

N^o 238. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1710.

————— *Poëtica surgit*

Tempestas —————

JUV. Sat. xii. 23.

Thus dreadful rises the poetic storm.

R. WYNNE.

From my own Apartment, October 16.

STORMS at sea are so frequently described by the ancient poets, and copied by the moderns, that whenever I find the winds begin to rise in a new heroic poem, I generally skip a leaf or two until I come into fair weather. Virgil's tempest is a masterpiece in this kind, and is indeed so naturally drawn, that one who has made a voyage can scarce read it without being sea-sick. Land showers are no less frequent among the poets than the former, but I remember none of them which have not fallen in the country; for which reason they are generally filled with the lowings of oxen and the bleatings of sheep, and very often embellished with a rainbow.

Virgil's land-shower is likewise the best in its kind. It is indeed a shower of consequence, and contributes to the main design of the poem, by cutting off a tedious ceremonial, and bringing matters to a speedy conclusion between two potentates of different sexes. My ingenious kinsman, Mr. Humphrey Wagstaff², who treats of every subject after a manner that no other author has done, and better than any other can do, has sent me the description of a city-shower. I do not question but the reader remembers my cousin's description of the morning as it breaks in town, which is printed in the ninth Tatler, and is another exquisite piece of this local poetry.

' Careful observers may foretel the hour
 (By sure prognostics) when to dread a shower ;
 While rain depends, the pensive cat gives o'er
 Her frolics, and pursues her tail no more.
 Returning home at night, you'll find the sink
 Strike your offended sense with double stink.
 If you be wise, then go not far to dine,
 You'll spend in coach-hire more than save in wine.
 A coming shower your shooting corns presage,
 Old aches will throb, your hollow tooth will rage,
 Sauntering in coffee-house is Dulman seen ;
 He damns the climate, and complains of spleen.

' Meanwhile the south, rising with dabbled wings,
 A sable cloud athwart the welkin flings,
 That swill'd more liquor than it could contain,
 And like a drunkard, gives it up again.
 Brisk Susan whips her linen from the rope,
 While the first drizzling shower is borne aslope :
 Such is that sprinkling which some careless quean
 Flirts on you from her mop, but not so clean.
 You fly, invoke the gods ; and, turning, stop
 To rail ; she, singing, still whirls on her mop.
 Not yet the dust had shunn'd th' unequal strife,
 But, aided by the wind, fought still for life ;

² Swift.

And wafted with its foe by violent gust,
 'Twas doubtful which was rain, and which was dust.
 Ah! where must needy poet seek for aid,
 When dust and rain at once his coat invade?
 His only coat, where dust, confus'd with rain,
 Roughen the nap, and leave a mingled stain?

' Now in contiguous drops the flood comes down,
 Threatening with deluge this devoted town.
 To shops in crowds the draggled females fly,
 Pretend to cheapen goods, but nothing buy.
 The Templar spruce, while every spout's abroad,
 Stays till 'tis fair, yet seems to call a coach.
 The tuck'd-up sempstress walks with hasty strides,
 While streams run down her oil'd umbrella's sides.
 Here various kinds, by various fortunes led,
 Commence acquaintance underneath a shed.
 Triumphant tories and desponding whigs
 Forget their feuds, and join to save their wigs.
 Box'd in a chair the beau impatient sits,
 While spouts run clattering o'er the roof by fits;
 And ever-and-anon with frightful din
 The leather sounds; he trembles from within.
 So when Troy-chairmen bore the wooden steed,
 Pregnant with Greeks impatient to be freed,
 (Those bully Greeks, who, as the moderns do,
 Instead of paying chairmen, run them through),
 Laocoon struck the outside with his spear,
 And each imprison'd hero quak'd for fear.

' Now from all parts the swelling kennels flow,
 And bear their trophies with them as they go:
 Filth of all hues and odours seem to tell
 What street they sail'd from, by their sight and smell.
 They, as each torrent drives, with rapid force,
 From Smithfield or St. 'Pulchre's shape their course,
 And in huge confluent join'd at Snow-hill ridge,
 Fall from the conduit, prone to Holborn-bridge.
 Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
 Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,
 Dead cats and turnip-tops come tumbling down the flood.*