[The Masque of Blackness: JnB 683]
[British Library MS Royal 17 B XXXI]

[fol. 1]

THE

Teares of the Howers.

IVSTICE. PEACE. & LAWE.

wept
into the bosome of
the best K.

M tare dominum non potest liber notus.

1604.

[fol. 2]

The twelvth nights Reuell

[fol. 3]

Plinie Solinus, Ptolomaeae, and of late, Leo Africanus, re-
member vnto vs a river, in Aethiopia, famous by the
name of Niger, of which the People were called Ni-
gritae, nowe Negroes and are the blackest Nation
of the world. This river taketh his springe owt
of a certaine Lake, eastward, and after a longe
race falleth into the westerne Ocean./
Hence the Inventon is derivd, and presented
thus. In the end of the designd place, there is
drawne vpon a downe right cloth straynd for the
scene a devise of Landscope, which openinge in manner
of a Curtine an artificiall sea is seene to shoote
foorth it self abroad the roome as if it flowed to ye
Land. In front of this Sea are placed six Tritons
with instrumentes made of antique shells for Musique,
and behind them two Sea-maides. Betweene ye
Maydes a payre of Sea-horses figured to the life
put foorth them selues in varied dispositons; Vpon
whose backes are advanced Oceanus, and Niger, arme
in arme enfolded./
Oceanus naked, the cullors of his flesh blew, and
Shadow’d with a roab of Seagreene. His bodie of a
humane forme. His head, and beard gray: hee is gyrlanded with Sea-grasse, and his hand sustaynes a Trident Niger in forme, and coulour of an Aethiope blacke:

his haire, and rare beard curled: shadow’d with a blew.

[fol. 3v]

a blew, and bright mantle, his necke, and wrists adorn’d with Pearle: Crowned with an artificiall wreath of Cane, and paper-rush./

These induce the Masquers, which are twelue Nymphs Negro’s, and ye daughters of Niger attended by as manie of the Oceanie, who are their Light-bearers.

The Masquers are placed in an entire concave shell of mother of pearle, curiously made to move on those waters, and guarded (for more ornament) with Dolphins, and Sea-monsters of different shapes: on which in payres their light-bearers are with their lights burninge out of Murex shelles, advanced./

The attire of ye Masquers is alyke in all without difference. Their cullores azure, and siluer; their hayre thicke, and curled vpright in tresses lyke Pyramids, but retouninge in the top; with a dressinge of feathers, and Jewells. And for the eare, necke, and wrist, the ornament of ye brightest pearle, best settinge of from the blacke.

For the Light-bearers Sea-greene, their faces and armes blew. Their hayres loose, and flowinge, gyrlanded with Alga, or Sea-grasse, and yat stucke about with braunches of corall, and water Lillyes.

These thus presented. One of the Tritons with the two Sea-maydes, beginne to singe to the other lowd Musique. Their voyces being a Tenor, and two Trebles./

[fol. 4]

The Song

Sound, sound aloud
The welcum of the orient Floud
Into the west:
Fayre Niger sonne to great oceanus
Now honored thus.
With all his beauteous Race:
who though but black in face,
yet are they bright,
And full of life, and light;
To prove that Beauty best
Which not ye coullor but ye feature
Assures vnto ye Creature.

Which ended, and the Musique ceassinge Oceanus
provokes Niger as followeth./

Oceanus

Bee silent nowe the Ceremony’s done
And Niger, say, howe comes it lovely sonne
That thou the Aethiops River, so far east
Art seene to fall in ye extreamest west
Of mee the kinge of floudes Oceanus,
And in myne Empires hart salute mee thus.
What is the end of thy Herculean Labours
Eextended to these Calme, and blessed shores;

Niger

[fol. 4v]

Niger
To doe a kynd, and carefull fathers parte
In satisfyinge euery pensiue harte
Of these my daughters, my most loved Birth;
Who, though they were first-formd Dames of Earth
And in whose sparcklinge, and refulgent eyes
The glorious sonne did still delight to rise;
Though hee (the best Iudg), and most formal cause
Of all Dames bewties) in their firme hew’s, drawes
Signes of his fervent loue, & therby shewes
That in their blacke the perfection Beauty growes;
Since the fxt cullor of their curled hayre
Which is the heighest grace of Dames most fayre)
No cares, no Age can chandge, or there display
The fearfull tincture of abhorred gray.
Since death him self (him self being pale, & blewe)
Can never alter their most faithfull hew;
All which are argumentes to prove howe farre
Their Beauties conquer in great Beauties warre:
And now howe neere Divinitie they bee
That stand from Passon, or decay soe free:
Yet since the fabulous voyces of some few
Poore braysnicke men stild Poets here with you)
Haue with such envy of their graces sunge
The paynted Beauties, other Empires sprung

Lettinge

Lettinge their loose, and winged fictons fly
To infect all Climattes, yea our puritie
As of one Phaethon that fir’d the world
And that before his heedlesse flames were hurld
About the Globe, the Aethiops were as fayre
As other Dames, nowe blacke with blacke dispayre
And in respect of their complexions chaungd
Are each where since for lucklesse creatures rangd
Which when my Daughters heard (as woemen are)
most jealous of their beauties) feare and Care
Possest them whole, yea, and beleeuing them
They wept such ceaslesse teares into my streame
That it hath thus farre overflowd his shore
To seeke them pacience whoe haue since ermore
As the Sonne riseth chargd his burninge Throne
With vollyes of reuilinges; cause hee shone
on their scortcht cheekes with such intemperat fiers
And other dames made Queenes of all desiers
To frustrat which straunge error oft I sought
(Though most in vayne against a settled thought
As woemens are) till they confirmd att length
By miracle, what I with soe much strength
of Argument resisted: (else they fayn’d
For in the lake where their first springe they gaind
As they satt coolinge their soft lymbs by night
Appeard a face all circumfusd with Light
Wherin they might decipher through the streame
(And sure they saw’t for Aethiops neuer Dreame)
The woords:

That they a Land must forthwith seeke
Whose Termination of ye Greeke
sounds, Tania, Where bright Sol yat heatt
Their bloodes, doeth neuer rise nor sett
But in his iorney passeth by,
And leaues that Climatte of ye sky
To comfort of a greater Light,
That forms all beauties with his sight.

In search of this have we three Prince-doones past
That speak out Tania in their accents last
Blacke Mauritaia first, and secondly
Swarth Lusitania. Next we did descry
Rich Aquitania, and yet cannot find
The place vnto those longinge Nymphs designd
Instruct, and ayd mee great Oceanus
What Land is this that nowe appeares to vs
Oceanus
This Land that lifts into the temperate ayre
Hir snowy Cliffe, is Albion the fayre
So call’d of Neptunes sonne, yat ruleth here
For whose deare guard my selfe four thousand yeere
(Since old Deucalions dayes) haue walckt ye round
About his Empire proud to see him crownd

[fol. 6]

Aboue my waues.

At this the Moone is discovered in ye upper parte of the house, triumphant in a Chariot, hir garments white, and siluer,
the dressinge of hir head antique, and crownd with lightes, To hir Niger.
Niger
O see our siluer Starre
Whose pure auspicious light greetes vs thus farre
Great Aethiopia, Goddesse of our store
Since with particular worshipp wee adore
Thy generall brightnesse, lett particular grace
Shine on my zealous daughters: shew ye place Which longe their longinges vrgd their eyes to see Betwifie them that long have diefied thee Aethiopia
Niger, bee gladd, resume thy natuie cheere
Thy Daughters labors haue thy Period here,
And so thy errors. I was that bright face Reflected by the Lake, in which thy Race Read mistick lynes; which skyl Pithagoras First taught to men by a reverberat glasse/

[fol. 6v]
This blessed Ille doth with that Tania end
Which their they sawe inscribd: and shall extend
Wish’d satisfaction to their best desiers,
Britania which the triple world admires
This Ille hath nowe recovered for his name
Where raigne the Beauties, yat with so much fame
The sacred Muses sonnes haue honored
And from sweete Hesperus to Eous spread
With that great name Britania, this blest Ille
Hath wonne hir antient dignitie and stile
A world divided from the world, and tryed
The abstract of it in his generall pride
And were the world with all his wealth a ringe
Britania (whose fresh name makes thunder singe)
Might bee a Diamond woorthy to enchace it,
Ruld by a Sunne, that to this height doeth grace it
Whose Beames shine day and night, and are of force
To blanch an Aethiop, and revive a Corse
His light scientiall is, and past meere Nature
Can salue the rude defectes of every Creature
Call forth thy honor'd daughters then
And let them for the Britaine men
Indent the Land with those pure traces
They flow with in their native graces
Invite them boldly to ye shore
Their Beauties shall bee scorct no more.

This sonne is temperate, and refines
All thinges on which his Radiance shines

Here the Tritons sound, and they daunce
on shore, eyuer Couple (as they advance) severally presentinge their fannes; in one of which are inscrib'd their mixed names, in the other a mute Hieroglyphick expressinge their mixed qualities which manner of Symbole wee rather choose, then Imprese, as well for strangnesse, as relishinge more of antiquitie; and nearer applyinge to yat originall doctrine of Sculpture, which the Aegiptians are sayd first to haue derived from the Aethiopians.

When their owne Daunce is ended, as they
are about to choose their men: on from the Sea
is heard to call them with this songe, sung
by a tenor voyce.

_Songe._

_Cum away, cum away,
Wee grow iealous of your stay:
If you do not stopp your eare,
Wee shall haue more cause to feare
Syrens of the Land then they
To doubt the Syrens of ye Sea.

[fol. 7v]

Here they daunce with their men which beinge
perfect they are againe provoked from the Sea
with a songe of two Trebles, iterated in ye fall
by a double Echo.

_Songe._

Treb. i Daugthers, of the subtill floud
Doe not lett earth longer entretaine you
Treb.2 Ti’s to them enough of good
That you giue this little hope to gaine you
Treb. i If they loue
Treb 2 You shall quickly see
Treb i For when to flight you moue
They’le followe you ye more you flee
Tre: do. If not impute it each to other matter
They are but Earth, & what you owed was water

Att this _Aethiopia_ speakes againe.

_Aethiopia_

Enough bright _Nymphes_ the night growes old
And wee are greiv’d wee cannot hold
You longer light; but comfort take,
your father only to the Lake [sh]

[fol. 8]

Shall make returne; your selues with feastes
Must here remayne the _Oceans_ guests
Nor shall this vayle the _Sunne_ hath cast
Above your bloods more Sommers last
For which you shall obserue these Rites
Thirteene tymes thrise on thirteene nightes,
Soe often as I fill my _Spheare_,

shall
With glorious light throughout the yeare
You shall (when all thinges ells doe sleepe
Saue your chast thoughts) with reuerence, steepe,
Your bodies in that purer brine
And holsome dew, calld Ros-marine
Then with that soft, and gentle fome
Of which the Ocean yet yeeldes some
Whereof bright Venus Beauties Queene
Is sayd to haue begotten bee,ne,
You shall your gentler lymbs ore-laue
And for your paynes perfection haue
Soe that this night the yeare gone round
You doe againe salute this ground
And in the Beames of yond bright Sunne
Your faces dry, and all is done./

With which in a daunce they returne to the Sea
agayne, where they take their shell, and with

[fol. 8v]

a full songe goe owt

Song
Now Dian with the burning face
Declines apace
By which our waters know
To ebb, that late did flow,
Backe seas, Backe Nymphs, but with a forward grace
Keepe still your reuerence to ye place,
And shout with ioy of fauor you haue wonne
In sight of Albion Neptuns sonne.

Hos ego versiculos feci.

Ben: Jonson./