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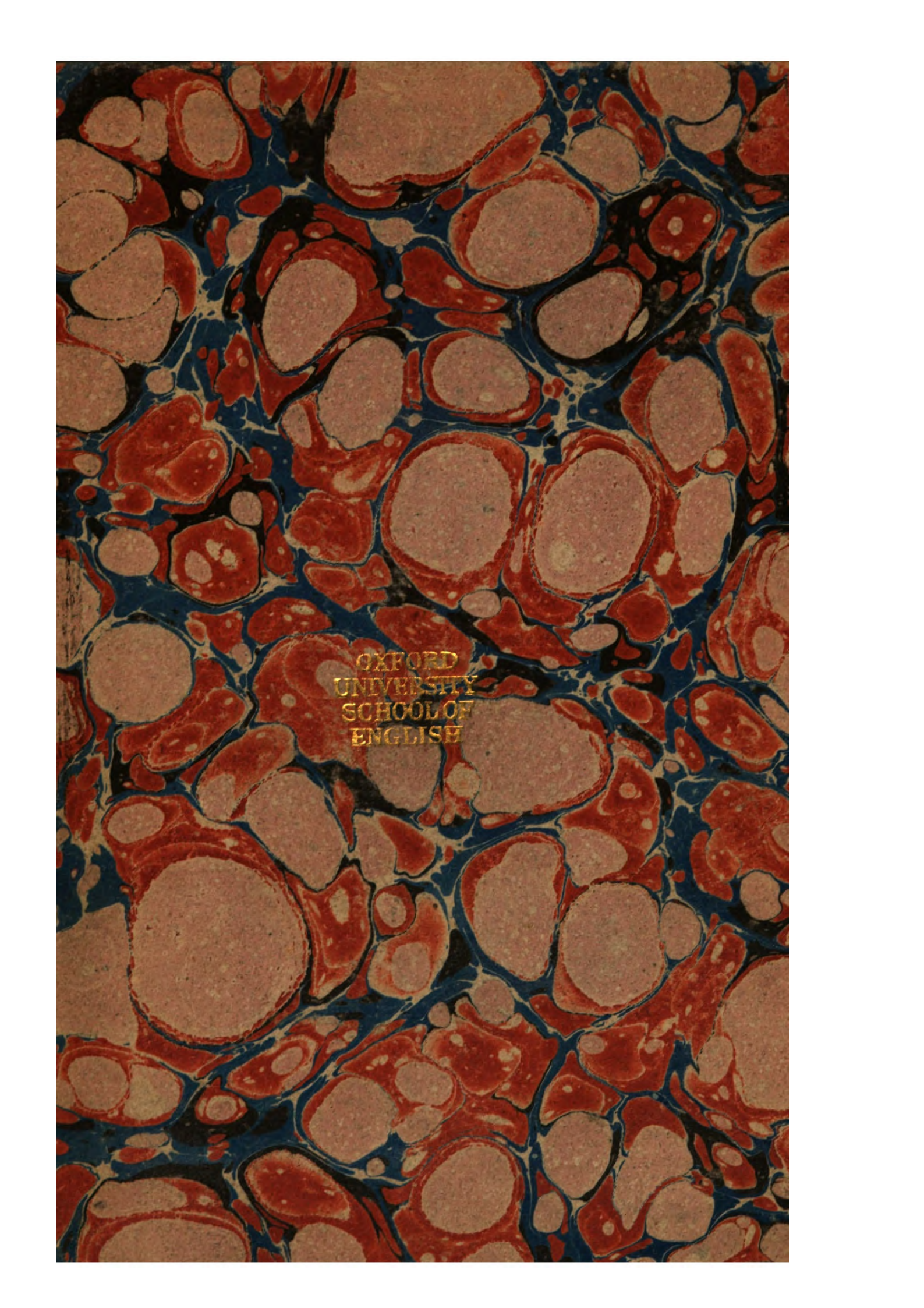
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THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
STAGE.

In which is included,  
The Theatrical Characters of the most  
celebrated Actors who have adorn'd  
the Theatre.

Among many others are the following, *viz.*

Mr. BETTERTON,  
Mr. MONTFORT,  
Mr. DOGGET,  
Mr. BOOTH,  
Mr. WILKS,  
Mr. NOKES.

Mrs. BARRY,  
Mrs. MONTFORT,  
Mrs. GWIN,  
Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE,  
Mrs. PORTER,  
Mrs. OLDFIELD.

TOGETHER WITH,

The THEATRICAL LIFE  
OF  
Mr. COLLY CIBBER.

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LONDON:

Printed for J. MILLER in Fleet-street; and sold  
by the Bookfellers of London and Westminster

MDCCLXII.



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A COMPLETE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
STAGE, &c.



THE Drama did not grow into any Form in England, till the Reign of King Henry VIII. It was in some measure encouraged in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth; but flourished in that of King James I. This and all other Arts were improved till the Beginning of the Grand Rebellion in the succeeding Reign, when the Dramatick Muse was banished.

The Stage did not properly recover itself till the Restoration of King Charles II, when, as Lord Lansdown says, Trade flourished, Navigation was increased, Manufactures improved, Arts and Sciences encouraged, Wit abounding, the Muses restored; and above all, real Liberty secured to the Subject.



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The STAGE having been always accounted a most rational and instructive Entertainment, has therefore met with Favour in the wisest Governments, and been supported by the wisest Men.

The English Theatre has risen under the Patronage of Princes, and appeared in the greatest Lustre: And what seems more extraordinary is, that some of the most eminent Writers in the Dramatick Way, have themselves been Players; of which Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, Otway, Lee and Farquhar, are immortal Instances.

I believe no Nation in the World can boast of having produced so many excellent Writers for the Stage, nor so many inimitable Performers, as our Own. The Memory of Mr. Betterton, Mr. Booth, Mr. Wilks; Mrs Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mrs. Oldfield's Performances, are still fresh to many among us: And as their Merit rendered them universally admired, their Loss is now as universally lamented.

But, it ought to be observed, that as Wit, good Sense, and Politeness, were absolutely necessary to support the Dignity and Character of the Scene, it was always thought proper to trust the Management of the Theatre, to Persons who were supposed to be justly qualified to judge of all Performances fit to be introduced in that Place, that Works of Genius might meet with suitable Encouragement, and Dullness and Immorality be effectually excluded.

Mr. Betterton long had the Stage under his Direction; and he, undoubtedly, wanted no Abilities to distinguish Merit; nor have I ever heard that he wanted Inclination to reward it. And of late Years Mr. Booth, Mr. Wilks, and Mr. Cibber, as they were all eminent in their  
Pro-

Profession, as Actors; their own Interest, as well as the Honour of the Stage, made them industrious to support it in full Credit.

King Charles II. immediately after his Restoration, granted two Patents, one to Sir William Davenant, and the other to Henry Killigrew, Esq; and their several Heirs and Assigns for ever, for the forming of two distinct Companies of Comedians: The first were called the King's Servants, and acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane; and the other the Duke's Company, who acted at the Duke's Theatre in Dorset Garden: About ten of the King's Company were on the Royal Household Establishment, having each ten Yards of Scarlet Cloth, with a proper quantity of Lace allowed them for Liveries; and in their Warrants from the Lord Chamberlain, were stiled Gentlemen of the Great Chamber: They were both in high Estimation with the Publick, and so much the Delight and Concern of the Court, that they were not only supported by its being frequently present at their publick Presentations, but by taking cognizance even of their private Government, insomuch that their Disputes were generally ended by the King or Duke's personal Command. Besides their being thorough Masters of their Art, these Actors set forward with two critical Advantages, which perhaps may never happen again: The one was, their immediate opening after the so long Interdiction of Plays during the Civil War, and the Anarchy that followed it. What eager Appetites from so long a Fast, must the Guests of those Times have had, to that high and fresh variety of Entertainments, which Shakespeare had left behind for them? How many shining Actors have the warm Scenes of his Genius given

#### 4 The HISTORY of

to Posterity? without being himself, in his Action, equal to his Writing! A strong Proof that Actors, like Poets, must be born such. Shakespeare could write Hamlet, but Tradition says, that the Ghost in the same Play was his best Performance as an Actor: Eloquence and Elocution are quite different Talents: Nor is it within the reach of Rule or Precept to complete either of them. Instruction may guard them equally against Faults and Absurdities; but there it stops, and Nature must do the rest.

The other Advantage is, that before the Restoration, no Actresses had ever been seen upon the English Stage. The Characters of Women, on former Theatres, were performed by Boys, or young Men of the most effeminate Aspect. And what Grace, or Master strokes of Action, can we conceive such ungain Hoydens to have been capable of? This defect was so well considered by Shakespeare, that in few of his Plays he has any great Dependence upon the Ladies. The additional Objects then of real, beautiful Women, could not but draw a proportion of new Admirers to the Theatre. We may imagine too, that these Actresses were not ill chosen, when it is well known, that more than one of them had Charms sufficient to mollify the Cares of Empire.

Besides these peculiar Advantages, they had a private Rule or Agreement, which both Houses were happily tied down to, which was, that no Play acted at one House, should be attempted at the other. All the capital Plays therefore of Shakespeare, Ben: Johnson, and Fletcher, were divided between them, by the Approbation of the Court, and their own alternate Choice: So that when Hart was famous for playing Othello,

Betterton



Betterton had no less a reputation for Hamlet. By this order the Stage was supplied with a greater Variety of Plays, than could possibly have been shewn, had both Companies been employed at the same time, upon the same Play; which Liberty too, must have occasioned such frequent Repetitions of them, by their opposite Endeavours to forestall and anticipate one another, that the best Actors in the World must have grown tedious and tasteless to the Spectator: For what Pleasure is not languid to Satiety?

I know it is the common Opinion, That the more Play-houses, the more Emulation; I grant it; but what has this Emulation ended in? Why, a daily Contention which shall soonest surfeit you with the best Plays; so that when what ought to please, can no longer please, your Appetite is again to be raised by such monstrous Presentations, as dishonour the Taste of a civilized People. If indeed we could raise a Number of good Authors sufficient to support the Spirit of our Theatres, then the Publick may profit from their Emulation: But while good Writers are so scarce, and undaunted Criticks so plenty, I am of opinion a good Play will be a very great Rarity. ——— But to our History.

These two excellent Companies were both prosperous for some few Years, till their Variety of Plays began to be exhausted: Then of course, the better Actors, which the King's seems to have been allowed, could not fail of drawing the greater Audiences.

~~Sir William Davenant~~ therefore, Master of the Duke's Company, to make head against their Success, was forced to add Spectacle and Musick to Action; and to introduce a new Species of Plays, since called Dramatick Operas, of which

*the result*

## 6 The HISTORY of

✓ which kind were the Tempest, Psyche, Circe, and others; all set off with the most expensive Decorations of Scenes and Habits, with the best Voices and Dancers.

This sensual Supply of Sight and Sound, coming into the Assistance of the weaker party, it was no wonder they should grow too hard for Sense and simple Nature, when it is considered how many more there are, that can see and hear, than think and judge. So wanton a Change of the publick Taste, therefore, began to fall as heavy upon the King's Company, as their greater Excellence in Action, had before, fallen upon their Competitors: Of which Encroachment upon Wit, several good Prologues in those days frequently complained.

✓ But what can Truth avail, when its Dependence is much more upon the ignorant, than the sensible Auditor? Taste and Fashion, with us, have always had Wings, and fly from one publick Spectacle to another so wantonly, that I have been informed, by those, who remember it, that a famous Puppet shew, in Salisbury Change, then standing where Cecil street now is, so far distressed these two celebrated Companies, that they were both reduced to petition the King against it: Nor does this seem so strange, when we consider, that Terence reproaches the Roman Auditors of his Time with the like Fondness for the Funambuli, or Rope-dancers.

The Audiences of both Houses now falling off, and Mohun and Hart now growing old, for above thirty Years before, they had severally born the King's Commission of Major and Captain in the Civil Wars, and the younger Actors being impatient to get into their parts, and growing intractable, the Audiences too of both Houses

inclining for their being joined, the Patentees of each, by the King's Advice, which perhaps amounted to a Command, united their Interests, and both Companies into one, exclusive of all others, in the Year 1684. This Union was, however, so much in favour of the Duke's Company, that Hart left the Stage upon it, and Mohun survived not long after.

One only Theatre being now in possession of the whole Town, the united Patentees imposed hard Terms upon the Actors; for the profits of acting were then divided into twenty Sharers, ten of which went to the Proprietors, and the other Moiety to the principal Actors, in such Sub-divisions as their different Merit might pretend to. These Shares of the Patentees were promiscuously sold out to Money-making Persons called Adventurers, who, tho' utterly ignorant of Theatrical Affairs, were still admitted to a proportionate Vote in the Management of them; all particular Encouragement to Actors were by them, of Consequence, looked upon as so many Sums deducted from their private Dividends. While therefore the theatrical Hive had so many Drones in it, the labouring Actors, sure, were under the greatest Discouragement, if not a direct State of Oppression. Their Hardships will appear in a much stronger Light, when compared to the Situation of the late Patentees, who with much less Merit, succeeded to be sharers under a Patent upon five times easier Terms.

As the Names of the principal Actors, not only of the United Company just now mentioned, but of their Successors, will often occur in this Work, it will be here proper to give the Reader such particular Characters of their  
Theatrical

Theatrical Merit, as they really deserved: Not doubting but that this Attempt will be agreeable to the Curious, and all true Lovers of the English Stage.

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Mr. THOMAS BETTERTON'S Character.

**M**R. Betterton being Apprentice to Mr. Rhodes a Bookseller, (who in the Year 1659, obtained from the Powers then in being, a Licence to act Plays in the Cockpit, Drury-lane,) was brought by him upon the Stage in the Year 1660, together with his Fellow-prentice Mr. Kynaſton.

Mr. Betterton, tho' but twenty Years of Age at his first Appearance on the Stage, acquired very great Applauſe by his performances in *The Loyal Subject*, *The Wild Goofe Chace*, *The Spaniſh Curate*, and ſeveral other Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. But while this excellent Actor was riſing under his Maſter Rhodes, Sir William Davenant took him, and all who acted under Mr. Rhodes, into his Company, in the Year 1662. In this Company, which was call'd the Duke's, Mr. Betterton was applauded for his performances in the firſt and ſecond Parts of the Siege of Rhodes, that being the Play with which Sir William Davenant opened his Houſe, having new Scenes and Decorations, being the firſt uſed in England.

Betterton was an Actor, as Shakeſpeare was an Author, both without Competitors, form'd for the mutual Aſſiſtance and Illuſtration of each others Genius! How Shakeſpeare wrote, all who have a Taſte for Nature may read, and know; but with what higher Rapture would he  
 ſtill



still be read, could they conceive how Betterton play'd him! Then might they know, the one was born alone to speak what the other only knew, to write. Pity it is, that the momentary Beauties flowing from an harmonious Elocution, cannot like those of Poetry, be their own Record: That the animated Graces of the Player can live no longer than the instant Breath and Motion that presents them, or at best can but faintly glimmer through the Memory, or imperfect Attestation of a few surviving Spectators: Could how Betterton spoke be as easily known as what he spoke, then might you see the Muse of Shakespeare in her Triumph, with all her Beauties, rising into real Life, and charming the Beholders. But since this is so far out of the reach of description, how shall I shew you Betterton? Should I therefore tell you, that all the Othellos, Hamlets, Hotspurs, Mackbeths, and Brutus's, whom you have seen since his Time, have fallen far short of him; this still would give you no Idea of his particular Excellence. Let us see then what a particular Comparison may do.

You have perhaps seen a Hamlet, who on the first appearance of his Father's Ghost, has thrown himself into all the straining Vociferation requisite to express Rage and Fury; and the House has thunder'd with Applause; tho' the misguided Actor was all the while, as Shakespeare terms it in this very Play, tearing a Passion into Rags. This Observation will meet with favour from the Reader, when 'tis known, that the late judicious Mr. Addison, while I sat by him, to see this Scene acted, asked me with some Surprise, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a Passion with the Ghost, which tho' it

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might

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might have astonish'd, it had not provok'd him? for you may observe that in this beautiful Speech, the Passion never rises beyond an almost breathless Astonishment, or an Impatience, limited by filial Reverence, to enquire into the suspected Wrongs that may have raised him from his peaceful Tomb; and to know what a Spirit so seemingly distress'd, might wish or enjoin a sorrowful Son to execute towards his future Quiet in the Grave? This was the Light into which Betterton threw this Scene, which he opened with a pause of mute Amazement; then rising slowly, to a solemn, trembling Voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the Spectator as to himself: And in the descriptive part of the natural Emotions which the ghastly Vision gave him, the Boldness of his Expostulation was still govern'd by decency, manly, but not braving; his Voice never rising into that seeming Outrage, or wild defiance of what he naturally revered: But to preserve this medium between mouthing and meaning too little, is of all the Master-strokes of an Actor the most difficult to reach; and in this none have yet equal'd Betterton. But I am unwilling to shew his superiority only by recounting the Errors of those who cannot answer to them; let their farther Failings therefore be forgotten: Or rather, shall I in some measure excuse them? For I am not yet sure, that they might not be as much owing to the false Judgment of the Spectator, as the Actor. While the Crowd are so apt to be transported, when the Drum of their Ear is so roundly rattled; while they take the Life of Elocution to lie in the Lungs, it is no wonder the Actor, whose end is applause, should be tempted, at this easy rate, to excite it. I shall go a little farther  
and

and allow that this Extreme is more pardonable than its opposite Error? I mean that dangerous Affectation of the Monotone, or solemn Sameness of Pronunciation, which to my Ear is insupportable; for of all Faults that so frequently pass upon the Vulgar, that of Flatness will be the least admired. That this is an ancient Error seems evident by what Hamlet says, in his Instructions to the Players, viz.

Be not too tame, neither, &c.

He that feels not himself the Passion he would raise, will talk to a sleeping Audience: But this never was the Fault of Betterton; and it has often amaz'd me to see those who soon came after him, throw out in some part of a Character, a just and graceful Spirit, which Betterton himself could not but have applauded: And yet in the equally shining passages of the same Character, have heavily dragg'd the Sentiment along like a dead Weight, with a long-ton'd Voice, and absent Eye, as if they had fairly forgot what they were about: If you have never made this Observation, I am contented you should not know where to apply it.

A farther Excellence in Betterton, was, that he could vary his Spirit to the different Characters he acted. These wild impatient starts, that fierce and flashing Fire, which he threw into Hotspur, never came from the unruffled Temper of his Brutus: When the Betterton Brutus was provok'd, in his dispute with Cassius, his Spirit flew only to his Eye; his steady Look alone supplied that Terror, which he disdain'd an Intemperance in his Voice should rise to. Thus, with a settled Dignity of Contempt, like an un-

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heeding Rock, he repelled upon himself the Foam of Cassius. Perhaps the very Words of Shakespeare will let you into my meaning.

Must I give way, and room to your rash Choler?  
Shall I be frighted when a Madman stares?

And a little after,

There is no Terror, Cassius, in your Looks, &c.

Not but in some part of this Scene, where he reproaches Cassius, his Temper is not under this Check, but opens into that Warmth which becomes a Man of Virtue; yet this is that hasty Spark of Anger, which Brutus himself endeavours to excuse.

But with whatever strength of Nature we see the Poet shew, at once, the Philosopher and the Heroe, yet the Image of the Actor's Excellence will be still imperfect to you, unless Language could put Colours in our Words to paint the Voice with.

The most that a Vandyke can arrive at, is to make his Portraits of great Persons seem to think; a Shakespear goes farther yet, and tells you what his Picture thought; a Betterton steps beyond them both, and calls them from the Grave, to breathe, and be themselves again, in Feature, Speech and Motion. When the skilful Actor shews you all these Powers at once united, and gratifies at once your Eye, your Ear, your Understanding. To conceive the Pleasure rising from such Harmony, you must have been present at it; 'tis not to be told you.

There cannot be a stronger Proof of the Charms of harmonious Elocution, than the many,  
even



even unnatural Scenes and Flights of the false Sublime it has lifted into Applause. In what Raptures have I seen an Audience at the furious Fustian and turgid Rants in Nat. Lee's Alexander the Great! For though I can allow this Play a few great Beauties; yet it is not without its extravagant Blemishes. Every Play of the same Author has more or less of them. Let me give you a Sample from this. Alexander in a full Crowd of Courtiers, without being occasionally call'd or provok'd to it, falls into this Rhapsody of Vain-glory.

Can none remember? Yes, I know all must!

And therefore they shall know it agen,

When Glory like the dazzling Eagle, stood  
Perch'd on my Beaver, in the Granic Flood,  
When Fortune's Self, my Standard trembling bore,  
And the pale Fates stood frighted on the Shore,  
When the Immortals on the Billows rode,  
And I myself appear'd the leading God.

When these flowing Numbers came from the Mouth of a Betterton, the Multitude no more desired Sense to them, than our musical Connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrated Airs of an Italian Opera. Does not this prove, that there is very near as much Enchantment in the well-governed Voice of an Actor, as in the sweet Pipe of an Eunuch? If I tell you there was no one Tragedy for many Years, more in Favour with the Town than Alexander, to what must we impute this its Command of publick Admiration? Not to its intrinsic Merit, surely if it swarms with passages like this I have shewn you. Where  
then



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then must have lain the Charm that once made the Publick so partial to this Tragedy? Why plainly, in the Grace and Harmony of the Actor's Utterance. For the Actor himself is not accountable for the false Poetry of his Author; That, the Hearer is to judge of; if it passes upon him, the Actor can have no Quarrel to it; who, if the Periods given him are round, smooth, spirited, and high sounding, even in a false Passion, must throw out the same Fire and Grace, as may be required in one justly rising from Nature; where those his Excellencies will then be only more pleasing in proportion to the Taste of his Hearer. And I am of opinion, that to the extraordinary Success of this very Play, we may impute the Corruption of so many Actors, and Tragick Writers, as were immediately misled by it. The unskilful Actor, who imagin'd all the Merit of delivering those blazing Rants, lay only in the Strength, and strain'd Exertion of the Voice, began to tear his Lungs, upon every false, or slight Occasion, to arrive at the same Applause. And it is from hence I date our having seen the same Reason prevalent, for above fifty Years. Thus equally misguided too, many a barren-brain'd Author has stream'd into a frothy flowing Style, signifying roundly nothing; but to keep a little closer to Betterton.

When this favourite Play, from its being too frequently acted, was worn out, and came to be deserted by the Town, upon the sudden Death of Montfort, who had play'd Alexander with Success for some Years, the Part was given to Betterton, which, under this great Disadvantage of the Satiety it had given, he immediately reviv'd with so new a Lustre, that for three Days together it fill'd the House; and had his then declining Strength  
 been

been equivalent to the Fatigue the Action gave him, it probably might have doubled its Success; an uncommon Instance of the Power and intrinsic Merit of an Actor. This I mention not only to prove what irresistible Pleasure may arise from a judicious Elocution, with scarce Sense to help it; but to shew you too, that tho' Betterton never wanted Fire and Force, when his Character demanded it; yet, where it was not demanded, he never prostituted his power to the low Ambition of a false Applause. And further, that when he resigned that toilsome part, the Play, for many Years after never was able to impose upon the Publick; and I look upon his so particularly supporting the false Fire and Extravagancies of that Character, to be a more surprising proof of his Skill, than his being eminent in those of Shakespeare; because there, Truth and Nature coming to his Assistance, he had not the same Difficulties to combat, and consequently we must be less amaz'd at his Success, where we are more able to account for it.

Once at the acting the last Scene of this Play of Alexander, Mrs. Barry, who played the Character of Roxana, wounded Mrs. Boutel, who played Statira: The occasion of which I shall here recite.

Mrs. Boutel was a considerable Actress; she was low of Stature, had very agreeable Features, a good Complexion, but a childish Look. Her Voice was weak, tho' very mellow; she generally acted the young innocent Lady whom all the Heroes are mad in Love with; she was a Favourite of the Town; and the Generosity of some happy Lovers enabled her to quit the Stage before she grew old.

It

It happened these two Persons before they appeared to the Audience, unfortunately had some dispute about a Veil, which Mrs. Boutel by the Partiality of the Property-man obtained; this offending the haughty Roxana, they had warm Disputes behind the Scenes, which spirited the Rivals with such a natural Resentment to each other, they were so violent in performing their Parts, and acted with such Vivacity, that Statura on hearing the King was nigh, begs the Gods to help her for that Moment; on which Roxana hastening the designed Blow, struck with such Force, that tho' the point of the Dagger was blunted, it made way through Mrs. Boutel's Stays, and entered about a Quarter of an Inch in the Flesh.

This Accident made a great Noise in the House, and alarmed the Town; many different Stories were told; some affirmed Mrs. Barry was jealous of Mrs. Boutel and Lord Rochester, which made them suppose she did it with a Design to destroy her: But by all that could be discovered on the strictest Examination, it was only the Veil these two Ladies contended for, and Mrs. Barry being warmed with Anger in her Part, she struck the Dagger with less Caution than at other Times. — But to return to our Subject.

Mr. Betterton had so just a Sense of what was true or false Applause, that I have heard him say, he never thought any Kind of it equal to an attentive Silence; that there were many ways of deceiving an Audience into a loud one; but to keep them hush and quiet, was an Applause which only Truth and Merit could arrive at: Of which Art, there never was a Master equal to himself. From these various Excellencies, he had

had so full a Possession of the Esteem and Regard of his Auditors, that upon his Entrance into every Scene, he seem'd to seize upon the Eyes and Ears of the Giddy and Inadvertent: To have talk'd or look'd another way, would then have been thought Insensibility or Ignorance. In all his Soliloquies of moment, the strong Intelligence of his Attitude and Aspect, drew you into such an impatient Gaze, and eager Expectation, that you almost imbib'd the Sentiments with your Eye, before the Ear could reach it.

I never heard a Line in Tragedy come from Betterton, wherein my Judgment, my Ear, and my Imagination, were not fully satisfied; which, since his Time, I cannot equally say of any one Actor whatsoever: Not but it is possible to be much his Inferior, with great Excellencies: Had it been practicable to have ty'd down the clattering Hands of all the ill Judges who were commonly the Majority of an Audience, to what amazing Perfection might the English Theatre have arriv'd, with so just an Actor as Betterton at the Head of it. If what was Truth only, could have been applauded, how many noisy Actors had shook their Plumes with shame, who, from the injudicious Approbation of the Multitude, have bawled and strutted in the place of Merit? If therefore the bare speaking Voice has such Allurements in it, how much less ought we to wonder, however we may lament, that the sweeter Notes of vocal Musick should have so captivated even the politer World, into an Apostacy from Sense, to that of Sound.

It is not to the Actor therefore, but to the vitiated and low Taste of the Spectator, that the Corruptions of the Stage, of what Kind soever, have been owing. If the Publick, by whom



they must live, had Spirit enough to discountenance, and declare against all the Trash and Fopperies they have been so frequently fond of, both the Actors and the Authors, to the best of their Power, must naturally have served their daily Table with sound and wholesome Diet.— But to return to the Article of Elocution.

As we have sometimes great Composers of Musick; who cannot sing, we have as frequently great Writers that cannot read; and though, without the nicest Ear, no Man can be Master of poetical Numbers, yet the best Ear in the World will not always enable him to pronounce them. Of this Truth, Dryden, our first great Master of Verse and Harmony, was a strong Instance: When he brought his Play of Amphytrion; or, The Two Sofias, to the Stage, I heard him give it his first Reading to the Actors, in which, though he delivered the plain Sense of every Period, yet the whole was in so cold, so flat, and unaffecting a manner, that I am afraid of not being believed when I affirm it.

On the contrary, Lee, far his Inferior in Poetry, was so pathetick a Reader of his own Scenes, that I have been informed by an Actor who was present, that while Lee was reading to Major Mohun at a Rehearsal, Mohun, in the Warmth of his Admiration, threw down his Part, and said, Unless I were able to play it as well as you read it, to what purpose should I undertake it? And yet this very Author, whose Elocution rais'd such Admiration in so great an Actor as Mohun, when he came upon the Stage himself, soon quitted it, in an honest Despair of ever making any profitable Figure there. From all this I would infer, That let our Conception of what we are to speak, be ever so just, and the



the Ear ever so true, yet when we are to deliver it to an Audience (I will leave Fear out of the Question) there must go along with the whole, a natural Freedom, and becoming Grace, which is easier to conceive than to describe: For without this inexpressible Somewhat, the Performance will come out oddly disguis'd; or somewhere defectively; unsurprising to the Hearer. Of this Defect too, I will give you yet a stranger Instance, which you will allow Fear could not be the Occasion of: It may be remember'd, That Estcourt was long enough upon the Stage, not to be under the least Restraint from Fear, in his Performance: This Man was so amazing and extraordinary a Mimick, that no Man or Woman, from the Coquet to the Privy Counsellor, ever mov'd or spoke before him, but he could carry their Voice, Look, Mien, and Motion, instantly into another Company: I have heard him make long Harangues, and form various Arguments, in representing an eminent Pleader at the Bar, with every the least Article and Singularity of his Utterance so perfectly imitated, that he was scarce to be distinguished from his Original. Yet more, I have seen, upon the Margin of the written Part of Falstaff, which he acted, his own Notes and Observations upon almost every Speech of it, describing the true Spirit of the Humour, and with what Tone of Voice, Look, and Gesture, each of them ought to be delivered. Yet in his Execution upon the Stage, he seem'd to have lost all those just Ideas he had form'd of it, and almost thro' the Character, labour'd under a heavy Load of Flatness: In a word, with all his Skill in Mimickry, and Knowledge of what ought to be done, he never upon the Stage could bring it truly into Practice, but was upon the whole, a

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languid, unaffecting Actor. After I have shewn you so many necessary Qualifications, not one of which can be spar'd in true Theatrical Elocution, and have at the same time prov'd, that with the Assistance of them all united, the whole may still come forth defective; what Talents shall we say will infallibly form an Actor? This, I confess is one of Nature's Secrets, too deep for me to dive into; let us content our selves therefore with affirming, That Genius, which Nature only gives, only can complete him. This Genius then was so strong in Betterton, that it shone out in every Speech and Motion of him. Yet Voice, and Person, are such necessary Supports to it, that, by the Multitude, they have been preferr'd to Genius itself, or at least often mistaken for it. Betterton had a Voice of that kind, which gave more Spirit to Terror, than to the softer Passions; of more Strength than Melody. The Rage and Jealousy of Othello, became him better than the Sighs and Tenderness of Castalio: For though in Castalio he only excell'd others, in Othello he excell'd himself; which you will easily believe, when you consider, that in spite of his Complexion, Othello has more natural Beauties than the best Actor can find in all the Magazine of Poetry, to animate his Power, and delight his Judgment with.

The Person of this most excellent Actor was suitable to his Voice, more manly than sweet, not exceeding the middle Stature, inclining to the corpulent; of a serious and penetrating Aspect; his Limbs nearer the athletick than the delicate Proportion; yet however formed, there arose from the Harmony of the whole a commanding Mien of Majesty, which the fairer faced, or (as Shakespear calls 'em) the curled Darlings of his Time, ever wanted something to be

be equal Masters of. There was some Years ago, to be had, in every Picture-shop, a Metzotinto, from Kneller, extremely like him.

In all I have said of Betterton, I confine myself to the Time of his Strength, and highest Power in Action, that you may make Allowances from what he was able to execute at Fifty, to what you might have seen of him at past Seventy; for tho' to the last he was without his Equal, he might not then be equal to his former self; yet so far was he from being ever overtaken, that for many Years after his Decease, I seldom saw any of his Parts, in Shakespeare, supplied by others, but it drew from me the Lamentation of Ophelia upon Hamlet's being unlike what she had seen him.

— Ah, woe is me!

T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see.

The last part this great Master of his Profession acted, was Melanthius in the Maid's Tragedy, for his own Benefit; when being suddenly seized by the Gout, he submitted, by extraordinary Applications, to have his Foot so far relieved, that he might be able to walk on the Stage, in a Slipper, rather than wholly disappoint his Auditors. He was observed that Day to have exerted a more than ordinary Spirit, and met with suitable Applause; but the unhappy Consequence of tampering with his Distemper was, that it flew into his Head, and kill'd him in three Days, in the seventy-fourth Year of his Age.

Mr. Betterton brought three Plays upon the Stage.

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I. The Woman made a Justice.  
II. The Unjust Judge: Or, Appius and Virginia. A Tragedy.

III. The Amorous Widow: Or, The Wanton Wife. In this Comedy Mr. Nokes played Sir Barnaby Brittle, and Mrs. Long Mrs. Brittle, in which Part Mrs. Bracegirdle succeeded her.

All these Plays were well received; but the last only is preserved, the first and second being lost.

N. B. The Author of this Work has, since he began it, had a very curious Manuscript of Mr. Betterton's communicated to him, containing, The whole Duty of a Player; interspersed with Directions for young Actors, as to the Management of the Voice, Carriage of the Body, &c. &c. reckoned the best Piece that has been wrote on the Subject. Which will be inserted in its proper place in this Volume.

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### Mrs. BARRY'S Character.

**M**R S. BARRY had so bad an Ear, tho' she had a good Voice, that they thought it would be impossible to make her fit for the meanest part: And so difficult did they find it to teach her, that she was three Times rejected: Sir William Davenant, by the Interest of some of his Friends, was again persuaded to try her, but with so little Success, that several Persons of Wit and Quality being at the Play, and observing how ill she performed, positively gave their Opinion.



Opinion she never would be capable of any tolerable part. But the Earl of Rochester, to shew them he had a superior Judgment, entered into a Wager, that in six Months he would make her the finest Actress on the Stage.

The Earl was opposed by them all, and tho' they knew him to be a Person of good Knowledge in theatrical Affairs, yet they thought, on this Subject, he had started beyond the Bounds of his Judgment; and so many poignant Things were said to him on this Occasion, that they piqued him into a Resolution of taking such pains with Mrs. Barry, as to convince them he was not mistaken.

From the Moment he had this Dispute, he became intimately acquainted with her, but to the World he kept it private, especially from those he had argued with about her. He soon, by talking with her, found her Mistress of exquisite Charms; and it was thought that he never lov'd any Person so sincerely as he did Mrs. Barry.

The first part Lord Rochester taught Mrs. Barry, was Isabella, the Hungarian Queen, in the Tragedy of Mustapha, by the Earl of Orfery, which he made her rehearse a great many Times on the Stage, dress'd as she was to act it. He took such extraordinary pains with her, as not to omit the least Look or Motion; nay, I have been assured from those who were present, that her Page was taught to manage her Train, in such a manner, as to give each Movement a peculiar Grace.

The Earl perceiving that his Pupil had run into a Tone in sounding the Words, a Fault in most young Players, he made her enter into the Nature of each Sentiment; perfectly changing herself, as it were, into the Person, not merely  
by



by the proper Strefs or Sounding of the Voice; but feeling really, and being in the Humour the Person she represented, was supposed to be.

The first Night she played the Hungarian Queen, my Lord brought the King, and the Duke and Dutchess of York to the Play, besides the Persons he had disputed withal about her: The very Air that she appeared with, in that distressed Character, moved them with pity, preparing the Mind to greater Expectations; but when she spoke these Words to the insulting Cardinal;

My Lord, my Sorrow seeks not your Relief;  
You are not fit to judge a Mother's Grief:  
You have no Child for an untimely Grave,  
Not can you lose what I desire to save,

The Theatre resounded with Applause; and the Dutchess of York was so pleased, that from Mrs. Barry she learned to improve in the English Language, made her a Present of her Wedding-suit, and favoured her in so particular a manner, when Queen, that 'tis said she gave her her Coronation Robes to act Queen Elizabeth, in the Earl of Essex. Tho' this Tragedy is but indifferently wrote, yet Mrs. Barry so happily hit it, that she made that Queen, who was so much beloved, revive again, and become idolized, in her. That little Speech of

What means my giving Subjects?

was spoken with such a Grace and Emphasis as has not yet been imitated; her Performance giving the Audience an Idea of that Princess in many important passages of her Life. The Air  
with

with which she looked when she penetrated into the Thoughts of the Countesses of Rutland and Nottingham, on their endeavouring to hide the different Passions of Hate and Love, shewed, more than the Language, the piercing Genius of that great Queen; but when Cecil is recounting the Seizure of the Earls, and mourns Essex's fallen State, no Imagination can form her Look and Air, when she says,

Essex, thou art fallen indeed!  
See! the Crocodile weeps o'er his Prey.

As those who are acquainted with History know, that Queen Elizabeth, notwithstanding her Indulgence to her Favourites, had a quick Eye in discerning their Faults; so it is certain, at the same time her Heart was moved with Compassion for the Crimes that occasioned their Fate, she still executed inflexible Justice on the Traitors. This Mrs. Barry represented so finely, that Love, Disdain, Hate, Severity and Pity, were so blended together in this politick Queen, one could hardly say which was the strongest; and gave greater Lights into the Temper of Queen Elizabeth, than History itself.

What Opinion Mr. Dryden had of Mrs. Barry, and what Life she gave to the principal Parts in Tragedy, you will easily judge from the Words of that Poet, in his preface to Cleomenes, (in which Mrs. Barry play'd the Character of Cassandra) where he says,

“ Mrs. Barry, always excellent, has in this  
“ Tragedy excell'd herself, and gained a Repu-  
“ tation beyond any Woman I have ever seen on  
“ the Stage.”

It may perhaps seem unnecessary for any Person to give their Opinion after Mr. Dryden ; but I can't help saying, that I will venture to add, that tho' Dryden has been dead these forty Years, the same Compliment, to this Hour, may be due to her Excellence. And tho', when she acted Cassandra, she was not a little past her Youth, she had not before that time fully arrived to the maturity of her Power and Judgment : From whence it may be observed, That the short Life of Beauty is not long enough to form a compleat Actress. In Men, the Delicacy of Person is not so absolutely necessary, nor the Decline of it so soon taken notice of.

Alexander the Great : Or, The Rival Queens, was a Tragedy in which Mrs. Barry seemed to have new-form'd the Character she played, which was that of Roxana : To read this Play, one would think the Author had been in a Heat the whole Time he was writing it, tho' there are some Strokes in it which have the true Fire of Poetry. For want of a Barry and a Bracegirdle, the Characters of Roxana and Statira are perfect Burlesque on the Dignity of Majesty and good Manners. Roxana is haughty, malicious, insinuating ; with this Compound, she is made desperately in Love with Alexander. On her first entering, what Misery did she seem to feel, tortured with Jealousy, when she says,

Madness but meanly represents my Toil.  
 Roxana and Statira ! they are Names  
 That must for ever jar ; eternal Discord,  
 Fury, Revenge, Disdain and Indignation,  
 Tear my swoln Breast, make way for Fire and  
 Tempest,

My

My Brain is burst, Debate and Reason quench'd,  
The Storm is up, and my hot bleeding Heart,  
Splits with the Rack.

I have heard this Speech spoke in a Rage that run the Actor out of Breath; but Mrs. Barry, when she talked of her hot bleeding Heart, seem'd to feel a Fever within, which by Debate and Reason she would quench. This was not done in a ranting Air, but as if she were struggling with her Passions, and trying to get the Mastery of them: A peculiar Smile she had, which made her look the most genteely malicious Person that can be imagined, when she meets Statira and insults her thus,

I hope your Majesty will give me Leave,  
To wait you to the Grove, where you would  
grieve,  
Where like the Turtle, you the Loss will moan  
Of that dear Mate, and murmur all alone.

Then with what a Softness did she look and speak, taking Alexander by the Hand, saying,

—now—for a last Look,  
And that the Memory of Roxana's Wrongs  
May be for ever printed in your Mind.

In the following Scene Roxana's Character rises; no Rage, no Revenge, nor even the Fear of Syfigambis, who was suspected to aim at her and the Infant's Destruction, could make her admit a Thought against the King's Life; nay, the Indignation she is in with Cafander for tempting her, joined with his profered Love, is so great, that he is forced to desist, sooth her



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Fury, and contrive the getting Statira into her Power, whom Roxana is supposed to kill with unrelenting Hate.

I must take notice, that tho' Roxana had just before, with such Malice murder'd an innocent Person, because better beloved than herself; yet after Statira is dead, and Roxana is following Alexander on her Knees, Mrs. Barry made this Complaint in so pathetick a manner, as drew Tears from the greatest part of the Audience.

O! speak not such harsh Words, my Royal Master :

But take, dear Sir, O! take me into Grace ;  
 By the dear Babe the Burden of my Womb,  
 That weighs me down when I would follow faster.  
 My Knees are weary, and my Force is spent,  
 O! do not frown, but clear that angry Brow ;  
 Your Eyes will blast me, and your Words are  
 Bolts

That strike me dead ; the little Wretch I bear,  
 Leaps frighted at your Wrath, and dies within me,

Mrs. Barry, in all Characters of Greatness, had a Presence of elevated Dignity, her Mien and Motion superb, and gracefully majestick ; her Voice full, clear and strong, so that no Violence of Passion could be too much for her : And when Distress or Tendernefs possess'd her, she subsided into the most affecting Melody and Softness. In the Art of exciting Pity, she had a Power beyond all the Actresses I have yet seen, or what your Imagination can conceive: Of the former of these two great Excellencies, she gave the most delightful Proofs in almost all the Heroic Plays of Dryden and Lee ; and of the latter, in the softer Passions of Otway's Monimia and Bel-

Belvidera, in the Tragedies of *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*: In Scenes of Anger, Defiance or Resentment, while she was impetuous and terrible, she poured out the Sentiment with an enchanting Harmony ; and it was this particular Excellence for which Dryden made her the before mentioned Complement, upon her acting *Cassandra* in his *Cleomenes*. But I am apt to think his Partiality for that Character may have tempted his Judgment to let it pass for her Master-piece ; when he could not but know, there were several other Characters in which her Action might have given her a fairer pretence to the Praise he has bestow'd on her for *Cassandra* ; for, in no part of that, is there the least Ground for Compassion, as in *Monimia* ; nor equal cause for Admiration, as in the nobler Love of *Cleopatra*, or the turbulent and tempestuous Jealousy of *Roxana*. 'Twas in these Lights I thought Mrs. Barry shone with a much brighter Excellence than in *Cassandra*. She was the first Person whose Merit was distinguish'd by the Indulgence of having an annual Benefit-play, which was granted to her alone, if I mistake not, first in King James's Time, and which became not common to other Actors, till after the Death of King William's Consort Queen Mary. This great Actress died of a Fever towards the End of Queen Anne's Reign. Perhaps you may recollect the Year by an Expression that fell from her in blank Verse, in her last Hours, when she was delirious, viz.

Ha, ha ; and so they make us Lords, by Dozens!

Mr.

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 Mr. EDWARD KYNASTON'S Character:

**T**H O', as I have before observed, Women were not admitted to the Stage till the Restoration, yet it could not be so suddenly supplied with them, but that there was still a Necessity to put the handsomest young Men into Petticoats; which Kynaston was then said to have worn with Success; particularly in the Part of Evadne, in the Maid's Tragedy, Arthiope in the Unfortunate Lovers, the Princess in the Mad Lover, Ismenia in the Maid in the Mill, Aglaura, &c. being Parts so greatly moving Compassion, that it has been disputed among the Judicious, whether any Woman could have more sensibly touched the Passions. This calls to my mind a ridiculous Distress that arose from these Sort of Shifts, which the Stage was then put to.—The King coming a little before his usual Time to a Tragedy, found the Actors not ready to begin, when his Majesty not chusing to have as much patience as his good Subjects, sent to them, to know the Meaning of it; upon which the Master of the Company came to the Box, and rightly judging, that the best Excuse for their Default, would be the true one, fairly told his Majesty, that the Queen was not shav'd yet: The King, whose good Humour lov'd to laugh at a Jest, as well as to make one, accepted the Excuse, which served to divert him, till the male Queen had his Face smooth'd. In a word, Kynaston at that time was so beautiful a Youth, that the Ladies of Quality prided themselves in taking

taking him with them in their Coaches to Hyde-park, in his theatrical Habit, after the Play; which in those days they might have sufficient time to do, because Plays then, were us'd to begin at four a-Clock, the Hour that People of the same Rank are now going to Dinner. This Truth I had confirmed from his own Mouth, in his advanced Age. Indeed to the last of him, his Handsomeness was little abated; even at past sixty, his Teeth were all sound, white and even, as one would wish to see in a beautiful young Woman of twenty. He had something of a formal Gravity in his Mien, which was attributed to the stately Step he had been so early confined to, in a female decency. But that, in Characters of Superiority had its proper Graces; it misbecame him not in the part of Leon, in Fletcher's Rule a Wife, and Have a Wife, which he executed with a determined Manliness, and honest Authority, well worth the best Actor's Imitation. He had a piercing Eye, and in Characters of heroic Life, a quick imperious Vivacity in his Tone of Voice, that painted the Tyrant truly terrible. There were two Plays of Dryden in which he shone with uncommon Lustre; in Aurenge-Zebe he play'd Morat, and in Don Sebastian, Muley Moloch; in both these parts, he had a fierce, Lion like Majesty in his Port and Utterance, that gave the Auditors a kind of trembling Admiration!

Here I cannot help taking notice of a modest Mistake, which I thought the late Mr. Booth committed in his acting the part of Morat: There are in this Character so many Sentiments of avow'd Barbarity, Insolence and Vain-glory, that they blaze even to a ludicrous Lustre; and doubtless the Author intended those to make his Spectators



Spectators laugh, while they admired them ; but Booth thought it depreciated the Dignity of Tragedy to raise a Smile, in any part of it, and therefore covered these kind of Sentiments with a scrupulous Coldness and unmov'd Delivery, as if he had fear'd the Audience might take too familiar a notice of them. The late Mr. Addison was clearly of Opinion, that Tragedy, on particular Occasions might admit of a Laugh of Approbation. In Shakespeare Instances of them are frequent, as in Mackbeth, Hotspur, Richard the Third, and Harry the Eighth ; all which Characters, tho' of a tragical Cast, have sometimes familiar strokes in them, so highly natural to each particular Disposition, that it is impossible not to be transported into an honest Laughter at them : And these are those happy Liberties, which tho' few Authors are qualified to take, yet when justly taken, may challenge a place among their greatest Beauties. Now whether Dryden in his Morat, may be allowed the Happiness of having hit this mark, seems not necessary to be determined by the Actor, whose business is to make the best of his Author's Intention, as in this part Kynaston did, doubtless not without Dryden's approbation. For these Reasons then, I thought Mr. Booth, who had certainly many Excellencies, carried his reverence for Tragedy too far, in not following the bold Flights of his Author with that Wantonness which the nature of those Sentiments demanded ; for Example, Morat having a criminal passion for Indamora, promises, at her request, for one Day, to spare the Life of her Lover Aurenge-Zebe ; but not chusing to make known the real motive of his Mercy, when Nourmahal says to him,

'Twill

'Twill not be safe to let him live an Hour.

Morat silences her with this heroical Rhodomontade,

I'll do't, to shew my Arbitrary Power.

It was impossible not to laugh, and reasonably too, when this Line came out of the Mouth of Kynaston, with the stern and haughty Look that attended it. But above this tyrannical, tumid Superiority of Character, there is a grave and rational Majesty in Shakespeare's Harry the Fourth, which tho' not so glaring to the vulgar Eye, requires thrice the Skill and Grace to become and support. Of this real Majesty Kynaston was entirely Master; here every Sentiment came from him, as if it had been his own, as if he had himself that instant conceived it, as if he had lost the Player, and were the real King he personated; a Perfection so rarely found, that very often, in Actors of good Repute, a certain Vacancy of Look, Inanity of Voice, or superfluous Gesture, shall unmask the Man, to the judicious Spectator; who from the least of those Errors plainly sees the whole but a Lesson given him, to be got by Heart, from some great Author, whose Sense is deeper than the Repeater's Understanding. This true Majesty Kynaston had so entire a Command of, that when he whisper'd the following plain Line to Hotspur,

Send us your Prisoners, or you'll hear of it.

He convey'd a more terrible Menace in it than the loudest Intemperance of Voice could swell to.

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But

But let the bold Imitator beware, for without the Look, and just Elocution that waited on it, an Attempt of the same Nature may fall to nothing.

But the Dignity of this Character appear'd in Kynaſton ſtill more ſhining, in the private Scene between the King and Prince his Son: There you ſaw Maſteſty, in that ſort of Grief, which only Maſteſty could feel; there the paternal Concern, for the Errors of the Son, made the Monarch more revered and dreaded: His Reproaches ſo juſt, yet ſo unmix'd with Anger, and therefore the more percing, opening as it were the Arms of Nature, with a ſecret Wiſh, that filial Duty and Penitence awak'd, might fall into them with Grace and Honour. In this affecting Scene I thought Kynaſton ſhew'd his moſt maſterly ſtrokes of Nature; expreſſing all the various Motions of the Heart, with the ſame Force, Dignity and Feeling they are written; adding to the whole, that peculiar and becoming Grace, which the beſt Writer cannot inſpire into any Actor, that is not born with it. What made the Merit of this Actor, and that of Betterton more ſurprizing, was, that though they had both obſerv'd the Rules of Truth and Nature, they were each as different in their manner of acting, as in their perſonal Form and Features. But Kynaſton ſtaid too long upon the Stage, till his Memory began to fail him. I ſhall not therefore ſay any Thing of his Imperfections, which, at that Time, were viſibly not his own, but the Effects of decaying Nature.

Mr.

## Mr. SANDFORD'S Character.

**M**R. Sandford might properly be term'd the Spagnolet of the Theatre, an Excellent Actor in disagreeable Characters: For as the chief Pieces of that famous Painter were of Human Nature in Pain and Agony; so Mr. Sandford, upon the Stage, was generally as flagitious as a Creon, a Maligni, an Iago or a Machiavil, could make him. The Painter, 'tis true, from the Fire of his Genius might think the quiet Objects of Nature too tame for his Pencil, and therefore chose to indulge it in its full Power, upon those of Violence and Horror: But poor Mr. Sandford was not the Stage-Villain by choice, but from Necessity; for having a low and crooked Person, such Bodily Defects were too strong to be admitted into great, or amiable Characters; so that whenever, in any new or revived Play, there was a hateful or mischievous Person, Mr. Sandford was sure to have no Competitor for it: Nor indeed (as we are not to suppose a Villain, or Traitor can be shewn but for our Abhorrence) can it be doubted, but the less comely the Actor's Person, the fitter he may be to perform them. The Spectator too, by not being misled by a tempting Form, may be less inclin'd to excuse wicked or immoral Views or Sentiments of them. And though the hard Fate of an Oedipus, might naturally give the Humanity of an Audience thrice the Pleasure that could arise from the wilful Wickedness of the best acted Creon; yet who could say



that Sandford, in such a Part was not Master of as true and just Action, as the best Tragedian could be, whose happier Person had recommended him to the virtuous Heroe, or any other more pleasing Favourite of the Imagination? In this disadvantageous Light, then, stood Mr. Sandford, as an Actor; admired by the Judicious, while the Crowd only prais'd him by their Prejudice. And so unusual had it been to see Mr. Sandford an innocent Man in a Play, that whenever he was so, the Spectators would hardly give him credit in so gross an Improbability. Let me give you an Instance of it, which I heard Mr. Monfort say was a real Fact. A new Play (the Name of it I have forgot) was brought upon the Stage, wherein Mr. Sandford happen'd to perform the Part of an honest Statesman: The Pit, after they had sate three or four Acts, in a quiet Expectation, that the well-disssembled Honesty of Mr. Sandford (for such of Course they concluded it) would soon be discover'd, or at least, from its Security, involve the Actors in the Play, in some surprizing Distress or Confusion, which might raise, and animate the Scenes to come, when, at last, finding no such matter, but that the Catastrophe had taken quite another Turn, and that Mr. Sandford was really an Honest Man to the end of the Play, they fairly damn'd it, as if the Author had impos'd upon them the most frontless or incredible Absurdity.

It is not improbable, but that from Mr. Sandford's so masterly personating Characters of Guilt, the inferior Actors might think his Success chiefly owing to the Defects of his Person; and from thence might take Occasion, whenever they appear'd as Bravo's, or Murtherers, to make themselves as frightful and as inhuman Figures, as possible.

able: In King Charles's time, this low Skill was carry'd to such an Extravagance, that the King himself, who was black-brow'd, and of a swarthy Complexion, pass'd a pleasant Remark, upon his observing the grim Looks of the Murtherers in *Maekbeth*; when turning to his People, in the Box about him, Pray, what is the Meaning, said he, that we never see a Rogue in a Play, but, Godsfish! they always clap him on a black Perriwig? when, it is well known, one of the greatest Rogues in England always wears a fair one. Now, whether or not Dr. Oates, at that time, wore his own Hair, I cannot be positive: Or, if his Majesty pointed at some greater Man, then out of Power, I leave those to guess at him, who may yet, remember the changing Complexion of his Ministers. This Story I had from Betterton, who was a Man of Veracity: And I confess, I should have thought the King's Observation a very just one, though he himself had been fair as Adonis. Nor can I, in this Question, help voting with the Court; for were it not too gross a Weakness to employ, in wicked Purposes, Men whose very suspected Looks might be enough to betray them? Or are we to suppose it unnatural, that a Murther should be thoroughly committed out of an old red Coat, and a Black Perriwig?

For my own part, I profess myself to have been an Admirer of Mr. Sandford, and have often lamented, that his masterly Performance could not be rewarded with that Applause, which I saw much inferior Actors meet with, merely because they stood in more laudable Characters. For, tho' it may be a Merit in an Audience, to applaud Sentiments of Virtue and Honour; yet there seems to be an equal Justice, that no Distinction should

should be made, as to the Excellence of an Actor, whether in a good or evil Character; since neither the Vice nor the Virtue of it, is his own, but given him by the Poet; Therefore, why is not the Actor who shines in either equally commendable? — No, Sir, this may be Reason, but that is not always a Rule with us; the Spectator will tell you, that when Virtue is applauded, he gives part of it to himself; because his Applause, at the same time, lets others about him see, that he himself admires it. But when a wicked Action is going forward; when an Iago is meditating Revenge and Mischief; tho' Art and Nature may be equally strong in the Actor, the Spectator is shy of his Applause, lest he should, in some sort, be look'd upon as an Aider or an Abettor of the Wickedness in view; and therefore rather chuses to rob the Actor of the Praise he may merit, than give it him in a Character, which he would have you see his Silence modestly discourages: From the same fond Principle, many Actors have made it a point to be seen in any Parts sometimes, even flatly written, only because they stood in the favourable Light of Honour and Virtue.

I have formerly known an Actress carry this theatrical Prudery to such a height, that she was very near, keeping herself chaste by it: Her Fondness for Virtue on the Stage, she began to think, might persuade the World, that it had made an Impression on her private Life; and the Appearances of it actually went so far, that in an Epilogue to an obscure Play, the Profits of which were given to her, and wherein she acted a part of impregnable Chastity, she bespoke the Favour of the Ladies by a protestation, that in honour of their Goodness and Virtue, she would dedi-

dedicate her unblemish'd Life to their Example. Part of this vestal Vow, I remember, was contained in the following Verse :

Study to live the Character I play.

But alas, how weak are the strongest Works of Art, when Nature besieges it? for though this good Creature so far held out her Distaste to Mankind, that they could never reduce her to marry any one of 'em; yet we must own she grew, like Cæsar, greater by her Fall. Her first heroic Motive, to a Surrender, was to save the Life of a Lover, who, in his despair, had vowed to destroy himself, with which Act of Mercy (in a jealous Dispute once, in my Hearing) she was provoked to reproach him in these very Words; Villain, did not I save your Life?

It is plainly not the Hood that makes the Monk, nor the Veil the Vestal; I am apt to think, that if the personal Morals of an Actor, were to be weighed by his Appearance on the Stage, the Advantage and (if any were due to either side) might rather incline to the Traytor, than the Heroe, to the Sempronius, than the Cato; or to the Syphax, than the Juba: Because no Man can naturally desire to cover his Honesty with a wicked Appearance; but an ill Man might possibly incline to cover his Guilt with the Appearance of Goodness, which was the case of the frail Fair One, now mentioned. But be this Question decided as it may, Sandford always appeared to me the honestest Man, in proportion to the Spirit wherewith he exposed the wicked and immoral Characters he acted: for had his Heart been unsound, or tainted with the least Guilt of them,



them, his Conscience must, in spite of him, in any too near a resemblance of himself, have been a Check upon the Liveliness of his Action. He therefore might be said to have contributed his equal share with the foremost Actors, to the true and laudable purposes of the Theatre: And in this Light too, of being so frequently the Object of common Distaste, we may honestly stile him a theatrical Martyr, to poetical Justice: For in making Vice odious, or Virtue amiable, where does the Merit differ? To hate the one, or love the other, are but leading steps to the same Temple of Fame, tho' at different Gates.

This Actor, in his manner of speaking, varied very much from those I have already mentioned. His voice had an acute and piercing Tone, which struck every Word distinctly upon the Ear. He had likewise a peculiar Skill in his Look of marking out to an Audience whatever he judg'd worth their more than ordinary Notice. When he deliver'd a Command, he would sometimes give it more Force, by seeming to slight the Ornament of Harmony. In Dryden's Plays of Rhime, he as little as possible glutted the Ear with the Jingle of it, rather chusing, when the Sense would permit him, to lose it, than to value it.

Had Sandford liv'd in Shakespear's time, I am confident his Judgment must have chose him, above all other Actors, to have play'd his Richard the Third: I leave his Person out of the Question, which, tho' naturally made for it, yet that would have been the least part of his Recommendation; he had stronger Claims to it, sometimes an uncouth stateliness in his Motion, a harsh and fullen pride of Speech, a meditating Brow, a stern Aspect, occasionally changing into  
an

an almost ludicrous Triumph over all Goodness ; and from thence falling into the most asswasive Gentleness, and soothing Candour of a designing Heart. These, I say, must have preferr'd him to it ; these would have been Colours so essentially shining in that Character, that it will be no Dispraise to that great Author to say, Sandford must have shewn as many masterly strokes in it, had he ever acted it, as are visible in the writing it.

Mrs. ELLEN GUYN'S Character.

**M**R S. Guyn, tho' Mistress to a Monarch, was the Daughter of a Fruiterer in Covent Garden.

This shews that Sultans, Emperors and Kings,  
When Blood boils high will stoop to meanest  
Things.

Nelly, for by that Name she was universally known, came into the Theatre in the way of her Business, to sell Fruit,

The Orange-basket her fair Arms did suit,  
Laden with Pippins and Hesperian Fruit,  
This first step rais'd, to th' wond'ring Pit she sold  
The lovely Fruit smiling with streaks of Gold.  
Fate now for her did its whole force engage,  
And from the Pit she's mounted to the Stage,  
There in full Lustre did her Glories shine,  
And long eclips'd, spread forth her Light divine ;  
There Hart's and Rowley's Soul she did ensnare,  
And made a King the Rival to a Play'r.

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This

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This is Lord Rochester's account. We find her afterwards acting the parts of Queen Almahide in the Conquest of Grannada, Florimel in the Maiden Queen, Donna Jacintha, in the Mock-astrologer, Valeria in the Royal Martyr ; in which Tragedy Mrs. Boutel played the part of Saint Catharine. Miss Guyn, besides her own part of Valeria, was likewise appointed to speak the Epilogue ; in performing which, she so captivated the King, who was present the first Night of the Play, by the humorous Turns she gave it, that his Majesty, when she had done, went behind the Scenes, and carried her off to an Entertainment that Night.

In the Tragedy of Tyrannick Love ; Or, The Royal Martyr, Valeria is Daughter to the Roman Emperor Maximin ; she being forced by her Father to marry Placidius, stabs herself for Love of Porphyrius, who thus condoles her Loss,

Our Arms no more let Aquileia fear,  
But to her Gates our peaceful Ensigns bear.  
While I mix Cypress with my Myrtle Wreath ;  
Joy for my Life, and mourn Valeria's Death.

As Valeria is carrying off the Stage dead, she thus accosts the Bearer,

Hold, are you mad ? You damn'd confounded  
Dog,  
I am to rise, and speak the Epilogue.

(Then she addresses herself to the Audience.)

I come, kind Gentlemen, strange News to tell ye,  
I am the Ghost of poor departed Nelly.  
Sweet Ladies be not frightened, I'll be civil,  
I'm what I was, a little harmless Devil.

For,

For, after death, we Sprites have just such natures  
We had, for all the World, when human Crea-  
tures :

And therefore I, that was an Actress here,  
Play all my Tricks in Hell, a Goblin there.  
Gallants, look to't, you say there are no Sprites,  
But I'll come dance about your Beds at Nights.  
And faith you'll be, in a sweet kind of taking,  
When I surprize you between sleep and waking.  
To tell you true, I walk, because I die  
Out of my Calling, in a Tragedy.  
O Poet, damn'd dull Poet, who could drove  
So senseless! to make Nelly die for Love;  
Nay, what's yet worse, to kill me in the prime  
Of Easter-Term; in Tart and Cheese-cake time!  
I'll fit the Fop; for I'll not one word say,  
T' excuse his godly out-of-Fashion Play,  
But farewell, Gentlemen, make haste to me,  
I'm sure ere long to have your Company.  
As for my Epitaph when I am gone,  
I'll trust no Poet, but will write my own.  
Here Nelly lies, who, tho' she liv'd a Slattern,  
Yet died a Princess, acting in Saint Cattern.

Besides the parts she acted in the foregoing  
Plays of Mr. Dryden, she performed a little  
Song, in his Comedy called the Assignation; Or,  
Love in a Nunnery, with great Archness. The  
Song in this Comedy is introduced by a young  
Lady's being asked this Question — Are you  
fit, at Fifteen, to be trusted with a Maidenhead?  
'Tis as much, Child, as your Betters can ma-  
nage at full Twenty;

I.

For 'tis of a Nature so subtile,  
That if 'tis not luted with Care,

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The



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The Spirit will work thro' the Bottle,  
And vanish away into Air.

II.

To keep it, there nothing so hard is,  
'T will go between waking and sleeping,  
The Simple, too weak for its Guard is,  
And no Wit, wou'd be plagu'd with the  
    keeping.

Nelly was eas'd of her Virginity by Mr. Hart,  
at the same Time that Lord Buckhurst sigh'd for  
it, tho' his Majesty carried off the Prize.

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Mr. WILLIAM MONTFORT'S Character:

**M**R. Montfort, was of person tall, well  
made, fair, and of an agreeable aspect :  
His Voice clear, full, and melodious : In Tra-  
gedy he was the most affecting Lover within my  
memory. His addressees had a resistless Recom-  
mendation from the very tone of his Voice,  
which gave his Words such softness, that, as Dry-  
den says,

----Like Flakes of feather'd Snow,  
They melted as they fell !

All this he particularly verify'd in that scene of  
Alexander, where the Heroe throws himself at  
the Feet of Statira for pardon of his past Infide-  
lities. There we saw the Great, the Tender, the  
Penitent, the Despairing, the Transported, and the  
Amiable, in the highest Perfection. In Comedy,  
he gave the truest Life to what we call the Fine  
Gentle-

Gentleman ; his spirit shone the brighter for being polish'd with Decency : In scenes of Gaiety, he never broke into the Regard, that was due to the presence of equal ; or superior Characters, tho' inferior Actors play'd them ; he fill'd the Stage, not by elbowing, and crossing it before others, or disconcerting their action, but the surpassing them, in true and masterly Touches of Nature. He never laugh'd at his own Jest, unless the point of his Raillery upon another requir'd it. He had a particular Talent, in giving Life to Bons Mots and Repartees : The Wit of the Poet seem'd always to come from him extempore, and sharpen'd into more Wit from his brilliant manner of delivering it ; he had himself a good share of it, or what is equal to it, so lively a pleasantness of Humour, that when either of these fell into his Hands upon the Stage, he wantoned with them, to the highest Delight of his Auditors. The Agreeable was so natural to him, that even in that dissolute Character of the Rover, he seem'd to wash off the Guilt from Vice, and give it Charms and Merit. For tho' it may be a Reproach to the Poet, to draw such Characters, not only unpunish'd, but rewarded : the Actor should still be allow'd his due praise in his excellent performance. And this is a Distinction which, when this Comedy was acted at Whitehall, King William's Queen Mary was pleas'd to make in favour of Monford, notwithstanding her Disapprobation of the Play.

He had besides all this, a variety in his Genius, which few capital actors have shewn, or perhaps have thought it any addition to their Merit to arrive at ; he could entirely change himself ; could at once throw off the Man of sense, for the brisk, vain, rude, and lively Coxcomb, the false, flashy,

flashy pretender to Wit, and the Dupe of his own sufficiency : Of this he gave a delightful Instance in the Character of Sparkish in Wycherly's Country Wife. In that of Sir Courtly Nice his Excellence was still greater : There his whole Man, Voice, Mien, and Gesture, was no longer Monfort, but another Person. There, the insipid soft Civility, the elegant, and formal Mien ; the drawling Delicacy of Voice, the stately Flatness of his Address, and the empty Eminence of his Attitudes were so nicely observ'd and guarded by him, that had he not been an entire Master of Nature, had he not kept his Judgment, as it were, a Centinel upon himself, not to admit the least Likeness of what he us'd to be, to enter into any part of his Performance, he could not possibly have so compleatly finish'd it. He sung a clear Counter-tenour, and had a melodious, warbling Throat, which could not but set off the last Scene of Sir Courtly with an uncommon Happiness.

This excellent Actor was cut off by a tragical Death, in the 33d Year of his Age, generally lamented by his Friends, and all Lovers of the Theatre. The particular Accidents that attended his Fall, are to be found at large in the Trial of the Lord Mohun, printed among those of the State, in Folio.

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Mr. JAMES NOKES's Character.

**M**R. Nokes was an Actor of a quite different Genius from any I have ever read, heard of, or seen, since or before his time ; and yet his general Excellence may be comprehended in one Article,

Article, viz. a plain and palpable simplicity of Nature, which was so utterly his own, that he was often as unaccountably diverting in his common speech, as on the Stage. I saw him once, giving an Account of some Table-talk, to another Actor behind the Scenes, which a Man of Quality accidentally listening to, was so deceived by his Manner, that he ask'd him, if that was a new Play, he was rehearsing? It seems almost amazing that this simplicity, so easy to Nokes, should never be caught by any one of his Successors. Leigh and Underhill have been well copied, tho' not equall'd by others. But not all the mimical Skill of Esteourt (fam'd as he was for it) tho' he had often seen Nokes, could scarce give us an Idea of him.

But Nokes was so singular a species, and was so form'd by Nature for the Stage, that I question if (beyond the trouble of getting Words by Heart) if ever cost him an Hour's Labour to arrive at that high Reputation he had, and deserved.

The Characters he particularly shone in, were Sir Martin Marr-al, Gomez in the Spanish Friar, Sir Nicholas Cully in Love in a Tub, Barnaby Brittle in the Wanton Wife, Sir Davy Duncie in the Soldier's Fortune, Sofia in Amphytrion, &c. &c. To tell you how he acted them, is beyond the reach of Criticism: But to tell you what Effect his Action had upon the Spectator, is not impossible: This then is all you will expect from me, and from hence I must leave you to guess at him.

He scarce ever made his first Entrance in a Play, but he was received with an involuntary Applause, not of Hands only, for those may be, and have often been partially prostituted, and be-  
spoken



spoken; but by a General Laughter, which the very sight of him provoked, and Nature cou'd not resist; yet the louder the Laugh, the graver was his Look upon it; and sure, the ridiculous Solemnity of his Features were enough to have set a whole Bench of Bishops into a Titter, cou'd he have been honour'd (may it be no Offence to suppose it) with such grave and right reverend Auditors. In the ludicrous Distresses, which by the Laws of Comedy, Folly is often involv'd in; he sunk into such a mixture of piteous Pusillanimity, and Consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolab'e, that when he had shook you, to a Fatigue of Laughter, it became a moot point, whether you ought not to have pity'd him. When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his Mouth with a dumb studious Pout, and roll his full Eye into such a vacant Amazement, such a palpable Ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent Perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several Minutes) gave your Imagination as full Content, as the most absurd thing he could say upon it. In the Character of Sir Martin Marr-all, who is always committing Blunders to the Prejueice of his own Interest, when he had brought himself to a Dilemma in his Affairs, by vainly proceeding upon his own Head, and was, afterwards afraid to look his governing Servant and Counsellor in the Face; what a copious, and distressful Harrangue have I seen him make with his look (while the House has been in one continued Roar, for several Minutes) before he could prevail with his Courage to speak a Word to him? Then might you have, at once, read in his Face Vexation—that his own Measures which he had piqued himself upon, had fail'd. Envy—of his Servants's superior Wit     Distress

Distress---to retrieve, the Occasion he had lost. Shame---to confess his Folly ; and yet a fullen Desire, to be reconciled and better advised, for the future ! What Tragedy ever shew'd us such a Tumult of Passion, rising at once, in one Bosom ? or what buskin'd Heroe standing under the Load of them, could have more effectually, mov'd his Spectators, by the most pathetick Speech, than poor miserable Nokes did, by this silent Eloquence, and piteous Plight of his Features ?

His Person was of the middle size, his Voice clear and Audible ; his natural Countenance grave and sober : but the Moment he spoke, the settled seriousness of his Features was utterly discharg'd, and a dry, drolling, or laughing Levity took such full Possession of him, that I can only refer the Idea of him to your Imagination. In some of his low Characters, that became it, he had a shuffling Shamble in his Gait, with so contended an Ignorance in his Aspect, and an awkward Absurdity in his Gesture, that had you not known him, you would not have believ'd, that naturally he could have had a Grain of common Sense. In a Word, I am tempted to sum up the Character of Nokes, as a Comedian, in a parodie of what Shakespeare's Mark Antony says of Brutus as a Hero.

His Life was Laughter, and the Ludicrous  
So mixt, in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the World--This was an Actor,

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 Mr. LEIGH'S Character.

**M**R. Leigh was of the mercurial kind, and though not so strict an Observer of Nature, yet never so wanton in his Performance, as to be wholly out of her sight. In Humour, he lov'd to take a full Career, but was careful enough to stop short, when just upon the Precipice: He had great Variety, in his manner, and was famous in very different Characters: In the canting, grave, Hypocrisy of the Spanish Friar, he stretch the Veil of Piety so thickly over him, that in every Look, Word, and Motion, you saw a palpable, wicked Slyness shine through it--Here he kept his Vivacity demurely confin'd, till the pretended Duty of his Function demanded it; and then he exerted it, with a cholerick sacredotal Insolence. But the Friar is a Character of such glaring Vice, and so strongly drawn, that a very indifferent Actor cannot but hit upon the broad Jest, that are remarkable, in every Scene of it. Though I have never yet seen any one, that has fill'd them with half the Truth and Spirit of Leigh-----Leigh rais'd the Character as much above the Poet's Imagination, as the Character has sometimes rais'd other Actors above themselves; and I do not doubt, but the Poet's Knowledge of Leigh's Genius help'd him to many a pleasant Stroke of Nature, which without that Knowledge never might have enter'd into his Conception. Leigh was so eminent in this Character, that the late Earl of Dorset (who was equally an Admirer, and a Judge of Theatrical Merit)

Merit) had a whole Length of him, in the Friar's Habit, drawn by Kneller : The whole Portrait is highly painted, and extremely like him. But no wonder Leigh arriv'd to such Fame in what was so compleatly written for him ; when Characters that would make the Reader yawn, in the Closet, have by the Strength of his Action, been lifted into the loudest Laughter, on the Stage. Of this kind was the Scrivener's great boobily Son in the Villain ; Ralph, a stupid, staring, Under-servant, in Sir Solomon Single. Quite opposite to those were Sir Jolly Jumble, in the Soldier's Fortune, and his old Belfond in the Squire of Alfatia. In Sir Jolly he was all Life, and laughing Humour ; and when Nokes acted with him in the same Play, they returned the Ball so dextrously upon one another, that every scene between them, seem'd but one continued Rest of Excellence—But alas ! when those Actors were gone, that Comedy, and many others, for the same Reason, were rarely known to stand upon their own Legs ; by seeing no more of Leigh or Nokes in them, the Characters were quite sunk, and alter'd. In his Sir William Belfond, Leigh shew'd a more spirited Variety than ever I saw in an Actor, in any one Character come up to : The Poet, 'tis true, had here, exactly chalked for him the Out-Lines of Nature ; but the high Colouring, the strong Lights and Shades of Humour that enliven'd the whole, and struck our Admiration with Surprise and Delight, were wholly owing to the Actor. The easy Reader might perhaps, have been pleas'd with the Author without discomposing a Feature ; but the Spectator must have heartily held his sides, or the Actor would have heartily made them ache for it.



Now, though I observ'd before, that Nokes never was tolerably touch'd by any of his Successors; yet, in this Character, I must own, I have seen Leigh extremely well imitated, by my late facetious Friend Penkethman, who tho' far short of what was inimitable, in the Original, yet as to the general Resemblance, was a very valuable Copy of him: And, as I know Penkethman cannot yet be out of your Memory, I have chosen to mention him here, to give you the nearest Idea I can, of the Excellence of Leigh in that particular Light. For Leigh had many masterly Variations, which the other cou'd not, nor ever pretended to reach; particularly in the Dotage, and Follies of extreme old Age, in the Characters of Fumble in the Fond Husband, and the Toothless Lawyer, in the City Politicks; both which Plays liv'd only by the extraordinary performance of Nokes and Leigh.

There were two other Characters of the farcical kind, Gaeta in the Prophetess, and Crack in Sir Courtly Nice, which, as they are less confined to Nature, the Imitation of them was less difficult to Penkethman; who, to say the Truth, delighted more in whimsical than natural Characters; therefore when I say he sometimes resembled Leigh, I reserve this Distinction on his Master's side, that the pleasing Extravagancies of Leigh, were all the flowers of his own Fancy, while the less fertile Brain of Pinky was contented to make use of the Stock his Predecessor had left him. In saying this, I do not detract from Penkethman's Merit, but only do Justice to Leigh. And though 'tis true, we as seldom see a good Actor as a great Poet, arise from the bare Imitation of another's Genius; yet if this be a general Rule, Penkethman was the nearest to an Ex-  
ception

ception from it ; for with those who never knew Leigh, he might very well have pass'd for a more than common Original. Yet again, as my partiality for Penkethman ought not to lead me from Truth, I shall endeavour to tell you fairly what was the best of him, that the Superiority of Leigh may stand in its due Light.

Penkethman had certainly from Nature, a great deal of comic power about him ; but his Judgment was by no means equal to it ; for he would make frequent deviations into the Whimfies of an Harlequin. By the way, whatever Allowances are made for the Licence of that Character, I mean of an Harlequin, whatever pretences may be urged, from the practice of the ancient Comedy, for its being played in a Mask, resembling no part of the human Species ; I am apt to think, the best Excuse a modern Actor can plead for his continuing it is, that the low, senseless, and monstrous things he says and does in it, no theatrical Assurance could get through, with a bare Face : Let me give you an Instance of Penkethman's being out of Countenance for want of it : When he first play'd Harlequin in the Emperor of the Moon, several Gentlemen (who inadvertently judged by the Rules of Nature) fancied, that a great deal of the Drollery, and Spirit of his Grimace was lost, by his wearing that useless, unmeaning Mask ; and therefore insisted, that the next time of his acting that part, he should play without it ; Their desire was accordingly complied with ; but in vain ! Penkethman could not take to himself the shame of that Character without being concealed ; he was no more Harlequin ; his Humour was quite disconcerted ; his Conscience could not with the same Front declare against Nature, without the  
cover

cover of that unchanging Face, which he was sure would never blush for it; it was quite another Cause; without that Armour his Courage could not come up to the bold strokes, that were necessary to get the better of common Sense. Now if this Circumstance will justify the modesty of Penkethman, it cannot but throw a wholesome Contempt on the low Merit of an Harlequin. But how farther necessary the Mask is to that Fool's Coat, we have lately had a stronger proof, in the favour that the Harlequin Sauvage met with at Paris, and the ill Fate that followed the same Sauvage, when he pull'd off the Mask in London. So that it seems what was Wit from a Harlequin, was something too extravagant for a human Creature. If therefore Penkethman, in Characters drawn from Nature, might sometimes launch out into a few gamesome Liberties, which could not have been excused from a more correct Comedian; yet, in his manner of taking them, he always seemed to me, in a kind of Consciousness of the hazard he was running, as if he had fairly confess'd that what he did, was only as well as he could do: That he was willing to take his Chance for Success; but if he did not meet with it, a Reproof should break no Squares; he would mend it another time, and would take whatever his Judges pleased to think of him in good part; and I have often thought, that a good deal of the favour he met with, was owing to this seeming humble way of waving all Opretences to Merit, but what the Town would please to allow him. What confirms me in this pinion is, that when it has been his ill Fortune to meet with a Disgraccia, I have known him say apart to himself, yet loud enough to be heard, "Odso! I believe I am a little wrong here."

Which

Which was once so well received by the Audience, that they turn'd their Reproof into Applause.

Now, the Judgment of Leigh always guarded the happier Sallies of his Fancy, from the least Hazard of Disapprobation: he seem'd not to court, but to attack your Applause, and always came off victorious; nor did his highest Assurance amount to any more, than that just Confidence, without which the commendable Spirit of every good Actor must be abated; and of this spirit Leigh was a most perfect Master. He was much admir'd by King Charles, who us'd to distinguish him, when spoken of, by the Title of his Actor: Which however makes me imagine, that in his Exile that Prince might have received his first Impression of good Actors from the French Stage; for Leigh had more of that farcical Vivacity than Nokes; but Nokes was never languid by his more strict Adherence to Nature, and as far as my Judgment is worth taking, if their intrinsick Merit could be justly weigh'd, Nokes must have had the better in the Balance. Upon the unfortunate Death of Montfort, Leigh fell ill of a Fever, and dy'd in a Week after him, in December 1692.

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Mr. UNDERHIL'S Character.

**M**R. Underhil was a correct, and natural Comedian, his particular Excellence was in Characters, that may be called still-life, I mean the Stiff, the Heavy, and the Stupid;



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Stupid ; to these he gave the exactest, and the most expressive Colours, and in some of them, look'd, as if it were not in the Power of human Passions to alter a Feature of him. In the solemn Formality of Obadiah in the Committee, and in the boobily Heaviness of Lolpoop in the Squire of Alfatia, he seem'd the immoveable Log he stood for ; a Countenance of Wood could not be more fixt than his, when the Blockhead of a Character required it : His face was full and long ; from his Crown to the end of his Nose, was the shorter half of it, so that the Disproportion of his lower Features, when soberly compos'd with an unwandering Eye hanging over them, threw him into the most lumpish, moping Mortal, that ever made Beholders merry ; not but, at other times, he could be wakened into Spirit equally ridiculous——In the coarse, rustick Humour of Justice Clodpate, in Epsome Wells, he was a delightful Brute ; and in the Blunt Vivacity of Sir Sampson, in Love for Love, he shew'd all that true perverse Spirit, that is commonly seen in so much Wit, and Ill-nature. This Character is one of those few so well written, with so much Wit and Humour, that an Actor must be the grossest Dunce, that does not appear with an unusual Life in it : But it will still shew as great a Proportion of Skill, to come near Underhil in the acting it, which (not to undervalue those who soon came after him) I have not yet seen. He was particularly admir'd too, for the Grave-digger in Hamlet. The Author of the Tattler recommends him to the Favour of the Town, upon that Play's being acted for his Benefit, wherein, after his Age had some Years oblig'd him to leave the Stage, he came on again, for that Day, to perform his old Part ; but alas, so worn, and disabled, as if himself was to  
have

have lain in the Grave he was digging ; when he could no more excite Laughter, his Infirmities were dismiss'd with Pity : He died soon after, a super-annuated Pensioner, in the List of those who were supported by the joint Sharers, under the first Patent granted to Sir Richard Steele.

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Mrs. MONTFORT'S Character.

**M**R S. Montfort, whose second Marriage gave her the Name of Verbruggen, was Mistress of more variety of Humour, than I ever knew in any one Woman Actress. This variety too, was attended with an equal Vivacity, which made her excellent in Characters extremely different. As she was naturally a pleasant Mimick, she had the Skill to make that Talent useful on the Stage, a Talent which may be surprizing in a Conversation, and yet be lost when brought to the Theatre, which was the Case of Estcourt already mention'd : But where the Elocution is round, distinct, voluble, and various, as Mrs. Montfort's was, the Mimick, there, is a great Assistant to the Actor. Nothing, tho' ever so barren, if within the Bounds of Nature, could be flat in her Hands. She gave many heightening Touches to Characters but coldly written, and often made an Author vain of his Work, that in it self had but little Merit. She was so fond of Humour, in what low Part soever to be found, what she would make no scruple of defacing her fair Form, to come heartily into it, ; for when she was eminent in several desirable Characters of Wit, and Humour, in higher Life, she would be, in as much Fancy, when descending

into the antiquated Abigail of Fletcher, as when triumphing in all the Airs and vain Graces of a fine Lady; a Merit that few Actresses care for. In a Play of D'urfey's, now forgotten, call'd The Western Lass, which Part she acted, she transform'd her whole Being, Body, Shape, Voice, Language, Look, and Features into almost another Animal; with a strong Devonshire Dialect, a broad laughing Voice, a poking Head, round Shoulders, an unconceiving Eye, and the most be-diz'ning Dress that ever cover'd the untrain'd Limbs of a Joan Trot. To have seen her here, you would have thought it impossible the same Creature could ever have been recover'd, to what was as easy to her, the Gay, the Lively, and the Desirable. Nor was her Humour limited, to her Sex; for, while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty Fellow, than is usually seen upon the Stage: Her easy Air, Action, Mien, and Gesture, quite chang'd from the Quoit, to the cock'd Hat, and Cavalier in fashion. People were so fond of seeing her a Man, that when the Part of Bays in the Rehearsal, had, for some time, lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true, combsy Spirit and Humour, that the Sufficiency of the Character required.

But what found most Employment for her whole various Excellence at once, was the Part of Melantha, in Marriage-Alamode. Melantha is as finish'd an Impertinent, as ever flutter'd in a Drawing-Room, and seems to contain the most compleat system of Female Foppery, that could possibly be crowded into the tortured Form of a Fine Lady. Her Language, Dress, Motion, Manner, Soul, and Body, are in a continual

tinual Hurry to be something more, than is necessary or commendable. And though I doubt it will be a vain Labour to offer you a just Likeness of Mrs. Montfort's Action, yet the fantastick Impression is still so strong in my Memory, that I cannot help saying something, tho' fantastically, about it. The first ridiculous Airs that break from her, are upon a Gallant, never seen before, who delivers her a Letter from her Father, recommending him to her good Graces, as an honourable Lover. Here now, one would think she might naturally shew a little of the Sex's decent Reserve, tho' never so slightly cover'd! No, Sir; not a Tittle of it; Modesty is the Virtue of a poor soul'd Country Gentlewoman, she is too much a Court Lady to be under so vulgar a confusion; she reads the Letter therefore with a careless, dropping Lip, and an erected Brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her Father's Commands, by making a compleat Conquest of him at once; and that the Letter might not embarrass her Attack, she crumbles it at once into her Palm, and pours upon him her whole Artillery of Airs, Eyes and Motion; down goes her dainty, diving Body to the Ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious Load of her own Attractions; then launches into a Flood of fine Language and Compliment, still playing her Chest forward in fifty Falls and Risings, like a Swan upon waving Water; and, to complete her Impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own Wit, that she will not give her Lover leave to praise it; silent assenting Bows, and vain Endeavours to speak, are all the share of the Conversation he is admitted to, which, at last he is relieved from, by her Engagement to half a score Visits, which she



swims from him to make, with a promise to return in a Twinkling.

If this Sketch has colour enough to give you any near conception of her, I then need only tell you, that throughout the whole Character, her variety of Humour was every way proportionable ; as, indeed, in most parts that she thought worth her care, or that had the least matter for her Fancy to work upon, I may justly say, That no Actress whatever could have heighten'd them with more lively strokes of Nature.

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#### Mr. BRACEGIRDLE'S Character.

**M**R S. Bracegirdle was an Actress who had more favour from the Publick than any I ever knew, which she maintained to the last of her Dramatick Life, by not being unguarded in her private Character. This Discretion contributed, not a little, to make her the Darling of the Theatre ; for it will be no extravagant Thing to say, scarce an Audience saw her, that were less than half of them Lovers, without a suspected Favourite among them : And tho' she might be said to have been the Universal Passion, and under the highest Temptations, her Constancy in resisting them, served but to increase the number of her Admirers ; And this perhaps you will more easily believe, when I extend not my Encomiums on her person beyond a sincerity that can be suspected ; for she had no greater Claim to Beauty, than what the most desirable Brunette might pretend to. But her Youth, and lively Aspect, threw out such a Glow of Health  
and

and Chearfulness, that, on the Stage, few Spectators that were not past it, could behold her without desire. It was even a Fashion among the Gay and Young, to have a Taste or Tendre for Mrs. Bracegirdle. She inspired the best Authors to write for her, and two of them, when they gave her a Lover in a Play, seemed palpably to plead their own Passions, and make their private Court to her, in fictitious Characters. In all the chief parts she acted, the Desirable was so predominant, that no Judge could be cold enough to consider, from what other Excellence she became delightful. To speak critically of an Actress that was extremely good, is as hazardous as to be positive in one's Opinion of the best Opera-singer. People often judge by Comparison, where there is no Similitude. In this case we have only Taste to appeal to, and of Taste there can be no disputing. I shall therefore only say of Mrs. Bracegirdle, that the most eminent Authors always chose her for their favourite Character, and shall leave that uncontestable proof of her Merit to its own Value. Yet let me say, there were two very different Characters, in which she acquitted herself with uncommon Applause: If any thing could excuse that desperate Extravagance of Love, that almost frantick Passion of Lee's Alexander the Great, it must have been when Mrs. Bracegirdle was his Statira: As when she acted Millamant, all the Faults, Follies and Affectation of that agreeable Tyrant, were venially melted down into so many Charms and Attractions of a conscious Beauty. In other Characters, where Singing was a necessary part of them, her Voice and Action gave a Pleasure, which good Sense was not asham'd to give praise to.

She

She retired from the Stage in the Height of her favour from the Publick, when most of her Cotemporaries, whom she had been bred up with, were declining, in the Year 1710, nor could she be persuaded to return to it, under new Masters, upon the most advantageous Terms that were offered her, excepting one Day, about a Year after, to assist her good Friend Mr. Betterton, when she play'd Angelica, in Love for Love, for his Benefit.

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Mrs. LEIGH'S Character.

**M**R S. Leigh, the Wife of Leigh already mentioned, had a very droll way of dressing the pretty Foibles of superannuated Beauties. She had, in her self, a good deal of Humour, and knew how to infuse it into the affected Mothers, Aunts, and modest stale Maids, that had miss'd their Market; of this sort were the Modish Mother in the Chances, affecting to be politely commode for her own Daughter; the Coquette Prude of an Aunt, in Sir Courtly Nice, who prides herself in being chaste, and cruel, at Fifty, and the languishing Lady Wishfort, in The Way of the World: In all these, with many others, she was extremely entertaining, and painted, with great Exactness, and in a lively manner, the blind side of Nature.

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The Characters of Mrs. BETTERTON and  
Mrs. BUTLER.

**M**R S. Betterton was so great a Mistress of Nature, that even Mrs. Barry, who acted the Lady Macbeth after her, could not in that part, with all her superior Strength and Melody of Voice, throw out those quick and careless Strokes of Terror, from the Disorder of a guilty Mind, which the other gave us with a Facility in her Manner, that render'd them at once tremendous and delightful. Time could not impair her Judgment, tho' he had brought her Person to decay; for she was to the last, the Admiration of all true Judges of Nature, and Lovers of Shakespeare, in whose Plays she chiefly excell'd, and without a Rival. When she quitted the Theatre, several good Actresses were the better for her Instruction. She was a Woman of an unblemish'd and sober Life; and had the Honour to teach Queen Anne, when Princess, the part of Semandra in Mithridates, which she acted at Court in King Charles's Time. After the Death of Mr. Betterton, her Husband, that Princess, when Queen, ordered her a pension for Life, but she liv'd not to receive more than the first half Year of it.

Mrs. Butler, who had her Christian Name of Charlotte given her by King Charles II. was the Daughter of a decay'd Knight, and had the Honour of that Prince's Recommendation to the Theatre; a provident Restitution, giving to the  
Stage



Stage in kind, what he had sometimes taken from it: The Publick, at least, was obliged by it; for she proved not only a good Actress, but was allowed to sing and dance to great perfection. In the Dramatick Operas of Dioclesian, and that of King Arthur, she was a capital and admired Performer. In speaking too, she had a sweet-ton'd Voice, which, with her naturally genteel Air, and sensible Pronunciation, render'd her wholly Mistress of the Amiable, in many serious Characters. In parts of Humour too she had a manner of blending her assuasive Softness, even with the Gay, the Lively, and the Alluring. Of this she gave an agreeable Instance, in her Action of the Duke of Buckingham's second Constantia in the Chances. In which, if I should say, I have never seen her exceeded, I might still do no wrong to the late Mrs. Oldfield's lively performance of the same Character. Mrs. Oldfield's Fame may spare Mrs. Butler's Action this Compliment, without the least Diminution, or Dispute of her Superiority, in Characters of more moment.

Here, one can't help observing, when there was but one Theatre in London, at what unequal Salaries, compared to those of latter Days, the hired Actors were then held, by the frugal Management of their Masters; for Mrs. Butler had but forty Shillings a Week, and could she have obtained an addition of ten Shillings a Week, would never have left their Service; but being offered her own Conditions to go to the Theatre at Dublin, soon after the Revolution, her Discontent prevailed with her to accept the Offers made to her.

## Mr. D O G G E T's Character.

**M**R. Dogget was the most an Original, and the strictest Observer of Nature, of all his Cotemporaries. He borrowed from none of them: His Manner was his own; He was a Pattern to others, whose greatest Merit was, that they had sometimes tolerably imitated him. In dressing a Character to the greatest Exactness, he was remarkably skilful; the least Article of whatever Habit he wore, seemed in some measure to speak and mark the different Humour he presented; a necessary Care in a Comedian, in which many have been too remis, or ignorant. He could be extremely ridiculous, without stepping into the least Impropropriety, to make him so. His greatest Success was in Characters of lower Life, which he improved, from the delight he took, in his Observations of that kind, in the real World. In Songs and particular Dances too of Humour, he had no Competitor. Congreve was a great Admirer of him, and found his Account in the Characters he expressly wrote for him. In those of Fondlewife, in his Old Bachelor; and Ben, in Love for Love, no Author and Actor could be more obliged to their mutual masterly Performances. He was very acceptable to several Persons of high Rank and Taste; tho' he seldom cared to be the Comedian, but among his more intimate Acquaintance.

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Mrs. OLDFIELD'S Character.

**M**R S. Oldfield was taken into the Theatre in the Year 1699, where she remained almost a Mute, and unheeded, till Sir John Vanbrugh, who first recommended her, gave her the Part of Alinda, in the Pilgrim revis'd. This gentle Character happily became that want of Confidence which is inseparable from young Beginners, who, without it seldom arrive to any Excellence.

Mr. Cibber says of her as follows, viz.

‘ When Mrs. Oldfield first appeared upon the  
 ‘ Stage, I was so far deceived in my Opinion of  
 ‘ her, that I thought she had little more than  
 ‘ her Person, that appeared necessary to the  
 ‘ forming a good Actress; for she set out with  
 ‘ so extraordinary a Diffidence, that it kept her  
 ‘ too despondingly down, to a formal, plain,  
 ‘ flat manner of speaking. Nor could the silver  
 ‘ Tone of her Voice, till after some time, incline  
 ‘ my Ear to any Hope, in her favour. But  
 ‘ publick Approbation is the warm Weather of  
 ‘ a theatrical Plant, which will soon bring it for-  
 ‘ ward to whatever Perfection Nature has de-  
 ‘ signed it. However, Mrs. Oldfield, perhaps  
 ‘ for want of fresh Parts, seemed to come but  
 ‘ slowly forward, till the Year 1703. Our Com-  
 ‘ pany, that Summer, acted at the Bath, during  
 ‘ the Residence of Queen Anne at that place. It  
 ‘ happened at that Time, that Mrs. Verbruggen,  
 ‘ by reason of her last sickness, of which she died  
 ‘ soon after, was left in London; and though  
 ‘ most

' most of her Parts, were of course to be disposed  
 ' of, yet so earnest was the other Players for  
 ' them, that only one of them came to the share  
 ' of Mrs. Oldfield, that of Leonora, in Sir Court-  
 ' ly Nice; a Part of good plain Sense, but not  
 ' over elegantly written: It was in this part she  
 ' surprized me into an Opinion of her having all  
 ' the innate Powers of a good Actress, though  
 ' they were yet but in the Bloom of what they  
 ' promised: Before she had acted Leonora, I  
 ' had so cold an Expectation of her, that she  
 ' could scarce prevail with me to rehearse with  
 ' her the Scenes she was chiefly concerned in  
 ' with Sir Courtly, which I then acted: How-  
 ' ever, we ran them over, with a mutual Inad-  
 ' vertency of one another; I seemed careless, as  
 ' concluding that any Help I could give her, was  
 ' to little or no purpose; and she mutter'd out  
 ' her Words in a sort of misty manner, at my low  
 ' Opinion of her. But when the Play came to  
 ' be acted, she had a just Occasion to triumph  
 ' over my Judgment, by the surprize that her  
 ' unexpected performance awaken'd me to; so  
 ' forward and sudden a step into Nature I had  
 ' never seen; and what made her performance  
 ' more surprizing was, that I knew it all pro-  
 ' ceeded from her own Understanding, untaught  
 ' and unassisted by any Actor of more Expe-  
 ' rience.

' Though the part of Leonora in itself, was of  
 ' so little value, that when she got more into  
 ' Esteem, it was one of the several she gave  
 ' away to inferior Actresses; yet it was the first  
 ' (as I have observed) that corrected my Judg-  
 ' ment of her, and confirmed me in a strong Be-  
 ' lief, that she could not fail, in a little time, of  
 ' being



‘ being what she was afterwards allow’d to be,  
‘ the foremost Ornament of our Theatre. Upon  
‘ this unexpected Sally, then, of the Power,  
‘ and Disposition, of so unforeseen an Actress, it  
‘ was, that I again took up the two first Acts  
‘ of the Careless Husband, which I had written  
‘ the Summer before, and had thrown aside,  
‘ in despair of having Justice done to the Cha-  
‘ racter of Lady Betty Modish, by any one  
‘ Woman, then among us ; Mrs. Verbruggen  
‘ being now in a very declining state of Health,  
‘ and Mrs. Bracegirdle out of my Reach, and  
‘ engag’d in another Company : But, as I  
‘ have said, Mrs. Oldfield having thrown out  
‘ such new Proffers of a Genius, I was no longer  
‘ at a loss for Support ; my Doubts were dispell’d  
‘ and I had now a new call to finish it : Accord-  
‘ ingly, the Careless Husband took its Fate upon  
‘ the Stage, the Winter following. What-  
‘ ever favourable Reception this Comedy has  
‘ met with from the Publick ; it would be un-  
‘ just in me, not to place a large Share of it to the  
‘ Account of Mrs. Oldfield ; not only from the  
‘ uncommon Excellence of her Action ; but even  
‘ from her personal manner of Conversing.  
‘ There are many Sentiments in the Character of  
‘ Lady Betty Modish, that I may almost say,  
‘ were originally her own, or only dress’d with  
‘ a little more care, than when they negligently  
‘ fell from her lively Humour ; had her Birth  
‘ plac’d her in a higher Rank of Life, she had  
‘ certainly appear’d, in reality, what in this Play  
‘ she only, excellently, acted an agreeably gay  
‘ Woman of Quality, a little too conscious of  
‘ her natural Attractions. I have often seen her  
‘ in private Societies, where Women of the best  
‘ Rank might have borrow’d some part of her  
‘ Behaviour

Behaviour, without the least Diminution of their Sense, or Dignity. After her Success, in this Character of higher Life, all that Nature had given her of the Actress, seem'd to have risen to its full Perfection; But the Variety of her Power could not be known till she was seen, in variety of Characters; which, as fast as they fell to her, she equally excell'd in. Authors had much more, from her Performance, than they had reason to hope for, from what they had written for her; and none had less than another, but as their Genius in the Parts they allotted her, was more or less elevated.

In the Wearing of her Person, she was particularly fortunate; her Figure was always improving, to her Thirty-sixth Year; but her Excellence in acting was never at a stand: And the last new Character she shone in (Lady Townly) was a proof that she was still able to do more, if more could have been done for her. She had one Mark of good sense, rarely known, in any Actor of either Sex, but herself. I have observ'd several, with promising Dispositions, very desirous of Instruction at their first setting out; but no sooner had they found their least Account, in it, than they were, as desirous of being left, to their own Capacity, which they then thought would be disgrac'd, by their seeming to want any farther Assistance. But this was not Mrs. Oldfield's way of thinking; for to the last Year of her life, she never undertook any Part she lik'd, without being importunately desirous of having all the helps in it, that another could possibly give her. By knowing so much herself, she found how much more there was of Nature, yet needful to be known. Yet it was a hard matter to give her any Hint, that

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' she was not able to take, or improve. With  
 ' all this Merit, she was tractable, and less pre-  
 ' suming, in her Station, than several, that had  
 ' not half her Pretensions to be troublesome : But  
 ' she lost nothing by her easy Conduct ; she had  
 ' every thing she ask'd, which she took care  
 ' should be Reasonable, because she hated as  
 ' much to be grudg'd, as deny'd a Civility.  
 ' Upon her extraordinary Action in the Provok'd  
 ' Husband, the Managers made her a present of  
 ' Fifty Guineas more than her agreement, which  
 ' never was more than a Verbal one ; for they  
 ' knew she was above deserting them, to engage  
 ' upon any other Stage, and she was conscious,  
 ' they would never think it their Interest, to give  
 ' her cause of Complaint. In the last two Months  
 ' of her Illness, when she was no longer able to  
 ' assist them, she declin'd receiving her Sallary,  
 ' tho' by her Agreement she was entitl'd to it.  
 ' Upon the whole, she was to the last Scene  
 ' she acted the Delight of her Spectators : Why  
 ' then may we not close her Character, with the  
 ' same Indulgence with which Horace speaks of a  
 ' commendable Poem :

Where in the whole, such various Beauties  
     shine,  
 'Twere idle, upon Errors, to refine.

MEMOIRS of Mrs. MARSHAL and Mr.  
L A C Y.

**M**R S. Marshal, was an Actress famous for playing haughty Parts in Tragedy, particularly the Character of Roxalana, by which Name she generally went. She was said to be Mistress of a very severe Virtue; and was attacked by, but had withstood the Earl of Oxford in every Form an artful Gallant could put on. Grown mad with Love, and her Repulses, he forms a Plot to get her by Force; intending to seize her as she went from the House after she had been acting this Part; which being made known to her, by some real Friend, she obtained a party of the King's Guards to protect her. When her Chair appeared, the Nobleman began his assault, but was valiantly repulsed, and she was safely conducted home.

The adventure was the whole Talk of the Court and Town; the Ladies applauded her Resolution secretly, not a little pleased to see their Sex's resolute Behaviour in Roxalana. Many Parties were formed both for and against her. The Fanatics cried out, saying, it was a shame they should bring up Girls in the School of Venus, teaching them such Arts and Tricks to tempt Mankind. The Gentry liked the Diversion, alledging, the greater the Temptation, the greater the Glory to resist.

However, in this Affair, the King himself having the Story represented to him in the blackest Light, interposed; and his Majesty, with a  
Freedom



Freedom natural to one of the best tempered Princes, told the Earl, he thought the Vice (though perhaps he gave too much Countenance to it by his own Irregularity) bad enough with the Consent of the Fair, but where Force or Violence was used, it was so heinous, he would not, though a Sovereign, indulge the thought of such an Action, much more permit it to be done by a Subject.

This Reproof caused the Earl to answer with some Reserve; he said he would think no more of her; but soon after he renewed his Assault, telling her it was impossible to live without her. What her exalted Virtue had inspired him with other Sentiments, proposing to Marry her in private. This Bait Roxalana greedily swallowed, her Vanity inclining her to believe the Earl sincere. In short, the Earl comes, brings his Coachman dressed like a Minister, Marries her, and took her down to one of his Country-Seats, where soon growing weary of her, he pulled off the Mask, and, with scorn, bids her return to the Stage. Upon this, she threw herself at the King's Feet, who countenanced her so far, that he made the Earl allow her 500 l. a Year; and, as long as her Son lived would not sueffr him to Marry any other Lady; but, on the Child's Death, the Concern for so ancient a Family's becoming extinct (the Earl being the last of it) his Majesty through great Intercession was prevailed on, to permit of the Earl's Re-Marriage.

Mr. John Lacy was a Native of Yorkshire, born near Doncaster. He was bred in the Profession of a Dancing Master, but pursuing some military Views; he became a Lieutenant and Quarter-Master under Colonel Gerrard. He was a well shaped Man; of a noble Stature,  
and

and justly proportioned. What brought him upon the Stage we cannot determine ; but Langbaine, in his Account of the English Dramatick Poets, tells us, That he was a Comedian, whose Abilities in Action were sufficiently known to all who frequented the King's Theatre. He performed all the Parts he undertook to a Miracle, in so much that as the Age he lived in never had, so I am apt to believe no other will ever have his Equal, at least not his Superior.

He was so well approved of by King Charles II, an undeniable Judge in dramatick Arts, that he caused his Picture to be drawn in three Characters in one and the same piece, viz. Teague in the Committee ; Mr. Scruple in the Cheats ; and Monsieur Galliard, in the Variety, now in the Royal Palace of Windsor Castle. Nor did his Talent wholly lie in Acting, he knew both how to judge and write Plays, and is the Author of three Comedies, viz.

I. The Dumb Lady : Or, The Farrier made Physician. Taken from *Le Medicin malgre luy*. Whoever will compare them together, will find that Mr. Lacy has greatly improved Moliere.

II. The Old Troop : Or, Monsieur Ragou. Taken likewise, as I conjecture, from the French. Both these Plays were acted with universal Applause.

III. Sir Hercules Buffoon : Or, The Poetical Squire. This Play was brought upon the Stage after the Author's decease, 1684. In the Prologue, spoken by that very facetious Comedian Mr. Joseph Haines, were the following Lines,

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Know,

Know, that fam'd Lacy, Ornament o' th' Stage,  
 That Standard of Comedy, in our Age ;  
 Wrote this Play :  
 And if it takes not, all that we can say on't,  
 Is, we've his Fiddle, not his Hand to play on't.

This Comedy was very well received:

There were a great many good Actors, soon after the Restoration of King Charles II. whose Excellencies to enumerate would be endless. We have already given the Characters of some of the principal, among whom may justly be reckoned Mr. Smith and Major Mohun.

The following were some of Mr. Hart's shining Characters ; Arbaces in King and no King. Amintor, in the Maid's Tragedy, Rollo Duke of Normandy, Brutus in Julius Cæsar, Othello, and Alexander the Great. In this last Character he appeared with such Majesty in his Looks and Gesture, that a Courtier of the first Rank was pleased to honour him with this Commendation, "Hart, says he, might teach any King on Earth how to comport himself." He was likewise excellent in Comedy ; particularly in the parts of Mosca in Volpone, Don John in the Duke of Buckingham's Chances, Wildblood in the Mock Astrologer.

Major Mohun shone in the parts of Volpone, Face in the Alchymist, Melanthius in the Maid's Tragedy, Mordonius in King and no King, Cassius in Julius Cæsar. Clytus in Alexander the Great. Mithridates King of Pontus : When he performed this last part, Mr. Lee cried out, in  
 the

the greatest Extasy, O Mohun, Mohun! Thou little Man of Mettle, were I to write a hundred Plays thou should'st be in 'em all,

Never had any Court so great a regard for Actors and theatrical Performances, as that of King Charles II. For when the Play of Love and Honour, written by Sir William Davenant, was acted before the Court, the King gave Mr. Betterton, who played Prince Alvaro, his Coronation-suit. And to Mr. Harris, who played Prospero, the Duke of York gave his Suit. And to Mr. Price, who acted Lionel Duke of Parma, the Lord Oxford gave his Cloaths. Mrs. Davenport, an excellent Actress, played Evandra.

A short Time after this, at the Revival of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, a very merry Incident happened. There being a Fight in this play between the House of Capulet and the House of Paris, Mrs. Holden, a good Actress, who was the Wife of Paris, entering in a violent Hurry, and crying out, O MY DEAR COUNT, inadvertently omitted the Letter O, and laying a vehement Accent on the Word, put the House into the loudest Fit of Laughter and Merriment. While the Actress, conscious of her Mistake, retired with the utmost precipitation.



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The Characters of Mr. BOOTH, and  
Mr. WILKS.

**M**R. Booth and Mr Wilks, were certainly very good Actors, tho' of different Excellencies, and as they were Cotemporaries with Mr. Cibber, both in acting, and in the Management of the Theatre, it is not doubted but his Opinion of these two celebrated Actors, will be very agreeable, which take as follows, viz.

“ If I were to paint them in the Colours they laid upon one another, their Talents would not be shewn with half the Commendation, I am inclined to bestow upon them, when they are left to my own Opinion. But People of the same Profession, are apt to see themselves in their own clear Glass of Partiality, and look upon their Equals through a mist of Prejudice.

It might be imagin'd too, from the difference of their natural Tempers, that Wilks should have been more blind to the Excellencies of Booth, than Booth was to those of Wilks; but it was not so: Wilks would sometimes commend Booth to me; but when Wilks excell'd, the other was silent: Booth seem'd to think nothing valuable, that was not tragically Great, or Marvellous; Let that be as true, as it may; yet I have often thought, that from his having no Taste of Humour himself, he might be too much inclin'd to depreciate the Acting of it in others. The very slight Opinion, which in private Conversation with me, he had of Wilks's acting Sir Harry Wildair, was certainly more, than could  
be

be justified ; not only from the general Applause that was against that Opinion (tho' Applause is not always infallible) but from the visible Capacity which must be allow'd to an Actor, that could carry such slight Materials to such a height of Approbation : For though the Character of Wildair, scarce in any one Scene will stand against a just Criticism ; yet in the Whole, there are so many gay, and false Colours of the fine Gentleman, that nothing but a Vivacity in the Performance, proportionably extravagant, could have made them so happily glare, upon a common Audience.

Wilks, from his first setting out, certainly form'd his manner of Acting, upon the Model of Monfort ; as Booth did his, on that of Betterton. But neither of them came up to their Original : Wilks had not that easy, regulated Behaviour, or the harmonious Elocution of the One, nor Booth that conscious Aspect of Intelligence, nor requisite Variation of Voice, that made every Line the Other spoke seem his own, natural, self-deliver'd Sentiment : Yet there is still room for great Commendation of Both the first mentioned ; which will not be so much diminish'd, in my having said, they were only excell'd by such Predecessors as it will be rais'd, in venturing to affirm, it will be a longer time, before any Successors will come near them, Thus one of the greatest Praises given to Virgil is, that no Successor in Poetry came so near Him, as He himself did to Homer.

Though the Majority of Publick Auditors are but bad judges of Theatrical Action, and are often deceiv'd into their Approbation of what has no solid Pretence to it ; yet, as there are no other appointed Judges to appeal to, and as every single Spectator has a Right to be one of them, their  
Sentence

Sentence will be definitive, and the Merit of an Actor must, in some degree, be weigh'd by it ; By this Law then, Wilks was pronounced an Excellent Actor ; which if the few true Judges did not allow him to be, they were at least too candid to slight, or discourage him: Booth and he were Actors so directly opposite in their Manner, that, if either of them could have borrowed a little of the other's Fault, they would both have been improv'd by it : If Wilks had sometimes too violent a vivacity ; Booth as often contented himself with too grave a Dignity : The Latter seem'd too much to heave up his Words, as the other to dart them to the Ear, with too quick and sharp a vehemence : Thus Wilks, would too frequently break into the Time and Measure of the Harmony, by too many spirited Accents, in one Line ; and Booth by too solemn a Regard to Harmony, would as often lose the necessary Spirit of it: So that (as I have observ'd) could we have sometimes rais'd the one, and sunk the other, they had both been nearer to the mark. Yet this could not be always objected to them : They had their Intervals of unexceptionable Excellence, that more than ballanc'd their Errors. The Master-piece of Booth was Othello : There, he was most in Character, and seem'd not more to animate, or please himself, in it, than his Spectators. 'Tis true, he owed his last, and highest Advancement, to his acting Cato : But it was the Novelty, and critical Appearance of that Character, that chiefly swell'd the Torrent of his applause : For let the Sentiments of a declaiming Patriot have all the Sublimity, that Poetry can raise them to ; let them be deliver'd too, with the utmost Grace, and Dignity of Elocution, that can recommend them to the Auditor : Yet this is  
but

but one Light, wherein the Excellence of an Actor can shine: But in Othello we may see him, in the Variety of Nature: There the Actor is carried through the different accidents of domestick Happiness and Misery, Occasionally torn, and tortur'd by the most distracting Passion, that can raise Terror, or Compassion, in the Spectator, Such are the Characters that a Master-actor would delight in; and therefore in Othello, I may safely aver, that Booth shew'd himself thrice the Actor that he could in Cato. And yet his Merit in acting Cato need not be diminish'd by this Comparison.

Wilks often regretted, that in Tragedy, he had not the full, and strong Voice of Booth to command, and grace his Periods with; But Booth us'd to say, that if his Ear had been equal to it, Wilks had voice enough to have shewn himself a much better Tragedian. Now though there might be some Truth in this; yet these two Actors were of so mixt a merit, that even in Tragedy, the Superiority was not always on the same side: In Sorrow, Tenderness, or Resignation Wilks plainly had the Advantage, and seem'd more pathetically to feel, look, and express his calamity: But, in the more turbulent transports of the Heart, Booth again bore the Palm, and all Competitors behind him. A Fact perhaps will set this Difference, in a clearer Light. I have formerly seen Wilks act Othello, and Booth the Earl of Essex, in which they both miscarried: Neither the exclamatory Rage, or Jealousy of the one, or the plaintive Distresses of the other, were happily executed, or became either of them; though in the contrary Characters, they were both excellent.

When



When an Actor becomes, and naturally Looks the Character he stands in, I have often observ'd it to have had as fortunate an Effect, and as much recommended him to the approbation of the common auditors, as the most correct, or judicious Utterance of the Sentiments: This was strongly visible, in the favourable Reception Wilks met with in Hamlet, where I own the Half of what he spoke, was as painful to my Ear, as every Line, that came from Betterton was charming; and yet it is not impossible, could they have come to a Poll, but Wilks might have had a majority of admirers; However, such a Division had been no Proof, that the Præeminence had not still remain'd in Betterton; and if I should add, that Booth too, was behind Betterton in Othello, it would be saying no more, than Booth himself had Judgment and Candour enough to know, and confess. And if both he, and Wilks, are allow'd in the two above-mention'd Characters, a second Place, to so great a master, as Betterton, it will be a Rank of praise, that the best Actors, since my Time might have been proud of."

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T H E  
D U T Y  
O F A  
P L A Y E R.

**F**ROM his very Name we may derive his Duty, he is called an Actor, and his Excellence consists in acting and speaking; The Mimes and Pantomimes did all by Gesture, and the Action of Hands, Legs and Feet, without making use of the Tongue in uttering any Sentiments or Sounds; so that they were something like our Dumb-shows, with this difference, one Pantomime expressed several Persons, and that to the Tunes of musical Instruments. The Dumb-shows made use of several Persons to express the design of the Play as a silent Action. The Nature of this is best seen in Hamlet before the Entrance of his Players.

(Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly, the Queen embracing him; she kneels, and makes Shew of Protestation unto him; he takes her up, and reclines his Head on her Neck. Lays him down on a Bed of Flowers; she seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a  
M Fellow,

Fellow, takes off his Crown, kisses it, and pours poison into the King's Ear, and Exit. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate Action. The Poisoner, with two or three Mutes, come in again, seems to lament with her; the dead Body is carried away. The Poisoner courts the Queen with Gifts; she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his Love.)

I only repeat this to shew the manner of the old Time, which Shakespeare himself condemns in this very Tragedy, when Hamlet says to the Players, O! it offends me to the Soul to see a robustous perriwig pated Fellow tear a passion to Tatters, to very Rags, to split the Ears of the Groundlings, who, for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable Dumb-shows and Noise —

But the Roman Dancers expressed all this in one person, as we have it in Mr. Mayne's Lucian; where Demetrius the Cynic railing against Dancing, is invited by one of them in the time of Nero, to see him perform without either Pipe or Flute; and did so; for having imposed Silence on the Instruments, he by himself danced the Adultery of Mars and Venus, the Sun betraying them, and Vulcan plotting, and catching them in a Wire net; then every God, who was severally Spectator; then Venus blushing, and Mars beseeching; in a word, he acted the whole Fable so well, that Demetrius very much pleased with the Spectacle, as the greatest praise that could be bestowed upon him, cried out in a loud Voice, I hear my Friend, what you act; nor  
do

do I only see them, but methinks you speak with your Hands.

This Instance not only shews the Difference between these Pantomimes from our old Dumb-Shows; but the Power of Action, which a Player ought to study with his utmost application.

Action indeed has a natural Excellence in it, superior to all other Qualities: Action is Motion, and Motion is the Support of Nature, which without it would again sink into the sluggish Mass of Chaos. Motion in the various and regular Dances of the Planets surprizes and delights: Life is Motion, and when that ceases, the human Body so beautiful, nay, so divine when enlivened by Motion, becomes a dead and putrid Coarse, from which all turn their Eyes. The Eye is caught by any thing in Motion, but passes over the sluggish and motionless things, as not the pleasing Object of its View.

This natural Power of Motion, or Action is the Reason, that the Attention of the Audience is fixed by any irregular or even fantastical Action, on the Stage, of the most indifferent Player; and supine and drowsy, when the best Actor speaks without the Addition of Action.

It was the Skill the ancient Players of Athens and Rome had in this, which made them not only so much admired by the Great Men of those Times and Places, but raised them to the Reputation of being Masters of Two of the greatest Orators that Athens or Rome ever saw; and who, had it not been for the Instructions of the Actors Satyrus, Roscius and Æsopus, had never been able to convey their admirable Parts to the World.



Demosthenes being, after many successful Attempts, one Time exploded the Assembly, went Home with his Head muffled up in his Cloak, much affected with the Disgrace; in this Condition Satyrus the Actor followed him, being his intimate Acquaintance, and fell into discourse with him. Demosthenes having bemoaned himself to him, told his Misfortune, that having been the most industrious of the Pleaders, and having spent almost the whole Strength and Vigour of his Body in that Employment, yet could he not render himself acceptable to the People; that Drunkards, Tarpaulins, Sots, and illiterate Fellows found so favourable a Hearing, as to possess the Pulpit, while he himself was despised. What you say (replied Satyrus) is very true, but I will soon remove the Cause of all this, if you will repeat some Verses to me out of Sophocles, or Euripides. When Demosthenes had pronounced after his Way, Satyrus presently repeating the same Verses with their proper Tone, Mien and Gesture, gave such a Turn to them, that Demosthenes himself perceived they had quite another Appearance. By which being convinced how much Grace and Ornament accrues to Speech by a proper and due Action, he began to think it of little Consequence for a Man to exercise himself in declaiming, if he neglected the just pronunciation, or decency of speaking. Upon this he built himself a place under Ground (which remained in the Time of Plutarch) whither he retired every day to form his action, and exercise his voice. To shew what pains this Great Man took, as an Example to our young Actors, who do not think themselves obliged to take any at all, I shall proceed with Plutarch. In his House he had a great Looking-Glass, before

fore which he would stand and repeat his Orations by that means observing how far his Action and Gesture were graceful or unbecoming.

The same Demosthenes, when a Client came to him on an Assault and Battery, he at large gave him an account of what Blows he had received from his adversary, but in so calm and unconcerned a Manner, that Demosthenes said, surely, my good Friend, thou hast not suffered any one Thing of what thou makest thy Complaint: Upon which his Client warmed, cryed aloud— How, Demosthenes? Have I suffered nothing? Ay marry, replies he, now I hear the voice of a Man who has been injured and beaten. Of so great Consequence did he think the Tone and Acton of the Speaker towards the gaining Belief.

This was the case of Demosthenes, as Plutarch assures us, and that of Cicero was not much different— At first (says Plutarch) he was, as well as Demosthenes, very defective in action, and therefore he diligently applied himself to Roscus the Comedian sometimes, and sometimes to Æsopus the Tragedian. And such afterwards was the action of Cicero, that it did not a little contribute to make his Eloquence persuasive; deriding the Rhetoricians of his Time, for delivering their Orations with so much Noise and Bawling, saying, that it was their want of ability to speak, which made them have Recourse to bellowing.

The same might be said to many of our bawling Actors, of which Number Æsopus was not, yet so possessed with his Part, that he took his acting to be so real, and not a Representation, that whilst he was on the Stage representing Atreus deliberating on the Revenge of Thyestes, he was so transported beyond himself, that he smote

smote one of the Servants hastily crossing the Stage, and laid him dead on the Place.

Lord Bacon, in his Advancement of Learning, gives us a History from the Annals of Tacitus, of one Vibulenus, formerly an Actor on the Stage, but at that time a common Soldier in the Pannonian Garrisons; which is a wonderful Instance of the Power of Action, and what Force it adds to the Words. The Account is as follows,

“Vibulenus, on the Death of Augustus Cæsar, had raised a Mutiny, so that Blæsus the Lieutenant committed some of the Mutineers to Prison; but the Soldiers violently broke open the Prison-Gates, and set their Comrades at Liberty; and this Vibulenus, in a Tribunitial Speech to the Soldiers, begins in this manner ———“ You have given Life and Light to these poor innocent Wretches——but who restores my Brother to me, or Life to my Brother? who was sent hither with a Message from the Legions of Germany to treat of the common Cause; and this very last Night has he murdered him by some of his Gladiators, some of his Bravoës, whom he keeps about him to be the Murderers of the Soldiers. Answer, Blæsus, where hast thou thrown his Body, the most mortal Enemies deny not Burial to the dead Enemy: When to his Corps I have performed my last Duties in Kisses, and flowing Tears, command me to be slain at his side, so that these our Fellow-Soldiers may have leave to bury us.”

He put the Army into such a Ferment and Fury by this Speech, that if it had not immediately been made appear, there was no such Matter, and that he never had any Brother, the Soldiers would hardly have spared the Lieutenant's

nant's Life ; for he acted as if it had been some Interlude on the Stage.

There is not so great a Pathos in the Words uttered by the Soldier, as to stir the Army into so very great a Ferment ; they must therefore receive almost their whole force from a most moving and pathetic action, in which his Eyes, Hands and Voice joined in a most lively Expression of his Misery, and of his Loss. It is true, that when an Army is tumultuous in it self, it is no difficult matter to run them into Madness : but then it must be done by some, who either by their former Interest there, had purchased an Opinion among them, or some one who by the Artfulness of his address should touch their Souls, and so engage them to what he pleases. The latter I take to be our Case in Vibulenus, who by the advantage of his skill in action recommended himself and his supposititious Cause so effectually to them, as to make the General run a great hazard of his Life for an imaginary Murder.

This has made some of the old Orators give the sole Power in Speech to Action, as I have read in some of those learned Men who have treated of this Subject in English and French. And I am persuaded that the Clergy would move their Hearers far more, if they added but graceful Action to loud speaking: This often sets off indifferent Matter, and makes a Man of little Skill in any other Part of Oratory, pass for the most eloquent ; this, I have read, was the Case of Trachallus, who tho' none of the best Orators of his Time, for the Composition and Writing-part, yet excelled all the Pleaders of that age, his appearance and delivery was so plausible and pleasing. The Stateliness of his Person and Port, the Sparkling of his eyes, the Majesty of his Looks,  
the



the Beauty of his Mien and Voice, added to these Qualities, which not only for Gravity and Composedness came up to that of a Tragedian, but even excelled any Actors, that ever yet trod the Stage, as Quintilian assures us. Philistus, on the other hand, for want of these advantages of Utterance, lost all the Beauty and Force of his Pleading, tho' for Language and the Art of Composition he excelled all the Greeks of his Time.

The same Advantage had Pericles and Hortensius, with this Difference, Hortensius ascribed all the success of his Pleading, to the Merit of the Writing, and convinced the World of his Error by publishing his Orations; Pericles, tho' it is said he had the Goddess persuasion on his Lips, and that he Thundered and Lightened in an Assembly, and made all Greece tremble when he spoke, yet would never publish any of his Orations, because their Excellency lay in the Action.

What I have said here of acting in general, and the particular Examples I have given, is I believe, sufficient to satisfy any one that is studious of Excellence on the Stage, that it ought to be his chief Aim and Application. But next to this is the art of speaking, in which also a Player ought to be perfectly skilled; for, as an eminent Writer observes, "The Operation of speech is strong, not only for the Reason or Wit therein contained, but by its sound. For in all good speech there is a sort of Music, with respect to its Measure, Time and Tune. Every well-measured sentence is proportional Three Ways, in all its Parts to the Sentences, and to what it is intended to express, and all Words that have Time allowed to their Syllables, as is suitable

able to the Letters whereof they consist, and to the Order in which they stand in a Sentence. Nor are Words without their Tune or Notes even in common Talk, which is proper to every Sentence, and may be pricked down as well as any musical Tune; only in the Tunes of Speech, the Notes have much less Variety, and have all a short Time. With respect also to Time and Measure, the Poetic is less various, and therefore less powerful, than that of Oratory; the former being like that of a short Country Song repeated, to the End of the Poem, but that of Oratory is varied all along, like the Divisions which a skilful Musician runs upon a Lute.

He proceeds to our former Consideration, saying,—"The Behaviour and Gesture is also of Force; is in Oratory so in Converse, consisting of almost as many Motions, as there are moveable Parts of the Body, all made with a certain agreeable Measure between one another, and at the same time answerable to that of Speech, which when easy and unaffected, is becoming."

A Mastery in these two parts, is what compleats an Actor; and I hope the Rules I shall give for both, will be of use to such as have truly a Genius for this Art; the Rules of which, like those of Poetry, are only for those who have a Genius, and are not perfectly to be understood by those who have not.

To begin therefore with Action, the Player is to consider, that it is not every rude and undesigned Action which is his Business, for that is what the Ignorant as well as the Skilful may have, nor can indeed want: But the Action of a Player is what is agreeable to personation, or the Subject he represents. Now what he represents, is Man in his various Characters, Manner and

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Passions,

Passions, and to these Heads he must adjust every action ; he must perfectly express the Quality and Manners of the Man whose person he assumes, that is, he must know how his Manners are compounded, and from thence know the several Features, as I may call them, of his passions ; and a Patriot, a Prince, a Beggar, and a Clown, must each have their distinction, as well as Words and Language. He must vary with his argument, that is, carry the person in all his Manners and Qualities with him in every action and passion ; he must transform himself into every person he represents, because he is to act all sorts of actions and passions ; sometimes he is to be a Lover, and know not only all the soft and tender addresses of one, but what are proper to the Character of him who is in love, whether he be a Prince or a Peasant, a hot or fiery Man, or of more moderate and flegmatic Constitution, and even the degrees of the passion he is possessed with ; sometimes he is to represent a choleric, hot and jealous Man ; then he must be thoroughly acquainted with all the Motives and Sentiments productive of those motions of the Feet, Hands and Looks of such a person in such Circumstances. Sometimes he is a person all dejected and bending under the Extremities of Grief and Sorrow, which changes the whole force and appearance of him in the Representation, as it does really in Nature ; sometimes he is distracted, and here Nature will teach him, that his Action has always something wild and irregular, tho' even that regularly ; that his Eyes, his Looks or Countenance, motions of Body, Hands and Feet, be all of a piece, and that he never falls into the indifferent state of Calmness and Unconcern ; as he now represents Achilles, then Æneas, another  
 Time



Time Hamlet, then Alexander the Great, and Œdipus, he ought to know perfectly well the Characters of all these Heroes, the very same passions differing much in many Men; The courage of Æneas, for Example, was sedate and temperate, and always attended with good Nature; that of Turnus joined with Fury, yet accompanied with Generosity and Greatness of mind: The valour of Mezentius was savage and cruel; he has no fury but Fierceness; Turnus seems to fight to appease his anger, Mezentius to satisfy his Revenge, and barbarous Thirst of Blood. Turnus goes to the field with Grief, which always attends anger, whereas Mezentius destroys with Barbarity; he is so far from fury, that he is hard to be provoked to common anger; who calmly killing Ondes, grows but half angry at his Threats:

At whom Mezentius smil'd with mingled Ire.

Thus it is plain he has not the fury of Turnus, but a Barbarity peculiar to himself.

To know these different Characters of established Heroes, the Actor need only be acquainted with the Poets who write of them, if the Poet who introduces them in his play have not sufficiently distinguished them. But to know the different compositions of the Manners, and the passions springing from those Manners, he ought to have an Insight into moral Philosophy; for they produce various appearances in the looks and actions, according to their various Mixtures.

Our Stage indeed, at the best, is but a very cold Representation, when supported by loud prompting, to the great disgust of the Audience,



and spoiling the decorum of what is represented ; for an imperfect Actor affronts the Audience, and betrays his own demerits. I must say this in the praise of Major Mohun, he is generally perfect, and gives the Prompter little Trouble, and never puts in any thing of his own ; a fault for which some applaud themselves, tho' they deserve a severe punishment for their equal Folly and Impudence. They forget Hamlet's Advice to the Players, as follows,

“ Let those who play your Clowns speak no more than is set down for them ; for there be of them that will of themselves laugh, to set on some Quantity of barren Spectators to laugh too ; tho' in the mean time some necessary Question of the Play be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shews a most pitiful Ambition in the Fool that uses it.”

This is too frequently done by some of our Comedians. But it is, I think, an unpardonable fault in a Tragedian, who through his Imperfectness in his part shall speak on any Stuff that comes in his Head, which must infallibly prejudice the true Expression of the Business of the Play, let it be Passion, Description or Narration. Tho' notwithstanding this Supinuity in general of too many of our modern Players, there are some among them who are in earnest ; as may, from many Instances be pointed out in their respective parts. Among those Players, who seem always to be in earnest, I must not omit the principal, those incomparable performers Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle ; their Action is always just, and produced naturally by the Sentiments of the part they act, every where observing those Rules prescribed to the Poets by Horace, and which equally reach the Players.

We

We weep and laugh as we see others do,  
 He only makes me sad, who shews the way,  
 And first is sad himself ; then Telephus  
 I feel the Weight of your Calamities,  
 And fancy all your Miseries my own ;  
 But if you act them ill, I sleep or laugh.  
 Your Look must alter as your Subject does,  
 For Nature forms and softens us within,  
 And writes our Fortune's Changes in our  
 Face.

Pleasure enchants, impetuous Rage transports,  
 And Grief dejects and wrings the tortur'd  
 Soul ;  
 And these are all interpreted by Speech.  
 But he, whose Words and Fortunes disagree  
 Absurd, unpitied grows a publick Jest.

ROSCOM.

The Ladies just mentioned always entered into their parts. How often have I heard Mrs. Barry say, that she never spoke these Words in the Orphan, — Ah, poor Castalio ! — without weeping. Nay, I have frequently observed her to change Countenance several times, as the discourse of others on the Stage have affected her in the part she acted. This is being thoroughly concerned, this is to know one's part, this is to express the Passions in the Countenance and Gesture.

The Stage ought to be the Seat of passion in its various Kinds ; and therefore the Actors ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the whole Nature of the Affections, and Habits of the Mind, or else they never will be able to express them justly in their Looks and Gestures, as well

well as in the Tone of their Voice, and Manner of Utterance. They must know them in their various Mixtures, as they are differently blended together in the Characters they represent; and then that excellent Rule, in the Essay on Poetry, will be of great Use to the Actor,

—Who must look Within to find  
Those secret Turns of Nature in the Mind;  
Without this part, in vain would be the whole,  
And but a Body All, without a Soul.

Buck.

I think we have already assigned tolerable Reasons why Movement and Action should teach us so sensibly; nay, the very Representation of them in Painting often strikes the Passions, and makes Impressions of our Minds more strong and vivid, than all the Force of Words. The chief Work is certainly done by Speech in most other ways of Publick Discourse, either at the Bar, or in the Pulpit; where the Weight of the Reason and the Proof are first and most to be considered; But on the Stage, where the Passions are chiefly in View, the best Speaking destitute of Action and Gesture (the Life of all Speaking) proves but a heavy, dull, and dead Discourse:

This, in some measure, will likewise reach all things delivered in Public, since we find Pliny the Younger talking of People in his Days reciting of their Speeches, or Poems, either by reading them themselves, or by having them read by others, tells us, that this reading them was a very great Disadvantage to the Excellence of their Performance either way, lessening both their Eloquence and Character, since the principal

pal Helps of Pronunciation, the Eyes and the Hands, could not perform their Office, being otherwise employ'd to read, and not adorn the Utterance with their proper Motions ; infomuch that it was no manner of wonder, that the Attention of the Audience grew languid, on so unactive an Entertainment. On the contrary, when any Discourse receives Force and Life, not only from the propriety and Graces of speaking agreeably to the Subject, but from a proper Action and Gesture for it, it is truly moving, penetrating, transporting ; it has a Soul, it has Life, it has Vigour and Energy not to be resisted. For then the Player, the Preacher or Pleader, holds his Audience by the Eyes, as well as Ears, and engrosses their Attention by a double Force. This seems to be well represented in some Words of Cicero to Cæcilius a young Orator, in his first Cause, who would needs undertake the Action against Verres, in Opposition to Hortensius. After he has shown his Incapacity in many Points to accuse Verres, both in Ability, and in not being free from a Suspicion of a Share in the Guilt, he comes at last to the power and Art of his Adversary. " Cæcilius, says he, reflect, consider, again and again what you are going to do ! for there seems to me to be some Danger not only of his oppressing you with his Words, but even of his confounding and dazling the Eyes of your Understanding with his Gesture, and the Motion of his Body, and so entirely drive you from your Design, and from all your Thoughts.

Cicero, in his Books of Oratory, tells us, that Crassus pleading against Brutus, delivered his Words with such an accent and such a Gesture, that



that he perfectly confounded the latter, and put him out of Countenance, fixing his Eyes steadfastly on him, and addressing all his Action to him, as if he would devour him with a Look and a Word.

But to make these motions of the Face and Hands easily understood, that is, useful in moving the passions of the Auditors, they must be properly suited to the Thing you speak of, your Thoughts and Design; and always resembling the passion you would express or excite. Thus you must never speak of mournful Things with a gay and brisk Look, nor affirm any thing with the Action of Denial; for that would make what you say of no manner of Authority or Credit; you would gain neither Belief nor Admiration. You must also have a peculiar Care of avoiding all manner of Affectation in your Gesture, for that is ridiculous, unless where the Actor is to express some Affectation in the Character he represents, as Melantha in Marriage Ala-mode, and Millamant in the Way of the World. But even that Affectation must be unaffected, as those two parts were admirably performed by Mrs. Montfort and Mrs. Bracegirdle.

In fine, the Actor must have such nice Address in the management of his Gestures, that there may be nothing in all the various Motions and Dispositions of his Body which may be offensive to the Eye of the Spectator, as well as nothing grating and disobliging to the Ears of his Auditors, in his pronounciation, else will his Person be less agreeable, and his Speech less efficacious to both, by wanting all that Grace, Virtue and Power it would certainly otherwise obtain.

It

It is true, it must be confessed, that Gesture seems more difficult to be obtained than the art of Speaking; because a Man's own Ear may be Judge of the Voice and its several variations, but cannot see his Face at all, and the Motion of the other parts of the Body but very imperfectly. Demosthenes, as we have said, to make a true Judgment how far his Face and Limbs moved and kept to the Rules of good Action and Gesture, set before him a large Looking glass sufficient to represent the whole Body at one view, to direct him in distinguishing betwixt right and wrong, decent and indecent Action; but yet, tho' this might not be unuseful, it lies under this Disadvantage, that it represents to the Right what is on the Left, and on the Left what is on the Right Hand; so that when you make a Motion with your Right Hand, the Reflection makes it seem as done by the Left, which confounds the Gesture, and gives it an aukward Appearance: And to rectify these erroneous Motions from the Glass, by changing Hands, might contract such an ill Habit, as ought with the utmost Caution to be avoided.

We shall here lay down some particular Rules of Action, which justly weighed, will be of great Use to all Players.

The place and posture of the Body ought not to be changed every Moment, since so fickle an Agitation is trifling and light: Nor, on the other hand, should it always keep the same position, fixt like a Statue. For this, in the first place is unnatural, and must therefore be disagreeable, since God has so formed the Body with Members disposing it to motion, that it must move either as the Impulse of the Mind directs, or as the necessary Occasions of the Body  
 O require,

require. This heavy Stability, or thoughtless Fixedness, by losing that Variety, which is so becoming of, and agreeable in the Change and Diversity of Speech and Discourse, and gives Admiration to every thing it adorns, loses likewise that Genteelness and Grace, which engages the Attention by pleasing the Eye. Being taught to dance, will very much contribute in general to the graceful Motion of the whole Body, especially in Motions that are not immediately embarrassed with the Passions.

That the Head has various Gestures and Signs, Intimations and Hints, by which it is capable of expressing Consent, Refusal, Confirmation, Admiration and Anger, &c. is what every one knows, who has ever considered at all. It might therefore be thought superfluous to treat particularly of them. But this Rule may be laid down on this Head in general, first that it ought not to be lifted up too high, and stretched out extravagantly, which is the mark of Haughtiness; but an Exception to this Rule will come in for the Player, who is to act a person of that Character. Nor, on the other side, should it be hung down upon the Breast, which is both disagreeable to the Eye, in rendring the Mien clumsy and dull, and would prove extremely prejudicial to the Voice, depriving it of its Clearness, Distinction, and that Intelligibility, which it ought to have: Nor should the Head always lean towards the Shoulders, which is equally rustic and affected, or a great Mark of Indifference, Languidness, and a faint Inclination. But the Head, in all the calmer Speeches at least, ought to be kept in its just natural State and upright position. In the Agitation indeed of a passion, the position will naturally follow

follow the several Accesses and Recesses of the Passion, whether Grief, Anger, &c.

We must farther observe, that the Head must not be kept long without Motion; nor must it on the contrary be moving perpetually, and always throwing itself on every different Expression. It must therefore shun these ridiculous Extremes, turn gently on the Neck, as often as Occasion requires it, now to one side, and then to another, and then return to such a decent Position, as your Voice may best be heard by all, or the Generality of the Audience. The Head ought always to be turned on the same Side, to which the Actions of the rest of the Body are directed, except when 'tis employed to express our Aversion to Things we refuse, or on Things we detest and abhor; for these Things we reject with the right Hand, at the same Time turning the Head away to the Left.

But the greatest Life and Grace of Action derive themselves from the Face. For this Reason, Crassus in Cicero remarks, that Roscius, tho' so excellent a Player, lost his Admiration among the Romans on the Stage, because the Masque he wore denied the Audience the sight of those Motions and attractive Charms which were to be discovered in the Countenance. Some have been extremely surprized at the Ancients Use of those Masks on the Stage, which they called the Personæ; nor is it easy to imagine how they were made, not to destroy that Grace and Beauty of acting, in the Management of the Lineaments of the Face, which by all that we have of that kind, must be entirely hid; and yet what Plutarch tells us of Demosthenes and Cicero, is a proof, that the Players of Athens and Rome were absolute Masters of Speaking and Action.



It is true, there is much in the Voice to express the Passions artfully, yet certainly the several Figurations of the Countenance, as of the Eyes, Brow, Mouth, add the most touching Beauties. But the Observation before mentioned sufficiently proves, that those were entirely lost by the Personæ; which is a proof, that in whatever they excelled our Actors, we have the advantage in the making the Representation perfect, by enjoying the Benefit of exposing the Face.

The Character which Lucian gives of those Personæ makes them extremely ridiculous, and by his Description of the rest of the Tragic Equipage, would make us very much doubt their Excellence in other Parts of Acting. “ What  
 ‘ a deformed and frightful Sight is it, to see a  
 ‘ Man raised to a prodigious Length, stalking on  
 ‘ exalted Buskins, his Face disguised with a  
 ‘ grim Vizard, widely gaping, as if he meant  
 ‘ to devour all the Spectators; I forbear to  
 ‘ speak of his stuffed Breasts and Fore-bellies,  
 ‘ which makes an adventitious and artificial  
 ‘ Corpulency, lest his unnatural Length should  
 ‘ carry a Disproportion to his Slenderness.’

Surely such a Figure as Lucian gives the Tragedian, must not only render him incapable of giving the Body all its just Motions and graceful Gestures, of which we are talking, and which the great Writers celebrate so much; but must be ridiculous to a Farce. But tho’ what Lucian represents, may be looked upon as in the Time of the Corruption of the Roman Stage, yet the Cothurni and the Personæ were in use among the Greeks, and must have been extremely prejudicial to the Beauty of the Representation. The Reason given for the first was the common Opinion, that the Heroes of former Times were larger

ger and taller than our Cotemporaries ; and it is probable that the first Use of the Vizor, which succeeded the besmeering the Face with Lees of Wine in the Time of Thespis, was chiefly to express the Looks and Countenance of the several Heroes represented, according to their Statues and Portraitures, which made the Players always new to the Audience ; whereas we coming always on the Stage with the same Face, put no Force on the Imagination of the Audience to fancy us other than the same Persons.

If a Player was acquainted with the Character of his Hero, so far as to have an Account of his Features and Looks, or of any one living of the same Character, he would not only vary his Face so much by that means, as to appear quite another Face, by raising, or falling, contracting, or extending the Brows ; giving a brisk or fullen, sprightly or heavy Turn to his Eyes ; sharpening or swelling his Nostrils, and the various Positions of his Mouth, which by Practice would grow familiar, and wonderfully improve the Art of Acting, and raise the noble Diversion to greater Esteem. The studying History-Painting would be very useful on this Occasion, because the Knowledge of the Figure and Lineaments of the Person represented will teach the Actor to vary and change his figure, which would make him not always the same in all parts, but his very Countenance so changed, that they would not only have other Thoughts themselves, but raise others in the Audience. Some carry their Heads aloft and stately, others pucker their Brows, and look with a piercing Eye; as we have said ; and these things thoroughly considered by the Player, would in every part make him a new Man ; and with some Beauty supply the  
Per-

Personæ of the Ancients, and raise our Stage to a greater Merit than they could pretend to, which deprived the Audience of the noblest and most vivacious part of the Representation, in the Loss of the motions of the Face, of which we ought to take a peculiar Care, since it is on that which the Audience or Spectators generally fix their Eyes the whole Time of the Action.

Exercise and frequent practice ought to reform the least Error in this particular, because in the performance every one presently discovers it, tho' the Actor sees it not himself. The surest way of correcting this, is either a Looking-glass, or a judicious Friend, who can and will let you know what Countenance is agreeable, and what the contrary. But this is a general Rule, without any Exception, that you adjust all the Lines and Motions of the Face to the Subject of your Discourse, the passion you feel within you, or should according to your part feel, or would raise in those who hear and see you. You must likewise consider the Quality you represent, as well as the Quality of those to whom you speak; for even in great degrees of the passions, the Difference and Distance of that has a greater or less awe upon the very appearance of the passion. The Countenance must be brightened with a pleasant Gaiety on Things that are agreeable, and that according to the Degrees of their being so; and likewise in Joy, which must still be heightened in the passion of Love, tho' indeed the Countenance in the Expression of Love is extremely various, participating sometimes of the Transports of Joy, sometimes of the agonies of Grief; and is sometimes mingled with the Heats of Anger. Sadness or Gravity must prevail

vail in the Countenance, when the Subject is grave, melancholly or sorrowful; and Grief is to be expressed according to its various degrees of Violence.

I have observed frequently some Players, who pass'd for great ones, have their Eyes lifted up to the Galleries, or Top of the House, when they are engaged in a Discourse of some Heat, as if they were conning a Lesson, not acting a part. But Nature acts quite contrary; for no Man is engaged in Dispute, or any argument of Moment, but his Eyes and all his Regard are fixt on the person he talks with; not but that there are Times, according to the Turn or Crisis of a passion, where the Eyes may with great Beauty be turned from the Object we address to, as in Appeals to Heaven, imploring assistance, and the like.

When we are in a Discourse which requires no great Motion, our aspect should be pleasant, our Looks direct, neither severe nor aside, unless we fall into a passion, which requires the contrary; for then Nature, if we obey her Summons, will alter our Looks and Gestures. Thus when a Man speaks in anger, his Imagination is quite inflamed, and kindles a Sort of Fire in his Eyes, which sparkles from them in such a manner, that a person who understood not a Word of the Language, or a deaf Man, who could not hear the loudest Tone of Voice, would not fail of perceiving his Fury and Indignation. This fire of their Eyes will easily strike those of their Spectators, which are continually fixt on theirs; and by a very strange sympathetick Infection, it will set them on fire too with the very same passion,

Last



Last of all, the Art of Weeping ought to be carefully studied ; the Ancients made so great a progress in this, and worked the Counterfeit to so near a Reality, that their Faces used to be all over bedewed with Tears when they came off the Stage.

Thus ends Mr. Betterton's Observations on Action : We come now to give our Readers the celebrated Comedy of Pamela, which, tho' it may seem to some to be foreign to our purpose, yet as it certainly relates to the Stage, we don't doubt of its being agreeable to all Persons : However, 'tis so contrived, that it may be stitch'd up by itself, without interfering with our History.



THE  
L I F E  
O F  
Mr. COLLY CIBBER.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N.

I N the Beginning of this Work, we gave our Readers the History of the STAGE, from its Origin to the Year 1685, when the King and Duke's Companies were united; after that the Characters of the principal Actors; and come now to give some Account of Mr. CIBBER, one of our principal Theatrical Heroes: But as this Gentleman has lately published his own Life, in which is contained a very entertaining History of all the Theatrical Affairs, from the Union of the above two Companies, to the present Time; we shall give our Readers large Extracts from it, as follows, viz.

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A T my Admission to the Theatre, the Patentees, who were Masters of the united and only Company of Comedians, made it a Rule, that no young Persons, desirous to be  
P Actors,

Actors, should be admitted to Pay under at least half a Year's probation. But Pay was the least of my Concern; the pleasure of every Day seeing Plays for nothing, I thought was a sufficient Reward for the best of my Services. So that it was no pain to my Patience, that I waited full three Quarters of a Year, before I was taken into a Sallery of ten Shillings per Week; which, with the Assistance of Food and Raiment at my Father's House, I then thought a most plentiful Accession, and myself the happiest of Mortals.

The first Thing that enters into the Head of a young Actor, is that of being a Heroe: In this ambition I was soon snubb'd, by the Insufficiency of my Voice; to which might be added, an uninform'd meagre Person (tho' then not ill made) with a dismal pale Complexion. Under these Disadvantages, I had but a melancholy Prospect of ever playing a Lover, with Mrs. Bracegirdle, which I had flatter'd my Hopes, that my Youth might one Day have recommended me to. What was most promising in me, then, was the Aptness of my Ear; for I was soon allow'd to speak justly, tho' what was grave and serious, did not equally become me. The first Part, therefore, in which I appear'd, with any glimpse of Success, was the Chaplain in the Orphan of Otway. There is in this Character (one of one Scene only) a decent Pleasantry, and Sense enough to shew an Audience, whether the Actor has any himself. Here was the first Applause I ever receiv'd, which, you may be sure, made my Heart leap with a higher Joy, than may be necessary to describe; and yet my Transport was not then half so high, as at what Goodman, who had now left the Stage, said  
of

of me, the next day, in my hearing. Goodman often came to a Rehearsal for Amusement, and having sat out the Orphan, the Day before; in a Conversation with some of the principal Actors enquir'd what new young Fellow that was, whom he had seen in the Chaplain? Upon which, Montfort reply'd, That's he, behind you. Goodman then turning about, look'd earnestly at me, and, after some Pause, clapping me on the Shoulder, rejoin'd, If he does not make a good Actor, I'll be d---'d? The Surprise of being commended, by one who had been himself so eminent on the Stage, and in so positive a manner, was more than I could support; in a Word, it almost took away my Breath, and laugh, if you please, fairly drew Tears from my Eyes! And, tho' it may be as ridiculous, as incredible, to tell you what a full Vanity, and Consent, at that time possess'd me, I will still make it a Question, whether Alexander himself, or Charles the XIIth of Sweden, when at the Head of their first victorious Armies, could feel a greater Transport, in their Bosoms, than I did then in mine, when but in the Rear of this Troop of Comedians. You see, to what low Particulars I am forc'd to descend, to give you a true Resemblance of the early and lively Follies of my Mind. Let me give you another Instance, of my Discretion, more desperate than that, of preferring the Stage, to any other Views of Life. One might think, the Madness of breaking from the Advice, and Care of Parents; to turn Player, could not easily be exceeded: But what think you, Sir of---Matrimony? which, before I was Two-and-twenty, I actually committed, when I had but Twenty Pounds a Year, which my Father had assur'd to me, and



Twenty Shillings a Week from my Theatrical Labours, to maintain, as I then thought, the happiest young Couple, that ever took a Leap in the Dark? If after this, to complete my Fortune, I turned Poet too, this last Folly, indeed, had something a better Excuse.---Necessity: Had it never been my Lot to have come on the Stage, 'tis probable, I might never have been inclin'd, or reduc'd to have wrote for it: But having once expos'd my Person there, I thought it could be no additional Dishonour to let my Parts, whatever they were, take their Fortune along with it.---But, to return to the Progress I made as an Actor.

Queen Mary having commanded the Double Dealer to be acted, Kynaston happen'd to be so ill, that he could not hope to be able next Day to perform his Part of the Lord Touchwood. In this Exigence, the Author, Mr. Congreve, advis'd that it might be given to me, if at so short a Warning I would undertake it. The Flattery of being thus distinguish'd by so celebrated an Author, and the Honour to act before a Queen, you may be sure, made me blind to whatever Difficulties might attend it. I accepted the Part, and was ready in it before I slept; next Day the Queen was present at the Play, and was receiv'd with a new Prologue from the Author, spoken by Mrs. Barry, humbly acknowledging the great Honour done to the Stage, and to his play in particular: Two Lines of it, which tho' I have not since read, I still remember.

But never were in Rome, nor Athens seen,  
so fair a Circle, or so bright a Queen.

After

After the Play, Mr. Congreve made me the Compliment of saying, That I had not only answered, but had exceeded his Expectations, and that he would shew me he was sincere, by his saying more of me to the Masters.---He was as good as his Word, and the next pay-day, I found my Sallary of fifteen, was then advanc'd to twenty Shillings a Week. But alas! this favourable Opinion of Mr Congreve, made no farther Impression upon the Judgment of my good Masters ; it only serv'd to heighten my own Vanity ; but could not recommend me to any new Trials of my Capacity ; not a Step farther could I get, till the Company was again divided, when the Desertion of the best Actors left a clear Stage, for younger Champions to mount, and shew their best pretensions to Favour. But it is now time to enter upon those Facts, that immediately preceded this remarkable Revolution of the Theatre.

You have seen how compleat a set of Actors were under the Government of the united patentees in 1690 ; if their Gains were not extraordinary, what shall we impute it to, but some extraordinary ill Management ? I was then too young to be in their secrets, and therefore can only observe upon what I say, and have since thought visibly wrong.

Though the Success of the Prophetess, and King Arthur two dramatic Operas, in which the Patentees had embark'd all their Hopes, was in Appearance, very great, yet their whole Receipts did not so far ballance their Expence, as to keep them out of a large Debt, which it was publicly known was about this time, contracted, and which found Work for the Court of Chancery for about twenty years following, till one side of  
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the Cause grew weary. But this was not all that was wrong; every Branch of the Theatrical Trade had been sacrificed to the necessary fitting out those tall Ships of Burthen, that were to bring home the Indies. Plays of course were neglected, Actors held cheap, and slightly dressed, while Singers and Dancers were better paid, and embroidered. These Measures, of course, created Murmurings, on one side, and Ill-humour and Contempt on the other. When it became necessary therefore to lessen the Charge, a Resolution was taken to begin with the Sallaries of the Actors; and what seemed to make this Resolution more necessary at that time, was the Loss of Nokes, Montfort, and Leigh, who all died about the same year; No wonder, then, if when these great pillars were at once removed, the Building grew weaker, and the Audiences very much abated. Now in this Distress, what more natural Remedy could be found, than to incite and encourage, tho' with some Hazard, the Industry of the surviving Actors. But the Patentees, it seems, thought the surer way was to bring down their Pay, in proportion to the fall of their Audiences. To make this Project more feasible, they proposed to begin at the Head of them, rightly judging, that if the Principals acquiesc'd, their Inferiors would murmur in vain. To bring this about with a better Grace, they under pretence of bringing younger Actors forward, ordered several of Betterton's and Mrs. Barry's chief parts to be given to young Powel and Mrs. Bracegirdle. In this they committed two palpable Errors; for while the best Actors are in Health, and still on the Stage, the Publick is always apt to be out of Humour, when those of a lower Class pretend to

to stand in their places ; or admitting, at this time, they might have been accepted, this project might very probably have lessen'd, but could not possibly mend an Audience ; and was a sure Loss of that Time, in studying, which might have been better employed in giving the Auditor Variety, the only Temptation to a pall'd appetite, and Variety is only to be given by Industry : But Industry will always be lame, when the Actor has Reason to be discontented. This the Patentees did not consider, or pretended not to value, while they thought their power secure and uncontroulable : But farther, their first project did not succeed ; for tho' the giddy head of Powell accepted the parts of Betterton ; Mrs. Bracegirdle had a different way of thinking, and desired to be excused from those of Mrs. Barry ; her good Sense was not to be misled by the insidious favour of the Patentees ; she knew the Stage was wide enough for her Success, without entering into any such rash and invidious Competition with Mrs. Barry ; and therefore wholly refused acting any Part that properly belonged to her. But this proceeding, however, was Warning enough to make Betterton be upon his Guard, and to alarm others, with apprehension of their own Safety, from the Design that was laid against him : Betterton, upon this, drew into his party most of the valuable Actors, who, to secure their Unity, entered with him into a sort of association, to stand, or fall together. All this the patentees for some time slighted, but when Matters drew towards a Crisis, they found it adviseable to take the same Measures, and accordingly opened an association on their part ; both which were severally signed, as the Interest or Inclination of either Side led them.

During



During these Contentions, which the impolitic patentees had raised against themselves, not only by this I have mentioned, but by many other Grievances, which my Memory retains not, the Actors offer'd a Treaty of peace: but their Masters imagining no Consequence could shake the Right of their Authority, refused all Terms of Accommodation. In the mean time this dissention was so prejudicial to their daily affairs, that I remember it was allowed by both parties, that before Christmas the patent had lost the getting of at least a Thousand pounds by it.

The patentees who by their united powers, had made a Monopoly of the Stage, and consequently presumed they might impose what Conditions they pleased upon their people, did not consider, that they were all this while endeavouring to enslave a Set of Actors, whom the Publick, more arbitrary than themselves were inclined to support; nor did they reflect, that the Spectators naturally wished that the Actor, who gave him delight, might enjoy the profits arising from his Labour, without regard of what pretended Damage, or Injustice might fall upon his Owners, whose personal Merit the publick was not so well acquainted with. From this Consideration, then, several persons of the highest Distinction espoused their Cause, and sometimes, in the Circle, entertained the King with the State of the Theatre. At length their Grievances were laid before the Earl of Dorset, then Lord Chamberlain, who took the most effectual Method for their Relief. The Learned of the Law were advised with, and they gave their Opinion, that no patent for acting plays, &c. could tie up the Hands of a succeeding Prince, from granting the like Authority, where it might be thought proper

proper to trust it. But while this affair was in Agitation, Queen Mary dy'd, which of course occasion'd a Cessation of all publick Diversions. In this melancholy Interim, Betterton, and his Adherents had more Leisure to sollicit their Redress; and the Patentees now finding, that the Party against them was gathering Strength, were reduced to make sure of as good a Company, as the Leavings of Betterton's Interest could form; and these, you may be sure, would not lose this Occasion of setting a Price upon their Merit, equal to their own Opinion of it, which was but just double to what they had before. Powel, and Verbruggen, who had then but forty Shillings, a Week. were now raised each of them to four Pounds, and others in proportion: As for my self, I was then too insignificant to be taken into their Councils, and consequently stood among those of little Importance, like Cattle in a Market, to be sold to the first Bidder. But the Patentees seeming in the greater distress for Actors, condescended to purchase me. Thus, without any farther Merit, than that of being a scarce Commodity, I was advanc'd to thirty Shillings a Week, yet our Company was so far from being full, that our Commanders were forced to beat up for Voluntiers, in several distant Counties; it was this Occasion that first brought Johnson and Bullock to the Service of the Theatre-Royal.

Forces being thus raised, and the War declared on both Sides, Betterton and his Chiefs had the Honour of an Audience of the King, who considered them as the only Subjects, whom he had not yet delivered from arbitrary Power; and graciously dismiss'd them, with an Assurance of Relief, and Support—Accordingly a

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select number of them were impower'd by his Royal Licence, to act in a separate Theatre, for themselves. This great Point being obtain'd, many people of Quality came into a voluntary Subscription of twenty, and some forty Guineas a-piece, for erecting a Theatre within the Walls of the Tennis Court, in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. But as it required Time to fit it up, it gave the Patentees more Leisure to muster their Forces, who notwithstanding were not able to take Field till the Easter-Monday in April following: Their first attempt was a revived play, called *Abdelazar, or the Moor's Revenge*, poorly written by Mrs. Behn; The house was very full, yet the next Day sunk to nothing. But our Masters promised to make good all Deficiencies, and so indeed they did, till towards the End of the season, when Dues to Ballance came too thick upon them.

After we had stolen some few days march upon them, the forces of Betterton came up with us in terrible Order, and began with a new Comedy of Mr. Congreve's, called *Love for Love*; which ran on with such extraordinary Success, that they had seldom occasion to act any other Play, till the End of the Season.

Mr. Congreve was then in such Reputation as an Author, that besides his profits from this play, they offered him a whole Share with them, which he accepted; in Consideration of which he oblig'd himself, if his Health permitted, to give them one new Play every Year.

This Gentleman, whatever Impediment he met with, was three Years before, in pursuance to his Agreement, he produced the *Mourning Bride*; and if I mistake not, the Interval had been much the same, when he gave them the  
Way

Way of the World. But it came out the stronger for the Time it cost him, and to their better support, when they sorely wanted it; for though they went on with Success for a Year or two, and even when their Affairs were declining, stood in much higher Estimation of the Publick than their Opponents, yet in the end, both Sides were great Sufferers.

The first Fault this new Colony of Actors fell into, was their inconsiderately parting with Williams and Mrs. Monfort, upon a too nice Punctilio, in not allowing them to be equal Sharers with the rest; which, before they had acted one Play, occasioned their Return to us. I say this was a very wrong Step; for tho' Williams lov'd his Bottle, and Mrs. Montfort was only excellent in Comedy, yet their Merit was too great to be added to the Enemy. Of this Fact there is a poetical Record, in the Prologue to Love for Love, where the Author observes, that if in Paradise, when two only were there, they both fell, the Surprize was less, if from so numerous a Body as theirs, there had been any Deferters.

Abate the Wonder, and the Fault forgive,  
 If, in our larger Family, we grieve  
 One falling Adam, and one tempted Eve. }

Notwithstanding the Acquisition of these two Actors, who were of more Importance, than any of those to whose Assistance they came, the Affairs of the Patentees were still in a very creeping Condition; they were now convinced of their Error in having provoked their People to a Civil War: Quite chang'd and dismal now was the prospect before them, their Houses thin, and



the Town crowding into a new one, and their Actors at double Sallaries! And all this brought upon them by those their full Security had contemned, and who were now in a fair way of making their Fortunes upon the ruined Interest of their Oppressors.

Here, tho' at this Time my Fortune depended on the Success of the Patentees, yet I cannot help observing what rude and riotous Havock we made of all the late dramattick Honours of the Theatre; all at once became the Spoil of Ignorance and Self-conceit: Shakespear was defaced and tortured in every signal Character. — Nothing sure, could more painfully regret a judicious Spectator, than to see, at our first setting out, with what Confidence those Habits, which Actors of real Merit had left behind them, were worn by giddy Pretenders that so vulgarly disgrac'd them.

The reason of my not charging any one of those Faults to myself, is not from an imaginary Vanity that I could have avoided them, but because none of the principal Parts came to my share at that Time, nor indeed for many Months after. The first unintended Favour, therefore, of a part of any Value, Necessity threw upon me, on the following Occasion.

As it has been always judged their natural Interest, where there are two Theatres, to do one another as much Mischief as they can; it happened, upon our having Information on a Saturday Morning, that the Tuesday after, Hamlet was intended to be acted at the other House, where it had not yet been seen; our merry managing Actors resolved, at any rate, to steal a March upon the Enemy, and take possession of the same Play the Day before them; Accordingly,

ingly, Hamlet was given out that Night, to be acted with us on Monday. The Notice of this sudden enterprize, soon reach'd the other House: Upon this they shorten'd their first Orders, and resolv'd that Hamlet should to Hamlet be oppos'd, on the same Day. When we saw in their Monday's Bills that Hamlet was up against us, our Consternation was terrible, to find that so hopeful a Project was frustrated. In this distress Powell, who was our commanding Officer, immediately called a Council of War; where the Question was, Whether he should fairly face the Enemy, or make a Retreat. It was soon resolv'd that to act Hamlet against Hamlet, would be disgracing themselves to very little purpose; therefore Powell propos'd to change Plays with them, and that as they had given out the Old Batchelor, and had chang'd it for Hamlet, against us; we should give up our Hamlet, and turn the Old Batchelor upon them: This was unanimously agreed to. But upon Enquiry it was found, that there were not two Persons among them that had ever acted in this play: But Powell had an Equivaleut in petto, that would ballance any Deficiency on that Score; which was, to play the Old Batchelor himself, and mimick Betterton throughout the whole part. This happy Thought was approved with Delight and Applause; and accordingly the Bills were chang'd, and at the Bottom inserted,

The Part of the OLD BATCHELOR, to be perform'd in Imitation of the Original.

While the Actors were picking the parts they had chosen from the printed Books, some one hap-

happening to cast his Eye over the Dramatis Personæ, found that the main Matter was still forgot, that no body had yet been thought of for the part of Alderman Fondlewife. Here we were all aground agen ; nor was it to be conceiv'd who could make the least tolerable shift with it, this part having been so admirably performed by Dogget. At last it was recollected, that I had been heard to say, what a vast mind I had to play Nykin, by which Name the Character was more frequently call'd. Notwithstanding they all shook their Heads at my being nam'd, Powell was resolv'd, at all Hazards, to fall upon Betterton, ordered me to be sent for ; and as he naturally lov'd to set other People wrong, honestly said, before I came, " If the Fool has a mind to blow himself up at once, let us ev'n give him a clear Stage for it." Accordingly, the part was put into my Hands between Eleven and Twelve that Morning, which I durst not refuse, because others were as much straitned in time as myself. But having so constantly observed Dogget's performance, I wanted but little Trouble to make me perfect in the Words. To conclude, the Curiosity to see Betterton mimick'd, drew us a pretty good Audience ; and Powell was allow'd to have burlesqu'd him very well. When I appeared, one might have imagined, by the various Murmurs of the Audience, that they were in doubt whether Dogget himself was not return'd, or that they could not conceive what strange Face it could be, that so nearly resembled him ; for I had laid the Tint of forty Years more than my real Age upon my Features ; and to the most minute placing of a Hair, was dressed exactly like him : When I spoke, they  
thought

thought I had borrow'd his Voice too. But tho' that was the least difficult Part of him, to be imitated, they seem'd to allow, I had so much of him, in every other Requisite, that my applause was, perhaps, more than proportionable: For, whether I had done so much, where so little was expected, or that the Generosity of my Hearers were more than usually zealous, upon so unexpected an Occasion, or from what other Motive such Favour might be pour'd upon me I cannot say; but, in plain and honest Truth, upon my going off from the first Scene, a much better Actor might have been proud of the Applause, that followed me.

If, to all this, I add, that Dogget himself was, in the Pit, at the same, it would be too rank Affectation, if I should not confess, that, to see him there a Witness of my Reception, was, to me, as consummate a Triumph, as the Heart of Vanity could be indulg'd with. But whatever Vanity I might set upon myself, from this unexpected Success, I found that was no Rule to other People's Judgment of me. There were few or no Parts. of the same Kind, to be had; nor could they conceive, from what I had done in this, what other sort of Character I could be fit for. If I solicited for any thing of a different Nature, I was answered, That was not in my Way. And what was in my Way, it seems. was not, as yet, resolv'd upon. And though I reply'd, That I thought any thing, naturally written, ought to be in every one's Way that that pretended to be an Actor; this was looked upon as a vain, impracticable Conceit of my own. Yet it is a Conceit, that, in forty Years farther Experience, I have not yet given up.

Now



Now tho' to do any one thing well, may have more Merit, than we often meet with; and may be enough, to procure a Man the Name of a good Actor, from the publick; yet, in my Opinion, it is but still the Name, without the Substance. If this Talent is in such narrow Bounds, that he dares not step out of them, to look upon the Singularities of Mankind, and cannot catch them, in whatever Form they present themselves; if he is not Master of the Quicquid agunt homines, &c. in any Shape, Human Nature is fit to be seen in; if he cannot change himself into several distinct Persons, so as to vary his whole Tone of Voice, his Motion, his Look and Gesture, whether in high, or lower Life, and, at the same time, kept close to those Variations, without leaving the Character they singly belong to, if his best Skill falls short of this Capacity, what pretence have we to call him a compleat Master of his Art.

If I am ask'd, who, ever, arriv'd at this imaginary Excellence, I confess, the Instances are very few; but I will venture to name Montford as one of them, whose Theatrical Character I have given, in my last Chapter: For, in his Youth, he had acted Low Humour, with great Success, even down to Tallboy in the Jovial Crew; and when he was in great Esteem, as a Tragedian, he was, in Comedy, the most compleat Gentleman that I ever saw upon the Stage.

Let me add too, that Betterton, in his declining Age, was as eminent in Sir John Falstaff, as in the Vigour of it, in his Othello.

While I thus measure the Value of an Actor, by the Variety of Shape he is able to throw himself into, you may naturally suspect, that I am all this while, leading my own Theatrical Character

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unto your Favour : Why, really, to speak as an honest Man, I cannot wholly deny it: But in this, I shall endeavour to be no farther partial to myself, than known Facts will make me; from the good, or bad Evidence of which, your better Judgment will condemn, or acquit me.

In the mean time, be pleas'd to observe, how slowly, in my younger days, my good Fortune came forward.

My early Success in the Old Batchelor, of which I have given so full an account, having open'd no farther way to my Advancement, was enough, perhaps, to have made a young Fellow of more Modesty despair; but being of a Temper not easily dishearten'd, I resolv'd to leave nothing unattempted, that might shew me, in some new Rank of Distinction. Having then no other Resource, I was at last reduc'd to write a Character for myself; but as that was not finish'd till about a Year after, I could not, in the Interim, procure any one Part, that gave me the least Inclination to act it; and consequently, such as I got, I perform'd with a proportionable Negligence.

The next Year I produc'd the Comedy of Love's last Shift; yet the Difficulty of getting it on the Stage, was not easily surmounted; for, at that time, as little was expected from me, as an Author, as had been from my Pretensions to be an Actor. However, Mr. Southern, the Author of Oroonoko, having had the patience to hear me read it to him, happened to like it so well, that he immediately recommended it to the Patentees; and it was accordingly acted in January 1695. In this Play, I gave myself the Part of Sir Novelty, which was thought a good Portrait

of the Foppery then in fashion. Here too Mr. Southern, though he had approv'd my Play, came into the common Diffidence of me, as an Actor: For, when on the first Day of it, I was standing, myself, to prompt the Prologue, he took me by the Hand, and said, Young Man! I pronounce thy Play a good one; I will answer for its Success, if thou dost not spoil it by thy own Action: Though this might be a fair Salvo, for his favourable Judgment of my Play; yet if it were his real Opinion of me, as an Actor, I had the good Fortune to deceive him: I succeeded so well in both, that People seem'd at a loss, which they should give the Preference to.

The new Light, in which the Character of Sir Novelty had shewn me, one might have thought, was enough to have dissipated the Doubts, of what I might now, be possibly good for. But to whatever Chance, my Ill-fortune was due; whether I had still, but little Merit, or that the Managers, if I had any, were not competent Judges of it; or whether I was not generally elbow'd, by other Actors, (which I am most inclin'd to think the true Cause) when any fresh Parts were to be disposed of, not one Part of any consequence was I prefer'd to, 'till the Year following: Then indeed, from Sir John Vanbrugh's favourable Opinion of me, I began, with others, to have a better of myself: For he not only did me Honour, as an Author, by writing his Relapse, as a Sequel, or Second Part, of Love's last Shift; but as an Actor too, by preferring me, to the chief Character in his own Play; (which from Sir Novelty) he had ennobled by the Stile of Baron of Foppington. This Play (the Relapse) from  
its

its new, and easy Turn of Wit, had great Success and gave me, as a Comedian, a second Flight of Reputation along with it.

Though the Relapse was the first Play this agreeable Author produc'd, yet it was not, it seems, the first he had written; for he had at that time, by him, more than all the Scenes, that were acted, of the Provok'd Wife; but being then doubtful, whether he should ever trust them to the Stage, he thought no more of it: But after the Success of the Relapse, he was more strongly importun'd, than able to refuse it to the Publick. Why the last written play was first acted, and for that Reason they were given to different Stages, what follows, will explain.

In his first step, into publick Life, when he was but an Ensign, and had a Heart above his Income, he happen'd somewere, at his Winter-Quarters, upon a very slender Acquaintance with Sir Thomas Shipwith, to receive a particular Obligation from him, which he had not forgot at the Time I am speaking of: When Sir Thomas's Interest, in the Theatrical Patent, for he had a large Share in it, though he little concern'd himself in the Conduct of it, was raising but very slowly, he thought, that to give it a Lift by a new Comedy, if it succeeded, might be the handsomest Return he could make to those his former Favours; and having observed, that in Love's last Shift, most of the Actors had acquitted themselves, beyond what was expected of them; he took a sudden Hint from what he lik'd in that Play, and in less than three Months in the begining of April following, brought us the Relapse finish'd; but the Season being then too far advanc'd, it was not acted 'till the succeeding Winter. Upon the Success of the Relapse,



the late Lord Hallifax, who was a great Favourer of Betterton's Company, having formerly, by way of Family-Amusement, heard the Provok'd Wife read to him, in its looser Sheets, engaged Sir John Vanbrugh to revise it, and give it to the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. This was a Request not to be refused to so eminent a patron of the Muses, as the Lord Hallifax, who was equally a Friend and Admirer of Sir John himself. Nor was Sir Thomas Shipwith, in the least disoblige'd, by so reasonable a Compliance: After which, Sir John was again at liberty, to repeat his Civilities to his Friend Sir Thomas; and about the same time, or not long after, gave us the Comedy of Æsop; for his Inclination always led him to serve Sir Thomas. Besides our Company, about this time, began to be looked upon in another Light; the late Contempt we had lain under, was now wearing off, and from the success of two or three new plays, our Actors, by being Originals in a few good parts, where they had not the Disadvantage of Comparison against them, sometimes found new Favour, in those old plays, where others had exceed'd them.

Of this Good-fortune, perhaps, I had more than my share, from the two very different chief Characters, I had succeeded in; for I was equally approved in Æsop, as the Lord Foppington, allowing the Difference, to be no less than as Wisdom, in a person deformed, may be less entertaining to the general Taste than Folly and Foppery, finely dress'd: For the Character that delivers precepts of Wisdom, is, in some sort, severe upon the Auditor, by shewing him one wiser than himself. But when Folly is his Object, he applauds himself, for being wiser than the Coxcomb he laughs at: And who is not more  
pleas'd

pleas'd with an Occasion to commend, than accuse himself.

As I have already promised you, to refer your judgment of me, as an Actor, rather to known Facts, than my own Opinion, which I could not be sure, would keep clear of Self-partiality, I must a little farther risque my being tedious, to be as good as my Word. I have elsewhere allowed, that my want of a strong and full Voice, soon cut short my Hopes of making any valuable Figure, in Tragedy; and I have been many Years since, convinced, that whatever Opinion I might have of my own Judgment, or Capacity to amend the palpable Errors, that I saw our Tragedians, most in favour, commit; yet the Auditors, who would have been sensible of any such Amendments, could I have made them, were so very few, that my best Endeavours would have been but an unavailing Labour, or what is yet worse, might have appeared both to our Actors, and to many Auditors, the vain Mistake of my own Self-Conceit: For so strong, so very near indispensable, is that one Article of Voice, in the forming a good Tragedian, that an Actor may want any other Qualification whatsoever, and yet have a better chance for applause, than he will ever have, with all the skill in the World, if his Voice is not equal to it. Mistake me not; I say, for applause only — but applause does not always stay for, nor always follow intrinsic Merit; applause will frequently open, like a young Hound, upon a wrong scent; and the Majority of Auditors, you know, are generally composed of Babblers, that are profuse of their Voices, before there is any thing on foot, that calls for them: Not but, I grant, to lead, or mislead the Many, will always stand  
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in some Rank of a necessary Merit ; yet when I say a good Tragedian, I mean one, in Opinion of whose real Merit, the best Judges would agree.

Having so far given up my pretensions to the Buskin, I ought to account for my having, been notwithstanding, so often seen, in some particular Characters in Tragedy, as Iago, Wolsey, Syphax, Richard the Third, &c. If in any of this kind I have succeeded, perhaps it has been a Merit dearly purchas'd ; for, from the Delight I seem'd to take in my performing them, half my Auditors have been persuaded, that a great share of the Wickedness of them must have been in my own Nature : If this be true, it is rather a praise, than Censure of my performance. Aversion there is an involuntary Commendation, where we are only hated, for being like the Thing we ought to be like ; a sort of praise which few Actors besides my self could endure ; Had it been equal to the usual praise given to Virtue, my Cotemporaries would have thought themselves injured, if I had pretended to an equal share of it.

But it may be farther observed, that in the Characters I have named, where there is so much close meditated Mischief, Deceit, Pride, Insolence, or Cruelty, they cannot have the least Cast of the Amiable in them ; consequently there can be no Demand for that harmonious Sound, which in the softer Sentiments of Love, the Wailings of distressful Virtue, or in the Throws and Swellings of Ambition, may be needful to recommend them to us. So that again, my Want of that requisite Voice might less disqualify me for wicked Characters.

But

But not to make too great a Merit of my avoiding this common Road to Applause, perhaps I was inclined to think I had more ways than one to come at it ; and that in the Variety of Characters I acted, the Chances to win it were the stronger on my side. That if the Multitude were not in a Roar to see me in Cardinal Wolfey, I could be sure of them in Alderman Fondlewife. If they hated me in Iago, in Sir Fopling they took me for a fine Gentleman ; if they were silent at Syphax, no Italian Eunuch was more applauded than when I sung in Sir Courtly. If the Morals of Æsop were too grave for them, Justice Shallow was as simple and as merry an old Rake, as the wisest of our young ones could wish me. And though the Terror and Detestation raised by King Richard, might be too severe a Delight for them, yet the more gentle and modern Vanities of a Poet Bays, or the well-bred Vices of a Lord Foppington, were not at all more than their merry Hearts could bear.

These few Instances will serve to explain what sort of Merit I at most pretended to ; which was, that I supplied with Variety, whatever I might want of that particular Skill wherein others went before me. Those who have often been my Spectators are the proper Judges of my Performance ; if they pronounce me defective, I am condemn'd. If not, these Out-lines may serve for a Sketch of my Theatrical Character.



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 P A R T II.

The State of the STAGE continued. The Occasion of Wilks's commencing Actor. Facts relating to his Theatrical Talent. Actors more or less esteemed from their private Characters.

THE Lincoln's-Inn-Fields Company were now, in 1693, a Commonwealth, like that of Holland, divided from the Tyranny of Spain : But short was the Duration of their Theatrical Power ; for tho' success pour'd in so fast upon them at their first Opening, that every Thing seem'd to support itself ; yet in a Year or two many of them began to make their particular Interest more their point, than that of the general ; and tho' some Deference might be had to the Measures and Advice of Betterton, some of them wanted to rule in their Turn ; and were often out of humour that their Opinion was not regarded. The Tragedians seem'd to think their Rank as much superior to the Comedians, as in the Characters they acted ; when the first were in their Finery, the latter were impatient at the Expence ; and looked upon it as rather laid out upon the real than the fictitious Person of the Actor ; nay, I have known, in our own Company, this ridiculous sort of Regret carried so far, that the Tragedian has thought himself injured, when the Comedian pretended to wear a fine Coat. I remember Powel, looking at my  
first

first Dress, in the Relapse, was out of all Temper, and reproach'd our Master in very rude Terms, that he had not so good a Suit to play Cæsar Borgia in, tho' he knew, at the same time, my Lord Poppington filled the House, when his bouncing Borgia would do little more than pay Fiddlers and Candles to it.

Thus again on the contrary, when Betterton propos'd to set off a Tragedy, the Comedians were sure to murmur at the Charge of it: And the late Reputation which Dogget had acquired, from his acting his Ben, in Love for Love, made him a more declared Male-content on such Occasions; he over-valued Comedy for its being nearer to Nature than Tragedy, which is allow'd to say many fine things that Nature never spoke, in the same Words; and supposing his Opinion were just, yet he should have consider'd, that the Publick had a Taste, as well as himself; which, in Policy, he ought to have complied with. Dogget however, could not, with patience, look upon the costly Trains and Plumes of Tragedy, in which knowing himself to be useless, he thought were all a vain Extravagance: And when he found his Singularity could no longer oppose that Expence, he so obstinately adhered to his own Opinion, that he left the Society of his old Friends, and came over to us at the Theatre-Royal: And yet this Actor always set up for a Theatrical Patriot. This happened in the Winter following the first Division of the (only) Company. He came time enough to the Theatre-Royal, to act the part of Lory in the Relapse, an arch Valet, quite after the French-Cast, pert and familiar. But it suited so ill with Dogget's dry, and closely-natural Manner of acting, that upon the second Day he de-

fired it might be disposed of to another ; which the Author complying with, gave it to Penkethman , who tho' in other, Lights, much his Inferior, yet this part he seem'd better to become. Dogget was so immoveable in his Opinion of whatever he thought was right, or wrong, that he could never be easy, under any kind of Theatrical Government ; and was generally so warm, in pursuit of his Interest, that he often out-ran it ; I remember him three times, for some Years, unemploy'd in any Theatre, from his not being able to bear, in common with others, the disagreeable Accidents, that in such Societies are unavoidable. But whatever pretences he had form'd for this first deserting from Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, I always thought his best Reason for it, was, that he look'd upon it as a sinking Ship ; not only from the melancholly Abatement of their profits, but likewise from the Neglect and Disorder in their Government : He plainly saw, that their extraordinary success at first, had made them too confident of its Duration, and from thence had slacken'd their Industry—by which he observ'd, at that time the old House, where there was scarce any other Merit than Industry, began to flourish.

But alas ? the Vanity of applauded Actors, when they are not crowded to, as they may have been, makes them naturally impute the Change to any Cause, rather than the true one, Satiety : They are mighty loath, to think a Town, once so fond of them, could ever be tired ; and yet, at one time, or other, more or less, thin Houses have been the certain fate of the most prosperous Actors, ever since I remember the Stage ! But against this Evil, the provident Patentees had found out a Relief, which  
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the new House were not yet Masters of, viz. Never to pay their people, when the Money did not come in nor, then neither, but in such Proportions, as suited their Conveniency. I myself was one of the many, who for six acting Weeks together, never received one Day's pay; and for some Years after, seldom had above half our nominal Sallaries: But to the best of my Memory, the Finances of the other House, held it not above one season more, before they were reduced to the same Expedient of making the like scanty Payments.

Such was the Distress, and Fortune of both these Companies, since their Division from the Theatre-Royal; either working at half Wages, or by alternate Successes, intercepting the Bread from one another's Mouths; irreconcilable Enemies, yet without Hope or Relief, from a Victory on either side; sometimes both Parties reduced, and yet each supporting their Spirits, by seeing the other under the same Calamity.

During this State of the Stage, it was, that the lowest Expedient was made use of, to ingratiate our Company, in the publick Favour: Our Master, who had some time practised the Law, and therefore loved a storm better than fair Weather (for it was his own Conduct chiefly, that had brought the Patent into these Dangers took nothing so much to Heart, as that Partiality, wherewith he imagined the People of Quality had prefer'd the Actors of the other House, to those of his own: To balance this Misfortune, he was resolved, at least, to be well with their Domesticks, and therefore cunningly open'd the upper Gallery to them gratis: For before this time no Footman was ever admitted, or had



presum'd to come into it, till after the fourth Act was ended : This additional Priviledge, the greatest Plague that ever Play-House had to complain of, he conceived would not only incline them, to give us a good Word, in the respective Families they belong'd to, but would naturally incite them, to come all hands aloft, in the Crack of our applauses : And indeed it so far succeeded, that it often thunder'd from the full Gallery above, while our thin Pit and Boxes below, were in the utmost Serenity. This riotous priviledge, so craftily given, and which from Custom, was at last ripen'd into Right, became the most disgraceful Nuisance, that ever depreciated the Theatre.

About the distressful Time I was speaking of, in the Year 1696, Wilks, who now had been five Years in great Esteem on the Dublin Theatre, return'd to that of Drury-Lane ; in which last he had first set out, and had continued to act some small parts, for one Winter only.

In King James's Reign he had been some time employ'd in the Secretary's Office in Ireland, his native Country, and remained in it till after the Battle of the Boyn, which compleated the Revolution. Upon that happy, and unexpected Deliverance, the people of Dublin, among the various Expressions of their Joy, had a mind to have a Play ; but the Actors being disperfed during the War, some private persons agreed, in the best Manner they were able, to give one to the Publick, gratis, at the Theatre. The play was Othello, in which Wilks acted the Moor ; and the applause he received in it, warm'd him to so strong an Inclination for the Stage, that he immediately prefer'd it to all his other Views in Life ; for he quitted his post,  
and

and with the first fair Occasion came over, to try his Fortune, in the (then only) Company of Actors in London. The Person, who supply'd his Post, in Dublin, he told me, rais'd to himself, from thence, a Fortune of fifty thousand Pounds.

Upon his being formerly received into the Theatre-Royal, which was in the Winter after I had been initiated, his Station there was much upon the same Class with my own; our Parts were generally of an equal Insignificancy, not of consequence enough to give either a preference: But Wilks being more impatient of his low Condition than I was; and indeed the Company was then so well stock'd with good Actors, that there was very little hope of getting forward laid hold of a more expeditious way of his Advancement, and returned again to Dublin, with Mr. Ashbury, the Patentee of that Theatre, to act in his new Company there: Wilks having no Competitor in Dublin, was immediately preferr'd to whatever parts his Inclination led him, and his early Reputation on that Stage, as soon rais'd, in him, an Ambition to shew himself on a better. And I have heard him say in Raillery of the Vanity, which young Actors are liable to, that when the News of Montfort's Death came to Ireland, he from that time thought his Fortune was made, and took a Resolution to return a second time to England, with the first Opportunity; but as his Engagements to the Stage where he was, were too strong to be suddenly broke from, he return'd not to the Theatre-Royal, 'till the Year 1696.

Upon his first Arrival, Powel, who was now in possession of all the chief parts of Montfort, and the only Actor that stood in Wilks's way, in seeming Civility, offer'd him his choice of what-

whatever part he thought fit to make his first appearance in; though in reality, the Favour was intended to hurt him. But Wilks rightly judged it more modest to accept only of a Part of Powel's, and which Montfort had never acted, that of Palamede in Dryden's Marriage A la mode. Here too, he had the advantage of having the Ball play'd into his Hand, by the inimitable Mrs. Montfort, who was then his Melantha in the same Play: Whatever Fame Wilks had brought with him from Ireland, he as yet appear'd but a very raw Actor, to what he was afterwards allow'd to be; His faults however, I shall rather leave to the Judgments of those who then may remember him, than to take upon me the disagreeable Office of being particular upon them, farther than by saying, that in his part of Palamede, he was short of Powel, and miss'd a good deal of the loose Humour of the Character, which the other more happily hit. But however, he was young, erect, of a pleasing Aspect, and, in the whole, gave the Town, and the Stage sufficient Hopes of him.

Upon this visible Success of Wilks, the pretended Contempt, which Powel had held him in, began to sour into an open Jealousy; he, now plainly saw he was a formidable Rival, and (which more hurt him) saw too, that other people saw it; and therefore found it high time to oppose, and be troublesome to him. But Wilks happening to be as jealous of his Fame, as the other, you may imagine such clashing Candidates could not be long without a Rupture; In short, a Challenge, I very well remember, came from Powel, when he was hot-headed, but the next Morning he was cool enough, to let it end in favour of Wilks. Yet however the Magnanimity, on  
either

either Part, might subside, the Animosity was as deep in the Heart, as ever, tho' it was not afterwards so openly avow'd : For when Powel found that intimidating would not carry his point, but that Wilks, when provok'd, would really give Battle, he (Powel) grew so out of Humour, that he cock'd his Hat, and in his Passion walk'd off, to the Service of the Company, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. But there, finding more Competitors, he returned to his old Quarters, in Drury-Lane ; where, after these unsuccessful Pushes of his Ambition, he at last became a Martyr to Negligence, and quietly submitted to the Advantages and Superiority, which (during his late Desertion) Wilks had more easily got over him.

I must therefore let it be known, that though in Voice and Ear, Nature had been more kind to Powel, yet he so often lost the Value of them by an unheedful Confidence ; that the constant wakeful Care, and Decency of Wilks, left the other far behind, in the publick Esteem, and Approbation. Nor was his Memory less tenacious than that of Wilks ; but Powel put too much Trust in it, and idly deferr'd the Studying of his parts, as School-boys to their Exercise, to the last day ; which commonly brings them out proportionably defective. But Wilks never lost an Hour of precious Time, and was, in all his parts perfect, to such an Exactitude, that I question, if in forty Years, he ever five times chang'd or misplac'd an Article, in any one of them.

While Powel presided, his idle Example made his Fault so common to others, that I had my Share of it ; nor was my too critical Excuse, for it, a good one, viz. That scarce  
one



one part, in five, that fell to my Lot, was worth the Labour. But to shew Respect to an Audience, is worth the best Actor's Labour, and his Business considered, he must be a very impudent one that comes before them, with a conscious Negligence of what he is about: But Wilks was never known to make any of these venial distinctions, nor however barren his Part might be, could bear even the Self-Reproach of favouring his Memory.

In some new Comedy, he happen'd to complain of a crabbed Speech in his part, which, he said, gave him more trouble to study, than all the rest of it had done; upon which, he apply'd to the Author, either to soften, or shorten it.

The Author, that he might make the Matter quite easy to him, fairly cut it all out. But, when he got home from the Rehearsal, Wilks thought it such an Indignity to his Memory than any thing should be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himself perfect in that Speech, though he knew it was never to be made use of.

But besides this indispenfible Quality of diligence, Wilks had the Advantage of a sober Character, in private Life, which Powel not having the least Regard to, labour'd under the unhappy Disfavour, not to say Contempt, of the Publick, to whom his licentious Courses were no Secret; Even when he did well, that natural prejudice pursued him; neither the Hero, nor the Gentleman; the young Ammon, nor the Dorimant, could conceal, from the conscious Spectator, the True George Powel.

And this sort of Disesteem, or Favour, every Actor, will feel, and more, or less, have his Share of, as he has, or has not, a due Regard  
to

to his private Life and Reputation. Nay, even false Reports shall affect him, and become the Cause, or Pretence at least, of undervaluing, or treating him injuriously.

The private Character of an Actor, will always more or less affect his publick Performance. I have seen the most tender Sentiment of Love, in Tragedy, create Laughter, instead of Compassion, when it has been applicable to the real Engagements of the person that utter'd it. I have known good parts thrown up, from an humble Consciousness, that something in them might put an Audience in mind of — what was rather wish'd might be forgotten: Those remarkable Words of Evadne, in the Maid's Tragedy, 'A Maidenhead, Amintor, at my Years?' have sometimes been a much stronger Jest, for being a true one. But these are Reproaches, which in all Ages, the Theatre must have been us'd to, unless we could suppose Actors something more than Human Creatures, void of Faults or Frailties. It is a Misfortune not limited to the English Stage. I have seen the better-bred Audience in Paris, made merry even with a modest Expression, when it has come from the Mouth of an Actress; whose private Character it seem'd not to belong to. The Apprehension of these kind of Fleers, has been carried so far, in our own Country, that a late valuable Actress, who was conscious her Beauty was not her greatest Merit, desired the Warmth of some Lines might be abated, when they have made her too remarkably handsome. But to consider this Matter seriously, I cannot but think, at a Play, a sensible Auditor would contribute all he could to his being well deceived, and not suffer his Imagination so far to wander from the well-acted Character

racter before him, as to gratify a frivolous Spleen by Mocks or personal Sneers on the performer, at the Expence of his better Entertainment.

As the Matter I write must be very insipid to those who have not a Taste for the Stage, I will endeavour to relieve them, by telling a Story relating to myself, of a more publick Nature.

In the Year 1730, there were many Authors, whose Merit wanted nothing but Interest to recommend them to the vacant Laurel, and who took it ill to see it at last conferred upon a Comedian; insomuch that they were resolved, at least, to shew Specimens of their superior pretensions, and accordingly enliven'd the publick Papers with ingenious Epigrams and satyrical Flirts at the unworthy Successor. While I was thus beset on all sides, there happen'd to step forth a poetical Knight-Errant to my Assistance, who was hardy enough to publish some compassionate Stanzas in my favour. These you may be sure, the Raillery of my Friends could do no less than say, were written by myself. To deny it, I knew, would have confirmed their pretended Suspicion; I therefore told them, since it gave them such Joy to believe them my own, I would do my best to make the whole Town think so too. As the Oddness of this Reply was what would not be easily comprehended, I desired them to have patience, and I would explain it. In two Days, I sent this Letter, with some doggrel Rhimes at the Bottom,

To the Author of the Whitehall Evening-Post.

S I R,

THE Verses to the Laureat, in yours of Saturday last, have occasioned the following Reply, which I hope you'll give a place in  
your

your next, to shew that we can be quick, as well as smart, upon a proper Occasion : And, as I think it the lowest Mark of a Scoundrel to make bold with any Man's Character in Print, without subscribing the true Name of the Author ; I therefore desire, if the Laureat is concern'd enough to ask the Question, that you will tell him my Name, and where I live ; till then I beg Leave to be known by no other than that of,

Your Servant,

FRANCIS FAIRPLAY:

These were the Verses.

I.

Ah, hah ! Sir Coll, is that the Way,  
Thy own dull praise to write ?  
And wou'dst thou stand so sure a Lay ?  
No, that's too stale a Bite,

II.

Nature and Art, in thee combine,  
Thy Talents here excel,  
All shining Brags thou dost outshine,  
To play the Cheat so well.

III.

Who sees thee in Iago's part,  
But thinks thee such a Rogue ?  
And is not glad, with all his Heart,  
To hang so sad a Dog ?

IV.

When Bays thou play'st, Thyself thou art,  
For that by Nature fit,

No



140      The HISTORY of  
No Blockhead better suits the part,  
    Than such a Coxcomb Wit.

V.

In Wronghead too, thy Brains we see,  
    Who might do well at Plough ;  
As fit for Parliament was he,  
As for the Laurel Thou.

VI.

Bring thy protected Verse from Court,  
    And try it on the Stage :  
There it will make much better sport,  
    And set the Town in Rage.

VII.

There Beaux, and Wits, and Cits, and Smarts,  
    Where Hissing's not uncivil,  
Will shew their parts, to thy Deserts,  
    And send it to the Devil.

VIII.

But ah! in vain, 'gainst Thee we write,  
    In vain thy Verse we maul !  
Our sharpest Satyr's thy Delight,  
    \* For—Blood ! thou'll stand it all.

IX.

Thunder, 'tis said, the Laurel spares,  
    Nought but thy Brows could blast it ;  
And yet——O curst, provoking Stars !  
    Thy Comfort is, thou hast it.

I offer this as a proof, that I was several  
Years ago the same cold Candidate for Fame.

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\* A Line in the Epilogue to the Nonjuror.

as I would still be thought ; you will not easily suppose I could have much Concern about it, while, to gratify the merry Pique of my Friends, I was capable of seeming to head the poetical Cry then against me. But I must now take up Wilks and Powel again, where I left them.

Though the Contention for Superiority between them, seemed about this Time, to end in favour of the former, yet the Distress of the Patentee, in having his Servant his Master, as Powel had lately been, was not much relieved by the Victory ; for Wilks, by being in possession of so many good parts, fell into the common Error of most Actors, that of over-rating their Merit, or never thinking it is so thoroughly considered as it ought to be ; which generally makes them proportionably troublesome to the Master. The Patentee therefore found it as difficult to supply the continual Demands of Wilks, as it was dangerous to refuse them ; very few were made that were not granted, and as few were granted as was not grudg'd him : Not but that our good Master was as sly a Tyrant as ever was at the Head of a Theatre ; here he found himself under a Difficulty he knew not well how to get out of ; for as he was a close subtle Man, he very seldom made use of a Confident in his Schemes of Government : But here Delays would not do ; Wilks must instantly be complied with, or Powel come again into power. In short, he was reduced to take my Opinion to his Assistance, which I gave him in the best manner I was able, in favour of Wilks ; observing at the same time how much better our Affairs went forward since he came among us. To conclude, this matter ended in a new Agreement with Wilks, which intitled him to his full pay of four Pounds per

per Week, without any conditional Deductions. From this time Wilks seemed to take new Delight in keeping the Actors close to their Business, and got every Play revived with Care, in which he had performed the chief part in Dublin: To be employed on the Stage was the delight of his Life; to be justly excused from it was the Joy of mine. In our theatrical disputes, he would hazard our Undoing to gratify his passions, tho' otherwise an honest Man, and I rather chose to give up my Reason, or not see my Wrong, than ruin our Community by an equal Rashness. Let me now give a particular Instance of the Reward and Favour, which in a Theatre, Diligence and Sobriety seldom fail of. Mills the elder grew into the Friendship of Wilks, with not a great deal more than those useful Qualities to recommend him; He was an honest, quiet Man, of as few Faults as Excellencies; and Wilks rather chose him for his Second in many Plays, than an Actor of perhaps greater Skill, that was not so laboriously diligent. And from this constant Assiduity, Mills with making to himself a Friend in Wilks, was advanced to a larger Sallary than any Man-actor had enjoyed, during my Time on the Stage. I have yet to offer a more happy Recommendation of Temperance, which a late celebrated Actor was warn'd into, by the mis-conduct of Powel. About the Year that Wilks returned from Dublin, Booth, who had commenced Actor upon that Theatre, came over to the Company in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields: He was then but an Undergraduate of the Buskin, and as he told me himself, had been for some time too frank a Lover of the Bottle; but having had the Happiness to observe into what Contempt and Distress poor  
Powel

Powel had plung'd himself by the same Vice, he was so struck with the Terror of his Example, that he fixed a Resolution, which from that Time to the End of his days he strictly observed, of utterly reforming it; an uncommon Act of Philosophy in a young Man; of which in his Fame and Fortune he afterwards enjoyed the Benefit. Had Wilks been as remarkable for Ease in his Temper, as for Sobriety, he would certainly have lived to a great Age; but he never left the Stage till he left the World: I never so well enjoy'd the World, as when I left the Stage; he died in possession of his Wishes. As he in a great measure wore out the Organs of Life, in his incessant Labours to gratify the Publick, the Many whom he gave pleasure to, will always owe his Memory a favourable Report. If I have spoke with more Freedom of his quondam Competitor Powel, let my good Intentions to future Actors, in shewing what will so much concern them to avoid, be my Excuse for it; for an intemperate Man, though Morality were out of the Question, can never arrive at the necessary Excellencies of a good or useful Actor.





## P A R T II.

The Patentee of Drury Lane wiser than his Actors. The Author continues to write Plays. The best dramattick Poets censured by Collier, in his Short View of the Stage. It has a good Effect. The Master of the Revels from that Time cautious, in his licensing new plays. The late Act for that purpose considered.

**T**Hough the Master of our Theatre had no Conception himself of Theatrical Merit, either in Authors or Actors; yet his Judgment was governed by a saving Rule in both: He looked into his Receipts for the Value of a play, and from common Fame he judged of the Actors, Formerly, when there was but one Company, the Actors were punctually paid their appointed Sallaries; but our wise Master took first out of every day's receipt two Shillings in the pound, and left them to be paid only as the less or great Deficiencies of acting, would permit. I remember in a few Years after this, he once paid us nine days in one Week: But it was too costly a Frolick to be repeated; we never having received one day more of our arrears in above fifteen Years Service.

While the Actors were in this Condition, I think I may very well be excused my presuming to write Plays, my precarious Income as an Actor  
being

being then too scanty to supply my Family with even the Necessaries of Life: To this Necessity of Writing then, I attribute the Defects of my second Play, which coming out too hastily turn'd to very little account; but having got as much by my first as I ought to have expected from them both, I had no great Reason to complain; Not but I confess so bad was my second, that I do not chuse to tell you the Name of it. When I was warmly engag'd, by a Subject entirely new, I only thought it a good one, when it seem'd worthy of abler pens than my own, and might prove as useful to the Hearer, as profitable to my self: Therefore, whatever any of my productions might want of Skill, Learning, Wit or Humour, or however unqualified I might be to instruct others, who so ill govern'd my self: Yet such Plays, entirely my own, were not wanting, at least in what our most admired Writers seem'd to neglect, and without which, I cannot allow the most taking Play, to be intrinsically good, or to be a Work, which a Man of Sense and Probity should value himself; I mean when they do not, as well give profit with Delight! It has often amaz'd me, that our best Authors of that time could think the Wit and Spirit of their Scenes, could be an Excuse for making the Looseness of them publick. The many instances of their Talents so abused, are too glaring to need a closer Comment, and are sometimes too gross to be recited. If then to have avoided this Imputation, or rather to have the Interest and Honour of Virtue always in View, can give Merit to a Play; I am contented that my Readers should think such Merit, the All, that mine have to boast of—Libertines of meer Wit and Pleasure, may laugh at these grave Laws, that would limit a

lively Genius: But every sensible honest Man, conscious of their Truth and Use, will give these Ralliers Smile for Smile, and shew a due Contempt for their Merriment.

But while our Authors took these extraordinary Liberties with their Wit, I remember the Ladies were then observ'd, to be decently afraid of venturing bare fac'd to a new Comedy, 'till they had been assur'd they might do it, without the Risque of an Insult to their Modesty — Or, if their Curiosity were too strong, for their Patience, they took Care, at least, to save Appearances, and rarely came upon the first Day of acting but in Masks, then daily worn, and admitted in the Pit, the side Boxes and Gallery, which Custom however, had so many ill Consequences attending it, that it has been abolish'd these many Years.

These Immoralities of the Stage, had by an avow'd Indulgence been creeping into it ever since King Charles his Time; nothing that was loose could then be too low for it: The London Cuckolds the most rank Play that ever succeeded, was then in the highest Court-Favour.

In this almost general Corruption, Dryden, whose Plays were more fam'd for their Wit than their Chastity, led the Way, which he fairly confesses, and endeavours to excuse, in his Epilogue to the Pilgrim, revis'd in 1700 for his Benefit, in his declining Age and Fortune: The following Lines of it will make good my Observation.

Perhaps the Parson stretch'd a point too far,  
When, with our Theatres he wag'd a War.  
He tells you, that this very moral Age  
Receiv'd the first Infection from the Stage,

But

But sure, a banish'd Court, with Lewdness  
 fraught,  
 The Seeds of open Vice returning brought.  
 Thus lodg'd, as Vice by great Example thrives,  
 It first debauch'd the Daughters and the Wives.  
 London, a fruitful Soil, yet never bore  
 So plentiful a Crop of Horns before.  
 The Poets, who must live by Courts or starve,  
 Were proud, so good a Government to serve.  
 And mixing with Buffoons, and Pimps profane,  
 Tainted the Stage, for some small snip of Gain.  
 For they like Harlots under Bawds profess,  
 Took all the ungodly Pains, and got the least.  
 Thus did the thriving Malady prevail,  
 The Court, it's Head, the Poets but the Tail.  
 The Sin was of our native Growth, 'tis true,  
 The Scandal of the Sin was wholly new.  
 Misses there were, but modestly conceal'd;  
 Whitehall the naked Venus first reveal'd,  
 Where standing as at Cyprus in her Shrine,  
 The Strumpet was ador'd with Rites divine, &c.

This Epilogue, and the Prologue to the same Play, written by Dryden, I spoke myself, which not being usually done by the same Person, I have a mind, while I think of it, to let you know how they both fell to my share, and how other Actors were affected by it.

Sir John Vanbrugh, who had given some light Touches of his Pen to the Pilgrim, to assist the Benefit Day of Dryden, had the disposal of the parts; he was so good as to offer me my choice of what I might like best for myself in it: But I only chose two short incidental parts, that of the stuttering Cook and the mad Englishman. In which homely Characters, I saw more matter for Delight, than those that might have



a better pretence to the Amiable. Sir John, upon my being contented with so little, gave me the Epilogue to make up my share, which being written so much above the strain of common Authors, I confess I was not a little pleased with. And Dryden, upon his hearing me repeat it to him, trusted me with the Prologue. This was looked upon by the Actors as something too extraordinary; but none complain'd of it so loudly as Wilks, who seldom chose soft Words when he spoke of any thing he did not like: The most gentle thing he said of it was, that he did not understand such Treatment; that for his part he looked upon it as an affront to all the rest of the Company, that there should be but one out of the whole judg'd fit either to speak a Prologue or an Epilogue. I offer'd to decline either in his Favour, or both: But he was too much concern'd to accept of an Offer, that had been made to another, in preference to himself, and which he seem'd to think his best way of resenting, was to contemn. But from that Time, however, he never let the first Offer of a prologue escape him.

To speak a good prologue well, is in my Opinion one of the hardest parts, and strongest proofs of sound Elocution, of which, I confess, I never thought, that any of the several who attempted it, shewed themselves equal Masters to Betterton. Betterton, in the Delivery of a good prologue, had a natural Gravity that gave strength to good Sense; a temper'd Spirit, that gave Life to Wit; and a dry Reserve in his Smile, that threw Ridicule into its brightest Colours. Of these Qualities, Booth only had the first, but attained not the other two: Wilks had spirit, but gave too loose a Rein to it, and it was seldom he could speak a grave and weighty Verse harmoniously:

niously : His Accents were frequently too sharp, and violent, which sometimes occasioned his eagerly cutting off half the sound of Syllables, that ought to have been gently melted into the Melody of Metre ; in Verses of Humour too, he would sometimes carry the Mimickry farther than the Hint would bear, even to a trifling Light, as if himself were pleased to see it so glittering : Wilks had many Excellencies, but if we leave Prologue-speaking out of the Number, he will still have enough to have made him a valuable Actor.

But I have something more to say concerning the Inimoralities of the Stage : many flagrant Instances of which, were collected and published by a Non-juring Clergyman, Jeremy Collier, about the Year 1697. However just his charge against the Authors who then wrote for it, might be ; I cannot but think his sentence against the Theatre itself is unequal ; Reformation he thinks too mild a Treatment for it, and is therefore for laying the ax to the root of it. This puts me in mind of what the noted Jo. Haines, the Comedian, a Fellow of a wicked Wit, said upon this Occasion ; who being ask'd what could transport Mr. Collier into so blind a Zeal for the general suppression of the Stage, when only some particular Authors had abus'd it ? Whereas the Stage, he could not but know, was generally allowed, when rightly conducted, to be a delightful method of mending our Morals ? ' For that reason, replied Haines : Collier is by profession a Moral-mender himself, and two of a Trade, you know, can never agree.'

The Authors of the Old Batchelor, and of the Relapse, were those whom Collier labour'd most

to convict of Immorality ; to which they severally published their Reply ; the first seemed too much hurt, to be able to defend himself, and the other felt him so little, that his Wit only laugh'd at his Lashes.

However, it must be granted, that Mr. Collier's calling our Dramatick Writers to this strict account, had a very wholesome Effect upon those who writ after this time. Indecencies were no longer Wit, and by degrees the Fair Sex came again to fill the Boxes on the first Day of a new Comedy, without Fear or Censure. But the Master of the Revels assisted this Reformation with a more zealous Severity than ever. He would strike out whole Scenes of a vicious or immoral Character, tho' it were visibly shewn to be reformed or punished ; a severe Instance of this falling upon myself, may be an Excuse for my relating it : When Richard the Third, as I altered it from Shakespeare, 'came from his hands, to be acted, he entirely expung'd the first Act. This occasioned my applying to him, for the small Indulgence of a speech or two, that the other four Acts might limp on with a little less Absurdity. But he had an Objection to the whole Act ; and the Reason he gave for it was, that the Distresses of King Henry the Sixth, who is killed by Richard in the first Act, would put weak people too much in mind of King James, then living in France ; a notable proof of his Zeal for the Government ! Those who have read either the Play or the History, I dare say, will think he strain'd hard for the parallel. In a word, we were forced, for some Years, to let it take its Fate, with only four Acts divided into five.

This

This power of the Master of the Revels, leads me to throw out a few Observations upon the late Act for vesting it in the Lord Chamberlain. But I must first tell you what made this Law necessary.

About nine Years ago, a Theatre was erected in Goodman's Fields, where Plays, without any Licence, were acted for some time unmolested, and with Impunity. This being thought a Nuisance by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, they petition'd the Crown to suppress it; but this affair, a little time after, came to a nearer decision in Westminster-Hall, on the following Occasion: It happened that the purchasers of the Patent, to whom Mr. Booth and Myself had sold our shares, were at variance with their Comedians, and the Variance ended, in the chief of them deserting, and setting up for themselves in the little Houſe in the Hay-market, in 1733, by which Desertion the Patentees were very much distress'd. Upon this they were advised to put the Act of the 12th of Queen Anne, against Vagabonds, in force, against these Deserters, then acting in the Hay-market, without Licence: Accordingly one of their chief performers was taken from the Stage by the Warrant of a Justice of Peace, and committed to Bridewell. When the Legality of this came to be disputed in Westminster-hall, it appeared the person taken up was not within the description of the Act, he having a Vote for the Westminster Members of Parliament. He was discharged accordingly, and conducted through the Hall, with the Congratulations of the Crouds that wish'd well to his Cause.

This



This Endeavour to suppress the Comedians acting in the Hay-market, proving ineffectual, and no hopes of a Re-union then appearing, the Remains of the Players left in Drury-lane, were reduced to a very low condition: At this time a third purchaser, Mr. Fleetwood, stepped in, and struck up a Bargain at once, for five parts in six of the patent, and at the same time gave the revolted Players their own Terms to return, and come under his Government in Drury-lane, where they still continue to act. But the late affair of the prosecuted Comedian, going so very strongly in his Favour, and the House in Goodman's Fields still continuing to act, gave Encouragement to a certain Person to collect a fourth Company, who acted plays in the Hay-market, which House the united Drury-lane Comedians had lately quitted. This person soon found it necessary to give the Publick some pieces of an extraordinary Kind; of which it may be enough to say in general Terms, they were so openly flagrant, that the Wisdom of the Legislature thought it was high Time to take a proper Notice of them.

I come now to speak of that Law which has reduced the number of Play-houses, and prevents the Repetition of such Abuses, in those that remain open.

While this Law was in debate, a lively Spirit and uncommon Eloquence was employed against it: It was said, That to bring the Theatre under the Restraint of a Licenser, was leading the way to an attack upon the Liberty of the Press. This amounts but to a Jealousy at best, which I hope and believe all honest Englishmen have as much reason to think a groundless, as to fear, it is

is a just Jealousy: For the Stage and the Press, I shall endeavour to shew are very different Weapons to wound with. If a great Man could be no more injured by being personally ridiculed, or made contemptible in a Play, than by the same Matter only printed and read against him in a Pamphlet, or the strongest Verse; then indeed the Stage and the Press might pretend to be upon an equal Footing: But when the wide Difference between these two Liberties come to be explain'd and consider'd, I dare say we shall find the Injuries from one capable of being ten times more severe and formidable than from the other. Read what Mr. Collier, in his Defence of the Short View of the Stage says to this point.

• The Satyr of a Comedian, and that of a Poet, have a different Effect upon Reputation; A Character of Disadvantage upon the Stage, makes a stronger Impression than elsewhere: Reading is but Hearing at second hand; now Hearing, at best, is a more languid Conveyance than sight; for the Eye is much more affecting, and strikes deeper into the Memory than the Ear; besides, upon the Stage, both the senses are in Conjunction. The Life of the Actor fortifies the Object, and awakens the Mind to take hold of it. Thus a dramattick Abuse, is rivetted in the Audience; a Jest is improved into Argument, and Rallying grows up into Reason. Thus a Character of Scandal becomes almost indelible; a Man goes for a Blockhead upon Content, and he that is made a Fool in a play, is often made one for his Life. 'Tis true, he passes for such only among the prejudiced and unthinking; but these are no inconsiderable Division of Mankind. For these Reasons, I humbly conceive the Stage stands in need of a great deal of

Discipline and Restraint. To give them an unlimited Rage, is in effect to make them Masters of all moral Distinctions, and to lay Honour and Religion at their Mercy. To shew Greatness ridiculous, is the way to lose the Use, and abate the Value of the Quality. Things made little in jest, will soon be so in earnest; for Laughing and Esteem are seldom bestowed on the same Object.

If this was Truth and Reason forty Years ago, will it not carry the same Conviction with it to these days, when there came to be a much stronger Call for a Reformation of the Stage, than when this Author wrote against it, or perhaps than was ever known, since the English Stage had a Being?

To conclude, let us consider this Law in a quite different Light; let us leave the political part of it quite out of the Question; what advantage could either the Spectators of Plays, or the Masters of Play-houses have gain'd, by its never having been made? How could the same stock of plays supply four Theatres, which, without such additional Entertainments, as a Nation of common Sense ought to be ashamed of, could not well supply two. Satiety must have been the natural Consequence of the same Plays being twice as often repeated as now they need be; and Satiety puts an End to all Tastes that the mind of Man can delight in. Had therefore this Law been made nine Years ago, I should not have parted with my share in the patent under a thousand pounds more than I received for it. So that as far as I am able to judge, both the Publick as Spectators, and the Patentees as Undertakers, are  
or

or might be in a better way of being entertained,  
and more considerable Gainers by it.

I now return to the state of the Stage, where I  
left it, about the Year 1697, from whence this  
pursuit of its Immoralities has led me farther than  
I first designed to have followed it.





## P A R T IV.

The different state of the two Companies. Wilks and Estcourt invited over from Dublin. The great Theatre in the Hay market built for Betterton's Company. It answers not their Expectation, and some Observations upon it. A Theatrical State secret.

**T**HE second Union of our Comedians, was in that very memorable Year when the two Kingdoms of England and Scotland were made one. And I remember a particular that confirms me I am right in my Chronology; for the play of Hamlet being acted soon after, Estcourt, who then took upon him to say any thing, added a fourth Line to Shakespeare's prologue to the Play, which originally consisted but of three; but Estcourt made it run thus:

For Us and for our Tragedy,  
Thus stooping to your Clemency,  
(This being a Year of Unity,)  
We beg your Hearing patiently.

This new Chronological Line coming unexpectedly upon the Audience, was received with Applause, tho' several grave Faces look'd a little serious upon it. However, by this Fact it is plain our Theatrical Union happened in 1707.

But

But to speak of it in its place, I must go a little back again.

From 1697, to this Union, both Companies went on without any memorable Change in their Affairs, unless it were, That Betterton's People (however good in their Kind) were most of them too far advanced in Years to mend; and tho' we in Drury-Lane were too young to be excellent, we were not too old to be better. But what will not Society depreciate? For tho' I must own and avow, that in our highest Prosperity, I always thought we were greatly inferior; yet, by our good Fortune of being seen in quite new Lights, which several new written Plays had shewn us in, we now began to make a considerable Stand against them. One good new Play to a rising Company is of inconceivable Value. In Oroonoko, Love's last Shift, and in the Sequel of it, the Relapse; several of our People shew'd themselves in a new Style of acting, in which Nature had not as yet been seen. I cannot here forget a Misfortune that befel our Society about this time, by the Loss of a young Actor, Hildebrand Horden, who was kill'd at the Bar of the Rose-Tavern, in a frivilous, rash, accidental Quarrel; for which a late Resident at Venice, Colonel Burgess, and several other Persons of Distinction took their Trials, and were acquitted. This young Man had almost every Gift that could promise an excellent Actor; he had besides a good deal of Table-Wit, and Humour, with a handsome Person, and was every Day rising into publick Favour. Before he was buried, it was observable, that two or three Days together, several of the Fair-Sex, well dress'd, came in Masks, then frequently worn, and some in their own Coaches, to visit this Theatrical Heroe in his Shrowd. He was

was the eldest Son of Dr. Horden, Minister of Twickenham, in Middlesex : But this Misfortune was soon repair'd by the Return of Mr. Wilks from Dublin, who upon this young Man's Death was sent for over, and liv'd long enough among us to enjoy that Approbation, from which the other was so unhappily cut off. The Winter following, Estcourt the famous Mimick, who has already been spoken of, had the same Invitation from Ireland, where he had commenc'd Actor: His first Part here, at the Theatre Royal, was the Spanish Friar, in which, tho' he had remembered every Look and Motion of the late Tony Leigh, so far as to put the Spectator very much in mind of him, yet it was visible through the whole, notwithstanding his Exactness in the Outlines, the true Spirit that was to fill up the Figure, was not the same, but unskillfully dawb'd on, like a Child's Painting on the Face of a Metzo-tinto : It was too plain to the Judicious, that the Conception was not his own, but imprinted on his Memory by another, of whom he only presented a dead Likeness. But these Defects were not so obvious to common Spectators ; no wonder therefore, if by his being so much sought after in private Companies, he met with a sort of Indulgence for what he sometimes did on the Stage.

In the Year 1699 Mrs. Oldfield was taken into the House : With the Addition then of so accomplish'd an Actress, and one so much in favour as Wilks, and by the visible Improvement of our other Actors, as Penkethman, Johnson, Bullock, and I think I may venture to name myself in the Number, but in what Rank, I leave to the Judgment of those who have been my Spectators, the Reputation of our Company began

to get ground ; Mrs. Oldfield, and Mr. Wilks, by their frequently playing against one another in our best Comedies, very happily supported that Humour, and Vivacity, which is so peculiar to our English Stage. The French, our only modern Competitors, seldom give us their Lovers, in such various Lights: In their Comedies, however lively a People they are by nature, their Lovers are generally constant, simple Sighers, both of a Mind, and equally distress'd about the Difficulties of their coming together, which naturally makes their Conversation so serious, that they are seldom good Company to their Auditors: And tho' I allow them many other Beauties, of which we are too negligent ; yet our Variety of Humour has Excellencies that all their valuable Observance of Rules have never yet attain'd to. By these Advantages then, we began to have an equal share of the politer sort of Spectators, who, for several Years, could not allow our Company to stand in any comparison with the other. But Theatrical Favour, like publick Commerce, will sometimes deceive the best Judgments, by an unaccountable change of its Channel ; the best Commodities are not always known to meet with the best Markets. To this decline of the Old Company, many Accidents might contribute ; as the too distant situation of their Theatre ; or their want of a better, for it was not, then in the condition it now is, but small, and poorly fitted up, within the Walls of a Tennis Quaree Court, which is of the lesser sort.

Booth, who was then a young Actor among them, has often told me of the Difficulties Betterton labour'd under, and complain'd of : How impracticable he found it to keep their Body to  
that



that common Order, which was necessary for the good of the whole; of their relying too much upon their intrinſick Merit; and though but few of them were young when they firſt became their own Maſters, yet they were all now ten Years older, and conſequently more liable to fall into Negligence, or were only ſeparately diligent, in the ſole Regard of their Benefit-plays; which ſeveral of their Principals knew, at worſt, would raiſe them Contributions, that would more than tolerably ſuſſiſt them, for the current Year. But theſe were too precarious Expedients to be always depended upon, and brought in nothing to the general ſupport of the Numbers who were at ſallaries under them; they were obliged to have recourſe to foreign Novelties; L'Abbe, Balon, and Mademoiſelle Subligny, three of the then moſt famous Dancers of the French Opera, were at ſeveral Times brought over at extraordinary Rates, to revive that ſickly Appetite, which plain Senſe and Nature had ſatiated. But there was no recovering to a ſound Conſtitution by theſe mere coſtly cordials; tho' perhaps their exhibiting theſe Novelties, might be owing to the ſucceſs we had met with, in our more barbarous introducing of French Tumblers the Year before; of which Mr. Rowe thus complains, in his prologue to one of his firſt plays:

Must Shakeſpear, Fletcher, and laborious Ben,  
Be left for Scaramouch and Harlequin?

While the Crowd therefore, ſo fluctuated from one Houſe to another, as their Eyes were more or leſs regaled than their Ears, it could not be a Queſtion much in debate which had the better Actors; the Merit of either ſeemed to be of very little

little Moment; and the Complaint in the foregoing Lines, tho' it might be just for a time, could not be a just one for ever; because the best Play that ever was writ, may tire by being too often repeated, a Misfortune naturally attending the Obligation to play every Day; not that when ever such Satiety commences, it will be any Proof of the Play's being a bad one, or of its being ill acted. To recover them therefore to their due Estimation, a new Project was form'd, of building them a stately Theatre, in the Hay-Market, by Sir John Vanbrugh, for which he raised a Subscription of thirty Persons of Quality, at one hundred Pounds each, in Consideration whereof every Subscriber for his own Life, was to be admitted to whatever Entertainments should be publicly perform'd there. Of this Theatre I saw the first Stone laid, on which was inscrib'd the LITTLE WIG, in Honour to a Lady of extraordinary Beauty, then the celebrated Toast and Pride of that party.

In the Year 1706, when this House was finish'd, Betterton, and his Co-partners dissolved their own Agreements, and threw themselves under the Direction of Sir John Vanbrugh, and Mr. Congreve; imagining perhaps, that the Conduct of two such eminent Authors might give a more prosperous Turn to their Condition; that the Plays, it would now be their Interest to write for them, would soon recover the Town to a true Taste, and be an Advantage that no other Company could hope for, that in the Interim, till such Plays could be written, the Grandeur of their House, as it was a new Spectacle, might allure the Crowd to support them: But if these were their Views, we shall see that their Dependence upon them were too sanguine. For Mr. Congreve

greve in a few Months, gave up his Share and Interest in the Government of it, wholly to Sir John Vanbrugh. But Sir John being sole Proprietor of the House, was at all Events obliged to do his utmost to support it. As he had a happier Talent of throwing the English Spirit into his Translation of French Plays, than any former Author who had borrowed from them, he in the same Season gave the Publick three more of that Kind, call'd The Cuckold in Conceit, from the Cocu imaginaire of Moliere; Squire Trelooby from his Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, and the Mistake, from the D'epit Amoureux of the same Author. Yet all these, however well executed, came to the Ear in an undistinguish'd Utterance, owing to the bad Contrivance of the House, by which almost all their Plays had equally suffer'd; for what few could plainly hear, it was not likely a great many could applaud.

It must further be considered too, that this Company were not now, what they had been, when they first revolted. Kynaston, Sandford, and Leigh were dead, and Mrs. Betterton and Underhill being at this Time superannuated Pensioners; Nor could it be expected that Betterton himself at past seventy, could retain his former Force, though he was far distant from any Rival.

It was now the Town talk, that nothing but a Union of the two Companies could restore the Theatre to its former Reputation; which Opinion was certainly true: But it is as certain, that the close Master of Drury Lane had no such Intention.

Sir John Vanbrugh, in order to make a Union worth his while, found himself under a Necessity of letting his Theatrical Farm to some industrious  
Tenant,

Tenant, that might put it into better condition. At this time then, the Master of Drury-Lane happen'd to have a sort of primier Agent, in his Stage-Affairs, that seem'd in Appearance as much to govern the Master, as the Master himself did to govern his Actors: But this Person was under no Stipulation or Sallary for the Service he render'd; but had gradually wrought himself into the Master's extraordinary Confidence and Trust, from an habitual Intimacy, a chearful Humour, and an indefatigable Zeal for his Interest. This Person was Mr. Owen Swiney, and that it was to him Sir John Vanbrugh, in this Exigence of his Theatrical Affairs, made an Offer of his Actors under such Agreements of Sallary, as might be made with them; and of his House, Cloaths and Scenes, with the Queen's Licence to employ them, upon Payment of only the casual Rent of Five Pounds every acting Day, and not to exceed 700 l. in the Year. Of this proposal, Mr. Swiney desired a Day or two to consider; for he would not undertake it without the Consent of his Patron, the Master of Drury-Lane. But he immediately consented that Swiney should take the Hay-Market House, &c. and continue that Company to act against him; but the real Truth was, that he had a mind both Companies should be clandestinely under one and the same Interest. What flatter'd him, that he had this wholesome project, and Swiney to execute it, both in his power, was that at this time, Swiney happen'd to stand in his Books Debtor to Cash, upwards of Two Hundred pounds: But here we shall find he over-rated his Security. However, Swiney as yet follow'd his Orders, he took the Hay-Market Theatre, and had farther the private Consent of the Patentee, to take such of his Actors from Drury-Lane,



as either from Inclination or Discontent, might be willing to come over to him in the Hay-Market. The only one he made Exception of was myself: For tho' he chiefly depended upon his Singers and Dancers, he said it would be necessary to keep some one tolerable Actor with him, that might enable him to set those Machines a going. The Actors that came to him from Drury-Lane, were Wilks, Estcourt, Mills, Keen, Johnson, Bullock, Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Rogers, and some few others of less Note: This project was form'd and put in Execution in a very few Days, in the Summer Season, when no Theatre was open, to all which I was entirely a Stranger.

The first Word I heard of this Transaction, was by a Letter from Swiney, inviting me to make one in the Hay-Market Company, whom he hop'd I could not but now think the strongest party. But I confess I was not a little alarm'd at this Revolution: For I considered, that I knew of no visible Fund to support these Actors, but their own Industry; that all his Recruits from Drury Lane would want new Cloathing; and that the warmest Industry would be always labouring up Hill, under so unnecessary an Expence, so bad a Situation, and so inconvenient a Theatre. Upon these Considerations, I was only thankful for the Offers made me from the Hay-market, without accepting them; and soon after came to Town towards the usual Time of their beginning to act, to offer my Service to our old Master. But I found our Company so thinn'd, that it was almost impracticable, to bring any one tolerable play upon the Stage. When I ask'd him where were his Actors, and in what manner he intended to proceed? he replied, Don't you trouble yourself, come along, and I'll shew you. He then led me  
about

about all the By-places in the House, and shew'd me fifty little Back-doors, dark Closets, and narrow Passages; in Alterations and Contrivances of which kind he had busied his Head most part of the Vacation; for he was scarce ever, without some notable Joiner, or a Bricklayer extraordinary, in pay, for twenty Years. But to speak of him seriously, and to account for this Disregard to his Actors, his Notion was, that Singing and Dancing, or any sort of Exotick Entertainment, would make an ordinary Company of Actors too hard for the best Set, who had only plain plays to subsist on. Now, though I am afraid too much might be said, in favour of this Opinion, yet I thought he laid more stress upon that sort of Merit than it would bear; as I therefore found myself of so little Value with him, I could not help setting a little more upon myself, and was resolv'd to come to a short Explanation with him. In short, I looked gravely in his Face, and told him, that I expected either my casual pay to be advanced, or the payment of my former Salary made certain, for as many days as we had acted the Year before: Upon which I took my Leave. By this time, the Hay-market Company had begun acting, to Audiences something better than usual, and were all paid their full Salaries, a Blessing they had not felt in some Years, in either House before. Upon this Success, Swiney press'd the Patentee to execute the Articles they had as yet only verbally agreed on. But soft and fair! Rashness was a Fault, that had never yet been imputed to the Patentee; certain payments were Methods he had not of a long, long time been us'd to; that point still wanted time for Consideration. But Swiney was as hasty as the other was slow, stood upon his Right  
of

Of having me added to that Company, if I was willing to come into it. But this was a point as absolutely refused on one side, as insisted on, on the other. In this Contest high Words were exchanged on both sides, till in the end, this their last private Meeting came to an open Rupture: But before it was publickly known, Swiney, by fairly letting me into the whole Transaction, took effectual means to secure me in his Interest. When the Mystery of the Patentee's Indifference to me was unfolded, and that his slighting me was owing to the security he relied on, of Swiney's not daring to engage me, I could have no further Debate with myself, which side of the Question I should adhere to. To conclude, I agreed, in two Words, to act with Swiney; and from this time every Change that happened in the Theatrical Government, was a nearer step to that twenty Years of Prosperity, which Actors, under the Management of Actors, not long afterwards enjoyed. What was the immediate Consequence of this last Desertion from Drury Lane, shall be the Subject of another Part.



P A R T V.

The Recruited Actors, in the Hay-market, encouraged by a Subscription. Drury-lane, under a particular Management. The power of a Lord Chamberlain, over the Theatres, considered. How it had been formerly exercised. A Digression to Tragick Authors.

**I**T may now be imagined, that such a Detachment of Actors from Drury-Lane, could not but give a new Spirit to those in the Hay Market ; not only by enabling them to act each others plays to better Advantage ; but by an emulous Industry, which had lain too long inactive among them, and without which they plainly saw they could not be sure of subsistence. Plays, by this means, began to recover a good share of their former Esteem and Favour ; and the profits of them, in about a Month, enabled our new Manager to discharge his Debt to his old Friend the Patentee, who had now left him, and his Troop, in trust, to fight their own Battles.

While the Stage was thus recovering its former strength, a more honourable Mark of Favour was shewn to it, than it was ever known before, or since, to have received. A Proposal was drawn up, and addressed to the Lord Hallifax, the patron of the Men of Genius of his Time, for his Approbation and Assistance, to raise a publick  
Sub-



Subscription for reviving three plays of the best Authors ; every Subscriber to have three Tickets; for the first Day of each play, for his single payment of three Guineas. This subscription his Lordship so zealously encouraged, that from his Recommendation chiefly, in a very little time, it was compleated.

By the Aid of this Subscription, not only the Actors were duly paid, but the Manager himself too, at the Foot of his Account, stood a considerable Gainer.

At the same time the Patentee of Drury-Lane went on in his usual Method of paying extraordinary Prices to Singers, Dancers and other exotick Performers, which were as constantly deducted out of the sinking Sallaries of his Actors. His point was to please the Majority, who could more easily comprehend any thing they saw, than the daintiest thing that could be said to them. But in this Notion he kept no Medium ; for in my Memory, he carry'd it so far, that he was (some few Years before this time) actually dealing for an extraordinary large Elephant, at a certain Sum, for every Day he might think fit to shew the tractable Genius of that vast quiet Creature : But from the Jealousy, which so formidable a Rival had rais'd in his Dancers, and by his Bricklayer's assuring him, that if the Walls were to be open'd wide enough for its Entrance, it might endanger the Fall of the House, he gave up his project, and with it, so hopeful a Prospect of making the Receipts of the Stage run higher than all the Wit and Force of the best Writers had ever yet rais'd them to.

About the same time he put in practice an other project of as new, though not of so bold a Nature ; which was his introducing a Set of  
Rope

Rope-dancers, for the first Day of whose Performance, he had given out some Play in which I had a material Part: But I was hardy enough to go into the Pit, and acquaint the Spectators near me, that I hop'd they would not think it a Mark of my Disrespect to them, if I declin'd acting upon any Stage, that was brought to so low a Disgrace, as ours was like to be by that Day's Entertainment. My Excuse was very well taken; and the whole Body of Actors too, protesting against such an Abuse of their Profession, our cautious Master was too much alarm'd and intimidated to repeat it.

It may be a natural Question, why the Actors, whom Swiney brought over to his Undertaking in the Hay Market, would tie themselves down to limited Salaries? for though he, as Manager was obliged to make them certain Payments, it was not certain that the Receipts would enable him to do it; and since their own Industry was the only visible Fund they had to depend upon, why would they not, for that Reason, insist upon their being Sharers as well of possible Profits as Losses? But it must first be consider'd, that this Scheme of their Desertion was all concerted, and put in Execution in a Week's Time, which short Warning might make them overlook that Circumstance, and the sudden prospect of being deliver'd from having seldom more than half their pay, was a Contentment that had bounded all their farther Views. Besides, (as there could be no room to doubt of their receiving full Pay, previous to any profits that might be reap'd by their Labour, and as they had no great Reason to apprehend those profits could exceed their respective Salaries, so far as to make them repine at them, they might think it but reasonable, to

let the Chance of any extraordinary Gain be on the side of their Leader and Director. But farther, as this Scheme had the Approbation of the Court, these Actors had it not in their Power to alter any part of it: And what induced the Court to encourage it, was, that by having the Theatre, and its Manager more immediately dependent on the Power of the Lord Chamberlain, it was not doubted but the Stage would be recover'd into such a Reputation, as might now do Honour to that absolute Command which the Court or its Officers seem'd always fond of having over it: And I shall now give some few Instances in what manner it was exercised.

What appear'd to be most reasonably under his Cognizance, was the licencing or refusing new plays, or striking out what might be thought offensive in them. The first Instance of this Kind that common Fame has deliver'd down to us, is that of the Maid's Tragedy of Beaumont and Fletcher, which was forbid in King Charles the Second's Time, by an Order from the Lord Chamberlain. For what Reason this Interdiction was laid upon it, the politicians of those Days have left us to guess. Some said the killing the King in that play, while the tragical Death of King Charles the First was then so fresh in people's Memory, was an Object too horribly impious for a publick Entertainment. Others have given out, that a repenting Mistress, in a Romantick Revenge of her Dishonour, killing the King in the very Bed he expected her to come into, was shewing too dangerous an Example to other Evadnes then shining at Court, in the same Rank of Royal Distinction; who, if ever their Consciences should have run equally mad, might have had frequent Opportunities of putting the  
Expia-

Expiation of their Frailty into the like Execution. But this I doubt is too deep a speculation, or too ludicrous a Reason to be relied on; it being well known, that the Ladies then in Favour, were not so nice in their Notions, as to think their preferment their dishonour, or their Lover a Tyrant: Besides, that easy Monarch loved his Roses without Thorns.

The Lucius Junius Brutus of Nat. Lee, was in the same Reign, silenced after the third day of acting it; it being objected, that the plan and sentiments of it had too boldly vindicated, and might enflame republican principles.

A Prologue (by Dryden) to the Prophetess, was forbid by the Lord Dorset, after the first day of its being spoken. It must be confess'd, that this Prologue had some familiar, metaphorical sneers, at the Revolution itself; and as the poetry of it was good, the Offence of it was less pardonable.

The Tragedy of Mary Queen of Scotland had been offer'd to the Stage Twenty Years before it had been acted: But from the profound penetration of the Master of the Revels, who saw political Spectres in it, that never appear'd in the presentation, it had lain so long upon the Hands of the Author, who had at last the good Fortune to prevail with a Nobleman to favour his petition to Queen Anne, for permission to have it acted: The Queen had the Goodness to refer the Merit of his play to the Opinion of that noble person, although he was not her Majesty's Lord Chamberlain; upon whose Report of its being every way an innocent piece, it was soon after acted with Success.

I will but just speak a Word or two to any Author that has not yet writ a Line of his next  
 Z 2 Play,



Play,—Sir, before you set Pen to Paper, think well and principally of your design, or chief Action, towards which every Line you write ought to be drawn, as to its Centre: If we can say of your finest sentiments, This, or that might be left out, without maiming the story you would tell us, depend upon it, that fine Thing is said in a wrong place; and though you may urge, that a bright Thought is not to be refuted, you will not be able to deny that those very fine Lines would be much finer, if you could find a proper Occasion for them: Otherwise you will be thought to take less Advice from Aristotle or Horace, than from Poet Bays in the Rehearsal, who very smartly says, What the Devil is the plot good for, but to bring in fine Things? Take therefore, in some part, Example by the Author last mentioned; there are three plays of his, The Earl of Essex, Anna Bullen, and Mary Queen of Scots, which tho' they are all written in the most barren Style that was ever able to keep possession of the Stage, have all interested the Hearts of his Auditors; which must be entirely owing to the intrinsick Value of the well conducted Tales he has simply told us.

After what I have observed, whenever I see a Tragedy defective in its Fable, let there be never so many fine Lines in it; I hope I shall be forgiven, if I impute that Defect to the Idleness, the weak Judgment, or barren Invention of the Author.

I shall now offer some Facts relating to the power of a Lord Chamberlain, of a very extraordinary Nature.

About the middle of King William's Reign, an Order of the Lord Chamberlain was then subsisting, that no Actor of either Company should pre-

presume to go from one to the other, without a Discharge from their respective Managers, and the permission of the Lord Chamberlain. Notwithstanding such Order, Powel had left Drury Lane without such Discharge, and engaged himself to that of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields: But by what follows, it will appear that this Order was not so much intended to do good to them both, as to do no Harm to Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, which the Court favour'd: For when Powel returned to Drury Lane without a discharge, he was the next day taken up by a Messenger, and confined to the Porter's Lodge, where to the best of my Remembrance, he remained about two Days, when the Managers of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields gave him up; though perhaps he was released for some better Reason. Upon this occasion, the next day, behind the Scenes, a Person of great Quality, in my hearing, enquiring of Powel into the Nature of his Offence, after he had heard it, told him, that if he had had patience enough to have staid in his Confinement till he had given him Notice of it, he would have found him a handsomer way of coming out of it.

Another time the same Actor, Powel, was provoked at Will's Coffee-house, in a Dispute about the Play-house, to strike a Gentleman; a Complaint was immediately made to the Vice Chamberlain, who so highly resented it, that he thought himself bound in Honour to carry his power of redressing it as far as it could possibly go: For Powel having a part in the Play that was acted the Day after, the Vice Chamberlain sent an Order to silence the whole Company, for having suffered Powel to appear upon the Stage, before he had made that Gentleman Satisfaction, although the Masters of the Theatre had had no Notice

Notice of Powel's Misbehaviour : However this Order was obeyed, and remained in Force for three days, till the same power was pleased to revoke it.

I shall now give an Instance of an Actor, who stood in defence of his Liberty against the same Authority, and was relieved by it.

In the same King's Reign, Dogget having some Reason to think the Patentee of Drury-Lane had not dealt fairly with him, he quitted the Stage, and would act no more. But the Patentee, who from other People's Judgment, knew the Value of him, and who wanted too to have him sooner back than the Law could possibly bring him, thought the surer way would be to desire a shorter Redress from the Authority of the Lord Chamberlain. Accordingly upon his Complaint, a Messenger was immediately dispatch'd to Norwich, where Dogget then was, to bring him up, in Custody : But doughty Dogget, who had Money in his Pocket, and the Cause of Liberty at his Heart, was not, in the least intimidated by this formidale Summons. He was observ'd to obey it with a particular Chearfulness, entertaining his Fellow-traveller, the Messenger, all the way in the Coach, with as much Humour as a Man of his Business might be capable of tasting. And as he found his Charges were to be defray'd, he at every Inn call'd for the best Dainties the Country could afford, or a pretended weak Appetite could digest. Upon his Arrival in Town, he immediately apply'd to Lord Chief Justice Holt for his Habeas Corpus. As his Case was something particular, that eminent and learned Minister of the Law took a particular Notice of it : For Dogget was not only discharg'd, but the Proceſs of his confinement according to com-  
mon

mon Fame, had a Censure pass'd upon it, in court, which I doubt, I am not Lawyer enough to repeat! To conclude, the officious Agents in this Affair finding, that in Dogget they had mistaken their Man, were mollify'd into milder proceedings, and, as he afterwards told me, whisper'd something in his Ear, that took away Dogget's farther Uneasiness about it.

By these Instances we see how naturally Power only founded on Custom is apt, where the Law is silent, to run into Excesses, and while it laudably pretends to govern others, how hard it is to govern itself. But I return to my History.

When the sole managing Patentee at Drury Lane, for several Years, could never be persuaded or driven to any account with the Adventurers; Sir Thomas Skipwith, who, if I am rightly informed, had an equal share with him, grew so weary of the Affair, that he made a Present of his entire Interest in it, upon the following Occasion.

Sir Thomas happened, in the Summer preceding the Reunion of the Companies, to make a Visit to an intimate Friend of his, Colonel Brett, of Sandywell in Gloucestershire, where the agreeable manner of passing his time there, had raised him to such a Gallantry of Heart, that in return to the Civilities of his Friend, he made him an Offer of his whole Right in the Patent, but at the same Time told him, he himself had made nothing of it these ten Years: But the Colonel, he said, being a Favourite of the people in power, and likewise of the Actors, might think of some Scheme to turn it to Advantage. At last they came to a Resolution, That an Instrument should be drawn the next Morning, of an absolute Conveyance of the premises. A Gentleman of the  
Law,



Law, well known to them both, happening to be a Guest there, at the same time, the next day produced the Deed, according to his Instructions, in the presence of whom, and of others, it was sign'd, sealed, and delivered to the Purposes therein contained.

The next Thing to be considered was, what Mr. Brett should do with his new Theatrical Commission, which, in another's possession, had been of so little Importance. Here it may be necessary to premise, that this Gentleman was the first of any Figure, since my coming to the Stage, with whom I had contracted a personal Intimacy; which might be the Reason why in this debate my Opinion had some Weight with him. Notwithstanding he knew I was then engag'd in another Interest, at the Hay-Market, he desired we might consider together of the best Use he could make of it, assuring me at the same time, he should think it of none to himself, unless it could in some Shape be turn'd to my Advantage. This friendly declaration, was not needful to incline me, in whatever might be honestly in my power, whether by Interest or Negotiation, to serve him. My first Advice therefore was, that he should produce his deed to the other managing Patentee of Drury Lane, and demand immediate Entrance to a joint possession of all Effects to which that deed had given him an equal Title. After which, if he met with no Opposition to this demand, that he should be watchful against any contradiction from the other Patentee, in whatever he might propose, in carrying on the Affair, but to let him see, that he was determined in all his Measures; yet to heighten that Resolution with an Ease and Temper in his manner, as if he took it for granted, there could be no Opposition  
made

made to whatever he had a mind to. For that this Method, added to his natural Talent of persuading, would imperceptibly lead his Colleague into a Reliance on his superior Understanding; That however little he cared for Business, he should give himself the Air at least of Enquiry into what had been done, that what he intended to do might be thought more considerable, and be the readier complied with: That Sir Thomas Skipwith had trusted too much to his Colleague; and was treated by him accordingly, without ever receiving any profits from it for several Years: Therefore if Mr. Brett could once fix himself, as I had advised, upon a different Foot with this hitherto untractable Manager, the Business would soon run through whatever Channel he might have a mind to lead it. And though I allowed the greatest Difficulty he could meet with, would be in getting his consent to a Union of the two Companies, which was the only thing that could raise the Patent to its former Value, and which, I knew, this close Manager would secretly lay all possible Rubs in the way to; yet it was visible there was a way of reducing him to Compliance; for though, it was true his caution would never part with a Straw; by way of Concession, yet to a high Hand, he would give up any thing, provided he were suffered to keep his Title to it: If his Hat were taken from his Head in the street, he would make no farther Resistance than say, I am not willing to part with it. Much less would he have the Resolution openly to oppose any just Measures, when he should find one, who with an equal Right to his, and with a known Interest to bring them about, was resolved to go thro' with them.

Immediately after Mr. Brett was admitted as a joint Patentee, he made use of the Intimacy he had with the Vice Chamberlain to forward his Scheme of this intended Union, in which he so far prevailed, that it was soon after left to the particular Care of the same Vice Chamberlain, to give him all the Aid, and Power necessary to the bringing what he desired to perfection. The Scheme was to have but one Theatre for Plays, and another for Operas, under separate Interests. And this the Generality of Spectators, as well as the most approved Actors, had been some time calling for, as the only Expedient to recover the Credit of the Stage, and the valuable Interests of its Managers.

I must refer my Reader to my play of the Wife's Resentment, where, in a Dedication to the then Marquis (now Duke of) Kent, and then Lord Chamberlain, which was published above thirty Years ago, the situation of the Theatres, and the Hardships of the Actors, are fully set forth.

Such was the State of the Stage, immediately preceding the time of Mr. Brett's being admitted a joint Patentee, who, as he saw with clear Eyes, what was its evident Interest, left no proper Measures unattempted to make this so long despair'd of, Union practicable. The most apparent difficulty to be got over, in this Affair, was what could be done for Swiney, in consideration of his being obliged to give up those Actors, whom the Power and Choice of the Lord Chamberlain, had the Year before, set him at the Head of, and by whose Management those Actors had found themselves in a prosperous Condition. But an Accident at this time happily contributed to make that

that Matter easy. The Inclination of our people of Quality for foreign Operas, had now reached the Ears of Italy, and the Credit of their Taste had drawn over from thence without any more particular Invitation, one of their capital Singers, the famous Signior Cavaliero Nicolini: From whose Arrival, and the Impatience of the Town to hear him, it was concluded, that Operas, being now so completely provided, could not fail of Success; and that by making Swiney sole Director of them, the Profits must be an ample compensation for his Resignation of the Actors. This Matter being thus adjusted, by Swiney's Acceptance of the Opera only to be performed at the Hay-market, the Actors were all ordered to return to Drury Lane, there to remain her Majesty's only Company of Comedians.





## P A R T VI.

A short View of the Opera, when first divided from the Comedy. Plays recover their credit. The old Patentee uneasy at their Success. The occasion of Mr. Brett's throwing up his share in the patent. The consequences of it. The Managers, by endeavouring to reduce their price, lose them all a second Time. The principal Comedians return to the Hay-market, in shares with Swiney. They alter that Theatre. Operas fall off. The Occasion of it. Farther Observations upon them: The Patentee dispossess'd of Drury Lane Theatre. Mr. Collier, with a new Licence, heads the Remains of that Company.

PLAYS and Operas being thus established upon separate Interests, they were now left to make the best of their way into favour, by their different Merit. Although the Opera is not a plant of our native Growth, nor what our plainer Appetites are fond of, and is of so delicate a Nature, that without great Expence, it cannot live among us; especially while the nicest Connoisseurs in Musick fall into such various Heresies in Taste, every Sect pretending to be the true one; yet as it is called a Theatrical Entertainment, and by its Alliance or Neutrality has more or less affected our

our Domestick Theatre, a short View of its progress may be allowed a place in our History.

After this new Regulation, the first Opera that appeared was Pyrrhus. The chief performers in this were Nicolini, Valentini, and Mrs. Tofts; and for the inferior parts the best that were then to be found. Whatever praises may have been given to the most famous Voices that have been heard since Nicolini; upon the whole I cannot but come into the Opinion that still prevails among several persons of Condition, who are able to give a Reason for their liking, that no Singer since his Time has so justly and gracefully acquitted himself, in whatever Character he appeared, as Nicolini.

Mrs. Tofts, who took her first Grounds of Musick here in her own Country, before the Italian Taste had so highly prevailed, was then not an Adept in it: Yet whatever Defect the fashionably skilful might find in her manner, she had, in the general sense of her Spectators, Charms that few of the most learned Singers ever arrive at. The Beauty of her fine proportioned Figure, and exquisitely sweet, silver Tone of her Voice, with that peculiar, rapid Swiftnes of her Throat, were Perfections not to be imitated by Art or Labour. Valentini I have already mentioned, therefore need only say farther of him, that tho' he was every way inferior to Nicolini, yet as he had the Advantage of giving us our first Impression of a good Opera Singer, he had still his Admirers, and was of great service, in being so skilful a Second to his Superior.

Three such excellent Performers, in the same kind of Entertainment at once, England till this Time had never seen: Without any farther Comparison then, with the much dearer bought  
 who

who have succeeded them, their Novelty was a Charm that drew vast Audiences after them. Swiney their sole Director was prosperous, and in one Winter, a Gainer by them of a moderate younger Brother's Fortune. But as Musick, by so profuse a Dispensation of her Beauties, could not always supply our dainty Appetites with equal Variety, nor for ever please us with the same Objects; the Opera, after one luxurious Season, began to loose its Charms, and every Day discover'd to our Satiety, Imperfections which our former Fondness had been blind to. It may now easily be conceived, that by the entire Re-union of the two Companies, Plays must generally have been perform'd to a more than usual Advantage, and Exactness: For now every chief Actor, according to his particular Capacity, piqued himself upon rectifying those Errors, which during their divided State were almost unavoidable; in a Word, all Parties seem'd better pleas'd, but he, who one might imagine had most Reason to be so, the lately sole managing Patentee. He indeed saw his Power daily mouldering from his own Hands into those of Mr. Brett; whose Gentlemanly manner of making every one's Business easy to him, threw their old Master under a Disregard, which he had not been us'd to, nor could with all his happy Change of Affairs support: He therefore in this Distress call'd in the Adventurers (whom for many Years by his Defence in Law he had kept out) now to take Care of their visibly improving Interest. This fair Appearance of Equity, he rightly guess'd would incline these Adventurers to form a Majority of Votes on his Side in all Theatrical Questions; and consequently become a Check upon the Power of Mr. Brett. When the Adventurers there-

therefore were re-admitted to their old Government; after having recommended himself to them, by proposing to make some small Dividend of the Profits, he took care that the Creditors of the Patent, who were then no inconsiderable Body, should carry off the every Week's clear Profits, in proportion to their several Dues and Demands. Now, though these might be all notable Expedients, yet I cannot say they would have wholly contributed to Mr. Brett's quitting his Post, had not a Matter of much stronger Moment, an unexpected Dispute between him and Sir Thomas Skipwith, who alledg'd in his Bill, that the Conveyance he had made of his Interest in the Patent to Mr. Brett, was only intended in Trust. But whether Mr. Brett, as Sir Thomas farther asserted, had previously given his Word of Honour, that if he should ever make the Stage turn to any Account, or Profit, he would certainly restore it: That indeed I can say nothing to; but the Facts that apparently follow'd were, that tho' Mr. Brett, in his Answer to this Bill, absolutely deny'd his receiving this Assignment; yet he made no farther Defence in the Cause. But since he found Sir Thomas had thought fit, to sue for the Restitution of it; Mr. Brett being conscious, that the World knew, he had paid nothing for it; he therefore withdrew himself from all Concern with the Theatre. And thus stood this undecided Right, till upon the Demise of Sir Thomas, Mr. Brett being allow'd the Charges he had been at, in this Attendance, and prosecution of the Union, reconvey'd this Share of the patent to Sir George Skipwith, the Son and Heir of Sir Thomas.

The Patentees now thinking themselves secure, in being restored to their former absolute power,



fell into their former politicks, thinking that every Shilling taken from a hired Actor, so much clear Gain to the Proprietor: Many of their people therefore were actually reduced in their pay, and others given to understand the same Fate was designed them, thinking it a Folly to continue the higher price, which their Divisions had raised them to, now there was but one Market for them, quite forgetting their former fatal mistake of squabbling with their Actors in 1695; nor did they make any Allowance for the Changes of Time, or enough consider the Interest the Actors had in the Lord Chamberlain, on whose protection they might always rely, and whose Decrees had been less restrained by precedent, than those of a Lord Chancellor.

In this mistaken View of their Interest, the patentees, by treating their Actors as Enemies, really made them so: And when once the Masters of a hired Company think not their Actors Hearts as necessary as their Hands, they cannot be said to have agreed for above half the Work they are able to do in a day.

The patentees observing that the Benefit-plays of the Actors, towards the latter End of the Season, brought the most crowded Audiences in the Year, judg'd it would not be impolitick to have a Fellow-feeling with them. Accordingly, an Indulto was laid of one Third, on every Benefit, for the Use of the patent. But here it will be necessary to shew from whence the Actors Claim to Benefits originally proceeded.

The first Indulgence of this kind was given to Mrs. Barry, in consideration of the extraordinary Applause that followed her performance: But here this Favour rested to her alone till the division of the only Company in 1695, at which time  
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the Patentees were soon reduced to pay their Actors half in good Words, and half in ready Money. In this precarious Condition, some particular Actors rather chose to compound their Arrears, than to go to Law, for their being admitted to the chance of a Benefit-play. This Expedient had this Consequence, that the Patentees, tho' their daily Audiences might mend, still kept the short Subsistence of their Actors at a stand, and grew more steady so to keep them, as they found them less apt to mutiny. In a Year or two, these Benefits grew so advantageous, that they became the chief Article in every Actor's Agreement.

At last, the Actors were so oppress'd by the Patentees, that there was a Complaint lodged with the Lord Chamberlain against the Patentees, who were warn'd at their Peril to refuse the Actors full Satisfaction. But here it was thought necessary that Judgment should be for some Time respited, till the Actors who had Leave so to do, could form a Body strong enough to make the Inclination of the Lord Chamberlain to relieve them, practicable.

Accordingly Swiney had permission to enter into a private Treaty with such of the Actors in Drury Lane, as might be thought fit to head a Company, and to be Sharers with him in the Hay Market. The Actors chosen for this Charge, were Wilks, Dogget, Mrs. Oldfield, and Myself.

When Mrs. Oldfield was nominated as a joint Sharer in our new Agreement to be made with Swiney; Dogget, who had no Objection to her Merit, insisted that our Affairs could never be upon a secure Foundation, if there was more than one Sex admitted to the Management of them. He therefore hoped, that if we offered Mrs. Old-

field a Charte Blanche, she would not think herself slighted. This was instantly agreed to, and Mrs. Oldfield receiv'd it as a Favour. Her demands were Two Hundred Pounds a Year certain, and a Benefit clear of all Charges; which were readily sign'd to. We afterwards advanced her Two Hundred Pounds, to Three Hundred Guineas per Annum, with her usual Benefit, which upon an Average for several Years, at least, doubled that Sum.

When a sufficient Number of Actors were engaged with Swiney, it was then judg'd a proper Time for the Lord-Chamberlain's Power to operate, which, by lying above a Month dormant, had so far recover'd the Patentees from any Apprehension that might fall upon them from their late Usurpations on the Benefit of the Actors, that they began to set their Marks upon those who had distinguish'd themselves in the Application for Redress. Several little Disgraces were put upon them; particularly in the disposal of Parts in Plays to be reviv'd, and as visible a Partiality was shewn in the Promotion of those in their Interest, though their Endeavours to serve them could be of no extraordinary Use. All this while, the other Party were passively silent; 'till one Day, the Actor who particularly solicited their Cause, at the Lord Chamberlain's Office, being shew'd there the Order sign'd for absolutely silencing the Patentees, and ready to be serv'd, flew back with the News to his Companions, then at a Rehearsal, in which he had been wanted; when being call'd to his Part, and something hastily question'd by the Patentee, for his Neglect of Business: This Actor, I say, with a Theatrical Spirit, at once threw off the Mask, and told him— Sir, I have now no more Business here than  
you

you have; in half an Hour, you will neither have Actors to command, nor Authority to employ them.—The Patentee, who though he could not readily comprehend his mysterious manner of speaking, had just a Glimpse of Terror enough from the Words to soften his Reproof into a formal Declaration, That if he would not do his Work he should not be paid. But now to complete the Catastrophe of these Theatrical Comotions; enters the Messenger with the Order of Silence in his Hand, whom the same Actor officiously introduc'd, telling the Patentee, that the Gentleman wanted to speak with him from the Lord-Chamberlain. When the Messenger had deliver'd the Order, the Actor cry'd, ——— Read o'r that! and now—to Breakfast with what Appetite you may.

The Authority of the Patent now no longer subsisting, all the confederated Actors immediately walk'd out of the House, to which they never return'd, 'till they became themselves the Tenants and Masters of it.

Here agen, we see an higher Instance of the Authority of a Lord-Chamberlain, than any of those I have elsewhere mention'd: From whence that Power may be deriv'd, as I have already said I am not Lawyer enough to know; yet it is evident that a Lawyer obey'd it, though to his Cost; but as the Law has lately made it no longer a Question, let us drop the Enquiry, and proceed to the Facts that follow'd this Order that silenc'd the Patent.

From this last injudicious Disagreement of the Patentees with their principal Actors, and from what they had suffered on the same Occasion, in the Division of their only Company in 1695, might we not imagine there was something of



Infatuation in their Management? For though I allow Actors in general, when they are too much indulg'd, or govern'd by an unsteady Head, to be as unruly a Multitude as Power can be plagu'd with; yet there is a Medium, which if cautiously observ'd by a candid Use of Power, making them always know, without feeling their Superior, neither suffering their Encroachments, nor invading their Rights with an immoveable Adherence to the accepted Laws they are to walk by; such a Regulation I say, has never fail'd in my Observation, to have made them a tractable and profitable Society.

During the Vacation, which immediately follow'd the Silence of the Patent, both Parties were at leisure to form their Schemes for the Winter: For the Patentee would still hold out. In this way of thinking, he still kept together such as had not been invited over to the Hay-Market, or had been influenc'd by Booth to follow his Fortune in Drury Lane.

By the Patentee's keeping these Remains of his broken Forces together, it is plain, that he imagin'd this Order of Silence, like others of the same Kind, would be recall'd of Course, after a reasonable time of Obedience had been paid to it: But it seems he had rely'd too much upon former Precedents: Not that I have any stronger Reasons for this Conjecture, than that the Patent never after this Order of Silence, got leave to play during the Queen's Reign. But upon the Accession of his late Majesty, the Patent found no Difficulty in being permitted to exercise its former Authority for acting Plays, &c. which, however did not happen till 1714, which the old Patentee never liv'd to see: For he dy'd about six Weeks before the new built Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn Fields

Fields was open'd, where the first Play acted was The Recruiting Officer, under the Management of his Heirs, and Successors.

The first point now resolved on by the Comedians in the Haymarket, was to alter the auditory part of their Theatre, which was immediately done, tho' not entirely to their Satisfaction, for want of Time. However, the Remedy had its Effect; their Audiences exceeded their Expectation. There was now no other Theatre open against them; they were now their own Masters, and the profits of their Industry came into their own pockets.

Notwithstanding this, the great Expence, and thinner Audiences of the Opera, of which they then were equally Directors, was a constant Drawback upon their Gains, yet not so far, but that their Income this Year was better than in their late Station at Drury Lane. By the short Experience we then had of Operas; by the high Reputation they seemed to have had the Year before, what Mountains did we not hope from this Molehill? But the fairy Vision was vanished, this bridal Beauty was grown familiar to the general Taste, and Satiety began to make Excuses for its want of Appetite: The Truth is, that this kind of Entertainment being so entirely sensual, could not get the better of our Reason, but by its Novelty; and that Novelty could never be supported but by an annual Change of the best Voices, which like the finest Flowers bloom but for a Season, and when that is over, are only dead Nose-gays.

There is too, in the very Species of an Italian Singer, such an innate, fantastical Pride and Caprice, that the Government of them is almost impracticable. This Distemper, as we were not  
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sufficiently warn'd or appriz'd of, threw our musical Affairs into Perplexities we knew not how to get out of.

But not to impute more to the Caprice of those Performers than was really true, there were two different Accidents that drew Numbers from our Audiences, before the Season was ended; which were another Company permitted to act in Drury Lane, and the long Trial of Doctor Sacheverel, in Westminster Hall: It must be observed, that this Company was not under the Direction of the Patent, but was set up by a third Interest, with a Licence from Court. The Person to whom this new License was granted, was William Collier, Esq; a Lawyer of an enterprizing Head, and a jovial Heart, and Member of Parliament for Truro in Cornwall. This person made an Offer to the Landlords of Drury Lane Theatre, to raise the price of it from three to four Pounds per diem, on Condition of their granting him a Lease: This project succeeded, the Lease was signed; but the means of getting into possession were to be left to his own Discretion: They took him but little Time, he immediately laid a Siege to it, with a sufficient Number of Forces, whether lawless or lawful, I forget; but they were such as obliged the old Governor to give it up, who notwithstanding had got Intelligence of his design Time enough to carry off every Thing, except a great Number of old Scenes and new Actors that could not easily follow him.

This other new Licenser being now in possession of the Drury Lane Theatre, those Actors all to a Man came over to the Service of Collier. But about this Time great Numbers of people crouded into Drury Lane to a new Comedy, call'd The fair Quaker of Deal. This Play hav-  
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ing some low strokes of natural Humour, was rightly calculated for the Capacity of the Actors, and the Multitude who saw it. But the most happy Incident in its Fortune, was the Charms of the fair Quaker, which was acted by Miss Santlow (afterwards Mrs. Booth) whose Person was then in the full Bloom of what Beauty she might pretend to: Before this, she had only been admired as the most excellent dancer; which, perhaps, might not a little contribute to the favourable Reception she now met with, as an Actress, in this Character, which so happily suited her Figure and Capacity: The gentle Softness of her Voice, the composed Innocence of her Aspect, the Modesty of her dress, the reserv'd decency of her Gesture, and the Simplicity of the Sentiments that naturally fell from her, made her seem the amiable Maid she represented: In a Word, not the enthusiastick Maid of Orleans, was more serviceable of old, to the French Army, when the English had distressed them, than this fair Quaker was, at the Head of that dramattick Attempt, upon which the Support of their weak Society depended.

Having shewn by what means Collier had dispossest'd this Patentee, not only of the Drury Lane House, but likewise of those few Actors which he had kept for some Time unemployed in it, we are now led to consider another project of the same patentee, which, if we are to judge of it by the Event, has shewn him more a wise than a weak Man; which I confess at the Time he put it in Execution, seem'd not so clear a point; for notwithstanding he now saw the authority of his Patent was superseded, and that he had no actor left in his Service; yet under all these distresses he resolv'd upon rebuilding the New Theatre



Theatre in Lincolns Inn Fields, of which he had taken a Lease, at a low Rent, ever since Betterton's Company had first left it.

After this Defeat of the Patentee, the Theatrical Forces of Collier in Drury Lane, notwithstanding their having drawn the Multitude after them, for about three Weeks, during the Trial of Sacheverel, had made but an indifferent Campaign, at the end of the Season. Collier, at least, found so little Account in it, that it obliged him to push his Court Interest to support him in another Scheme; which was, that in consideration of his giving up the Drury Lane Cloaths, Scenes, and Actors to Swiney, and his joint Sharers in the Hay Market, he (Collier) might be put into an equal Possession of the Hay Market Theatre, with all the Singers, &c. and he made sole Director of the Opera. Accordingly, a Treaty was enter'd into, and in a few Days ratified by all parties, conformable to the said preliminaries.

However, there were two hard Articles in this Treaty, which though it might be policy in the Actors to comply with, yet the Imposition of them seem'd very despotick.

The first of these Articles was, That whereas the sole License for acting Plays, was presum'd to be a more profitable Authority than that for acting Operas only; that therefore Two Hundred pounds a Year should be paid to Collier, while Master of the Opera, by the Comedians. The other Article was, That on every Wednesday, whereon an Opera could be perform'd, the Plays should be silent at Drury Lane, to give the Opera a fairer Chance for a full House.

This last Article was in its Effect, of great Advantage to the sharing Actors: For in all publick Entertainments, a Day's Abstinence naturally  
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increases the Appetite to them: Our every Thursday's Audience therefore, was visibly the better, by thus making the Day before it a Fast,

Collier being thus possess'd of his Musical Government, thought his best way would be to farm it out to a Gentleman, Aaron Hill, Esq; (who he had reason to suppose, knew something more of Theatrical Matters than himself) at a Rent if I mistake not, of Six Hundred pounds per Annum: But before the Season was ended took it into his Hands again; yet all his Skill and Interest could not raise the Direction of the Opera to so good a post, as he thought due to a person of Consideration. After the Comedians were in possession of Drury Lane, from whence during my time upon the Stage, they never departed; their Swarm of Audiences exceeded all that had been seen in thirty Years before; which, however, I do not impute so much to the Excellence of their performance, as to their indefatigable Industry and good Management.

Collier now observing the prosperity of a Theatre, which he the Year before had parted with for a worse, began to meditate an Exchange of Theatrical posts with Swiney; to this it may be imagined Swiney demurr'd; but as Collier had very great Interest at Court, Sir John Vanbrugh advised Swiney rather to accept of the Change, than by a Non-compliance to hazard his being excluded from any concern in either of the Theatres. To conclude, it was not long before Collier had procured a new License for acting plays, &c. for himself, Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber.

Swiney being thus transferr'd to the Opera, in the sinking condition Collier had left it, found the Receipts of it, in the Winter following, 1711,

so far short of the Expences, that he was driven to attend his Fortune in some more favourable climate, where he remained twenty Years in Exile from his Country.

Collier being now first Manager with the Comedians, drove them too to the last Inch of a hard Bargain: He not only demanded six hundred a Year, the price at which he had farm'd out his Opera, and to make the Business a Sinecure to him, but likewise insisted upon a moiety of the Two hundred, that had been levied upon us the Year before in aid of the Operas; in all 700 l. But had Collier accepted of our first Offer of an equal share with us, he had got three hundred Pounds a Year more, by complying with it, than by the Sum he imposed upon us; our Shares being never less than a thousand annually, to each of us.

Collier, as has been said, having accepted of a certain Appointment of seven hundred per Annum; Wilks, Dogget, and Myself were now the only acting Managers, under the Queen's License, which being a Grant, but during Pleasure, oblig'd us to a Conduct that might not undeserve that Favour. At this Time we were all in the Vigour of our Capacities as Actors, and our Prosperity enabled us, to pay, at least, double the Sallaries what the same Actors had usually receiv'd, Dogget who was naturally an Oeconomist kept our Expences and Accounts to the best of his Power. Wilks, who had a stronger Passion, for Glory, than Lucre, was a little apt to be lavish, in what was not always as necessary for the Profit, as the Honour of the Theatre. For example, at the Beginning of almost every Season, he would order two, or three Suits to be made or refresh'd for actors of moderate consequence, that his having constantly

a new one for himself, might seem less particular. This Dogget always looked upon with the eye of a Man in pain. Upon these Occasions therefore, whenever I saw him and his Followers so prettily drefs'd, I only commended his Fancy ; or at most but whispered him not to give himself so much Trouble about others, upon whose performance it would but be thrown away : To which, with a smiling air of Triumph, he has replied, Why now, that was what I really did it for, to shew others that I love to take care of them, as well as of my self.

My Brother Managers being of very different Tempers, it was equally my Business to keep well with them both ; and therefore when in any material point of Management they were ready to come to a Rupture, I found it adviseable to think neither of them absolutely in the wrong. However, there were some points in which we were always unanimous. In the twenty Years while we were our own directors, we never had a Creditor that had occasion to come twice for his Bill ; every Monday Morning discharged us of all Demands, before we took a Shilling for our own Use. And from this Time we neither ask'd any Actor, nor were desired by them, to sign any written Agreement whatsoever ; the Rate of their respective Sallaries were only entered in our daily Pay-roll, which plain Record every one looked upon as good as City Security : But our being Actors ourselves, was an Advantage to our Government which all former Managers, who were only idle Gentlemen, could never have.

The only Actor, who in the Opinion of the Publick, seemed to have had a pretence of being advanced to a share with us, was certainly Booth ; but when it is considered how strongly he had op-



posed the Measures that had made us Managers, by setting himself at the Head of an opposite Interest, he could not as yet have much to complain of: Beside, if the Court had thought him now an equal Object of Favour, it could not have been in our power to have opposed his preferment: This I mention not to take from his Merit, but to shew from what Cause it was not, as yet better provided for.

Now was that happy period, when both Actors and Managers were in their highest Enjoyment of general Content and Prosperity. Now it was that the politer World too, by their decent Attention, their sensible Taste, and their generous Encouragements to Authors and Actors, once more saw, that the Stage, under a due Regulation, was capable of being what the wisest Ages thought it might be, the most rational Scheme that Human Wit could form, to dissipate with Innocence, the Cares of Life; to allure even the Turbulent or Ill-disposed from worse Meditations, and to give the leisure Hours of Business and Virtue an instructive Recreation.

P A R T VII.

Cato first acted. What brought it to the Stage. Booth made a Sharer. Dogget objects to him. Quits the Stage upon his Admittance. Sir Richard Steele succeeds Collier in the Theatre Royal. The Patent restored. Eight Actors at once desert from the King's Company. The Author quits the Stage. Why.

**T**HE next Thing worth mentioning, is the first acting of the Tragedy of Cato. As to the Play itself, it might be enough to say, That the Author and the Actors had their different Hopes of Fame and Profit amply answered by the performance.

In 1703, nine Years before it was acted, I had the pleasure of reading the first four Acts (which was all of it then written) privately with Sir Richard Steele: But my Satisfaction was highly disappointed, when he told me, Whatever Spirit Mr. Addison had shewn in his writing it, he doubted he would never have Courage enough to let his Cato stand the Censure of an English Audience; that it had only been the Amusement of his leisure Hours in Italy, and was never intended for the Stage. But in the latter End of Queen Anne's Reign, when our national Politicks had changed Hands, the Friends of Mr. Addison then thought it a proper Time to animate the  
Publick

Publick with the Sentiments of Cato; in a word, their Importunities were not to be resisted; and it was no sooner finished than hurried to the Stage, in April 1712. This Tragedy was acted (Mondays excepted) every Day for a Month, to constantly crowded Houses. As the Author had made us a present of whatever profits he might have claimed from it, we thought ourselves oblig'd to spare no Cost in the proper Decorations of it, Its coming so late in the Season, prov'd of particular Advantage to the sharing Actors, and was almost equal to two fruitful Seasons in the same Year, at the Close of which the three managing Actors found themselves each a Gainer of thirteen hundred and fifty pound.

Although Cato seems plainly written upon what are called Whig Principles, yet the Tories of that Time had Sense enough not to take it as the least Reflection upon their Administration; but on the contrary, carried their Approbation of it so high, that one day, while the play was acting, they collected fifty Guineas in the Boxes, and made a present of them to Booth, with this compliment, 'For his honest Opposition to a perpetual Dictator, and his dying so bravely in the cause of Liberty.' What was insinuated by any part of these Words, is not my Affair; but so publick a Reward had the Appearance of a laudable Spirit; nor could Booth be blam'd, if upon so particular a distinction of his Merit, he began himself to set more Value upon it.

Dogget insinuated to us, for he was a staunch Whig, that this present of fifty Guineas, was a sort of Tory Triumph which they had no pretence to; and that for his part, he could not bear that so redoubted a Champion for Liberty as Cato should be bought off to the cause of a contrary

trary Party: He therefore, propos'd, that the Managers themselves should make the same Present to Booth, which had been made him, from the Boxes, the Day before. This, he said, might be a Means, to secure Booth more firmly in our Interest, it never having been known, that the Skill of the best Actor had receiv'd so round a Reward, or Gratuity, in one Day before. Wilks, was so charm'd with the Proposal, that he long'd that Moment to make Booth the present with his own Hands; and though he knew he had no Right to do it without my Consent, had no patience to ask it; upon which I turned to Dogget with a cold Smile, and told him, that if Booth could be purchas'd at so cheap a Rate, it would be one of the best proofs of his Oeconomy we had ever been beholden to; I therefore desired that we might have a little Patience; that our doing it too hastily might be only making sure of an Occasion to throw the fifty Guineas away; for if we should be oblig'd to do better for him, we could never expect, that Booth would think himself bound in Honour to refund them. This seem'd so absurd an Argument to Wilks, that he began with his usual Freedom of Speech to treat it as a pitiful Evasion of their intended Generosity. To conclude, my Objections that the Money would be only thrown away, were over-ruled, and the same Night Booth had the fifty Guineas, which he receiv'd with a Thankfulness that made Wilks and Dogget perfectly easy; insomuch that they seem'd, for some Time, to triumph in their Conduct, and often endeavour'd to laugh my Jealousy out of Countenance. But in the following Winter, the Game happened to take a different Turn; and then, if it had been a laugh-

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ing Matter, I had as strong an Occasion to smile at their former Security.

Next Year a new Licence, recalling all former Licences, was issued, wherein Booth's Name was added to those of the other Managers. But still there was a Difficulty, in his Qualification, to be adjusted; what Consideration he should allow, for an equal Title to our Stocks of Cloaths, Scenes, &c. without which, the License was of no more use than the Stock was without the License.

Collier, though now but a fifth Manager, still insisted on his former Appointment of 700 l. a Year; which, in Equity ought certainly to have been proportionably abated; but Court-favour was not always measured by that yard: But the Affair of Booth was not so clear a point; The Lord Chamberlain therefore, only recommended it to be adjusted among ourselves, which was a greater Indulgence than I expected.

Wilks was of Opinion, that to set a good round Value upon our Stock, was the only way to come near an Equivalent, for the Diminution of our Shares, which the Admission of Booth must occasion: But Dogget insisted, that he had no mind to dispose of any part of his Property, and therefore would set no price upon it at all; adding, that nothing but the Law should make him part with his Property; and so went out of the Room. After which he never came among us more.

Dogget having thus abruptly abdicated his Post in our Government, Wilks and I determined to keep our Business still going, and that our safest Way would be, to make the best Bargain we could with Booth; one Article of which was to be,

be, That Booth should stand equally answerable with us, to Dogget, for the Consequence: To which Booth made no Objection, and the rest of his Agreement, was to allow us Six Hundred Pounds for his Share, in our Property, which was to be paid by such Sums as should arise from half his Profits of Acting, 'till the whole was discharg'd. Let us see what Dogget did in this Affair after he had left us.

Dogget, who was equally oblig'd with us to act upon the Stage, as to assist in the Management of it, tho' he had refus'd to do either, still demanded of us his whole Share of the Profits; without considering what Part of them Booth might pretend to from our late Concessions. After many fruitless Endeavours to bring him back to us, Booth join'd with us in making him an Offer of half a Share, if he had a mind totally to quit the Stage, and make it a Sine-cure. No! he wanted the whole, and to sit still himself, while we if we pleas'd might work for him, or let it alone, and none of us all, neither he nor we be the better for it.

He appeal'd to the Vice-Chamberlain, to whose Direction the adjusting of all these Theatrical Difficulties was then committed: But there I dare say the Reader does not expect he should meet with much Favour: However, a few Days after, we receiv'd an Order from the Vice-Chamberlain, positively commanding us to pay Dogget his whole Share, notwithstanding we had complain'd before of his having withdrawn himself from acting on the Stage, and from the Management of it. We absolutely refus'd to comply with this Order, and made the Affair at last too troublesome for the Ease of a Courtier to go thro' with. For when it was consider'd, that the

principal Point, the Admission of Booth was got over, Dogget was fairly left to the Law for Relief.

When our Cause came to a Hearing before the Lord Chancellor Cooper, the Issue of it was this. Dogget had about fourteen days allowed him to make his Election, whether he would return to act as usual: But he declaring by his Counsel, That he rather chose to quit the Stage, he was decreed Six Hundred Pounds for his Share in our Property, with 15 per Cent. Interest, from the Date of the last License: Upon the Receipt of which, both Parties were to sign General Releases, and severally to pay their own costs. By this decree, Dogget, when his Lawyer's Bill was paid, scarce got above one Year's Purchase, of what we had offered him without Law, which, as he survived but seven Years after it, would have been an Annuity of Five Hundred Pounds, and a Sine cure for Life.

Upon the death of the Queen, Plays were silenced for six Weeks: But this happening in the long Vacation of the Theatre, did them no great damage. Their Licence however, being of course to be renewed, we applied to Sir Richard Steele, and begg'd him to use his Interest for the Renewal of our License, and that he would do us the Honour of getting our Names to stand with his, in the same commission. Accordingly Sir Richard applied himself to the duke of Marlborough, the Hero of his Heart, who upon the first Mention of it, obtained it of his Majesty for Sir Richard, and the former Managers.

About this Time the Patentee, having very near finished his House in Lincoln's Inn Fields, began to think of forming a new Company; and in the mean time, found it necessary for Leave  
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to employ them. And soon after prevail'd with Mr. Craggs the Younger, (afterwards Secretary of State) to lay his Case before the King, which he did in so effectual a manner, that (as Mr. Craggs himself told me) his Majesty was pleas'd to say upon it, ' That he remember'd, when he  
' had been in England before, in King Charles  
' his Time, there had been two Theatres in  
' London ; and as the Patent seem'd to be a law-  
' ful Grant, he saw no Reason why Two Play-  
' houses might not be continued.'

When the new-built Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn Fields was ready to be open'd, seven or eight Actors in one day deserted from us to the Service of the Enemy, which oblig'd us to postpone many of our best Plays, for want of some inferior Part in them, which these Deserters had been used to fill : But the Indulgence of the Royal Family, who then frequently honour'd us by their Presence, was pleas'd to accept of whatever could be hastily got ready for their Entertainment ; And tho' that Year, our Profits amounted not to above a third Part of our usual Dividends ; yet in the following Year we intirely recover'd them. The Chief of these Deserters were Keene, Bullock, Pack, Leigh, Son of the famous Tony Leigh, and others of less Note. 'Tis true, they none of them had more than a negative Merit, in being only able to do us more Harm by their leaving us, without Notice, than they could do us Good by remaining with us : For though the best of them could not support a Play, the worst of them by their Absence could maim it ; as the Loss of the least pin in a Watch may obstruct its Motion.

After this new Theatre had enjoy'd that short Run of Favour, which is apt to follow Novelty ; their Audiences began to flag : But whatever good



Opinion we had of our own Merit, we had not so good a one of the Multitude, as to depend too much upon the delicacy of their Taste: We knew too, that this Company being so much nearer to the City than we were, would intercept many an honest Customer that might not know a good Market from a bad one; and that the thinnest of their Audiences must be always taking something from the Measure of our profits. All these disadvantages with many others, we were forced to lay before Sir Richard Steele, and farther to remonstrate to him, that as he now stood in Collier's Place, his Pension of 700l. was liable to the Conditions, that Collier had received it upon; which were, that it should be only payable during our being the only Company permitted to act, but in case another should be set up against us, that then this Pension was to be liquidated into an equal Share with us; and which we now hoped he would be contented with. While we were offering to proceed, Sir Richard stopt us short, by assuring us, that as he came among us, by our own Invitation, he should always think himself oblig'd to come into any Measures, for our Ease and Service: That to be a Burthen to our Industry, would be more disagreeable to him, than it could be to us; and as he had always taken a Delight, in his Endeavours for our Prosperity, he should be still ready on our own Terms, to continue them. Every one who knew Sir Richard Steele, in his Prosperity, knew that this was his constant manner of dealing with his Friends, in Business.

When we propos'd to put this Agreement into Writing, he desired us not to hurry ourselves; for that he was advis'd, upon the late Desertion of  
our

our Actors, to get our License which only subsisted during Pleasure, enlarged into a more ample and durable Authority, and which he said he had Reason to think would be more easily obtain'd, if we were willing, that a Patent for the same purpose might be granted to him only, for his Life, and three Years after, which he would then assign over to us. This was a Prospect beyond our Hopes, and what we had long wish'd for; Accordingly we desired Sir Richard to lose no time, and he was immediately promised it: In a few Days after, Sir Richard told us, that his Majesty being apprised that others had a joint Power with him in the License, it was expected we should, under our Hands signify, that his Petition for a Patent was prefer'd by the Consent of us all. Such an Acknowledgment was immediately sign'd, and the patent thereupon pass'd the Great Seal; for which I remember the Lord Chancellor Cooper, in Compliment to Sir Richard, would receive no Fee.

The Grant of this patent having assured us of a competent Term to be relied on, we were now emboldened to lay out larger sums in the decorations of our Plays: And upon the Revival of Dryden's *All for Love*, the Habits of that Tragedy amounted to an Expence of near six Hundred pounds; a Sum unheard of, for many Years before, on the like Occasions. About this time we were so much in fashion, and followed, that our Enemies made their push of a good round Lye upon us, to terrify those Auditors from our support, whom they could not mislead by their private Arts or publick Invectives. A current Report, that the Walls and Roof of our House were likely to fall, had got such Ground in the Town, that on a sudden we found our Audiences unusu-

unusually decreased by it. But an Order from the King was obtained, to have our Tenement surveyed by Sir Thomas Hewet, then the proper Officer; whose Report of its being in a safe and sound condition, and signed by him, was published in every News-paper. This had so immediate an Effect, that our Spectators, whose Apprehensions had lately kept them absent, now made up our Losses, by returning to us with a fresh Inclination, and in greater Numbers.

When it was publickly known, that the New Theatre would be opened against us, I cannot help going back a little to remember the Concern that my Brother-Managers express'd at what might be the consequences of it. They imagined that now all those who wish'd Ill to us, and particularly a great party, who had been disobliged by our shutting them out from behind our Scenes, even to the Refusal of their Money, would now exert themselves in any partial or extravagant Measures, that might either hurt us, or support our Competitors: These too were some of those farther Reasons which had discourag'd them from running the Hazard of continuing to Sir Richard Steele the same Pension which had been paid to Collier. Upon all which I observed to them, that for my own part, I had not the same Apprehensions; but that I foresaw as many good as bad Consequences from two Houses: That tho' the Novelty might possibly at first abate a little of our Profits; yet if we slacken'd not our Industry, that Loss would be amply balanced, by an equal Increase of our Ease and Quiet: That those turbulent Spirits which were always molesting us, would now have other Employment: That the question'd Merit of our acting would now stand in a clearer Light, when others were faintly compared

pared to us; and that what some People hoped might ruin us, would in the end reduce them to give up the Dispute, and reconcile them to those who could best entertain them.

When one Company is too hard for another, the lower in Reputation has always been forced to exhibit some new-fangled Foppery to draw the Multitude after them. Of these Expedients, Singing and Dancing had formerly been the most effectual; but at the Time I am speaking of, our English Musick had been so discountenanced, since the Taste of our Italian Operas prevail'd, that it was to no purpose to pretend to it. Dancing therefore was now the only Weight in the opposite Scale, and as the New Theatre sometimes found their Account in it, it could not be safe for us wholly to neglect it. To give even Dancing some Improvement, and to make it something more than Motion without Meaning, the Fable of Mars and Venus was form'd into a connected Presentation of Dances in Character, wherein the Passions were so happily express'd, and the whole Story so intelligibly told by a mute Narration of Gesture only, that even thinking Spectators allow'd it both a pleasant and a rational Entertainment; though at the same time, from our Distrust of its Reception, we durst not venture to decorate it with any extraordinary Expence of Scenes or Habits; but upon the Success of this Attempt, it was rightly concluded, that if a visible Expence in both was added to something of the same Nature, it could not fail of drawing the Town proportionably after it. From this original Hint then, but every way unequal to it, sprung forth that Succession of monstrous Medlies that have so long infested the Stage, and which arose upon one another alternately, both Houses outvying in  
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Expence, to secure a Majority of the Multitude. But so it is, Truth may complain, and Merit murmur with what Justice it may, the Few will never be a Match for the Many, unless Authority should think fit to interpose, and put down these poetical Drams, these Gin-Shops of the Stage, that intoxicate its Auditors, and dishonour their Understanding with a Levity for which I want a Name.

If I am ask'd how I came to assent, or continue my Share of Expence to them? I have no better Excuse for my Error, than confessing it. I did it against my Conscience! and had not Virtue enough to starve, by opposing a Multitude that would have been too hard for me.

But what is all this to the Theatrical Follies I was talking of; perhaps, not a great deal, but it is to my Purpose; for though I am an Historian, I do not write to the Wise, and Learned only; I hope to have Readers of no more Judgment, than some of my quondam Auditors; and I am afraid they will be as hardly contented, with dry Matters of Fact, as with a plain Play without Entertainments: This Rhapsody, therefore, has been thrown in, as a Dance between the Acts, to make up for the Dullness of what would have been by itself only proper. But I now come to my story again.

Notwithstanding then, this our Compliance with the vulgar Taste; we generally made use of these Pantomimes, but as Crutches to our weakest Play.

We had still a due Respect to several select Plays, that were able to be their own Support; and in which we found our constant Account, without painting and patching them out, like Prostitutes, with these Follies, in fashion: If there-

therefore we were not so strictly chaste, in the otherpart of our Conduct, let the Error of it stand among the silly Consequences of Two Stages. Could the Interest of both Companies have been united in one only Theatre ; I had been of the Few, that would have us'd my utmost Endeavour of never admitting on the Stage any Spectacle, that ought not to have been seen there ; the Errors of my own Plays, which I could not see, excepted. And though probably, the Majority of the Spectators would not have been so well pleas'd with a Theatre so regulated ; yet Sense and Reason cannot lose their intrinsick Value, because the Giddy, and the Ignorant, are blind and deaf, or numerous ; and I cannot help saying, it is a Reproach to a sensible people, to let Folly so publickly govern their pleasures.

While I am making this grave declaration of what I would have done, had one only Stage been continued ; to obtain an easier Belief of my Sincerity, I ought to put my Reader in mind of what I did do, even after two Companies were again establish'd.

About this Time Jacobitism had lately exerted it self, by the most unprovoked Rebellion, that our Histories have handed down to us, since the Norman Conquest : I therefore thought, that to set the Authors and Principles of that desperate Folly in a fair Light, by allowing the mistaken Consciences of some their best Excuse, and by making the artful Pretenders to Conscience, as ridiculous as they were ungratefully wicked, was a Subject fit for the honest Satire of Comedy, and what might, if it succeeded, do Honour to the Stage, by shewing the valuable Use of it.

To give Life therefore to this Design; I borrow'd the Tartuffe of Moliere, and turn'd him to a modern Nonjuror; upon the Hypocrisy of the French Character, I ingrafted a stronger Wickedness, that of an English Popish Priest, lurking under the Doctrine of our own Church, to raise his Fortune upon the Ruin of a worthy Gentleman, whom his dissembled Sanctity had seduced into the treasonable Cause of a Roman Catholick Out-law. How this Design in the Play was executed, I refer to the Readers of it; it cannot be mended by any critical Remarks I can make in its Favour: Let it speak for itself. All the Reason I had to think it no bad Performance was, that it was acted eighteen days running, and that the Party that were hurt by it (as I have been told) have not been the smallest Number of my back Friends ever since. But happy was it for this Play, that the very Subject was its protection; a few smiles of silent Contempt were the utmost disgrace, that on the first Day of its Appearance it was thought safe to throw upon it; as the Satire was chiefly employ'd on the Enemies of the Government, they were not so hardy, as to own themselves such, by any higher Disapprobation or Repentment. But as it was probable I might write again, they knew it would not be long before they might with more Security give a Loose to their Spleen, and make up Accounts with me.

But to none was I more beholden, than that celebrated Author Mr. Mist, whose Weekly Journal, for about fifteen Years following, scarce ever fail'd of passing some of his party Compliments upon me; The State and the Stage were his frequent parallels, and the Minister, and Minheer Keiber the Manager. were as constantly droll'd

droll'd upon : And soon after the Nonjuror had received the Favour of the Town, I read, in one of his Journals, the following short Paragraph, viz. Yesterday died Mr. Colley Cibber, late Comedian of the Theatre-Royal, notorious for writing the Nonjuror. The Compliment, in the latter Part, I confess, I did not dislike, because it came from so impartial a Judge ; and it really so happen'd that the former part of it was very near being true ; for I had that very Day just crawled out, after having been some Weeks laid up by a Fever : However I saw no use, in being thought to be thoroughly dead before my Time, and therefore had a mind to see, whether the Town cared to have me alive again : So the Play of the Orphan being to be acted that Day, I quietly stole myself into the Part of the Chaplain, which I had not been seen in, for many Years before. The Surprize of the Audience at my unexpected appearance on the very Day I had been dead in the News, and the Paleness of my Looks, seem'd to make it a doubt, whether I was not the Ghost of my real Self departed : But when I spoke, their Wonder eas'd itself by an Applause which convinc'd me, they were then satisfied, that my Friend Mist had told a Fib of me.

On the first Day of the Provok'd Husband, ten Years after the Nonjuror had appeared ; a powerful Party, not having the Fear of publick Offence, or private Injury before their Eyes, appear'd most impetuously concern'd for the Demolition of it ; in which they so far succeeded, that for some time I gave it up for lost ; and to follow their Blows, in the publick Papers of the next Day it was attack'd and triumph'd over, as a dead and damn'd Piece ; a swinging Criticism was made upon it, in general invective Terms,  
for



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for they disdain'd to trouble the World with Particulars ; their Sentence, it seems, was proof enough of its deserving the Fate it had met with. But this damn'd Play was, notwithstanding, acted twenty-eight Nights together, and left off, at a Receipt of upwards of a hundred and fifty Pounds, which happen'd to be more, than in fifty Years before, could be then said, of any one Play whatsoever.

Now if such notable Behaviour could break out upon so successful a Play (which too, upon the share Sir John Vanbrugh had in it, I will venture to call a good one) what shall we impute it to : Why may not I plainly say, it was not the Play, but Me, who had a hand in it, they did not like : And for what Reason, if they were not ashamed of it, why did not they publish it. No ! the Reason had published itself ; I was the Author of the Nonjuror ! But, perhaps, of all Authors I ought not to make this sort of Complaint, because I have Reason to think, that particular Offence has made me more honourable Friends than Enemies ; the latter of which I am not unwilling should know (however unequal the Merit may be to the Reward) that Part of the Bread I now eat, was given me for having writ the Nonjuror.

Having brought the Government of the Stage through such various Changes and Revolutions, to this settled State, in which it continued to almost the Time of my leaving it ; it cannot be suppos'd that a Period of so much Quiet, and so long a Train of Success can afford such matter of Surprize or Amusement, as might arise, from Time of more Distress, and Disorder. A quiet Time, in History, like a Calm in a Voyage, leaves us but in an indolent Station : To talk of our Affairs, when they were

were no longer ruffled by Misfortunes, would be a Picture without Shade, a flat Performance at best. However the next thing that occurs, is our dispute in Chancery with Sir Richard Steele.

In all the Transactions of Life, there cannot be a more painful Circumstance, than a dispute at Law, with a Man, with whom we have long liv'd, in an agreeable Amity : But when Sir Richard Steele, to get himself out of Difficulties, was oblig'd to throw his Affairs into the Hands of Lawyers and Trustees, that Consideration then, could be of no weight : The Friend, or the Gentleman had no more to do in the Matter. Thus, while Sir Richard no longer acted from himself, it may be no Wonder if a Flaw was found in our Conduct, for the Law to make Work with. It must be observed then, that about two or three Years before this Suit was commenc'd, upon Sir Richard's totally absenting himself from all Care and Management of the Stage, which by our Articles of Partnership he was equally and jointly oblig'd with us, to attend, we were reduc'd to let him know, that we could not go on at that Rate ; but that if he expected to make the Business a Sine-Cure, we had as much Reason to expect a Consideration for our extraordinary Care of it ; and that during his Absence, we therefore intended to charge ourselves at a Salary of 1 l. 13 s. 4 d. every acting day, for our Management : To which in his compos'd manner he only answered ; That to be sure, we knew what was fitter to be done than he did ; that he had always taken a delight in making us easy, and had no Reason to doubt of our doing him Justice. Now whether, under this easy Stile of Approbation, he conceal'd any dislike of our Resolution, I cannot say. But, if I may speak my  
private

private Opinion, I really believe, from his natural Negligence of his Affairs, he was glad at any Rate to be excus'd an Attendance which he was now grown weary of. But whether I am deceiv'd, or right in my Opinion, the Fact was truly this, that he never once, directly nor indirectly complain'd or objected to our being paid the above-mention'd daily Sum in near three Years together, and yet still continued to absent himself from us and our Affairs: But notwithstanding he had seen and done all this with his Eyes open, his Lawyer thought here was still a fair Field for a Battle in Chancery, in which, though his Client might be beaten, he was sure his Bill must be paid for it: Accordingly to work with us he went. But not to be so long as the Lawyers were in bringing this Cause to an Issue, I shall at once let you know, that it came to a Hearing before the late Sir Joseph Jekyll, then Master of the Rolls, in the Year 1726, when the Issue of it was this; That Sir Richard not having made any Objection to what we had charged for Management for three Years together; and as our Proceedings had been all transacted in open day, without any clandestine Intention of Fraud, we were allow'd the Sums in dispute above mention'd: And Sir Richard not being advised to appeal to the Lord Chancellor, both Parties agreed to pay their own Costs; and thought it their mutual Interest to let this be the last of their Law Suits.

I shall now proceed to speak of the Theatre, which was order'd by his late Majesty to be erected in the Great old Hall at Hampton-Court; where Plays were intended to have been acted twice a Week, during the Summer Season. But before the Theatre could be finish'd, above half the Month of September being elapsed, there were  
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but seven Plays acted before the Court returned to London. This throwing open a Theatre in a Royal Palace, seem'd to be reviving the Old English hospitable Grandeur, where the lowest Rank of neighbouring Subjects might make themselves merry at Court without being laughed at themselves. In former Reigns Theatrical Entertainments at the Royal Palaces had been perform'd at vast Expence, as appears by the Description of the Decorations in several of Ben Johnson's Masques in King James and Charles the First's Time: But when our Civil Wars ended in the Decadence of Monarchy, it was then an Honour to the Stage to have fallen with it: Yet after the Restoration of Charles II. some faint Attempts were made to revive these Theatrical Spectacles at Court; but I have met with no Account of above one Masque acted there by the Nobility, which was that of Calisto, written by Crown, the Author of Courtly Nice. For what Reason Crown was chosen to that Honour, rather than Dryden, who was then Poet-Laureat, and out of all Comparison his Superior in Poetry, may seem surprizing: But if we consider the Offence which the then Duke of Buckingham took at the Character of Zimri, in Dryden's Absalom, &c. which might probably be a Return to his Grace's Draw-cansir in the Rehearsal, we may suppose the Prejudice and Recommendation of so illustrious a Pretender to Poetry, might prevail at Court, to give Crown this Preference. In the same Reign the King had his Comedians at Windsor, but upon a particular Establishment; for tho' they acted in St. George's Hall, within the Royal Palace, yet (as I have been inform'd by an Eye-witness) they were permitted to take Money at the Door of every Spectator; whether this was an



an Indulgence, in Conscience I cannot say ; but it was a common Report among the principal Actors, when I first came into the Theatre Royal, that there was then due to the Company from that Court, about One Thousand Five Hundred Pounds for Plays commanded, &c. This Theatrical Anecdote however, puts me in mind of one of a more private Nature, which I had from old solemn Boman, the late Actor of venerable Memory. Boman then a Youth, and fam'd for his Voice, was appointed to sing some Part in a Concert of Musick at the private Lodgings of Mrs. Gwin ; at which were only present the Duke of York, and one or two more who were usually admitted upon these detach'd parties of Pleasure. When the Performance was ended, the King express'd himself highly pleas'd, and gave it extraordinary commendations ; Then Sir, said the Lady, to shew you don't speak like a Courtier, I hope you will make the Performers a handsome present : The King said he had no Money about him, and ask'd the Duke if he had any ? To which the Duke reply'd, I believe Sir, not above a Guinea or two. Upon which the laughing Lady turning to the people about her, and making bold with the King's common Expression, cry'd, Od's Fish ! what company am I got into ! But I have done with my Digression, and return to our Theatre at Hampton-Court.

A Play presented at Court, or acted on a publick Stage, seem to their different Auditors, a different Entertainment. Now hear my Reason for it. In the common Theatre the Guests are at home, where the politer Forms of good Breeding are not so nicely regarded : Every one there falls to, and likes or finds fault, according to his natural Taste or Appetite. At Court, where the  
 Prince

Prince gives the Treat, and honours the Table with his own presence, the Audience are under the Restraint of a Circle, where Laughter or Applause, rais'd higher than a Whisper, would be star'd at. At a publick Play they are both let loose, even 'till the Actor is sometimes pleas'd with his not being able to be heard for the clamour of them. But this coldness, or decency of Attention at Court, I observ'd had but a melancholly Effect upon the impatient Vanity of some of our Actors, who seem'd inconsolable, when their flashy Endeavours to please had pass'd unheeded: Their not considering where they were, quite disconcerted them; nor could they recover their Spirits, 'till from the lowest Rank of the Audience, some gaping John or Joan, in the Fulness of their Hearts, roar'd out their Approbation. However, as we were not here itinerant Adventurers, and had properly but one Royal Auditor to please, after that Honour was attain'd to, the rest of our Ambition had little to look after: And that the King was often pleas'd, we were not only assured by those who had the Honour to be near him; but could see it from the frequent Satisfaction in his Looks, at particular Scenes and passages: One Instance of which I am tempted to relate, because it was at a Speech that might more naturally affect a Sovereign prince, than any private Spectator. In Shakespear's Harry the Eighth, that King commands the Cardinal to write circular Letters of Indemnity into every County, where the payment of certain heavy Taxes had been disputed: Upon which the Cardinal whispers the following directions to his Secretary Cromwell:

——— A Word with you :

Let there be Letters writ to every Shire,  
Of the King's Grace and pardon : The griev'd  
Commons

Hardly conceive of me. Let it be nois'd,  
That through our Intercession, this Revokement,  
And pardon comes. — I shall anon advise you  
Farther, in the proceeding———

The sollicitude of this spiritual Minister in filching from his Master the Grace and Merit of a good Action, and dressing up himself in it, while himself had been Author of the Evil complain'd of, was so easy a stroke of his temporal conscience, that it seem'd to raise the King into something more than a smile, whenever that play came before him : And I had a more distinct Occasion to observe this Effect, because my proper stand on the Stage when I spoke the Lines, required me to be near the Box where the King usually sat. In a Word, this play is so true a dramattick Chronicle of an old English Court, and where the Character of Harry the Eighth is so exactly drawn, even to a humorous Likeness, that it may be no Wonder why his Majesty's particular Taste for it, should have commanded it three several Times in one Winter.

This too calls to my Memory an extravagant pleasantry of Sir Richard Steele, who being ask'd by a grave Nobleman, after the same play had been presented at Hampton-Court, how the King lik'd it : reply'd, So terribly well, my Lord, that I was afraid I should have lost all my Actors ! For I was not sure the King would not keep them to fill the posts at Court, that he saw them so fit for in the play.

Though

Though the stated Fee for a play acted at Whitehall had been formerly but Twenty pounds; yet, as that hindered not the Company's acting at the publick Theatre, that Sum was almost all clear profits to them: But this Circumstance not being practicable, when they were commanded to Hampton-Court, a new and extraordinary Charge was unavoidable: The Managers therefore not to inflame it, desired no Consideration for their own Labour, farther than the Honour of being employ'd in his Majesty's Commands; and if the other Actors might be allow'd each their day's pay, and travelling charges, they should hold themselves ready to act any Play there at a day's Warning: And that the Trouble might be less by being divided, the Lord-Chamberlain was pleas'd to let us know, that the Household-Musick, the Wax Lights, and a Chaise-Marine to carry our moving Wardrobe to every different play, should be under the charge of the proper Officers. Notwithstanding these Assistances, the Expence of every play amounted to Fifty pounds: Which Account, when all was over, was not only allow'd us, but his Majesty was graciously pleas'd to give the Managers Two Hundred pounds more for their particular performance and Trouble, in only seven times acting. Which last sum, though it might not be too much for a Sovereign Prince to give, it was certainly more than our utmost Merit ought to have hop'd for: And I confess, when I receiv'd the Order for the Money, from his Grace the Duke of Newcastle, then Lord-Chamberlain, I was so surpriz'd, that I imagin'd his Grace's Favour or Recommendation of our Readiness or Diligence, must have contributed to so high a consideration of it, and was offering my Acknowledgments, as I thought them due; but was



soon stopt short by his Grace's Declaration, That we had no Obligations for it but to the King himself, who had given it, from no other Motive, than his own Bounty.

Since that time, there has been but one Play given at Hampton-Court, which was for the Entertainment of the Duke of Lorrain; and for which his present Majesty was pleased to order us a Hundred Pounds.

Now, as I am tied down to the Veracity of an Historian, if I should happen to sink into a little farther Insignificancy, let the simple Truth of what I have farther to say, be my Excuse for it. I am obliged, therefore, to make the Experiment, by shewing you the Conduct of our Theatrical Ministry in such Lights, as on various Occasions it appear'd in.

Though Wilks had more Industry and Application, than any Actor I had ever known, yet we found it possible that those necessary Qualities might sometimes be so misconducted, as not only to make them useles, but hurtful to our Common-wealth; for while he was impatient to be foremost in every thing, he frequently shock'd the honest Ambition of others, whose Measures might have been more serviceable, could his Jealousy have given way to them. His own Regards for himself therefore, were, to avoid a disagreeable Dispute with him, too often complied with: But this leaving his Diligence to his own Conduct, made us in some Instances pay dearly for it: For Example; he would take as much, or more Pains in forwarding for the Stage, the Water-Gruel-Work of some insipid Author, that happen'd rightly to make his Court to him, than he would for the best Play, wherein it was not his Fortune to be chosen for the best Character.

rafter. So great was his Impatience to be employ'd, that I scarce remember, in twenty Years, above one profitable Play we could get to be reviv'd, wherein he found he was to make no considerable Figure, independent of him; But the Tempest having done Wonders, he could not form any Pretensions to let it lie longer dormant: However, his Coldness to it was so visible, that he took all Occasions to postpone and discourage its Progress, by frequently taking up the Morning Stage with something more to his Mind. Having been myself particularly solicitous for the reviving this Play, Dogget, (for this was before Booth came into the Management) consented that the extraordinary Decorations and Habits should be left to my care and direction. And so it happen'd, that the Success of this Play shew'd, it was possible to have good Audiences without his extraordinary Assistance. In the first six days of acting it, we paid all our constant and incidental Expence, and shar'd each of us a hundred Pounds: The greatest Profit that in so little a Time had yet been known within my Memory! But alas! what was paltry Pelf to Glory? That was the darling Passion of Wilks's Heart; and not to advance in it, was to so jealous an Ambition, a painful Retreat, a mere Shade to his Laurels: To conclude, not Prince Lewis of Baden, though a confederate General with the Duke of Marlborough, was more inconsolable upon the memorable Victory at Blenheim, at which he was not present, than our Theatrical Hero was, to see any Action prosperous that he was not himself at the Head of.

This laudable Appetite for Fame in Wilks, was not however to be fed without that constant Labour which only himself was able to come up to;

to: He therefore bethought him of the means to lessen the Fatigue, and at the same time, to heighten his Reputation; which was by giving up now and then, a Part to a raw Actor, who he was sure would disgrace it, and consequently put the Audience in mind of his superior Performance: Among this sort of Indulgences to young Actors, he happen'd once to make a Mistake, that set his Views in a clear Light. The best Criticks, I believe, will allow, that in Shakespear's Macbeth, there are in the Part of Macduff two Scenes, the one of Terror, in the second Act; and the other of Compassion, in the fourth, equal to any that dramattick Poetry has produc'd. These Scenes Wilks had acted with Success, tho' far short of that happier Skill and Grace which Montfort had formerly shewn in them. Such a Part however, one might imagine, would be one of the last a good Actor would chuse to part with: But Wilks was of a different Opinion; for Macbeth was thrice as long, had more great Scenes of Action, and bore the Name of the Play: Now, to be a second in any Play, was what he did not much care for, and had been seldom us'd to: This Part of Macduff therefore, he had given to one Williams, as yet no extraordinary, though a promising Actor. Williams, in the Simplicity of his Heart immediately told Booth what a Favour Wilks had done him. Booth, as he had Reason, thought Wilks had here carried his Indulgence and his Authority a little too far, for as Booth had no better a part in the same Play, than that of Banquo, he found himself too much disregarded, in letting so young an Actor take place of him: Booth therefore, who knew the Value of Macduff, propos'd to do it himself, and to give Banquo to Williams; and to make him farther amends,

amends, offer'd him any other of his parts that he thought might be of Service to him. Williams was content with the Exchange, and thankful for the promise. This Scheme indeed, (had it taken Effect) might have been an Ease to Wilks, and possibly no Disadvantage to the Play; but softly—This was not quite what we had a Mind to! No sooner then, came this Proposal to Wilks, but off went the Masque, and out came the Secret! For though Wilks wanted to be eas'd of the Part, he did not desire to be excell'd in it; and as he was not sure but that might be the case, if Booth were to act it, he wisely retracted his own project, took Macduff again to himself, and while he liv'd never had a Thought of running the same Hazard, by any farther Offer to resign it.

As nothing can be more impertinent than shewing too great a Fear to be thought so, I will without farther Apology, rather risque that Imputation, than not tell you another Story much to the same purpose, and of no more Consequence than my last.

If the Merit of an Actor consists more in the Quality than the Quantity of his Labour, the other Managers had no visible Reason to think this needless Ambition of Wilks, in being so often, and sometimes so unnecessarily employ'd, gave him any Title to a Superiority; especially when our Articles of agreement had allow'd us all to be equal. Wilks therefore, who thought himself lessen'd in appealing to any Judgment but his own, plainly discover'd by his restless Behaviour, that he thought he had a Right to some higher Consideration for his Performance: This was often Booth's Opinion as well as my own. It must be farther observ'd, that he actually



ally had an Allowance of Fifty Pounds a Year, for writing our daily Play-Bills for the Printer: Which province to say the Truth, was the only one we car'd to trust to his particular Intendance, or could find out for a Pretence to distinguish him. But to speak a plainer Truth, this pension, which was no part of our original Agreement, was merely paid to keep him quiet, and not that we thought it due to so insignificant a Charge, as what a prompter had formerly executed. This being really the Case, his frequent Complaints of being a Drudge to the Company, grew something more than disagreeable to us: For we could not digest the Imposition of a Man's setting himself to work, and then bringing in his own Bill for it. Booth therefore, who was less easy than I was, to see him so often setting a Merit upon this Quantity of his Labour, which neither could be our Interest, or his own to lay upon him, proposed to me, that we might remove this pretended Grievance, by reviving some play that might be likely to live, and be easily acted without Wilks's having any Part in it. And in 1725, we were called upon in a manner that could not be resisted, to revive the Provoked Wife. The Author Sir John Vanbrugh, who was conscious of what it had too much of, was prevailed upon to substitute a new-written Scene in the Place of one in the fourth Act, where the Wantonness of his Wit and Humour, had made a Rake talk like a Rake in the borrowed Habit of a Clergyman: To avoid which Offence, he clapt the same Debauchee into the Undress of a Woman of Quality.

This Play being thus refitted for the Stage, was, as I have observed, called for from Court, and by many of the Nobility. Now, then we thought

thought was a proper time to come to an Explanation with Wilks: Accordingly, when the Actors were summon'd to hear the Play read, and receiv'd their Parts; I address'd myself to Wilks before them all, and told him, That as the Part of Constant, which he seem'd to chuse, was a Character of less Action than he generally appear'd in, we thought this might be a good Occasion to ease himself, by giving it to another. — Here he look'd grave — That the Love-Scenes of it were rather serious than gay or humoreous, and therefore might fit very well upon Booth. -- Down dropt his Brow, and furl'd were his Features. — That as he could have no farther Advantage or Advancement in his Station to hope for, his acting in this Play was but giving himself an unprofitable Trouble. — Now the Pill began to gripe him. In a Word, this provoking Civility plung'd him into a Passion which he was no longer able to contain; out it came with all the Equipage of unlimited Language, that on such Occasions his Displeasure usually set out with. That he look'd upon all I had said, as a concerted Design, not only to signalize our selves by laying him aside; but a Contrivance to draw him into the Disfavour of the Nobility, by making it suppos'd his own Choice; that he did not act in a Play so particularly ask'd for; but we should find, he could stand upon his own Bottom, and it was not all our little caballing should get our Ends of him: To which I answer'd with some Warmth, That he was mistaken in our Ends, for Those, Sir, said I, you have answer'd already, by shewing the Company, you cannot bear to be left out of any Play. Are not you every Day complaining of your being overboard? And now, upon our first offering to ease you, you fly into a

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passion,

passion, and make that a greater Grievance, than t'other: But, Sir, if your being In, or Out of the play, is a Hardship, you shall impose it upon yourself: The part is in your Hand, and to us, it is a Matter of Indifference now, whether you take it, or leave it. Upon this he threw down the part upon the Table, cross'd his Arms, and sae knocking his Heel upon the Floor; but when no body persuaded him to take it up again, Booth chusing to split the Difference of our Dispute, said, That for his Part he saw no such great matter in acting every Day; for he believ'd it the wholesomest Exercise in the World; it kept the Spirits in Motion, and always gave him a good Stomach. Here I observ'd Mrs. Oldfield began to titter behind her Fan: But Wilks being more intent upon what Booth had said, reply'd, Every one could best feel for himself, but he did not pretend to the Strength of a Pack horse; therefore if Mrs. Oldfield would chuse any body else to play with her, he should be very glad to be excus'd: This throwing the Negative upon Mrs. Oldfield, was indeed a sure way to save himself; which I could not help taking notice of, by saying it was making but an ill Compliment to the Company, to suppose there was but one Man in it fit to play an ordinary Part with her. Here Mrs. Oldfield got up, and turning me half round to come forward, said with her usual Frankness, Pooh! you are all a parcel of Fools to make such a Rout about nothing: Rightly judging, that the Person most out of Humour, would not be more displeas'd at her calling us all by the same Name. As she knew too the best way of ending the Debate, would be to help the Weak; she said, she hop'd Mr. Wilks would not so far mind what had past, as to refuse his

his acting the part with her; for she believ'd those who had bespoke the Play would expect to have it done to the best Advantage. To conclude, Wilks had the part, and we had all we wanted; which was an Occasion to let him see, that the Accident or Choice of one Manager's being more employ'd than another, would never be allow'd a Pretence for altering our Indentures.

I am now come towards the End of that Time thro' which our Affairs had gone long forward in a settled Course of Prosperity. You are now to consider us in our Height of Favour, and so much in Fashion with the politer part of the Town, that our House every Saturday seem'd to be the appointed Assembly of the First Ladies of Quality: Of this too, the common Spectators were so well appriz'd, that for twenty Years successively, on that Pay, we scarce ever fail'd of a crowded Audience; for which Occasion we particularly reserv'd our best Plays acted in the best Manner we could give them.

Among our many necessary Reformatations; what not a little preserv'd to us the Regard of our Auditors, was the Decency of our clear Stage, from whence we had now, for many Years, shut out those idle Gentlemen, who seem'd more delighted to be pretty Objects themselves, than capable of any Pleasure from the Play: Who took their daily Stands, where they might best elbow the Actor, and come in for their Share of the Auditor's Attention. In many a labour'd Scene of the warmest Humour, and of the most affecting passion, have I seen the best Actors disconcerted, while these buzzing Muscatoes have been fluttering round their Eyes and Ears. How was it possible an Actor, so embarrassed, should keep his Impatience, from entering into that different  
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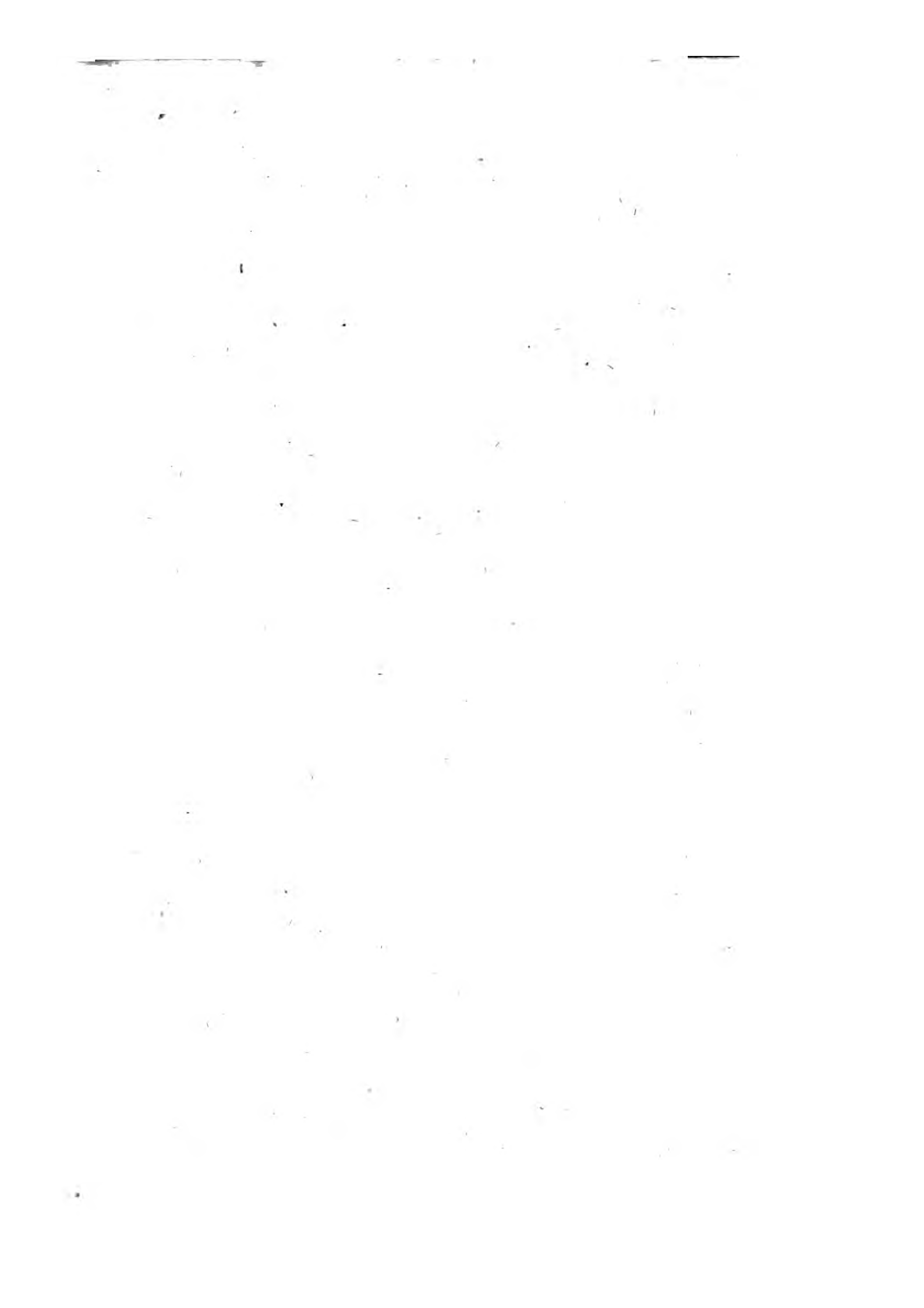


Temper which his personated Character might require him to be Master of?

I shall now conclude with barely mentioning those unavoidable Accidents, that drew on our dissolution. The first, that for some Years had led the way to greater, was the continued ill State of health, that rendered Booth incapable of appearing on the Stage. The next was the death of Mrs. Oldfield, which happened on the 23d of October, 1730. About the same Time too Mrs. Porter, then in high Reputation for Tragedy, was lost to us by the Misfortune of a dislocated Limb, from the overturning of a Chaise: And our last Stroke was the death of Wilks, in September, the Year following 1741.

Notwithstanding such irreparable Losses, our Audiences were far less abated, than our Apprehensions had suggested. So that, though it began now to grow late in Life with me; having still health and strength enough, to have been as useful on the Stage as ever, I was under no visible Necessity of quitting it: But so it happened that our Fraternity having got some unjust Notions into their heads, which though I knew they were without much difficulty to be surmounted, I chose not, at my time of day, to enter into new Contentions; and as I found an Inclination in some of them, to purchase the whole Power of the Patent into their own hands; I did my best to make it worth their while to come up to my price; and then patiently fold out my Share, to the first Bidder, wishing the Crew I had left in the Vessel, a good Voyage.

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