

THE INDIAN EMPEROR



A 1600s PLAY BY JOHN DRYDEN
EDITED BY SUZANNE ALEXANDER

The Indian Emperor

The Indian Emperor

A Dramatic Rhyme Play
By John Dryden

Edited By Suzanne Alexander

Signatures Books



Pacific Northwest, Washington

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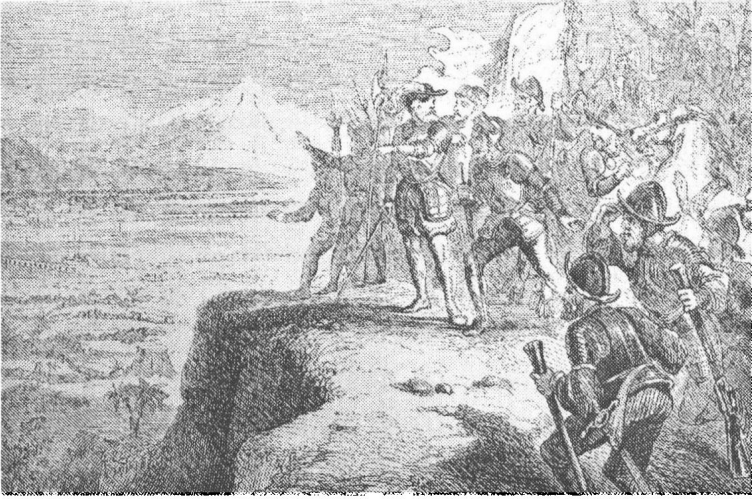
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First Printing. U.S.A.

ISBN: 0-9748510-0-0

Published by Signatures Books
Pacific Northwest, Washington
www.signaturesbooks.com

The Indian Emperor



Cortez, First Sight Of The City
Engraving, Harper's Weekly Magazine, 1852



Montezuma Captured By The Spaniards
Engraving, Harper's Weekly Magazine, 1852

Foreword

John Dryden's "The Indian Emperor," while not historically accurate in its depiction of the Conquest of Mexico, is a masterful example of heroic dramatic rhyme written during the Restoration Period of Charles the Second, King of England.

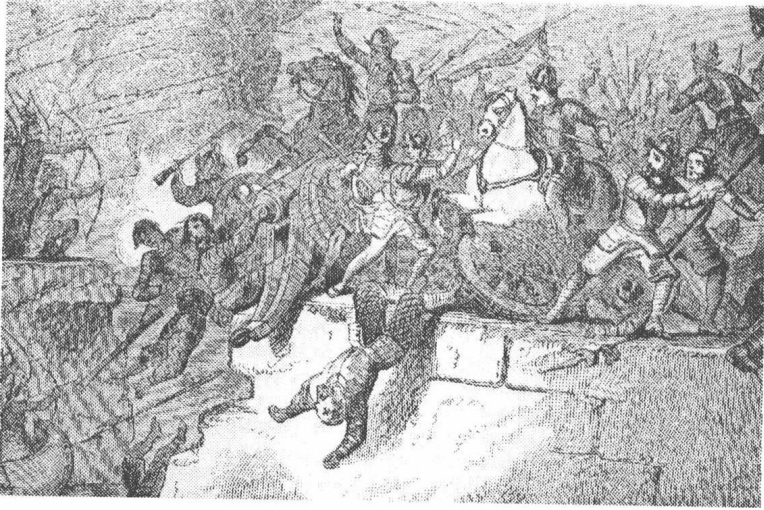
The Play in this volume was taken from a revised edition published by Dryden in 1667, and is complete with Dryden's Dedicatory Epistle and other letters and works associated with the play when it was performed before the court of England. These works have been edited and combined with illustrations that depict the play being performed {illustration of 1752} and Cortez and the Conquest Of Mexico {illustrations of 1852}. "The Indian Emperor" has been adapted to a modern play format to enhance readability.

Dryden was also called upon frequently as a poet to pen epitaphs for the English aristocracy. A few of these epitaphs, taken from a collection published in the mid-1700s in England are given in this volume as additional examples of his poetic style.

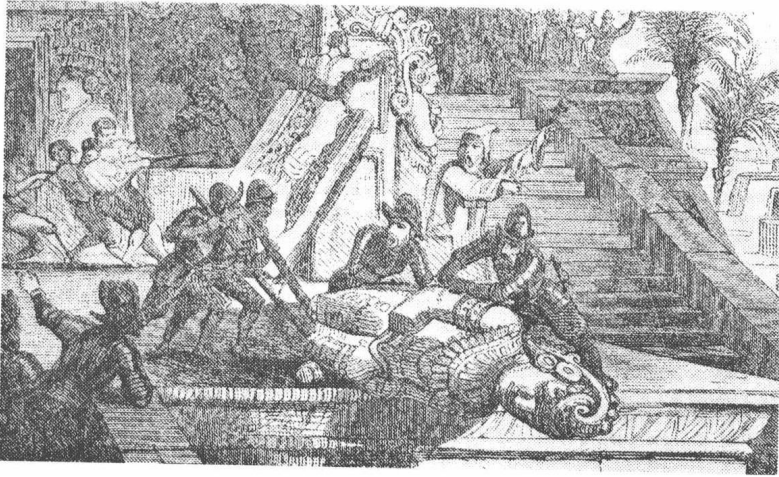
It is hoped that this version of "The Indian Emperor" will be appropriate for schools and theatre groups, and will be read and enjoyed for its literary merit by the general public.

Suzanne Alexander

The Indian Emperor



Conquistadors Battle For Control Of The City
Engraving, Harper's Weekly Magazine, 1852



The Destruction Of The Idols
Engraving, Harper's Weekly Magazine, 1852

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John Dryden

John Dryden was born August 9, 1631 in Northamptonshire, the eldest of fourteen children. He grew up with a privileged education: attending Westminster School and Trinity College. He became one of the King's scholars: in 1650 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge where he received a B.A. in January of 1654. He was a young man who grew through education, training, opportunity and ability, to become Poet Laureate of England. He fostered the genre of heroic dramatic rhyme during the reign of King Charles.

In 1658, when Cromwell died, Dryden began to gain recognition for his work with "Heroic Stanzas on the late Lord Proctor" and turned his genius in the direction of the stage. Audiences were appreciative of his verse abilities, but he was not without rivals, or failures. Dryden's first stage play was a comedy called "The Wild Gallant" which was not received well and he was forced to recall and redo it. It was a frustrating introduction to the theatre for a young man.

In 1664, Dryden introduced his play, "The Rival Ladies," written in dramatic rhyme style, dedicating the preface to the Earl of Orrey, who was a well-respected statesman and also a writer of rhyming tragedy. The Earl was influential in introducing tragedies in rhyme following the Restoration, in keeping with King Charles' preferences in theatre.

Following the acceptance and popularity of this play, Dryden teamed up with fellow author Sir Robert Howard to write the rhyming tragedy, "The Indian Queen." This was Dryden's first clear attempt to promote the acceptance of the heroic tragedy in rhyme.

It is not clear from historical accounts which author created various parts of the play, but one thing is clear: the rivalry and animosity between the two men lasted for years. Dryden and Howard became

bitter enemies waging a battle in words for public opinion.

When Dryden wrote "The Indian Emperor," he responded to Sir Robert Howard's latest criticisms of rhyming tragedy style with a passionate and detailed defense. Dryden's essay is attached in this volume, just as it was presented when published with the original play. Shortly after "The Indian Emperor", Dryden succeeded Sir William Davenant as Poet Laureate of England. For a while, he enjoyed the recognition due his abilities.

His days in the spotlight were however, short-lived. Dryden soon faced a rivalry with another poet, Elkanah Settle. Settle was a rising playwright who penned a very popular play entitled, "The Empress Of Morocco." The animosity between Settle and Dryden continued to escalate and draw in patrons on both sides. On December 18th, 1679, when Dryden was returning from a coffee-house to his home, he was attacked and severely beaten.

Dryden's "An Essay On Dramatic Poesy" is considered by some to be a major critical work of its time period. His plays and verse have been called brilliant, masterpieces and exceptional interpretations for the stage. John Dryden, poet, dramatist, passionate defender of dramatic heroic rhyme left behind over thirty works for the stage as well as other works, including epitaphs for those of privilege preserved in the churchyards of England.

He died on May 12, 1700 and was buried in Westminster Abbey beside Chaucer.

The Epistle Dedicatory

TO the most Excellent and most Illustrious
Princess ANNE, Duchess of Monmouth and Bucclugh,
Wife to the most Illustrious and High-born Prince
JAMES, Duke of Monmouth.

May it please your Grace,

The Favor, which Heroic 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 Honor 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 among 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 the Stage, so, being now more publicly exposed in Print, I humbly recommend it to your Grace's protection, who by all knowing Persons are esteemed 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 needful as Beauty is, Virtue and Honor 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 Honor, to make that perishable Good more lasting. And if Beauty, like Wines, could be preserved by being mixed, and embodied with others of their own Natures, 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 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 fit 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 public. For Goodness and Humanity, which shine in you, are Virtues which concerns 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 asked; 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 Favors, that I

am ready to look on those as very bold, who dare grow rich there without Defect.

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 Acknowledgement, which stands in need of your Protection; and which ought no more to be esteemed 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.

Offspring 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 a Hospitable Shore; Under your Patronage *Montezuma* hopes he is more safe than in 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 furnished 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 followed 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.

MADAM,

October 12, 1667

*Your Grace's most obedient
And most obliged Servant,*
JOHN DRYDEN

Defense Of An Essay Of Dramatic Poesy,
Being An Answer to Sir Robert Howard's Preface
Of *The Great Favorite*, or *The Duke Of Lerma*.

The former Edition of "The Indian Emperor" being full of Faults, which had escaped the Printer, I have been willing to overlook this second with more Care: and though I could not allow myself so much Time as was necessary, yet by that little I have done, the Press is freed from some Errors which it had to answer for before.

As for the more material Faults of writing, which are properly mine, though I see many of them, I want leisure to amend them. 'Tis enough for those who make one Poem the Business of their Lives, to leave that correct: yet, excepting Virgil, I never met with any, which was so in any Language.

But while I was thus employed about this Impression, there came to my Hands a new Printed Play called, "The Great Favorite, or the Duke of Lerma." The Author of which, a noble and most ingenious Person, has done me the Favor to make some Observations and Animadversions upon my Dramatic Essay.

I must confess he might have better consulted his Reputation, than by matching himself with so weak an Adversary. But if his Honor be diminished in the Choice of his Antagonist, it is sufficiently recompensed in the Election of his Cause: which being the weaker, in all Appearance, as combating the received Opinions of the best Ancient and Modern Authors, will add to his Glory, if he overcome; and to the Opinion of his Generosity, if he be vanquished, since he engages at so great odds; and so like a Cavalier, undertakes the Protection of the weaker Party.

I have only to fear on my own behalf, that so good a Cause as mine may not suffer by my ill Management,

or weak Defense; yet I cannot in Honor but take the Glove when 'tis offered me: though I am only a Champion by Succession: and no more able to defend the Right of *Aristotle* and *Horace*, than an Infant *Dimock* to maintain the Title of a King.

For my own Concernment of the Controversy, it is so small, that I can easily be contented to be driven from a few notions of Dramatic Poesy; especially by one, who has the Reputation of understanding all Things: and I might justly make that excuse for my yielding to him, which the Philosopher made to the Emperor; why, should I offer to contend with him who is Master of more than twenty Legions of Arts and Sciences? But I am forced to fight, and therefore it will be no shame to be overcome.

Yet I am so much his Servant as not to meddle with anything, which does not concern me in his Preface: therefore I leave the good Sense and other Excellencies of the first twenty Lines, to be considered by the Critics.

As for the Play of *The Duke of Lerma*, having so much altered and beautified it, as he has done, it can justly belong to none but him. Indeed they must be extreme ignorant as well as envious, who would rob him of that Honor; for you see him putting in his Claim to it, even in the first two Lines,

*"Repulse upon Repulse, like Waves thrown back,
That slide to hang upon obdurate Rocks."*

After this, let Detraction do its worst; for if this be not his, it deserves to be. For my Part, I declare for distributive Justice, and from this and what follows he certainly deserves *those Advantages, which he acknowledges to have received from the Opinion of sober Men.*

In the next place I must beg leave to observe his great Address in courting the Reader to his Party. For intending to assault all Poets, both Ancient and Modern, he discovers not only his whole Design at once, but seems only to aim at me, and attacks me on

my weakest side, my Defense of Verse.

To begin with me, he gives me the Compellation of *The Author of a Dramatic Essay*; which is a little Discourse in Dialogue, for the most part borrowed from the Observations of others: therefore, that I may not be wanting to him in Civility, I return his Compliment by calling him *The Author of the Duke of Lerma*.

But {that I may pass over his Salute} he takes notice of my great Pains to prove Rhyme as natural in a serious Play, and more effectual than Blank Verse. Thus indeed I did state the Question; but he tells me, *I pursue that which I call Natural in a wrong application: For 'tis not the Question whether Rhyme or not Rhyme be best or most natural for a serious Subject, but what is nearest the Nature of that it represents.*

If I have formerly mistaken the Question, I must confess my Ignorance so far, as to say I continue still in my Mistake: But he ought to have proved that I mistook it; for 'tis yet but gratis dictum; I still shall think I have gained my Point, if I can prove that Rhyme is best or most natural for a serious Subject. As for the Question as he states it, whether Rhyme be nearest the Nature of what it represents, I wonder he should think me so ridiculous as to dispute whether Prose or Verse be nearest no ordinary Conversation.

It still remains for him to prove his Inference: that, since Verse is granted to be more remote than Prose from ordinary Conversation, therefore no serious Plays ought to be writ in Verse: and when he clearly makes that good, I will acknowledge his Victory as absolute as he can desire it.

The Question now is, which of us two has mistaken it; and if it appear I have not, the World will suspect *what Gentleman that was, who was allowed to speak twice in Parliament, because he had not yet spoken to the Question*; and perhaps conclude it to be the same, who, as 'tis reported, maintained a Contradiction in *terminis*, in the Face of three hundred Persons.