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THE
Roman and English
COMEDY

CONSIDER'D and COMPAR'D.

With REMARKS on the

SUSPICIOUS HUSBAND.

AND

An EXAMEN into the Merit of the present
COMIC ACTORS.

By S. FOOTE, *Esq;*



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THE
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COMEDY
CONSIDER'D and COMPAR'D.

 FROM the Indulgence shewn to my *Treatise on the Passions*, in which I have consider'd the Merit of the Tragic Actors only, I have been encouraged to extend that Design; and now venture to present the Public with my Judgment on such of their Theatrical Servants, as have distinguished themselves in Comedy.

A 2

But

But in order to establish my Credit with the Reader, it may not be amiss previously to obviate an Objection or two, that have been made to my Criticism on the Character of *Lear*.

I have been condemned for impeaching Mr. *Garrick's* Manner of closing the Curse, at the End of the First Act, with Tears; and that because *Shakespear* (who best knows his own Meaning) has by the following Expression dictated such a Behaviour to the Actor,

*I am asham'd,
That thou hast Power to shake my Manhood thus,
That these hot Tears, which break from me
perforce, &c.*

This Observation, *prima facie*, has, I must own, a tolerable Aspect; but if these Critics had been a little more minute in their Enquiries, they would soon have discovered, that these Words have no Relation to any Part of the *Anathema*, but allude to a Passage that immediately succeeds it:

Go, go, my People.

The poor old King, enfeebled by Age, and his
Spirits

Spirits almost exhausted by the Rage and Violence of the preceding Passion, in attempting to recover from the Posture of Kneeling, staggers, and is ready to fall; at that Juncture, receiving the Assistance of his Attendants, it occurs to his Mind, that he is soon to be deprived of their Service, and they of his Protection, either of which Reflections are sufficient to alter the Mode of the Mind, render the Transition from Rage to Tenderness natural, and account for the Passage that has occasioned this Dispute.

This Question being (I flatter myself) pretty well settled, I am at Liberty to pursue the Design of the present Treatise, which is to draw a Comparison between Antient and Modern Comedy, and determine to which the Preference is due: To this I shall add some Observations on the Comic Actors of the present Age.

The first Design of Dramatic Poetry, was to amend the Heart, improve the Understanding, and, at the same Time, please the Imagination. To Tragedy, one Species of the Drama was allotted; the Description of those Passions, which, when loose and ungoverned, are productive of the most terrible Consequences

quences on the one Hand; but if, on the other, they are kept within proper Limits, and chuse Reason for their Guide and Director, they become highly conducive to the Happiness of Mankind. To Comedy was assigned the Correction of Vices and Follies of an inferior sort.

In the first Instance, we are taught, by a Collection of fatal Events, to avoid Ruin and Misery; in the last, by a Representation of fashionable Foibles, and particular extravagant Humours, to shun Ridicule and Absurdity.

Sir *Richard Steele* has apologized for his Mixture of the Tragic with the Comic, by saying, that there is a sort of Distress too mean for Tragedy, and which (as it would be cruel to deprive the World of such useful Lessons) ought to have a Place in Comedy.

Did Tragedy owe its Essence to the Adventures and Misfortunes of People in High Life only, Sir *Richard's* Argument might have some Weight: But it is the Distresses, not the Situations of Mankind, that are its Objects: If the Incidents are truly interesting, and the
Story

Story affecting the Rank and Quality of the *Personæ* are of no great Consequence.

Suffer me now to direct your Observation to those amongst the Antients, who are most distinguished for their Skill and Excellence in Dramatic Poetry. As *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, and *Seneca*, are the Chiefs of the Epic, so are *Aristophanes*, *Mænander*, *Plautus*, and *Terence*, amongst the Comic.

It was the Practice of the Comic Poets, till the Time of *Mænander*, to expose on the Stage, by real Names, such of their Fellow-Citizens as had distinguished themselves for any eminent Vice or Folly: But the universal Corruption and Degeneracy of subsequent Ages, having rendered that Custom both uselefs and dangerous, *Mænander* introduced the Method of exposing real Vices by the Assistance of feigned Characters. But as the Works of this Author have fallen a Sacrifice to Barbarism and Ignorance, we are obliged to the Confession of *Terence*, and the Observations of *Cæsar*, for all the Knowledge we have of his Excellence. And if the Judgment of the latter may be relied on, *Mænander* was happy in the Possession of every Requisite that can delight and improve an Age.

Terence

Terence has been said to be but a servile Copier of this *Greek* Writer ; but as the Comedies of the latter are lost, we have a Right to treat the former as an Original, especially as he is proposed by our own Critics, who despise and decry all modern Productions.

*Non quia Crassè illepidere putetur
Sed quia nuper,*

as the Standard of Dramatic Perfection : But as I have not all that Veneration for Antiquity, I shall take the Liberty to examine his Works with the same Freedom, as if he had lived but in the Days of *Dryden* ; and if upon Enquiry I can discover, that any Writer of our own Time has excelled him, I shall pay him the same Honour, as if he and *Homer* had been Contemporaries. Were I not apprised of the ridiculous Methods made use of by those who are appointed to instruct the Youth of this Nation in the Dead Languages, I should be astonished at the absurd Pre-possessions and Prejudices that most Men entertain in Favour of the antient Writers.

A Classic is read only to be admired, a Modern Writer only to be condemned. I believe

I have more reason to blame this unaccountable Partiality, than most Men; for to it I owe two Corrections in one Day, in the Morning I was jerk'd for reading a Comedy of *Congreve's*, and in the Afternoon was again turn'd up for not being prepared in a bawdy Scene, between the two Maids in the Eunuch of *Terence*. If then in my Enquiry into the Reasons, why what is wrong in one Writer, should be sanctified in another, I betray any Bitterness or Ill-nature, I hope the Reader will lay the Defect of my Brain to the Fault of my B——, for I

*Cannot but remember such things were,
And were most grievous to me.*

But to our Purpose.

Terence (as I have before observed) is said to have pirated all his Plots and Characters from *Mænander*; nor has *Plautus* less Obligation to the *Greek* Writers than *Terence*; but as their Geniuses were different, they have been successful in different Imitations.

Plautus, from the luxuriant Pleasantry of his Imagination, has been most happy in hitting the Humour, or *vis comica*, of his Master. *Terence*, from the Correctness of his Judgment,

B

and

and Chastity of his Manner; most fortunate in the Conduct of his Plot, and Purity of his Dialogue. But as this Gentleman is the critical Bell-weather, let us be a little more minute in our Enquiries after him. And first for his Fable.

There is such a tiresome Sameness in the Plots and Incidents of *Terence*, that the Man who has read his first Comedy, may be fairly said to have read them all.

Nor is he less barren in his Characters. Two doating old Fools have a Brace of senseless Cubs for their Sons; the latter have a smart Servant allowed them, who has Wit enough to gull the old Gentlemen, and direct the young ones: A Girl, who oftentimes exists in Name only, is the Object of young Masters Affections; but coming from the Lord knows where, and being the Lord knows who, why the Marriage is either impeded, or else great Perplexity and Distraction results from it; but, however, it turns out at last, by the Means of a Nurse, that Miss is a Citizen, a Friend's Daughter, perhaps; so the Casket and Trinkets are produc'd, and all Matters made easy. This is the general Plan and Plot: And as to what is called Humour in Comedy, the best

best Half of *Mænander*, I can only say with *Cæsar*,

Utinam ut adjuncta.

And here it may not be improper to examine, what is, or ought to be meant, by the Words *Characters of Humours*.

There is scarce a Play-follower, or Dabler in Criticism, but has that Expression constantly in his Mouth; and yet not one in five hundred of them, has a determinate Idea of what it means; some mistake Wit for it, others Buffoonry, &c. &c. Perhaps my Judgment may be as wrong as theirs, but as it will assist my present Enquiries, give me Leave to be absolute in my Definition of, and Distinction between, the Humourist, and Man of Humour.

In my Sense, then, these Characters should be never separated: The first is the Person to be exposed, and that by the Means and Assistance of the last; the latter we laugh with, but at the former.

The Humourist is a Man, who, from some Extravagance, or Disease of the Mind, is al-

ways saying or doing something absurd and ridiculous ; but at the same Time is firmly persuaded, that his Actions and Expressions are exactly proper and right. And so absolutely requisite is this last Circumstance, to the Constitution of a Humourist, that a very elegant and judicious Writer, has made it the Mark by which you are to distinguish him ; as Ridicule (says he) is the Test of Truth, so is Gravity of Humour.

The Man of Humour, on the other Hand, is always joyous and pleasant; the Humourist is his Food ; like the Carrion and Crow, they are never asunder ; it is to the Labour and Pleasantry of the former, that you are indebted for all the Entertainment you meet with in the latter.

That this Hypothesis may not appear [altogether groundless, cast your Eye on *Lappet* and the *Mijer*, on *Gnatbo* and *Ibrafo*, almost the only Character of Humour in the Author before us, and then tell me, whether you are not obliged for your Knowledge of, and Laughter at, the Curmudgeon and *Miles Gloriosus*, to the Address and Skill of the pert Chambermaid, and obsequious artful Conduct of the Flatterer.

If,

If, then, this be an accurate Account of the Characters in question, you must be content to go without them in all the Plays of *Terence*, except the *Eunuch* and *Heautontimorumenos*, and depend on Plot, Incident, and Language, for your Entertainment.

Our next Search must be into the Excellence of *Terence's* Dialogue ; and here, I believe, we must agree with *Cæsar*, that he is,

Puri sermonis amator ;

that is, that he is elegant in his Diction, chaste in his Expression, and, if it be any Merit in the Writer of a living Language, grammatically just.

I don't know whether this Observation or Objection (call it which you will) be just, but I can't help thinking, that we Moderns have improved on this chief Excellence of the *Latin* Poet. Pray can you distinguish any great Difference in his Dialogue ? Is not the Language of the one, the Language of all ? If there be any Difference, the polite Side is in Favour of the Servant : However, as *Terence*
him-

himself was but a *Libertus*, this Partiality may be pardonable.

I think I can discern in the *English* Poets a Unity of Dialogue, unattended to by the Antients. I cannot conceive that you may exchange one single Word in the humourous Character of *Vanburgh*, for a better : Each Man has a Language peculiar to himself, and what indeed is the Language of that Character in the World.

I can't say, the Manners of our Comedies are altogether so chaste as those of *Terence* ; but this may, in a great Measure, depend on the different Tastes of different Ages ; and though I own a Poet's Views should not be confined to the narrow Limits of his own Time or Country ; yet as it has been generally the Misfortune of these Gentlemen to want something more substantial than Applause, their Poverty must be their Apology.

Of even this Circumstance do different Ages judge differently. A young Lady squawling out behind the Scenes, in the extreme Pangs of Labour, did not shock the Delicacy of the *Roman* Matrons, but was a modern Poet to introduce a

Funo

Juno Lucina fer opem,

I very much doubt, whether that single Incident would not damn his whole Piece.

I think I can raise an Objection or two to the extreme Chastity of this Writer :
The

Quid tum fatue,

after the Description of the supposed *Eunuch's* preparing to commit a Rape, is very near as expressive, as the Relation itself would have been ; at least the Imagination has a pretty good Subject to work upon : A double Entendre may be neglected, but that Mind must be phlegmatic indeed, that does not proceed beyond the *tum*, and guesses at the subsequent Behaviour of the lusty *soever*. And, pray, what is your Judgment of the Chambermaid's *Nilil Possè*, in her Description of a Eunuch.

But, however, as it was absolutely necessary that the Audience should be acquainted with the several Circumstances that compose the above Scene, I believe few Writers would have
expressed

expressed the same Thoughts, with the same Delicacy ; therefore let *Terence* enjoy a Reputation which our modern Poets (by their Practice) don't envy him.

But before I quit this Author, I ought, in common Justice, to take notice of a Character, which though not absolutely complete, yet is possessed of some Qualities, that were it original, would give the Writer a Rank, which his Cotemporaries have thought fit to deny him.

The Character I mean, is the *Thraso* of the *Eunuch*. The Out-lines of this Character are the same with the *Miles Gloriosus* of *Plautus*, and the *Bully-Back* of *Congreve* : And though I must confess, in the general Conduct of the Characters. he is excelled by both his Rivals, yet in one Instance, he is at least equal to either of them.

Thraso, in Consequence of a Present made to a Courtesan, called *Thais*, was, by Compact, entitled to the sole and undisturbed Possession of that Lady for three Days.

Phædrus, the fine Gentleman of the Comedy, had possessed the Person, and still preserved the
Affection

Affection of *Tbais*. At his Request the Captain was excluded before the expiration of his Term ; in order to revenge this Insult, *Tbraso* martials all his Domestics, from *Gnatbo* to the Scullion, and leads them to attack the Mansion of *Tbais*, from whom he intends, by Force, to recover the Girl he had given her.

But as from a Recital of this Passage, we can scarce do Justice to the Merit of the Author, and I don't recollect, that the Spirit of this Scene has been preserved by any of his Translators, I shall take the Liberty to present you with my Conception of the whole Incident.

ACT IV. SCENE VII.

Enter *Tbraso*, as General ; *Gnatbo*, Lieutenant-General ; with Grooms, Cooks, Scullions, &c. &c. &c. for private Men.

Tbra. What! and shall I pocket so gross an Indignity? hey! *Gnatbo*? No, e're that be said, welcome grim Death. *Simalio*, *Donan*, *Syriscus*, follow your Leader ; I will first storm her Citadel.

Gna. Right.

Tbra. Then seize upon my Captive.

C

Gna.

Gna. By all Means.

Tbra. And as to the Harlot herself, her Punishment shall be proportioned to her Crime.

Gna. Equitable.

Tbra. *Donan*, to your Direction I commit the Van : You, *Simalio*, are to command the Left Wing ; and you, *Syriscus*, the Right. But where's Lieutenant *Sanga* ?

Sang. Here I be.

Tbra. What's that thou squeezezt in thy Paw, a Dishclout ? Death, Dastard, dost thou think we fight with Dishclouts ?

Sang. Being convinced of your Honour's Valour, and the Courage of your Soldiers, I guessed that this Affair would not end without Bloodshed, so I brought this Dishclout to wash their Wounds.

Tbra. Where are the Remainder of my Troops ?

Sang. Troops ! the Devil of any body is at home, but old *Sannio*, to take Care of the House.

Tbra. Do you, *Sanga*, draw up the Forces, whilst I retire to the Rear, from whence my Orders shall be issued.

Gna. There's a masterly Stroke ; conscions that the Success of an Army depends on the Security of the General, he curbs his Valour,
and,

and, for the sake of his Soldiers, retires to a Place of Safety.

Tbra. In this I condescend to imitate the great *Pirrbus*.

The Cowardice and Vanity of this Behaviour and Expression, are as strong and delicate Marks of Character, as can be met with in any Writer; to which if you add the blustering Behaviour of *Thraso* before the Entrance of *Thais*, and the Pusillanimity and Cowardice of his subsequent Conduct, I believe that you will confess, that the whole Scene is supported with great Spirit, Propriety, and Humour.

I have now finished my Observations on *Terence*, and shall hasten to an Examination of those Writers of this Nation, who are supposed capable of contending for the Palm with this Hero of Antiquity. With which then shall I begin, with *Shakespeare*, *Johnson*, or those of later Date? Or suppose, as our Comic Genii are so various, we were first to enumerate the several Rules required in a Comedy, and oppose (occasionally) our own Writers to each other, and all to the Antients.

To begin then with the Unities of *Aristotle*, which regard Time, Place, and Action; to

which we have added another, disregarded by the Writers of other Countries, Unity of Character.

The Rules prescribed by these Unities are, that your Time be limited to a natural Day ; your Place unchanged ; and your Action single. The fourth Unity requires, that your Character be preserved to the End in every Circumstance ; and that he neither say, or do, any thing that might as well have been said, or done, by any other Person of the Play.

As to the Unities of Time, Place, and Action, I cannot say that we have strictly attended to them, unless in some particular Instances ; such as the *Alchymist*, and most of the Plays of *Johnson*, *Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor* ; to which I might add some others ; but, in general, these Bonds do not hit the Taste and Genius of the free-born luxuriant Inhabitants of this Isle : They will no more bear a Yoke in Poetry than Religion.

No political nor critical Monarch shall give Laws to them : They have indeed sometimes given Proofs, that they do not despise these Mandates of *Aristotle*, because it is not in their Capacity to comply with them, but because
they

they will not be indebted to any other Country for what they can obtain without its Assistance.

I do not believe, that it ever was in the Power of Man, to furnish out a more elegant, pleasing, and interesting Entertainment, than *Shakespear* has, in many Instances, given us, without observing any one Unity, but that of Character; his adhering to that alone, with the Variety of his Incidents, the Propriety of his Sentiments, the Luxuriancy of his Fancy, and the Purity and Strength of his Dialogue, have produced, in one Instance alone, more Matter for Delight and Instruction, than can be collected from all the starv'd, strait-lac'd Brats, that every other Bard has produc'd. Can then our Contempt and Resentment be too strongly expressed against that insolent *French* Panegyrist, who first denies *Shakespear* almost every Dramatic Excellence, and then, in his next Play, pilfers from him almost every capital Scene. Let those who want to be informed of this Man, and this Truth, read the *Mabomet* of *Voltaire*, and compare it with the *Mackbeth* of *Shakespear*, to this add (if you have Patience) a Perusal of his Letters, you will then have, at one View, the *Zoilus* and the Plagiary, the
carping

carping superficial Critic, and the low paltry Thief. But to proceed :

The next Requisite, to an Observation of the Unities, (if we allow it a Requisite) is the *sine qua non*, the Effence of Comedy, Humour; and in this Particular we stand unrival'd; no Nation has more Comedies, no Comedies more diversified humourous Characters.

This may indeed, in a great Measure, be owing to the Nature of our Constitution, and the Complection of our Inhabitants.

In *France*, one Coxcomb is the Representation of the whole Kingdom. In *England* scarce any two are alike. I don't know but this Variety of Humour may, in a great Measure, derive its Source from Vanity. Property, with us, is so equally diffused, that the Distinctions arising from it are very trifling. In order then to procure a Pre-eminence, we have recourse to particular Singularities, which, though at first affected, are at last by Habit so closely rivited to the Mind, as to make it impossible for the Possessor ever to divest himself of it.

No

No Writer more abounds with Characters of this Cast, than *Congreeve*; and had his Execution been equal to his Imagination, he would have had a just Title to be rank'd with the foremost of our Comic Poets. All his Humourists are well sketch'd, and generally well begun, but ill conducted. The Author, from an Impatience to show his own Wit, throws it into the Mouths of Characters, who are not, in Propriety, entitled to an Atom.

And this is, indeed, the Failing of all young Writers: They jump at the Shadow, and lose the Substance: The main Article is neglected, and their Pursuit directed after Point, Antithesis, and, what is called, fine Writing.

Wit is not what it has been by many imagined to be, the Essence of Comedy; so far from it, that it is of no Use, but as it is subservient to Character.

And from this Mistake it happens, that the Quality which chiefly recommends the Works of Mr. *Congreeve*, to the Observation of the Million, is the very Circumstance that diminishes

minishes his Excellence with the Judicious.

Our next Enquiry must be directed after the Plots and Incidents of the Moderns: And in these Instances we are as various as in our Characters.

There seems to have been always a Trial of Skill amongst the Antients, which should write best on the same Subject. The Story of *Medea*, *Hercules*, &c. are the Objects of all their Tragedies. Their Want of Variety in Comedy I have before objected to.

That the Antients were more chaste in the Conduct of their Plots, I shall readily allow. Immoralities of all kinds have met with a favourable Reception on the *English* Stage, *Collier's* Complaint was but too just. The Want of Decency, both of Expression and Action, is an Objection that may with Justice be made to even our best Comedies. There are some kinds of Vice that it is improper to exhibit, though with a View of punishing. What kind of Apology then can be made for those Writers, who have not only been so imprudent as to introduce it, but, at the same time, have dared to reward it.

The

The most blameable of all our Play-writers in this Instance, are *Congreeve* and *Vanburgh*. Nay, the latter, as if distrusting his own Talents for the Advancement of Wickedness, has called in to his Assistance, the most immoral Play that ever disgraced the *English* Stage, the *Confederacy* of *Dancour* ; in which all the Men are Rogues, and all the Women as bad. The principal Personage is the Son of a Bawd, who after having robbed his Mother, imposed himself on the World in a fictitious Character, and committed Actions which had deservedly doomed him to the Gallows, is at last made happy in the Possession of a great Beauty and Fortune.

The Moral of this pretty Piece is, then, that be disobedient, dishonest, or any thing but virtuous, and you shall not fail of being rewarded.

But these Digressions have drawn me beyond my purpos'd Length ; I shall therefore close my Observations with a few general Remarks on the peculiar Excellencies of our principal Comic Writers.

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Ben

Ben Johnson is most successful in his Plots, *Congreeve* in his Characters, and *Vanburgh* in his Dialogue. The former possessed most Knowledge and Judgment, the second most Fancy and Fire, the last most Propriety, Ease, and Elegance. The first, in order to preserve Correctness, was often flat; *Congreeve*, too roving and unconfined; and, *Vanburgh*, too immoral. Divest this last Writer of this Failing, and his Comedies are unexceptionably the best in the Language.

I ought to make some Apology for my silence with regard to *Wycherly*, *Otway*, *Farquar*, and *Cibber*; but as these Writers possess the same Beauties and Errors in common with those already mentioned, it will be unnecessary to trouble you with a particular Description of their Works; I shall therefore close this Treatise, but not before I have paid my Tribute to the Genius of an Author, whose first Production has given him a Claim to be rank'd in the first Class.

It will (I doubt not) be often mentioned by future Generations, that in the Year 1746, Dr. *Hoadley* produc'd a Comedy, called the *Suspicious Husband*; in which he has found Means to give
the

the highest Delight, without having recourse to the low usual Arts of Bawdy and Buffoonry.

But that we may not appear tainted with the common Partiality that generally attends Novelty, let us venture at the Discovery of those Qualities in this Piece, which have recommended it to the general Favour of the Public, and have obtained for it our particular Approbation.

In the first Place, then, most of the Characters are real, the Incidents are interesting, the Catastrophe affecting, and the Language pure, spirited, and natural.

The Character of Mr. *Strickland*, (who names the Play) is as well drawn and supported, as any I have met with : And amongst the Scenes which the Author has designed to ridicule the Folly and Absurdity of Suspicion, none seems so well calculated for the Purpose, as that where *Strickland* is desirous, and yet afraid, of engaging one of his Domestics in the Service of his Passion : The Perplexity at which he shall trust, or whether he shall trust either ; with the Doubts, Resolutions, Hesitations, on that Occasion, make up so natural

and comic a Description of that Disease of the Mind, that the Play, on this Account only, deserves the highest Encomiums.

Mrs. *Strickland* is described as such a Woman ought to be, in order to render the Husband's extravagant Humour without Excuse. Her Innocence, joined to her other amiable Qualities, interest the Audience strongly in her Favour, and place the Passion of Jealousy in a more hated and ridiculous Light.

The two fine Gentlemen of this Comedy, are not (as I can perceive) different from the fine Gentlemen of other Writers: They laugh, sing, say good Things, and are in Love.

The Rake is a lively Portrait of that Character in Life. His Errors arise from the want of Reflection; a lively Imagination, with a great Flow of Spirits, hurries him into all the fashionable Follies of the Town; but throw the least shadow of Wickedness or Dishonour on an Action, and he avoids it with the same Care that he would a Precipice.

The natural good Qualities of this Youth, obtain for him on the Stage the same Indulgence

gence that attends him in the World : We are blind to his Foibles, entertained with his Adventures, and wish to see (in which, I suppose, by the Conduct of the Author, we are wrong) the wild Rogue reclaim'd.

I sat (the first Night this Comedy was exhibited) by a plain, honest, well-meaning Citizen, whose Imagination was strongly possessed by the Incidents of the Play. At dropping of the Curtain, I could not help complaining to my Neighbour, that I was displeas'd at seeing *Ranger* go off as he came on. Could not, said I, the Author throw this Youth, in the Course of his Nocturnal Rambles, into some ridiculous Scene of Distress, which might, with Propriety, have reclaim'd him. But, as he now stands, who knows but the Rogue, after all the Pleasure he has given us, may spend the Night in a Round-House. By G—d! says the Cit, if it happens in my Ward, I'll release him; for I'm sure he is too honest a Fellow to run away from his Bail.

The amiable Light in which this Character appears, will, I am afraid, draw' many a *Templar* into troublesome Scrapes. I have now no less than ten Friends, since the Appearance of *Ranger*, who are under Prosecutions for ravishing
ing

ing Kisses from Girls in the Street, and beating the Watch : It is therefore necessary to let these sprightly Boys know, that these are not the Particulars of *Ranger's* Character that procure our Regard ; we are only tempted to overlook these Blemishes in his Conduct, on the score of some amiable Beauties.

But that we may not appear partial to the Productions of this Author, let us take a View of such of his Characters, as appear liable to Exception.

That the Critics, then, might not be deprived of their daily Food, the Poet has thrown them a Couple of Characters to nibble at, the Coquet, and the Coxcomb.

The last is of a Species pretty common amongst us, but hitherto neglected. The Importation of Fopperies from *France*, we have laughed at till we are tir'd : Our Author was willing to see whether *Italy* could not furnish us with a Fool, as ridiculous and diverting as her Neighbour ; and had the Character in Question been supported with the same Spirit that it is begun, I doubt not but we should have been fully satisfied : But no sooner has this merry Gentleman raised our Attention, but he slips through

through our Fingers like an Eel, and we hear no more of him. Mr. *Meggot* does, in Truth, survive the Loss of his Monkey, but he never forgets his Affection so far, as to be tolerable Company after.

I did indeed flatter myself with the Hopes of seeing that Gentleman interested in the Conduct of the Play, and every Minute expected to find my Friend *Ranger* very jocose upon his Foible.

But whether the Author did not chuse to expose so good natur'd a Fellow, or was above being obliged to any Nation but his own, for the Entertainment he was to give us, *Fackey Meggot* is of very little more Consequence in the *Suspicious Husband*, than is Lieutenant *Story* in the *Committee*.

The next Character for the Snarlers to mumble is *Clarinda*.

This Lady, at the opening of the Play, would put herself upon us for a finish'd Coquet; but she does it so aukardly, that few of us are imposed upon; she is, indeed, at first a little waggish with *Jacinta*, about giving Ease, &c. but this was only a Copy of her Countenance,
for

for I don't find but she is as ready to satisfy the Desires of her Lover (in an honourable Way) as the other.

But all this while are not we imposing on ourselves? How are we sure that Dr. *Hoadley* intended *Clarinda* for a Coquet? Indeed she sometimes talks like one, but her Actions are directly opposite; and as I, for my own Part, chuse to rely more on the latter, than the former, I shan't scruple to pronounce, that this Lady is no more a Coquet than *Jacinta*.

The several Objections at the Personages of the Drama being (as far as the Affair will admit of) thus clear'd up, let us attend to a Cavil or two at the Conduct of the Play.

It is said, that *Frankley's* whole Scheme of pursuing *Clarinda*, is borrow'd from the *Eunuch* of *Terence*; and that the Expression of, *this I know, wherever she is, she cannot be long unknown*, is a literal Translation from the same Author. Well, and what then? Why do we take such Pains to create an Intimacy with the obsolete Gentry, if they don't help us out now and then at a dead Lift? The Doctor has been at some Pains and Expence to subdue the Meaning of this Classic to his own Comprehension; and
has

has not he a Right, by the Law of Arms, to enjoy the Fruits of his Victory ? Pretty Reasoning, truly ; and so I suppose you will reckon the Man, who now and then decorates a Period with a *Latin* and *Greek* Quotation, a Plagiary : Why, who the Devil would trouble himself to acquire those Languages, if it were not for the Reputation that Practice procures him ? Oh, fie ! Besides, in the present Case, the Doctor was under a Necessity of shewing his Learning. The little Bits of *Latin*, *Italian*, and *French*, which are here and there scattered through the Play, are not introduced because the Poet thought them necessary, but because the World should know, that it is not a small Matter of Knowledge that is required towards the Constitution of a Doctor of Physic.

But were we to answer all the trifling Remarks of these eternal Cavillers, there would be no End to the Subject ; therefore I shall dismiss them with one general Answer, that I defy them to produce a Comedy, since the Year *Twenty-six*, that has a Tithe of the Merit of the *Suspicious Husband*. And though we may be deficient as to the *vis comica*, and our Characters may not be altogether so highly drawn, as might be wished, yet, upon the whole, we are at least equal to the best of the *Roman* Co-

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mic Poets, *Terence*; and that is Reputation enough to satisfy our Ambition.

We have now given thee, Reader, an accurate Account of the public and private Judgment on the *Suspicious Husband*; suppose we were to present thee with our Opinion of the Department of the Actors in this Comedy: But as that would interfere with our general Design, I shall descend to no farther Particulars, than that they (on this Occasion) excelled themselves; but hasten to view the Comic Players of the present Age in a more extensive Light.

But before these Gentlemen of the Sock are entitled to my Regard, I must discharge a Debt due to the Public, and pay their and my Acknowledgement to Mrs. *Cibber*, for the Pleasure she has given us in the Buskin.

This Lady, though by much the youngest Actress (I mean in point of Experience) on the Stage, has almost all her Time reign'd unrival'd in the Hearts of the People. There is a Delicacy in her Deportment, and a sensible Innocence in her Countenance, that never fails to prejudice the Spectator in her Favour, even before she speaks. Nor does Mrs. *Cibber's* subsequent

sequent Behaviour erase these first Impressions. Her Expressions of the Passion of Grief, surpass every thing of the sort that I have seen. There is a melancholly Plaintiveness in her Voice, and such a Dejection of Countenance, (without Distortion,) that I defy any Man, who has the least Drop of the Milk of Human Nature about him, to sit out the Distresses of *Monimia* and *Belvidera*, when represented by this Lady, without giving the most tender and affecting Testimonies of his Humanity.

Nor has Mrs. *Cibber* less Force (when she pleases to exert it) in the different Modes of Rage. There is a Wildness in her Aspect, and a Rapidity in her Utterance, that are admirably suited to the Characters of *Constance*, in *King John*, and *Alicia* in *Jane Shore*.

That Mrs. *Cibber* is now and then languid in the Part of *Calista*, may, I am afraid, be attributed to the natural Weakness of her Constitution. The Character is of an unusual Length, and the Passions of Rage, Scorn, Grief, and Disappointment, so frequently and forcibly repeated, that it requires more than a common stock of Health and Spirits, to do

equal Justice to the whole Part. I cannot presume, that Mrs. *Cibber's* Judgment is defective ; nor is it less obvious, that she is happy in the possession of all the natural Powers required in this Character : To what then can we attribute the little Use she here makes of those Powers, but to the Consciousness of weak Lungs, and a bad Constitution.

But least the Imitators of Mrs. *Cibber* should mistake this Deportment of hers, for the Effect of her Judgment, it may not be improper to observe, that *Rowe* himself has recommended a Behaviour to the Player, and that it is her Duty, as near as she can, to answer and support the Portrait of *Calista*, given to the Audience by *Lothario* in the first Act :

*Mad as the Priestess of the Delphic God,
 Enthusiastic Passion swell'd her Breast,
 Enlarg'd her Voice, and ruffled all her
 Form.*

Though it may perhaps be deemed hypercritical to observe on trifling Faults, where there are so many glaring Beauties, yet as these Trifles are easily mended, and are, besides, apparent to the most superficial Spectator, I hope I shall have Mrs. *Cibber's* Pardon, if I desire
 her

her (unless she has an absolute Occasion for it) to put the Handkerchief in her Pocket : And if she would not shake her Head quite so much, and pat her Hands together quite so often, she would infinitely oblige me, and many more of her Admirers.

I believe I shall easily obtain the Reader's Pardon for detaining him a Minute from the Comic Actors, when I tell him, it is to thank Mrs. *Giffard* for the Entertainment she has, in many parts, given both him and me. To which, if I add, that she stands unequal'd in the Character of *Mackbeth*, I but barely do her Justice.

Mrs. *Pritchard* too has a Right to our Observation in this place : But as I am at present a good deal confined, she must be content with the Offerings I shall make her in her Comic Cast. And in this place I must beg, that those Ladies and Gentlemen, whose Names I may omit in this Treatise, would not impute my Neglect to the want of a sense of their Merit : We who write for the Public, are but too often obliged to condescend to their Prejudices, and are therefore necessitated, in order to procure a sale for our Pamphlets, to take up with those
Names,

Names, which they are pleas'd to recommend to our Observation.

Mr. Neale is generally allow'd to do Justice to the Character of *Launcelot*, in the *Merchant of Venice*; and yet I dare believe a Criticism on Mr. Garrick in the Part of *Scrub*, in which neither the Author nor Actor are very capital, would be much better received, than a Comment on Mr. Neale's Excellence in the *Jew's Man*. This is undoubtedly an Hardship both on them and me. But to proceed.

As there is, Reader, in the writing of Comedies many different Species, so is there also in the acting of them.

But, for the sake of Brevity, suffer me to confine the latter to two, the Comic, and the Comical. And, in order to give you a clear Idea of what I mean by the Distinction, cast your Eye on the *Abel Drugger* of G. and the *Abel Drugger* of C. † I call the simple, composed, grave Deportment of the former Comic, and the squint-ey'd grinning Grimace of the latter Comical. The first obtains your Applause, by persuading you that he is the real Man. The latter indeed opens your Eyes, and gives you to understand, that he is but personating

† *Theoph. Cibber.*

sonating the Tobacco-Boy : But then to atone for the Loss of the Deception, you are ready to split with Laughter, at the ridiculous Variations of his Muscles. It may indeed be objected, that this Conduct destroys all Distinction of Characters, and may as well become *Sir John Daw*, or *Sir Amorous La Tool*, as honest *Nab*. Well, and what then ? Don't Folks come to a Play to laugh ? And if that End be obtained, what matters it how ? Has not he the most Merit, who pleases the most ? Suppose *G.* has the Approbation of Twenty or Thirty Judges in the Pit, shall I give up my Fun, which makes the Inhabitants of both the Gallerys my Friends, for his Humour ? No, hold a little, that will never do. And to convince the Public, that *Mr. C.* is not single in his Judgment, *Mr. H—y*, *W—d—d*, † *Mr. Y—s*, † both approve and pursue his Plan.

And here suffer me to caution the young Actors of both Houses, that they be not too rash in the Imitation of *Mr. C's* Manner ; let them first consult their Abilities. Few People are happy in the Possession of such a sett of Features. This Gentleman's are formed with such peculiar Pleasantry, that the Spectator at surveying them in their natural state only, is (in the Words of the Commentator

on

† *Woodward*. † *Yates*.

on Dr. *Middleton*) often struck with an unexpected Ha, ha! For what Mr. C. is indebted to Nature, Mr. *H—y* is obliged to Accident. This great Comedian was so fortunate, as in his Infancy to fall in the Fire, by which Means the left Corner of his Mouth, and the Extremity of his Chin, became very near Neighbours: how often that lucky Circumstance has recommended him to the Approbation of the Sky-parlour Gentry, I submit to the Critics on the Ground Floor.

Mr. *Quin*, Mrs. *Clive*, and Mrs. *Pritchard*, are so injudicious as to build their Fame on the Comic Foundation.

I own, I am weak enough to have a Regard for the Judgment of the latter; and therefore as I have an Aversion to Controversy, and the Discovery of Faults is no very desirable Office, I shall leave the Comical Gentry to the Enjoyment of their Opinion, and seek out for some Particulars in the Comic Actors, which may, at least, justify my Partiality for them.

To begin with Mr. *Quin*.

Mr.

Mr. *Quin's* Deportment, through the whole Cast of his Characters, is natural and unaffected; his Countenance expressive, without the Assistance of Grimace; and he is indeed in every Circumstance so much the Person he represents, that it is scarce possible for any attentive Spectator to believe that the hypocritical intriguing *Masquell*, the suspicious superannuated Rake, the snarling old Batchelor, and the jolly jocose *Jack Falstaff*, are imitated, but real Persons.

And here I wish I had Room and Ability to point out the several masterly Strokes with which Mr. *Quin* has often entertained my Imagination, and satisfied my Judgment; but under my present Confinement, I can only recommend the Man, who wants to see a Character perfectly play'd, to Mr. *Quin*, in the Part of *Falstaff*; and if he does not express his Desire of spending an Evening with that merry Mortal, why, I would not spend one with him, if he would pay my Reckoning.

Mrs. *Clive* (the best Actress in her Walk, that I, or perhaps any Man living, has seen) next claims our Attention. This Lady is peculiarly happy in hitting the Humours of Characters

acters in low Life. The awkward Forwardness of a Country Girl, the ridiculous affected Airs of a Lady's Woman, or the pert Behaviour of an intriguing Chambermaid.

Mrs. *Clive* has been a little unhappy in her Choice of some Parts.

There are Characters in Comedy which require a Delicacy of Figure, and an Elegance of Behaviour ; and as both Nature and Habit have denied Mrs. *Clive* the Possession of these Requisites, I would advise her never to think of personating a fine Lady of any Kind or Condition, unless the Author (with a View of rendering the Part ridiculous) has endowed it with some whimsical Peculiarity.

You have already, Madam, a Cast of Characters in which your Action will always command the Attention and Applause of an Audience ; don't, therefore, suffer an idle Ambition to destroy that Consequence ; which, if you pursue the Bent of your Genius, you have it still in your Power to preserve.

This Lady has now and then perhaps (owing to an Earnestness for the Success of the Business)

ness) expressed herself behind the Scenes in too loud and forcible a Manner.

This Circumstance has (I am afraid) given some part of the Audience not a very favourable Opinion of her Temper. But when the Public are assured, that this Vehemence is assumed in order to procure a more decent Entertainment for themselves, I doubt not but they will convert their Resentment to Approbation.

The last, though not the least Person to be considered, is Mrs. *Pritchard*, whose unblameable Conduct in private Life, joined to her Theatrical Excellence, has justly recommended her to the Esteem of the Town.

Mrs. *Pritchard* is peculiarly happy in a good Voice, a pleasing Figure, and a correct Judgment.

As Mrs. *Clive's* Fort consists in the Imitation of the Foibles and extravagant Humours of the *Beau Monde* ; this Lady's Talent lies in the Representation of the graceful and becoming Parts of their Characters. Not but I have seen Mrs. *Pritchard* exert herself with great Pertness, Propriety, and Spirit, in the
Part

Part of a waggish favourite *Abigail*; and have observed a Deportment, which I thought extremely engaging in her, when a Lady become extremely ridiculous, when awkwardly mimick'd by her as an affected Servant.

But to sum up Mrs. *Pritchard's* Qualities in a few Words, from the various Cast of her Characters, in all of which she is pleasing, and the Easiness of her Disposition, I would, were I a Patentee, rather have her in my Service, than any Woman in *England*.

I believe I should with Difficulty obtain the Pardon of the Public, if I neglected to bestow a few Periods on their favourite Servant.

I have seen, with infinite Satisfaction, the Days of my Youth reviv'd in the forward, vacant, romping School-boy of Mr. *Garrick*.

Nor have I received less Pleasure from the simple credulous Conduct and Countenance of *Abel Drugger*.

I have, in some Instances, beheld with exquisite Delight, the ridicuolus Rapture of the vain self-approved Poet; though in others I have missed a Gravity of Countenance, and
Dig-

Dignity of Deportment, which I have always (though perhaps falsely) associated with my Idea of that solemn and serious Coxcomb.

I think *Garrick's* Rake a sprightly, merry, entertaining Fellow. I can't say I am fond of cultivating an Acquaintance with his Gentlemen. And as to his Fops, either lively or grave, I have them in utter Abhorrence.

As to the Merit of Mr. *Raftor*, Mr. *C——b*, Mr. *Collins*, with the long *Et cæteras* of both Theatres, they must be content to have the Celebration of their Perfections deferred to another Season; and I hope the Purchaser won't think that I exaggerate the Excellence of these good People, when I shall rate him for the Whole of it at no more than Three-pence.

F I N I S.