, &c. But to excuse all your faults, you say you saw some, but the Book was printed, and so too late to mend. What pity ’twas, that you cou’d not read your own hand before it was printed? But now, to reconcile your Country, I fancy you to be the Spawn of both Nations, got by a Dutch Pot-Heroe upon an English Fish-wife; deriving the Wit of your Arguments from the first, and the Delicacy of your Language from the last. Nor are you much unlike the famous Dutch Boor-Painter, who, to be excellent in that Kind of Draught, kept Company only with Tinkers, Chimneysweepers, &c. nor cou’d he draw a Lord without giving him the Air of a Boor: So you (I suppose, with the like method in Conversation) use the same Phrases to Lords, Gentry, Clergy, &c. of Sot, Rascal, &c. You say, our greatest Artists are the greatest Sots. ’Tis well known Mr. Halley, Mr. Gibbons, Mr. Cook, Mr. Cross, Mr. Banister, and all our most famous, were always free from that imputation. But I suppose (like that Boor-Painter) you mean such as you converse with. To shew your Skill in Musick is as great as in Poetry, you say our Choristers drink Wine to clear the Voice; a thing of quite contrary effect; nay, that Wine is the Balm that Surgeons pour into Wounds. Oh what a fine thought! But ’tis well known your Dutch Vice is much left off here by the better sort. To reflect on the Clergy, you raife Chimæras, and then valiantly oppose them. Which of them recanted the Doctrines of Non-Resistance and Passive Obedience towards King James during his Government? Which of them hath receded from those Principles to the present? What Fathers took up Arms? Which of them sent to invite the King, or appears now uneasie under him, or the least defective in Loyalty? Your Satyr as much touches the Chinese as Them. But concluding none of this Dirt wou’d stick, you call them the drunken Clergy; though ’tis confess’d by all People, that of so exemplar a Life as to Morals, so profoundly Learn’d in Divinity and all Philosophy, there is not a Clergy in the World. But I ask their pardon, that I shou’d seem to think your senseless Reflections worthy notice. Despairing of being sav’d by your Clergy, you appeal to the King in a Panegyrick of such extravagant unnatural Flights, that it looks more like a Banter: But, as if the Devil ow’d you a shame, you have prevented all hopes of Mercy there, by being more sawcy with Him than all the rest. You tax him with want of Consideration, page 42, for letting the Clergy swear. You reflect on his Honour and Wisdom, page 25, that “he creates Peers ef Men of no Merit, who have only Impudence and Money to recommend them. Nay, you have the impudence to call him Madman; for you say, page 52, “he were a Madman to trust English Gentlemen”; and he hath diffidently declar’d his Confidence in them. You highly derogate from his
Glory; for instead of being Monarch of a brave People, you make him only the Head of Banditti; nay, worse; for you say our Ancestors were Thieves and Robbers, and that we degenerate from them. So that, shoud he use your Dialect to the Parliament, instead of saying “My Lords and Gentlemen,” he must say “My Rogues and Vagabonds.” Nor certainly can he like your Commonwealth-Principles; for in page 43 you say if the People fancy they have not Right, (for you make Them Judges) they may send for Foreign Aid; that if the King breaks the Postulata’s to the Government, the Power returns to the People; that Laws are superior to Kings. Surely you ne’er read an Act of Parliament. Is the Creature above the Creator? But what ignorance do you betray, when you say this is the Voice of all Nations! Is it of France, Germany, Spain, Turkey, Persia, &c? Certainly you will not make a King of Poland a Precedent for the whole Universe. You conclude with a single Example to represent the whole Kingdom, than which nothing can be more absurd. Yet every particular of that may be easily refuted, but that I think your Censure is more for Sir Charles D---b’s Honour, than your Panegyrick would be, since it is with the same black Breath you endeavour to blast the Clergy, Lords, and Commons with; nay, in that very Character you bring in the Devil instigating the Parliament, page 58. Upon the whole, I find but one lash affects the English, and that is a severe one, which is in calling your self an Englishman. Will not Foreigners say, What nasty Birds are these English, that they will defile their own Nests! What Miscreants, that they are contented to render odious all their own Ancestors, so the Infection may taint their own Kinsmen and Country-men! But the Comfort is, none will give ear to such a Judas. With what Front can you accuse others of Treachery, when the design of your whole Pamphlet is to betray the Honour of your own Country to the contempt of Strangers, they who will do that, will make no bones of betraying the Country it self to them; as it is held more base to betray a Man’s Reputation than his Person. The Romans wou’d have wanted a Name for such an one. But the Riddle is, Whom was this Poem calculated to please? Not the King, after the gross Reflections on him. Not the Nobility, for you say, page 13, they are descended from Norman Rascals and French Troopers. Not the Gentry, for, page 24, they are made such of Rakes. Not the City, page 25, their Magistrates are Porters, Draymen, and Footmen. Not the Williamites, for ’tis all levelled against them, as Betrayers of the King after they had set him on the Throne. Nor yet your Idols P---d and S---g, page 18; you call them new-made Lords, and, page 25, you say, ’tis Money and Impudence makes our new Lords. Nor can you please the Dutch; for page 9, you say the Devil governs them by Avarice, which Vice contains Ingratitude and all baseness of Spirit. Nor will They, or any, trust one who betrays his own Country; at least, if they hug the Treason, they will abhor the Traytor. It can only please the Rakes of all Parties; They may dote on such a Champion against Religion and all good Manners, as also the Devil their Instigator, to whose Protection I commit you.