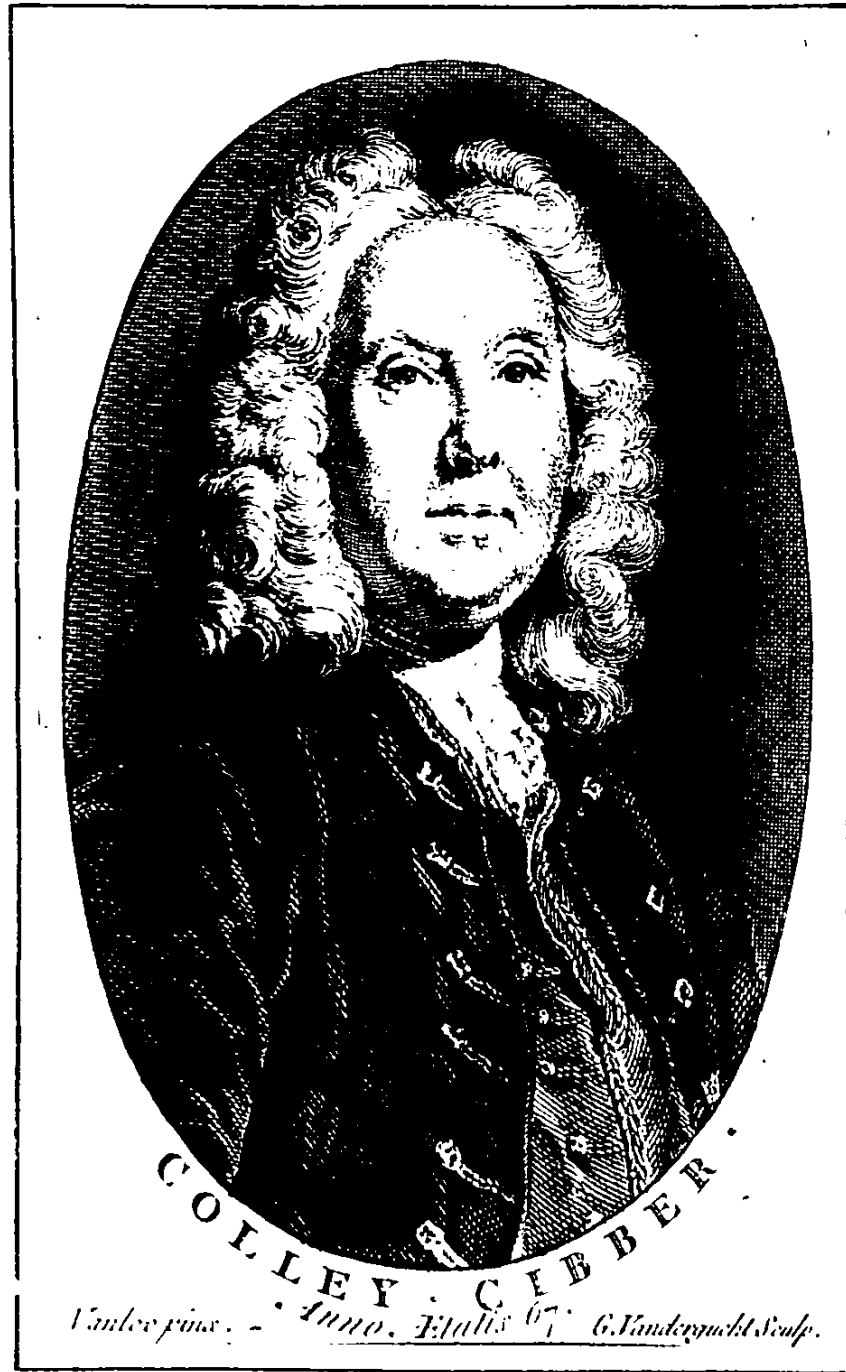




AUGUSTUS CAESAR.



COLLEY CIBBER.

*Vandae pins. - Anno. Fictis 67. G. Vandergucht Sculp.*

A N  
A P O L O G Y  
FOR THE  
L I F E  
O F

*Mr. COLLEY CIBBER, Comedian,*

A N D

Late PATENTEE of the *Theatre-Royal.*

*With an Historical View of the STAGE during  
his OWN TIME.*

---

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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*Hoc est*  
*Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.* Mart. lib. 2.

*When Years no more of active Life retain,*  
*'Tis Youth renew'd, to laugh 'em o'er again.* Anonym.

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The SECOND EDITION.

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L O N D O N :

Printed by JOHN WATTS for the AUTHOR:  
And Sold by W. LEWIS in *Russel-Street*, near  
*Convent - Garden.*

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M D C C X L .



For Henry, read Thomas — and for Dorset Gardens,  
read Lincoln's Inn Fields. —

The new Theatre in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, was finished  
and opened, with an occasional Prologue, by <sup>20 M J</sup> J<sup>r</sup> George Etherege, in 1671.

King *Charles II.* at 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 call'd 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 allow'd them for Liveries; and in their Warrants from the Lord Chamberlain, were stiled *Gentlemen of the Great Chamber*: Whether the like Appointments were extended to the Duke's Company, I am not certain; but 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 its taking cognizance even of their private Government, insonmuch, that their particular Differences, Pretentions, or Complaints, were generally ended by the *King*, or *Duke's* Personal Command or Decision. Besides their being thorough Masters of their Art, these Actors set forwards with two critical Advantages, which perhaps may never happen again in many Ages. The one was, their immediate opening after the so long Interdiction of Plays, during the Civil War, and the Anarchy

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chy 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 *Shakespear* had left prepared for them? Never was a Stage so provided! A hundred Years are wasted, and another silent Century well advanced, and yet what unborn Age shall say, *Shakespear* has his Equal! How many shining Actors have the warm Scenes of his Genius given to Posterity? without being himself, in his Action, equal to his Writing! A strong Proof that Actors, like Poets, must be born such. Eloquence and Elocution are quite different Talents: *Shakespear* could write *Hamlet*; but Tradition tells us, That the *Ghost*, in the same Play, was one of his best Performances as an Actor: Nor is it within the reach of Rule or Precept to complete either of them. Instruction, 'tis true, may guard them equally against Faults or Absurdities, but there it stops; Nature must do the rest: To excel in either Art, is a self-born Happiness, which something more than good Sense must be the Mother of.

The other Advantage I was speaking of, is, that before the Restoration, no Actresses had ever been seen upon the *English* Stage. The Characters of Women, on former Theatres, were perform'd 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 *Shakespear*,  
that



*Published by I. Stechardt, January 1907*



There is such a combination of natural gifts requisite to the formation of a complete Actor, that it is more a case of wonder how so many good ones are to be found, than why so few instances of excellence can be produced. Every thing that results from nature alone, lies out of the province of instruction; and no rules that I know of will serve to give a fine form, a fine voice, or even those fine feelings, which are amongst the first properties of an Actor. These in fact are tools and materials of his trade, and these, neither his own industry, nor any man's assistance can bestow. But the right use and application of them is another question, and there he must look for his directions, from education, industry and judgement.

| Burberland's Observer N° 59. |

It seems from a Prologue written by Thomas Jordan, expressly  
'to introduce the first woman that came to act on the stage' that the  
Lady who performed Desdemona was an unmarried woman, and as  
Aem Marshall was the principal unmarried actress in the Royal  
Company, soon after the time this Prologue was written, she is perhaps  
entitled to its dubious distinction. It is said, in Burle's 'History  
of the Stage' a book of no authority, and has been repeated in various other  
compilations, that Mr Morris the Mother of the celebrated Comedian,  
well known by the name of 'Jubilee Dicky' was the first actress who  
appeared upon the English Stage; but this is highly improbable.

In Davenant's Patent, | and doubtless in Killigrew's, | there  
was a clause to this effect. — "Whereas the Womens parts in  
Plays have hitherto been acted by men, in the habits of women, at  
which, some have taken offence, we do permit and give leave for the  
time to come, that all Womens parts, be acted by Womens."

| See the Patent, Vol 2. |

1660. December 8<sup>th</sup>. Othello was performed, | for the first time  
that season, | at the Theatre in Vere street; and on that day,  
it is probable, an Actress first appeared upon the English Stage.  
| Malone. |

The received tradition is, that M<sup>rs</sup> Sanderson, | afterwards  
M<sup>rs</sup> Betterton, | was the first female Actress; but this is an error,  
as a M<sup>rs</sup> Coleman represented Janthe, in the first part of D'Avenant's  
stage of Rhodes in 1656. Andrew Perry writes, so late as the year  
before, had played the Heroine of Davenant's King John!

Collier is not correct — such a division of the Plays of Shakespeare and Fletcher might possibly have taken place — but it seems more probable that each company selected what Plays they pleased, subject to the approbation of the higher powers — be this as it may — we are certain that there never was such a division of Jonson's Plays — all the best of them were acted at the Theatre Royal, and it does not appear that any one of them was ever acted by the Duke's Company — it appears from Doornic and Langbaine, that the King's Company revised about 10 of Fletcher's best Plays whereas they only mention 3 or 4 of Fletcher's Plays as acted by the Duke's Company — doubtless they acted more — but supposing them to have made the best selection they could of such of Fletcher's Plays as had not been pre-occupied by the other company still the advantage must have been wholly in favour of the Theatre Royal, with regard to Fletcher's plays.

29 M 55

Some Account of the English Stage!

that in few of his Plays, he has any greater Dependance upon the Ladies, than in the Innocence and Simplicity of a *Desdemona*, an *Ophelia*, or in the short Specimen of a fond and virtuous *Portia*. 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 at their leisure Hours, to calm and mollify the Cares of Empire. Besides these peculiar Advantages, they had a private Rule or Argument, which both Houses were happily ty'd down to, which was, that no Play acted at one House, should ever be attempted at the other. All the capital Plays therefore of *Shakespeare*, *Fletcher*, and *Ben. Johnson*, were divided between them, by the Approbation of the Court, and their own alternate Choice: So that when *Hart* was famous for *Othello*, *Betterton* had no less a Reputation for *Hamlet*. By this Order the Stage was supply'd with a greater Variety of Plays, than could possibly have been shewn, had both Companies been employ'd at the same time, upon the same Play; which Liberty too, must have occasion'd such frequent Repetitions of 'em, 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? It was therefore one of our greatest Happinesses

man's  
licensing

nesses (during my time of being in the Management of the Stage) that we had a certain Number of select Plays, which no other Company had the good Fortune to make a tolerable Figure in, and consequently, could find little or no Account, by acting them against us. These Plays therefore, for many Years, by not being too often seen, never fail'd to bring us crowded Audiences; and it was to this Conduct we ow'd no little Share of our Prosperity. But when four Houses are at once (as very lately they were) all permitted to act the same Pieces, let three of them perform never so ill, when Plays come to be so harrass'd and hackney'd out to the common People (half of which too, perhaps would as lieve see them at one House as another) the best Actors will soon feel that the Town has enough of them.

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 civiliz'd People. If, indeed, to our several Theatres, we could raise a proportionable Number of good Authors, to give them all different Employment, then, perhaps, the Publick might profit from their Emulation: But while good Writers are so scarce, and undaunted Criticks so plenty, I am afraid a good Play, and a blazing  
Star,

Including the lesser Theatres in the Haymarket, and Goodman's Fields, which were restricted to minor amusements by the Licensing Act in 1738.

"In February 1673 the long expected Opera of Psyche, came forth in all her ornaments: new Scenes, new Machines, new bloaths, new French Dances: this Opera was splendidly set out, especially in Scenes, the charge of which amounted to above £1000.

! Downes Roccus Anglicanus. !

"In 1673 The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island, made into an Opera by W Shadwell, having all new in it, as Scenes, Machines; one Scene painted with myriads of aerial spirits: and another, flying away with a Table, furnished out with fruits, sweetmeats, and all sorts of viands, just when Duke Trinculo, and his company were going to dinner all things were performed so admirably well, that not any succeeding Opera, got more money. " 29 MA 55

! Ibid. !

1674. January 5<sup>th</sup>. "I saw an Italian Opera in Musiq, the first that had been in England of this kind. "

! Evelyn's Memoirs. !



Star, will be equal Rarities. This voluptuous Expedient, therefore, of indulging the Taste with several Theatres, will amount to much the same variety as that of a certain Oeconomist, who, to enlarge his Hospitality, would have two Puddings and two Legs of Mutton, for the same Dinner.----But, to resume the Thread of my 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 seem 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 call'd Dramatick Opera's, 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 in to the Assistance of the weaker Party, it was no Wonder they should grow too hard for Sense and simple Nature, when it is consider'd how many more People 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 complain'd.

But alas! what can Truth avail, when its Dependance is much more upon the Ignorant, than the sensible Auditor? a poor Satisfaction, that the due Praise given to it, must at last, sink into the cold Comfort of---*Laudatur & Alget*. Unprofitable Praise can hardly give it a *Soup maigre*. Taste and Fashion, with us, have always had Wings, and fly from one publick Spectacle to another so wantonly, that I have been inform'd, by those, who remember it, that a famous Puppet-show, in *Salisbury Change* (then standing where *Cecil-Street* now is) so far distress'd these two celebrated Companies, that they were reduced to petition the King for Relief against it: Nor ought we perhaps to think this strange, when, if I mistake not, *Terence* himself reproaches the *Roman* Auditors of his Time, with the like Fondness for the *Funambuli*, the Rope-dancers. Not to dwell too long therefore upon that Part of my History, which I have only collected, from oral Tradition, I shall content myself with telling you, that *Mobun*, and *Hart* now growing old (for, above thirty Years before this Time, they had severally born the King's Commission of Major and Captain, in the Civil Wars) and the younger Actors, as *Goodman*, *Clark*, and others, being impatient to get into their Parts, and growing intractable, the Audiencies too of both Houses then falling off, the Patentees of each, by the King's Advice, which perhaps amounted

In 1602, the Kings Company was much reduced — Lacy and Wintershall were dead — Burt — Shatterell — and Mr Marshall seem either to have been dead, or to have retired — Hart, and Heynston had left them — The Heir of Morocco was evidently acted by the rump of the company — their ill success is hinted at in one or two Prologues, and plainly pointed out in the Epilogue to the Boar of Africa — it seems probable therefore, that if the Kings Company had continued to act by themselves, they would have been deserted by the town — Smith and Betterton did not want recruits, but they naturally wished for a union, in which they saw the advantages would be on their side.

\* In the Emperors of the Moon, a Farce in three Acts, written by Mr Behn, and produced at the T. B. in 1607. Quon, who played Harlequin, in the Prologue, says —

"There's nothing wanting but the Project show."

The Duches Company quitted Dorset Gardens, and removed to Drury Lane, which Theatre they opened the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, 1682, with a Prologue and Epilogue by Dryden.

Upon the Union of the two Companies in 1682, Mr Hart, being the heart of the Company, under Mr Kellegrews Patent, never acted more, by reason of his malady, being afflicted with the Stone and Gravel, of which he died some time after, having a Salary of 40<sup>l</sup> a week to the day of his death.

Downer Rorem's Anglicanism!

1683. August. Died Mr Charles Hart, Tragedian; and a Lover of Shakespeares. Buried at Stannore Magna on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the same Month.

— 55  
Charles Hart, was the great Nephew of Shakespeares, his Father William, who was likewise an Actor, being the eldest Son of our Poets Sister, Joan. Brought up as an Apprentice under Robinson, he commenced his career, by playing female parts, among which, the Duchess, in Shirlays Tragedy of the Carnival, was the first that enhanced his reputation.

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 *Mobun* survived not long after.

One only Theatre being now in Possession of the whole Town, the united Patentees imposed their own Terms, upon the Actors; for the Profits of acting were then divided into twenty Shares, 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, call'd Adventurers, who, tho' utterly ignorant of Theatrical Affairs, were still admitted to a proportionate Vote in the Management of them; all particular Encouragements to Actors were by them, of Consequence, look'd 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 highest Discouragement, if not a direct State of Oppression. Their Hardship will at least appear in a much stronger Light, when compar'd to our later Situation, who with scarce half their Merit, succeeded to be Sharers under a Patent upon five times easier Conditions: For as they had but half the Profits divided among ten, or more of them; we had three fourths of the whole Profits, divided only among three of

us: And as they might be said to have ten Task-masters over them, we never had but one Assistant Menager (not an Actor) join'd with us; who, by the Crown's Indulgence, was sometimes too of our own chusing. Under this heavy Establishment then groan'd this United Company, when I was first admitted into the lowest Rank of it. How they came to be relieved by King *William's* Licence in 1695, how they were again dispersed, early in Queen *Anne's* Reign; and from what Accidents Fortune took better care of Us, their unequal Successors, will be told in its Place: But to prepare you for the opening so large a Scene of their History, methinks I ought, (in Justice to their Memory too) to give you such particular Characters of their Theatrical Merit, as in my plain Judgment they seem'd to deserve. Presuming then, that this Attempt may not be disagreeable to the Curious, or the true Lovers of the Theatre, take it without farther Preface.

In the Year 1690, when I first came into this Company, the principal Actors then at the Head of it were,

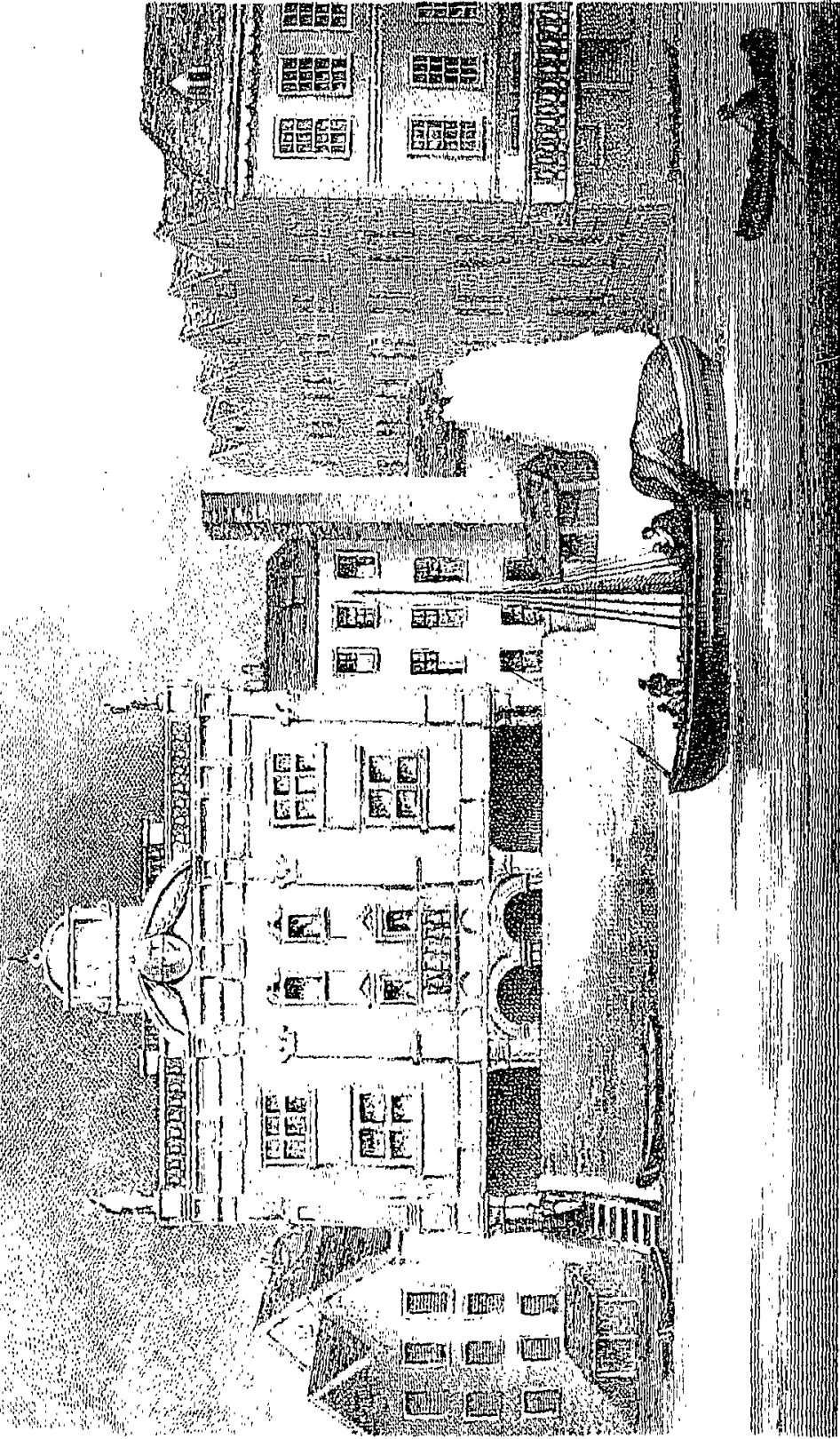
## Of Men.

Mr. *Betterton*,  
 Mr. *Monfort*,  
 Mr. *Kynaston*,  
 Mr. *Sandford*,  
 Mr. *Nokes*,  
 Mr. *Underbil*, and  
 Mr. *Leigh*.

## Of Women.

Mrs. *Betterton*,  
 Mrs. *Barry*,  
 Mrs. *Leigh*,  
 Mrs. *Buttler*,  
 Mrs. *Monfort*, and  
 Mrs. *Bracegirdle*.

These



THE BUREAU OF THE ARMY, DORSET-GARDENS.

The drawing is from a sketch by the Duke of Devonshire, and is intended to show the proposed alterations to the building, which is now in the hands of the architect, Mr. Barry. The alterations are of a very important nature, and will consist in the removal of the old building, and the erection of a new one, which will be a great improvement to the service of the Army. The whole of the alterations will be completed about the year 1850.

The Theatre in Dorset Gardens, had been built by subscription — the subscribers, were called Adventurers — of this Gibber seems totally ignorant — that there were any new Adventurers, added to the original number, rests solely on his authority, and in all probability he is not correct — it appears from a Petition presented to Queen Anne in 1709 that some of the Adventurers were persons of rank, who might naturally have subscribed to the building of a new Theatre, or have inherited a claim on it; but who could not be supposed to have obtained their interest in the Theatre, in the manner which Gibber represents — some of the Adventurers were doubtless mere money making persons.

| Some Account of the English Stage !





Mr. Tho. Betterton.



viving Spectators. Could *how Betterton* spoke be as easily known as *what* he spoke; then might you see the Muse of *Shakeſpear* in her Triumph, with all her Beauties in their beſt Array, riſing into real Life, and charming her Beholders. But alas! ſince all 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*, *Mackbetbs*, and *Brutus*'s, whom you may 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! whether that may yet draw him nearer to you?

You have ſeen a *Hamlet* perhaps, who, on the firſt Appearance of his Father's Spirit, has thrown himſelf into all the ſtraining Vociſeration requiſite to expreſs Rage and Fury, and the Houſe has thunder'd with Applauſe; tho' the miſ-guided Actor was all the while (as *Shakeſpear* terms it) tearing a Paſſion into Rags---- I am the more bold to offer you this particular Inſtance, becauſe the late Mr. *Addiſon*, while I ſate by him, to ſee this Scene acted, made the ſame Obſervation, aſking me with ſome Surprize, if I thought *Hamlet* ſhould be in ſo violent a Paſſion with the Gholt, which tho' it 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

Mr Bellerton, although a superlative good Actor, labour'd under ill figure, being clumsily made, having a great head, a short thick neck, stoop'd in the shoulders, and had fat short arms, which he rarely lifted higher than his stomach — His left hand frequently in his breast, between his coat and Waistcoat, while with his right, he prepar'd his speech. His actions were few, but just — He had little eyes, and a broad face, a little pock-bitten, a corpulent body, and thick legs, with large feet — He was better to meet, than to follow: for his aspect was serious venerable and majestic, in his latter time, a little paralytic — His voice was low and grumbling: yet he could tune it by an artful chimax, which enforced universal attention, even from the Tops and Orange girls — He was incapable of Dancing even in a Country Dance, as was Mr Barry: But their good qualities were more than equal to their deficiencies — While Mr Bracegirdle sung very agreeably in the Loves of Mars and Venus, and danced in a Country Dance as well as Mr Wilks, though not with so much Art and Toppery, but like a well bred gentleman — Mr Bellerton was the most extensive Actor, from Alexander to S<sup>r</sup> John Falstaff: but in that last character, he wanted the waggeny of Estcourt, the drollery of Harper, and salaciousness of Jack Evans — But then, Estcourt,

was too trifling: Harper, had too much of the Bartholomew Fair; and Evans, misplac'd his humour. — Thus you see, what flaws are in bright Diamonds: — And I have often wish'd that Mr Betterton would have resign'd the part of Hamlet to some young Actor, / who might have personated, though not have acted it better, / for when he threw himself at Ophelia's feet, he appear'd a little too grave for a young Student, lately come from the University of Wurttemberg: and his Repartees, seem'd rather as Apothegms from a sage Philosopher, than the sporting sallies of a young Hamlet; and no one else could have pleased the Town, he was so rooted in their opinion. His younger cotemporary, / Betterton 63, Powell 40 years old / Powell, attempted several of Betterton's parts, as Alexander, Jaffier &c. but lost his credit: as in Alexander, he maintain'd not the dignity of a King, but out Heroded Herod, and in his passion it mad scene, outrac'd all probability: while Betterton kept his passion under and shew'd it most, / as Time smokes most when stifled. / Betterton, from the time he was dress'd to the end of the Play, kept his mind in the same temperance and adaptness, as the present character requir'd.

29 MAY 55

/ Tony Aston's Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber Esq; his Lives of the late famous Actor and Actresses.

quire into the suspected Wrongs that may have rais'd him from his peaceful Tomb! and a Desire 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 open'd 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 rever'd. But alas! to preserve this medium, between mouthing, and meaning too little, to keep the Attention more pleasingly awake, by a temper'd Spirit, than by meer Vehemence of Voice, is of all the Master-strokes of an Actor the most difficult to reach. In this none yet have equall'd *Betterton*. But I am unwilling to shew his Superiority only by recounting the Errors of those, who now 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 Million 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 Strength of the Lungs, it is no wonder the Actor, whose end is Applause, should be also tempted, at this easy rate, to excite it. Shall I go a little farther? 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 have the fewest Admirers. That this is an Error of ancient standing seems evident by what *Hamlet* says, in his Instructions to the Players, *viz.*

*Be not too tame, neither, &c.*

The Actor, doubtless, is as strongly ty'd down to the Rules of *Horace* as the Writer.

*Si vis me flere, dolendum est  
Primum ipsi tibi———*                   ✱

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 Parts 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

This is not literally true, for it would have been as rightly said, 'if you do observe Nature that, 'I shall certainly weep if you do not.' But what is intended by that expression is, that it is not possible to give passion, except that you show you suffer yourself. Therefore the true art seems to be, that when you would have the person you represent, pitied, you must show him at once in the highest grief, and struggling to bear it with decency and patience. In this case we sigh for him, and give him every groan he suppresses.'

! Tatter. n° 68. !





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.

*Et, si vis similem pingere, pinge sonum*, is enjoying an impossibility. The most that a *Vandyke* can arrive at, is to make his Portraits of great Persons seem to *think*; a *Shakespeare* goes farther yet, and tells you *what* his Pictures thought; a *Betterton* steps beyond 'em 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 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*



NATHANIEL LEE

*the Poet*

*Printed by W. Moore, No. 1, Beaufort Street, 1842*

*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 celebrate *Airs* of an *Italian Opera*. Does not this prove, that there is very near as much Enchantment in the well-govern'd 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! If this Passage has Merit, let us see what Figure it would make upon Canvas, what sort of Picture would rise from it. If *Le Brun*, who was famous for painting the Battles of this Heroe, had seen this lofty Description, what one Image could he have possibly taken from it? In what Colours would he have shewn us *Glory perch'd upon a Beaver*? How would he have drawn *Fortune trembling*? Or, indeed, what use could he

he have made of *pale Fates*, or *Immortals* riding upon *Billows*, with this blustering *God* of his own making at the *head* of them? Where, 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, pompously rolling into sounding Periods, signifying  
 ——roundly nothing; of which Number,  
 in

The criticisms of Bibber, upon a literary subject are hardly worth the trouble of confuting, and yet it may be mentioned that Bishop Warburton, adduced these lines as containing, not only the most sublime, but the most judicious imagery, that poetry can conceive. If Le Brun or any other Artist, could not succeed in portraying the terrors of Fortune, it conveys perhaps the highest possible compliment to the powers of Lee, to admit that he has mastered a difficulty, beyond the most daring aspirations of an accomplished Painter.

( Bellchambers. )

Restricting Poetry to the bounds of Painting, is sad stuff indeed. Suppose Le Brun, trying to paint Milton's Death.

The other shape.

If shape it might be call'd that shape had none — so

Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,

For each seem'd either. So —

( M. S. M. )

in some of my former Labours, I am something more than suspicious, that I may myself have made one, but to keep a little closer to *Betterton*.

When this favourite Play I am speaking of, from its being too frequently acted, was worn out, and came to be deserted by the Town, upon the sudden Death of *Monfort*, who had play'd *Alexander* with Success, for several 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 equal 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 assist 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, from a too advanced Age, he resigned that toilsome Part of *Alexander*, 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 surprizing Proof of his Skill, than his being eminent

in

in those of *Shakeſpear* ; 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.

Notwithſtanding the extraordinary Power he ſhew'd in blowing *Alexander* once more into a blaze of Admiration, *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 huſht and quiet, was an Applauſe which only Truth and Merit could arrive at : Of which Art, there never was an equal Maſter to himſelf. From theſe various Excellencies, he 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 Sentiment with your Eye, before the Ear could reach it.

As *Betterton* is the Centre to which all my Obſervations upon Action tend, you will give me leave, under his Character, to enlarge upon that Head. In the juſt Delivery of Poetical



tical Numbers, particularly where the Sentiments are pathetick, it is scarce credible, upon how minute an Article of Sound depends their greatest Beauty or Inaffection. The Voice of a Singer is not more strictly ty'd to Time and Tune, than that of an Actor in Theatrical Elocution: The least Syllable too long, or too slightly dwelt upon in a Period, depreciates it to nothing; which very Syllable if rightly touch'd, shall, like the heightening Stroke of Light from a Master's Pencil, give Life and Spirit to the whole. I never heard a Line in Tragedy come from *Betterton*, wherein my Judgment, my Ear, and my Imagination, were not fully satisfy'd; 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; which I shall observe in another Place. 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 arrived, 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 bawl'd 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 so have captivated even the po-

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liter World, into an Apostacy from Sense, to an Idolatry of Sound. Let us enquire from whence this Enchantment rises. I am afraid it may be too naturally accounted for: For when we complain, that the finest Musick, purchas'd at such vast Expence, is so often thrown away upon the most miserable Poetry; we seem not to consider, that when the Movement of the Air, and Tone of the Voice, are exquisitely harmonious, tho' we regard not one *Word* of what we hear, yet the Power of the Melody is so busy in the Heart, that we naturally annex Ideas to it of our own Creation, and, in some sort, become our selves the Poet to the Composer; and what Poet is so dull as not to be charm'd with the Child of his own Fancy? So that there is even a kind of Language in agreeable Sounds, which, like the Aspect of Beauty, without Words, speaks and plays with the Imagination. While this Taste therefore is so naturally prevalent, I doubt, to propose Remedies for it, were but giving Laws to the Winds, or Advice to Inamorato's: And however gravely we may assert, that Profit ought always to be inseparable from the Delight of the Theatre; nay admitting that the Pleasure would be heighten'd by the uniting them; yet, while Instruction is so little the Concern of the Auditor, how can we hope that so choice a Commodity will come to a Market where there is so seldom a Demand for it?

It



Mr. John Dryden

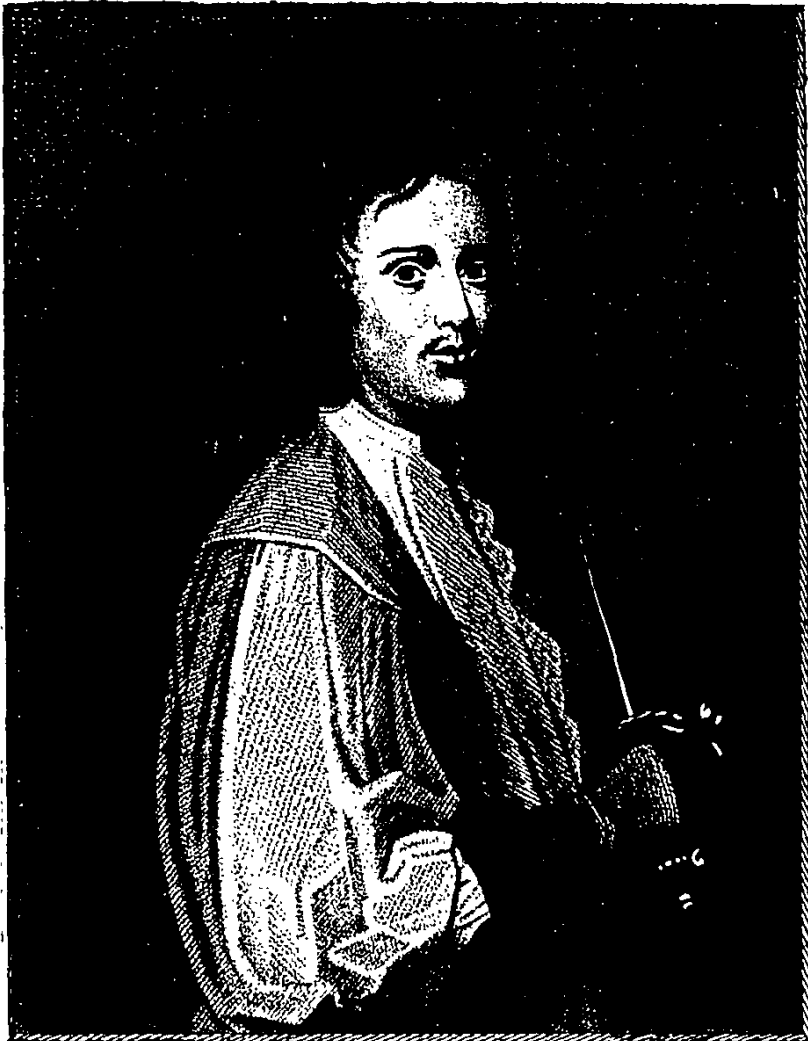
It is not to the Actor therefore, but to the vitiated and low Taste of the Spectator, that the Corruptions of the Stage (of what kind soever) have been owing. If the Publick, by whom they must live, had Spirit enough to discountenance, and declare against all the Trash and Fopperies they have been so frequently fond of, both the Actors, and the Authors, to the best of their Power, must naturally have serv'd their daily Table, with sound and wholesome Diet. ----- But I have not yet done with my 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* to the Stage, I heard him give it his first Reading to the Actors, in which, though it is true, he deliver'd 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 believ'd, 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 inform'd by an Actor, who was present, that while *Lee* was reading to Major *Mobun* at a Rehearsal, *Mobun*,

*hoo*, 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 capital an Actor, when he attempted to be an Actor himself, soon quitted the Stage, 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 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, unsurprizing 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: If you remember *Est-court*, you must have known that he 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 Coquette 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, even in the manner of thinking, of  
an

\* 1690 .



*S. Harding Del.*

*R. Harding Junr. Sculp.*

*WILLIAM, DUKE OF NORFOLK.*

*Portrait engraved in the Collection of his Grace the Duke of Norfolk.*

*Printed July 10 1793. by R. & S. Harding Pall Mall.*

an eminent Pleader at the Bar, with every the least Article and Singularity of his Utterance so perfectly imitated, that he was the very *alter ipse*, scarce to be distinguish'd 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 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 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 form'd, there arose from the Harmony of the whole a commanding Mien of Majesty, which the fairer-fac'd, or (as *Shakespear* calls 'em) the *curled Darlings* of his Time, ever wanted something to be equal Masters of. There was some Years ago, to be had, almost in every Printshop, a *Mezzotinto*, 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,



A correspondent has sent us the following character of Betterton, given by a cotemporary author during the life-time of that, in every respect, excellent actor: "Roscius, a sincere friend, and a man of honour; not to be corrupted even by the very living and manners of those he hourly converses with. Roscius, born for every thing that he thinks fit to undertake; endued with wit, morality, fire, judgment, sound sense, and good nature. Roscius, who would have still been eminent in any station of life he had been called to, and only unhappy to the world, in that it is not possible for him to bid time stand still, and permit him to endure for ever the ornament of the stage, the delight of his friends, and the regret of all who shall one day have the misfortune to lose him."

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 *Shakespear*, supply'd by others, but it drew from me the Lamentation of *Ophelia* upon *Hamlet's* being unlike, what she had seen him.

——— *Ab! 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 *Melantius* in the *Maid's Tragedy*, for his own Benefit; when being suddenly seiz'd by the Gout, he submitted, by extraordinary Applications, to have his Foot so far reliev'd, that he might be able to walk on the Stage, in a Slipper, rather than wholly disappoint his Auditors. He was observ'd 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, (I think) in the seventy-fourth Year of his Age.

I once thought to have fill'd up my Work with a select Dissertation upon Theatrical Action, but I find, by the Digressions I have been tempted to make in this Account of *Betterton*, that all I can say upon that Head, will naturally fall in, and possibly be less tedious, if dis-

pers'd among the various Characters of the particular Actors, I have promis'd to treat of; I shall therefore make use of those several Vehicles, which you will find waiting in the next Chapter, to carry you thro' the rest of the Journey, at your Leisure.



## C H A P. V.

*The Theatrical Characters of the Principal Actors, in the Year 1690, continu'd.*

*A few Words to Critical Auditors.*

**T**H O', as I have before observ'd, Women were not admitted to the Stage, 'till the Return of King *Charles*, yet it could not be so suddenly supply'd with them, but that there was still a Necessity, for some time, 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*, which I have heard him speak of; and which 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,



KYNASTON, COMEDIAN.

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 serv'd to divert him, till the male Queen cou'd be effeminated. In a word, *Kynaston*, at that time was so beautiful a Youth, that the Ladies of Quality prided themselves in 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. — Of this Truth, I had the Curiosity to enquire, and had it confirm'd from his own Mouth, in his advanc'd Age: And indeed, to the last of him, his Handsomeness was very little abated; even at past Sixty, his Teeth were all sound, white, and even, as one would wish to see, in a reigning Toast of Twenty. He had something of a formal Gravity in his Mien, which was attributed to the stately Step he had been so early confin'd to, in a female Decency. But even that, in Characters of Superiority had its proper Graces; it misbecame him not in the Part of *Leon*, in *Fletcher's Rule a Wife, &c.* which he executed with a determin'd Manliness, and honest Authority, well worth the

best Actor's Imitation. He had a piercing Eye, and in Characters of heroick 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 *Aurence-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 Spectator a kind of trembling Admiration!

Here I cannot help observing upon a modest Mistake, which I thought the late *Mr. Booth* committed in his acting the Part of *Morat*: There are in this fierce Character so many Sentiments of avow'd Barbarity, Insolence, and Vain-glory, that they blaze even to a ludicrous Lustre, and doubtless the Poet intended those to make his Spectators laugh, while they admir'd them; but *Booth* thought it depreciated the Dignity of Tragedy to raise a Smile, in any part of it, and therefore cover'd 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. In *Mr. Addison's Cato*, *Syphax* has some Sentiments of near the same nature, which I ventur'd to speak, as I imagin'd *Kynaston* would have done, had he been then living to have stood in the same Character. *Mr. Addison*, who had something of *Mr. Booth's* Diffidence, at the Rehearsal of his Play, after it was acted, came into my Opinion,



BARTON BOOTH.

nion, and own'd, that even Tragedy, on such particular Occasions might admit of a *Laugh of Approbation*. In *Shakefpear* 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 qualify'd to take, yet when justly taken, may challenge a Place among their greatest Beauties. Now whether *Dryden* in his *Morat*, *feliciter Audet*.--- or may be allow'd the Happiness of having hit this Mark, seems not necessary to be determin'd by the Actor; whose Business, sure, 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 my good Friend, Mr. *Booth* (who certainly had many Excellencies) carry'd his Reverence for the Buskin too far, in not following the bold Flights of the Author, with that Wantonness of Spirit 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 *Aurence-Zebe*: But not chusing to make known the real Motive of his Mercy, when *Nourmahal* says to him,



*'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.*

*Rijum teneatis?* 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, conceiv'd it, as if he had left 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 *Heslar*,

*Send us your Prisoners, or you'll bear of it!*

He

He convey'd a more terrible Menace in it than the loudest Intemperance of Voice could swell to. 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 Majesty, in that sort of Grief, which only Majesty could feel! there the paternal Concern, for the Errors of the Son, made the Monarch more rever'd, and dreaded: His Reproaches so just, yet so unmix'd with Anger (and therefore the more piercing) 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 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 and Spirit began to fail him. I shall

shall not therefore say any thing of his Imperfections, which, at that time, were visibly not his own, but the Effects of decaying Nature.

*Monfort*, a younger Man by twenty Years, and at this time in his highest Reputation, was an Actor of a very different Style: Of Person he was tall, well made, fair, and of an agreeable Aspect: His Voice clear, full, and melodious: In Tragedy he was the most affecting Lover within my Memory. His Addresses had a irresistible Recommendation from the very Tone of his Voice, which gave his Words such Softness, that, as *Dryden* 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 Infidelities. 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 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 by surpassing them, in true and masterly Touches  
of



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 gave 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 may 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 *Monfort*, 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 Pretender to Wit, and the Dupe of his own Sufficiency:

Of


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 he had 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 completely finish'd it. If, some Years after the Death of *Monfort*, I my self had any Success, in either of these Characters, I must pay the Debt, I owe to his Memory, in confessing the Advantages I receiv'd from the just Idea, and strong Impression he had given me, from his acting them. Had he been remember'd, when I first attempted them, my Defects would have been more easily discover'd, and consequently my favourable Reception in them, must have been very much, and justly abated. If it could be remembred how much he had the Advantage of me, in Voice and Person, I could not, here, be suspected of an affected Modesty, or of over-valuing his Excellence: For he sung a clear Counter-tenour, and had a melodious, warbling Throat, which could not  
but

1692. December 9<sup>th</sup>. Mr William Mountfort. Actor and  
Dramatist. was assassinated. in the 33<sup>d</sup> year of his age. in  
Norfolk Street. in the Strand. by Lord Mohun. and Captain  
Hill. His Body was Interred in the Church-yard of  
S<sup>t</sup> Clements Danes

" He was stabbed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, and languished  
till the 12<sup>th</sup> when he died.

" An Anecdote relating to this infamous transaction was  
communicated to me by the late Harace, Earl of Oxford of Strawberry  
Hill. Mr Horler Tatter to S<sup>r</sup> Robert Walpole's first Wife was walking  
down Norfolk Street just before Mountfort was stabbed: Lord Mohun  
mistaking him for that unfortunate Man, came up and embracing  
him said "Dear Mountfort" Mr Horler <sup>MS 55</sup> undressed him and  
walked home: he was scarcely got to his own House which was  
in Norfolk Street when he heard the noise and scuffle in the Street  
which was occasioned by Mountfort's murder. Lord Mohun's act  
was supposed to have been the signal for the Assassins to attack their  
prey  
} Legend. }



CHARLES MORDAUNT  
  
LORD MORDAUNT.



but set off the last Scene of *Sir Courtly* with an uncommon Happiness; which I, alas! could only struggle thro', with the faint Excuses, and real Confidence of a fine Singer, under the Imperfection of a feign'd and screaming Treble, which at best could only shew you what I would have done, had Nature been more favourable to me.

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 *Mobun*, printed among those of the State, in *Folio*.

*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 *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 *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 mischie-

vous Person, *Sandford* was sure to have no Competitor for it: Nor indeed (as we are not to suppose a Villain, or Traitor can be shewn for our Imitation, or not 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 the 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 *Sandford*, as an Actor; admir'd by the Judicious, while the Crowd only prais'd him by their Prejudice. And so unusual had it been to see *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 odd Instance of it, which I heard *Monfort* say was a real Fact. A new Play (the Name of it I have forgot) was brought upon the Stage, wherein *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-dissembled

Honesty

" W Sandford, although not usually deemed an Actor of the first rank, yet the characters allotted him were such, that none beside them, nor since, ever topped: for his figure, which was diminutive and mean, being round shouldered meagre faced, spindle shank'd, splay footed, with a sour countenance, and long lean arms, rendered him a proper person to discharge Jago, Foresight, and Malquis in the Villain, but he failed in succeeding in a fine description of a triumphant cavalcade in Alonzo, in the Mourning Bride, because his figure was despicable. | although his energy was by his voice and action, enforced with great soundness of art and justice. | — This person acted strongly with his face — and, | as King Charles said, | was the best Villain in the World — He proceeded from the Sandfords of Sandford, that lies between Newport and Whetchurch in Shropshire. He would not be concerned with W Bellerton, W Barry &c as a sharer in the revolt, from Drury Lane to Lincoln Inn Fields: but said, This is my Agreement, To Samuel Sandford Gentleman, Three score Shillings a Week — Pho! pho! said W Bellerton Three Pounds a Week — No, no, said Sandford: — To Samuel Sandford Gentleman, Three score Shillings a Week. — To which case Underhill, who was  $\frac{3}{4}$  sharer, would often jeer Sandford:

saying, Samuel Sandford, Gent. my man — Ho you Sol. said  
Sandford — to which latter was replied, Samuel Sandford, my  
man, Samuel."

Tony Aston!

Samuel Sandford, made his first appearance upon the Stage  
under Licentiate authority in the year 1663 at the time when the  
Company were strengthened by the accession of Smith, and  
Medbourne.

21. M. 55

Dramatic Register!

Honesty of *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 *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 *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 Murderers, to make themselves as frightful and as inhuman Figures, as possible. 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 Murderers in *Mackbeth*; 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 no Dr. Oates, at that time, wore his own Hair,  
I can-

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 Murder 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 *Sandford*, and have often lamented, that his masterly Performance could not be rewarded with that Applause, which I saw much inferior Actors met 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 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

tator 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 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 perswade 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 dedicate her unblemish'd Life to their Example. Part of this Vestal  
I. . . . . Vow,

Vow, I remember, was contain'd 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 heroick Motive, to a Surrender, was to save the Life of a Lover, who, in his Despair, had vow'd 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?* The generous Lover, in return to that first tender Obligation, gave Life to her First-born, and that pious Offspring has, since, raised to her Memory, several innocent Grandchildren.

So that, as we see, it is 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 Favour (if any were due to either side) might rather incline to the Traitor, 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  
Virtue,



Mr Rogers, in her younger days, carried her theatrical prudery to such a height, that she did not like to act any part that was not virtuous: and in the Epilogue to the Triumphs of Virtue 1697, she made a vow of chastity — it is true that she broke this, but then her motive must be her excuse, as it was to save the life of Wilks, whose Daughter by her, was married to Christopher Bullock in the year 1717.

The Teller says, [ N<sup>o</sup> 134. ] when Sandford was on the  
stage, I have seen him groaning upon a wheel, stuck with  
Daggers, impaled alive, calling his Executioners with a dying  
voice, cruel dogs, and villains — and all this to please his  
judicious Spectators, who were wonderfully delighted with seeing  
a man in torment so well acted <sup>20</sup> 14 55

Virtue, which was the Case of the frail Fair One, now mentioned. But be this Question decided as it may, *Sandford* always appear'd to me the honeſter 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, his Conſcience muſt, in ſpite of him, in any too near a Reſemblance of himſelf, have been a Check upon the Vivacity of his Action. *Sandford*, therefore, might be ſaid to have contributed his equal Share, with the foremoſt Actors, to the true and laudable Uſe of the Stage: 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 Portals.

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 Syllable of his Words 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

I 2. 11. 15 Jingle

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; *Sandford* had stronger Claims to it; he had sometimes an uncouth Stateliness in his Motion, a harsh and fullen Pride of Speech, a meditating Brow, a stern Aspect, occasionally changing into an almost ludicrous Triumph over all Goodness and Virtue: From thence falling into the most asswasive Gentleness, and soothing Candour of a designing Heart. These, I say, must have prefer'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.

When I first brought *Richard the Third* (with such Alterations as I thought not improper) to the Stage, *Sandford* was engaged in the Company then acting under King *William's* Licence in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*; otherwise you cannot but suppose my Interest must have offer'd him that Part. What encouraged me, therefore, to attempt it myself at the *Theatre-Royal*, was, that I imagined I knew how *Sandford* would have spoken every Line of it: If therefore, in  
any

The Author of the Laureat. says — " the Play of Richard 3<sup>d</sup> was altered from Shakespeare; that is, it was rumped up by a modern poetical botcher; who, besides mangling, and leaving out many beautiful, and just images in the original, had pillaged his other Plays to enrich this one — when it came to be acted, this mender of Shakespeare, chose the part of Richard for himself, and screamed through 4 Acts without dignity or decency: the Audience ill pleas'd with the Fare, accompanied him with a smile of contempt: but in the 5<sup>th</sup> Act he degenerated all at once into 1<sup>st</sup> Rossellty: and when in the heat of the Battle at Bosworth Field, the King is dismounted, our comic Tragedian came on the Stage, really breathless, and in a seeming panic, screaming out this line thus — " A Horse, a Horse, my Kingdom for a Horse " — this highly delighted some and disgusted others of his auditors: and when he was killed by Richmond, one might plainly perceive that the good people, were not better pleas'd that so execrable a Tyrant was destroyed, than so execrable an Actor was silent — as to Naubrough's flattering our Apologist in the character of Richard, he might please him for ought I know: and he might have a very bad taste: for certainly the general taste was against him. "

any Part of it, I succeeded, let the Merit be given to him: And how far I succeeded in that Light, those only can be Judges who remember him. In order, therefore, to give you a nearer Idea of *Sandford*, you must give me leave (compell'd as I am to be vain) to tell you, that the late Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who was an Admirer of *Sandford*, after he had seen me act it, assur'd me, That he never knew any one Actor so particularly profit by another, as I had done by *Sandford* in *Richard the Third*: You have, said he, *his very Look, Gesture, Gait, Speech, and every Motion of him, and have borrow'd them all, only to serve you in that Character.* If therefore Sir *John Vanbrugh's* Observation was just, they who remember me in *Richard the Third*, may have a nearer Conception of *Sandford*, than from all the critical Account I can give of him.

I come now to those other Men Actors, who, at this time, were equally famous in the lower Life of Comedy. But I find myself more at a loss to give you them, in their true and proper Light, than those I have already set before you. Why the Tragedian warms us into Joy, or Admiration, or sets our Eyes on flow with Pity, we can easily explain to another's Apprehension: But it may sometimes puzzle the gravest Spectator to account for that familiar Violence of Laughter, that shall seize him, at some particular Strokes of a true Comedian. How then shall I describe what a better Judge might not be able to express? The Rules to  
please

please the Fancy cannot so easily be laid down, as those that ought to govern the Judgment. The Decency too, that must be observed in Tragedy, reduces, by the manner of speaking it, one Actor to be much more like another, than they can or need be supposed to be in Comedy: There the Laws of Action give them such free, and almost unlimited Liberties, to play and wanton with Nature, that the Voice, Look, and Gesture of a Comedian may be as various, as the Manners and Faces of the whole Mankind are different from one another. These are the Difficulties I lie under. Where I want Words, therefore, to describe what I may commend, I can only hope you will give credit to my Opinion: And this Credit I shall most stand in need of, when I tell you, that

*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, *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 *Underbil* have

have been well copied, tho' not equall'd by others. But not all the mimical Skill of *Est-court* (fam'd as he was for it) tho' he had often seen *Nokes*, could scarce give us an Idea of him. After this perhaps it will be saying less of him, when I own, that though I have still the Sound of every Line he spoke, in my Ear, (which us'd not to be thought a bad one) yet I have often try'd, by myself, but in vain, to reach the least distant Likeness of the *Vis Comica* of *Nokes*. Though this may seem little to his Praise, it may be negatively saying a good deal to it, because I have never seen any one Actor, except himself, whom I could not, at least so far imitate, as to give you a more than tolerable Notion of his manner. 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) it 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 Nicolas Cully* in *Love in a Tub*, *Barnaby Brittle* in the *Wanton Wife*, *Sir Davy Dunc* in the *Soldier's Fortune*, *Sofia* in *Amphytrion*, &c. &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 bespoken; 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 a Consternation so rufully ridiculous and inconsolable, 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 Powt, 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 Marrall*, who is always committing Blunders to the Prejudice of his own Interest, when he had brought himself to a Dilemma in his Affairs, by vainly proceeding upon his own Head,  
and

and was, afterwards afraid to look his governing Servant, and Counsellor in the Face; what a copious, and distressful Harangue have I seen him make with his Looks (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*—to retrieve, the Occasion he had lost. *Shame*—to confess his Folly; and yet a sullen Desire, to be reconciled and better advised, for the future! What Tragedy ever shew'd us such a Tumult of Passions, 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 contented an Ignorance in his Aspect, and an awkward Absurdity in his Gesture,  
that

that had you not known him, you could 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.*

*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 thinly 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 sacerdotal 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  
the

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) 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 made the Reader yawn, in the Closer, have by the Strength of his Action, been lifted into the lowdest 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

quite sunk, and alter'd. In his Sir *William Belfond*, *Leigh* shew'd a more spirited Variety, than ever I saw, any 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 Surprize and Delight, were wholly owing to the Actor. The easy Reader might, perhaps, have been pleas'd with the Author without discompos'ing a Feature; but the Spectator must have heartily held his Sides, or the Actor would have heartily made them ach 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 *Penketbman*, 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 *Penketbman* 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



*E. Harding Sculp.*  
William Pitt-Cobham in the Character of Don Lewis in the *Pop's Fortune*  
From an original Drawing by Vertue in the Collection of Rich<sup>d</sup> Bull Esq.  
Cut April 1794. by E. & S. Harding, Pall Mall.

There were two other Characters, of the farcical kind, *Geta* in the *Prophetess*, and *Crack* in *Sir Courtly Nice*, which, as they are less confin'd to Nature, the Imitation of them was less difficult to *Penkethman*; who, to say the Truth, delighted more in the whimsical, than the natural; therefore, when I say he sometimes resembled *Leigh*, I reserve this Distinction, on his Master's side; that the pleasant Extravagancies of *Leigh*, were all the Flowers of his own Fancy, while the less fertile Brain of my Friend was contented to make use of the Stock his Predecessor had left him. What I have said, therefore, is not to detract from honest *Pinky's* Merit, but to do Justice to his Predecessor—— 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 Exception 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 must beg leave (though out of its Place) 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 Whimsies of an *Harlequin*. By the way, (let me digress a little farther) whatever Allowan-

ces

ces 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 play'd 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 even *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 judg'd 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 Masque of a black Cat, and therefore insisted, that the next time of his acting that Part, he should play without it: Their Desire was accordingly comply'd with—but, alas! in vain—*Penkethman* could not take to himself the Shame of the Character without being concealed— he was no more *Harlequin*—his Humour was quite disconcerted! his Conscience could not, with the same *Effronterie* declare against Nature, without the cover of that unchanging Face, which he was sure would never blush for it! no! it was quite another Case! 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



At the Desire of some Persons of Quality. This present Friday,  
being the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, will be  
presented a Comedy call'd the Emperor of the Moon: wherein Mr Pentkethman  
acts the Part of Harlequin without a Masque. for the Entertainment of an  
African Prince lately arriv'd here, being Nephew to the King of Bauday  
of that Country. With several Entertainments of singing and Dancing  
and the last new Epilogue never spoken but once by Mr Pentkethman.

In a Poem called 'The Players' a Satire, 1733, are the following lines, with the subjoined Note.

Quit not your Throne, to win the gaping rout.  
Nor aim at Pinky's leer, with — blood — I'm out!  
An arch dull rogue, who lets the business cool,  
To show how nicely he can stare the fool,  
Who with buffoonery his dullness's clothes,  
Deserves a cat-of-nine tails for his jokes.

This was not designed as an insidious reflection on the memory of Mr Pinkethman, who was a pleasant and successful Comedian: but to caution others from taking such liberties, as he very often did, which has been <sup>20 MA 55</sup> censured in him notwithstanding his uncommon pleasantness, and must appear very monstrous in persons of less humour than Mr Pinkethman.

justify the Modesty of *Penkethman*, it cannot but throw a wholesome Contempt on the low Merit of an *Harlequin*. But how farther necessary the Masque 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 his Masque in *London*. So that it seems, what was Wit from a *Harlequin*, was something too extravagant from a human Creature. If therefore *Penkethman*, in Characters drawn from Nature, might sometimes launch out into a few gamesome Liberties, which would not have been excused from a more correct Comedian; yet, in his manner of taking them, he always seem'd to me, in a kind of Consciousness of the Hazard he was running, as if he 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 Rebuke should break no Squares; he would mend it another time, and would take whatever pleas'd his Judges 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 Pretences to Merit, but what the Town would please to allow him. What confirms me in this Opinion 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—— *Odsó!* I believe I am

a little wrong here! which once was so well receiv'd, 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 spoke of, by the Title of *his Actor*: Which however makes me imagine, that in his Exile that Prince might have receiv'd 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 intrinsic Merit could be justly weigh'd, *Nokes* must have had the better in the Balance. Upon the unfortunate Death of *Monfort*, *Leigh* fell ill of a Fever, and dy'd in a Week after him, in *December 1692*.

*Underbil* 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; to these he gave the exactest, and most expressive Colours, and in some of them, look'd, as if it were

It is certain from Cibber, that he was Son to the famous  
Anthony Leigh — and from his own Advertisements — Drury  
Lane. Feb. 7. 1710. — and Lincoln's Inn Fields — April 19. 1715 —  
that his name was Francis — he must consequently be a different  
person from Michael Leigh, who originally acted Daniel in Oronoko  
and some other parts — the name of Leigh, is generally printed  
without any distinction — it seems however sufficiently clear, that  
Mr. Leigh either died or left the Stage about 1698, and that F. Leigh  
acted Tribani at Lincoln's Inn Fields on the 31<sup>st</sup> of Dec. 1702.

were not in the Power of human Passions to alter a Feature of him. In the solemn Formality of *Obadiab* 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 lūmpish, moping Mortal, that ever made Beholders merry! not but, at other times, he could be wakened into Spirit equally ridiculous — In the course, 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 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 *Underbil* 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 *Tatler* recommends him to the Favour of the Town, upon that Play's being acted for

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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 lain in the Grave he was digging; when he could no more excite Laughter, his Infirmities were dismiss'd with Pity: He dy'd 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*.

The deep Impressions of these excellent Actors, which I receiv'd in my Youth, I am afraid, may have drawn me into the common Foible of us old Fellows; which is, a Fondness, and perhaps, a tedious Partiality for the Pleasures we have formerly tasted, and think are now fallen off, because we can no longer enjoy them. If therefore I lie under that Suspicion, tho' I have related nothing incredible, or out of the reach of a good Judge's Conception, I must appeal to those Few, who are about my own Age, for the Truth and Likeness of these Theatrical Portraits.

There were, at this time, several others in some degree of Favour with the Publick, *Powel, Verbruggen, Williams, &c.* But as I cannot think their best Improvements made them, in any wise equal to those I have spoke of, I ought not to range them in the same Class. Neither were *Wilks*, or *Dogget*, yet come to the Stage; nor was *Booth* initiated till about six Years after them; or *Mrs. Oldfield*  
known,

The Tattler says. | May 30. | " I wish to recommend to my friends  
Honest Gave Underhill, who has been on the Stage for three generations;  
my Father admired him exceedingly when he was a Boy -- there is certainly  
nature excellently represented in his manner of action, in which he ever  
avoided the general fault in Players of doing too much -- it must be  
confessed, he has not the merit of some ingenious persons now on the  
Stage, of adding to his authors; for the Actors were so dull in the last  
age, that many of them have gone out of the world, without ever having  
spoken one word of their own in the Theatre. Poor Gave is so mortified,  
that he quibbles, and tells you that he pretends only to act a part fit  
for a man with one foot in the grave -- that is -- a grave digger --  
all admirers of true comedy it is hoped will have the gratitude to be  
present on the last day of his acting, when if he does not happen to  
please them, he will have it even then to say, that it was his first  
offence. "



\_\_\_\_\_ the first Patent granted to Sir Richard Steele.

"Bibber who is never to be depended on as to dates, is on this occasion more inaccurate than usual — Underhill could hardly with propriety be said to have left the Stage, some years, as he acted Jan. 20. 1707. — and perhaps later — By the first Patent, Bibber probably means the License, which was afterwards turned into a Patent: but even the License was not granted till more than 5 years after Underhill's Death — Bibber evidently supposes that this was the last time, Underhill acted the Grave-digger, whereas he acted the part again Feb. 23. 1710 at Drury Lane Theatre. "

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! Some account of the English Stage. !

" have Underhill, though not the best Actor in the course of  
precedency, was more admired by the Actors than the Audience — there  
being no rivals in his dry heavy down-right way in low Comedy — his  
two parts were, The first Grave Digger in Hamlet, — Sancho Pancha, in the  
last part of Don Quixote — Ned Blunt in the Rover — Giacomo, in the  
Libertine — and the Host, in the Villain — All which were dry heavy  
characters, except in Giacomo, in which, when he aimed at any archness  
he fell into downright insignificance — He was about 50 years of age,  
the latter end of King Williams reign, about 6 foot high, long and  
broad faced, and something more corpulent than this Author — His face  
very like the Homo Sylestria, or Chimpanze, for his nose was flattened  
and short, and his upper lip very long and thick, with a wide mouth and  
short chin, a churlish voice, and awkward action, leaping often up,  
with both legs at a time, when he conceived any thing waggish, and  
afterwards hugging himself at the thought, — He could not enter  
into any serious character, much more Tragedy, and was the most  
confined Actor I ever saw — He was obliged to Mr Betterton for thrusting  
him into the character of Merry-man, in his Wanton Wife, or Amorous  
Widow, but Westheart gave, was too much of a Dulman. His chief  
achievement, was in Lollipop, in the Squire of Alameda, where it was

almost impossible for him to derogate from himself. But he did great injustice to St Sampson Legend, in Looe for Looe, unless it had been true that the Knight had been bred a Hog-driver — In short Underhill was far from being a good Actor — as appeared by the late Ben Johnson's assuming his Parts of Jacomo — the Grave-Digger in Hamlet and Judge Sycamore, in Amphitruon. — I know Mr Underhill was much cried up in his time, but I am so stupid as not to know why.

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! Tony Acton. !

" Jack Verbruggen, that rough Diamond shone more bright than all the artificial polished brilliants, that ever sparkled on our Stage. / Jack bore the Bell away. / — He had the words perfect at one view, and Nature directed 'em into voice and action, in which last, he was always pleasing — His person being tall, well built and clean: only he was a little in-kneed, which gave him a shuffling gait, which was a carelessness, and became him — His chief parts were Bajazet, Oronoko, Edgar in King Lear, Wilmore, in the Rover, and Caspary, when Mr Betterton played Brutus with him — Then you might behold the grand contest Viz. whether Nature or Art excelled — Verbruggen wild and untaught, or Betterton in the trammels of instruction — In Edgar in King Lear, Jack shewed his judgment most, for his madness was unlimited: Whereas, he sensibly felt a tenderness for Cordelia in these words. / speaking to her. / " As you did once know Edgar! " — And you might best conceive his manly wild starts, by these words in Oronoko — " Ha! Thou hast rous'd the Lion in his Den; he stalks abroad, and the wild Forest, trembles at his roar " — which was spoke like a Lion by Oronoko, and Jack Verbruggen: for nature was so predominant, that his second thoughts, never altered

his prime performance — The late Marquis of Halifax, ordered  
Croonoko, to be taken from George Powell, saying to Mr Southern, the  
author — That Jack was the unpolluted Hero, and would do it best  
— In the Room, Wilmore, never was more beautiful scene, than  
between him and Mr Bracegirdle, in the character of Helena: for  
what with Verbruggen's untaught airs, and her smiling repartees  
the audience were afraid they were going off the Stage every moment  
Verbruggen, was nature without extravagance — Freedom, without  
licentiousness — and vociferous without bellowing — He was  
most indubitably soft when he says to Inoinda "I cannot, as I  
would bestow thee; and as I ought I dare not"

! Tony Aston. !

known, till the Year 1700. I must therefore reserve the four last for their proper Period, and proceed to the Actresses, that were famous with *Betterton*, at the latter end of the last Century.

Mrs. *Barry* was then in possession of almost all the chief Parts in Tragedy: With what Skill she gave Life to them, you will judge from the Words of *Dryden*, in his Preface to *Cleomenes*, where he says,

*Mrs. Barry, always excellent, has in this Tragedy excell'd herself; and gain'd a Reputation, beyond any Woman I have ever seen on the Theatre.*

I very perfectly remember her acting that Part; and however unnecessary it may seem, to give my Judgment after *Dryden's*; I cannot help saying, I do not only close with his Opinion, but will venture to add, that (tho' *Dryden* has been dead these Thirty Eight Years) the same Compliment, to this Hour, may be due to her Excellence. And tho' she was then, not a little, past her Youth, she was not, till that time, fully arriv'd to her maturity of Power and Judgment: From whence I would observe, That the short Life of Beauty, is not long enough to form a complete Actress. In Men, the Delicacy of Person is not so absolutely necessary, nor the Decline of it so soon taken notice of. The Fame Mrs. *Barry* arriv'd to, is a particular Proof of the Difficulty there is, in judging with Certainty, from

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their first Trials, whether young People will ever make any great Figure on a Theatre. There was, it seems, so little Hope of Mrs. *Barry*, at her first setting out, that she was, at the end of the first Year, discharg'd the Company, among others, that were thought to be a useless Expence to it. I take it for granted that the Objection to Mrs. *Barry*, at that time, must have been a defective Ear, or some unskillful Dissonance, in her manner of pronouncing: But where there is a proper Voice, and Person, with the Addition of a good Understanding, Experience tells us, that such Defect is not always invincible; of which, not only Mrs. *Barry*, but the late Mrs. *Oldfield*, are eminent Instances. Mrs. *Oldfield* had been a Year, in the Theatre-Royal, before she was observ'd to give any tolerable Hope of her being an Actress; so unlike, to all manner of Propriety, was her Speaking! How unaccountably, then, does a Genius for the Stage make its way towards Perfection? For, notwithstanding these equal Disadvantages, both these Actresses, tho' of different Excellence, made themselves complete Mistresses of their Art, by the Prevalence of their Understanding. If this Observation may be of any use, to the Masters of future Theatres, I shall not then have made it to no purpose.

Mrs. *Barry*, in 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



WILLIAM BARRY.

*From an original Picture by Sir Godfrey Kneller  
in the Collection of the R<sup>h</sup> Hon. the Earl of Oxford at Stone-Stratford*

*See Dec. 17. 1798. See R. & S. Standing Post Paid*



M<sup>rs</sup> Barry outshined M<sup>rs</sup> Bracegirdle, in the character of Tara, in the Mourning Bride, altho' M<sup>r</sup> Congreve, design'd Almira, for that part — and yet this fine creature, was not handsome, her mouth opening most on her right side, which she strove to draw 'other way, and, at times, composing her face, as if sitting to have her picture drawn — M<sup>rs</sup> Barry, was middle siz'd, and had darkish hair, light eyes, dark eye brows, and was indifferently plump. Her face somewhat preceded her action, as the latter did her words; her face ever expressing the passions: not like the Actresses of late times, who are afraid of putting their faces out of the form of non-meaning, lest they should crack the ceruse, while wash, or other cosmetic trowell'd on. M<sup>rs</sup> Barry had a manner of drawing out her words; which became her, but not M<sup>rs</sup> Bradshaw, and M<sup>rs</sup> Porter. / Successors. / — To hear her speak the following speech in the Orphan, was a charm:

I'm neer so well pleas'd, as when I hear thee speak  
And listen to the music of thy voice

And again

Who's he that speaks, with a voice so sweet  
As the Shepherd pipes upon the Mountain.

When all his little Flock are gathering round him

Neither she nor any of the Actors of those times, had any tone in their speaking. ! too much lately in use. ! — In Tragedy she was solemn and august — In free Comedy, alert, easy, and genteel — pleasant in her face and action: filling the Stage with variety of gesture. She was woman to Lady Shelton of Norfolk. ! my God-mother. ! When Lord Rochester took her on the Stage; where for some time they could make nothing of her — she could neither sing nor dance, nor not in a Country Dance.

! Tony Aston. !

— I have heard her say, that she never said,

' Ah, poor Bastard! ' without weeping; and I have frequently observed her change her countenance several times, as the discourses of others on the Stage have. <sup>29 MA 55</sup> I have. ! affected her in the part she acted

! Gildon's Life of Belsham. !

lence of Passion could be too much for her: And when Distress, or Tenderneſs 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 *Belvidera*. In Scenes of Anger, Deſiance, or Reſentment, while ſhe was impetuous, and terrible, ſhe pour'd out the Sentiment with an enchanting Harmony; and it was this particular Excellence, for which *Dryden* made her the above-recited Compliment, upon her acting *Cassandra* in his *Cleomenes*. But here, 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 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 an-

nual Benefit-Play, which was granted to her alone, if I mistake not, first in King *James's* time, and which became not common to others, 'till the Division of this Company, after the Death of King *William's* Queen *Mary*. This great Actress dy'd of a Fever, towards the latter end of Queen *Anne*; the Year I have forgot; but perhaps you will recollect it, 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!*

Mrs. *Betterton*, tho' far advanc'd in Years, 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 Skill, tho' he had brought her Person to decay. She was, to the last, the Admiration of all true Judges of Nature, and Lovers of *Shakspear*, in whose Plays she chiefly excell'd, and without a Rival. When she quitted the Stage, 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 *Mitbridates*, which she

\* Gibber is inaccurate in this fact: for it appears from the Agreement concluded between D<sup>r</sup> Davenant, Hart, Betterton and others, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, 1681. that the Actors then had Benefits: as by this Agreement five shillings a piece were to be paid to Hart and Kynaston, "for every day there shall be any Tragedies Comedies, or other representations, acted at the Dukes Theatre in Salisbury Court, or wherever the Company shall act, during the respective lives of the said Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston, excepting the day the young men or young women play for their own profit only."

! Gildon's Life of Betterton. }

she acted at Court in King *Charles's* time. After the Death of Mr. *Betterton*, her Husband, that Princess, when Queen, order'd her a Pension for Life, but she liv'd not to receive more than the first half Year of it.

Mrs. *Leigh*, the Wife of *Leigh* already mention'd, 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, in a lively manner, the blind Side of Nature.

Mrs. *Butler*, who had her Christian Name of *Charlotte* given her by King *Charles*, 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 in kind, what he had sometimes taken from it: The Publick, at least, was oblig'd by it; for she prov'd not only a good Actress, but was allow'd, in those Days, to sing and dance to great Perfection. In the Dramatick Operas of *Dioclesian*, and that of *King Arthur*, she was a capital, and admir'd

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 (*Villers*) Duke of *Buckingham's* second *Constantia* in the *Chance*. 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 I cannot help observing, when there was but one Theatre in *London*, at what unequal Sallaries, compar'd to those of later Days, the hired Actors were then held, by the absolute Authority of their frugal Masters, the Patentees; for Mrs. *Butler* had then but Forty Shillings a Week, and could she have obtain'd an Addition of Ten Shillings more (which was refus'd her) would never have left their Service; but being offer'd her own Conditions, to go with Mr. *Asbury* to *Dublin* (who was then raising a Company of Actors for that Theatre, where there had been none since the Revolution) her Discontent, here, prevail'd with her to accept of his Offer, and  
he

libbers animosity to the merit of Estcourt, is too conspicuous to be overlooked. Perhaps the following notice from 'the Tattler' No. 20. will suffice to set this question at rest. " This evening was acted the Recruiting Officer, in which Estcourt's proper sense and observation is what supports the Play. There is not in my humble opinion, the humour hit in Sergeant Kite, but it is admirably supplied by his actions. If I have skill to judge that man is an excellent Actor. "



he found his Account in her Value. Were not those Patentees most sagacious Oeconomists, that could lay hold on so notable an Expedient, to lessen their Charge? How glady, in my time of being a Sharer, would we have given four times her Income, to an Actress of equal Merit?

Mrs. *Monfort*, 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 surprising 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. *Monfort'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, that 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

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, dowdy *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 *Quoif*, 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, coxcomby *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-À-la-mode*. *Melantha* is as finish'd an *Impertinent*, as ever flutter'd

Ms Verbruggen: — She was all art, and her acting all acquired, but dressed so nice, it looked like Nature. There was not a look, a motion, but what were all designed, and these at the same word, period, occasion, incident, were every night in the same character alike: and yet all sat charmingly easy on her. Her face, motion &c changed at once. But the greatest and usual position was laughing. Starting her Fan, and *Je me scai quoi* — with a kind of affected twitter — She was very loth to accept of the part of Wellborn in Broncho, and that with just reason, as being oblig'd to put on Mene cloaths — having thick legs, and thighs, corpulent and large posteriors — but yet the Town that respected her, compounded and received her with applause: for she was the most pleasant creature that ever appeared: Add to these, she was a fine fair woman, plump, full featured, her face of a fine smooth oval, full of beautiful, well dispos'd moles on it, and on her neck and breast. — Whatever she did, was not to be call'd acting: no, no, it was what she represented: she was neither more nor less, and was the most easy Actress in the World. The late Ms Hatfield, borrowed something of her free manner in Comedy — As for Tragedy, Ms Verbruggen, never attempted it. Melanthe, was her master piece, and the part of Thellaria

in Cambridge Walks, could not be said to be acted by any but her —

Her maiden name was Percival, and she was the Widow of Mr. Hamble who was killed by Lord Mohun. When Mr. Verbruggen married her she was the best conversation possible: never captious or displeas'd at any thing, but what was gross or indecent: for she was cautious, lest Henry Jack, should so resent it, as to breed a quarrel: —

For he would often say. — "Damn'd! tho' I do not much value my Wife, yet nobody shall affront her, by G-d!" — and his Sword was drawn on the least occasion, which was much in fashion, at the latter end of King Williams reign. "

29 MAY 55

! Tom's Custom !

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, Manners, Soul, and Body, are in a continual 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. *Monfort'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 Sexe'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 out-go her Father's Commands, by making a compleat Conquest of him at once; and that the Letter might not embarrass her Attack, crack! 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;

tractions; 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, from her own Conception, could have heighten'd them with more lively Strokes of Nature.

I come now to the last, and only living Person, of all those whose Theatrical Characters I have promised you, Mrs. *Bracegirdle*; who, I know, would rather pass her remaining Days forgotten, as an Actress, than to have her Youth recollected in the most favourable Light I am able to place it; yet, as she is essentially necessary to my Theatrical History, and as I only bring her back to the Company of those, with whom she pass'd the Spring and Summer  
of

*Enough! It is Cibber's masterpiece, and invaluable!*



MRS. BEACONFIELD

On the Marriage of Mr Congreve. to Mr Bracegirdle.

Here Wit and Beauty join, and who can say  
There is a couple prettier, or more gay?  
She with her charms and voice enamours the Poet,  
While he's applauded for his lines and wit.  
They cannot fail most fortunate to prove,  
Since as they fit move, they both should Love

29 MA 55

| Martial Redivivus, or the English Epigrammatist.

1707.



" Mrs Bracegirdle, that Diana of the Stage, hath many places  
contending for her birth — The most received opinion is, that she was the  
Daughter of a coachman, coachmaker, or, letter-out of coaches, in the Town  
of Northampton — But I am inclinable to my Father's opinion,  
who had a great value for her reported virtue, / that she was a distant  
relation, and came out of Staffordshire, from about Walsall, or  
Wolverhampton — She had many assailants on her virtue, as Lord  
Lovelace, Mr Congreve; the last of which had her company most: but she  
ever resisted his vicious attacks, and yet, was always uneasy at his  
leaving her, on which observation, he made the following Song.

Pious Belinda goes to Prayers  
Whenever I ask the favour:  
Yet the tender fools in tears  
When she believes I'll leave her  
Would I were free from this restraint  
Or else had power to win her  
Would she could make of me a Saint  
Or I of her a Sinner.

And as Mr D'Urfey alludes to it in his Puppet Song in Don Quixote.

Since that our fate intends  
Our minds shall be no dears  
Still let us help, and be friends  
And sigh we never shall come nearer

She was very shy of Lord Lodowick's company, as being an engaging man, who dress'd well: And, as every day his servant came to her, to ask her how she did, she always returned her answer in the most obedient words and behaviour "That she was indifferent well, she humbly thank'd his Lordship" — She was of a lovely height, with dark brown hair and eyebrows, black sparkling eyes, and a fresh blushing complexion: and whenever she exerted herself, had an involuntary flushing in her Breast, Neck and Face, having continually a cheerful aspect, and a fine set of even white teeth: never making an Exit: but that she left the Audience in an imitation of her pleasant countenance  
Gentle Comedy was her chief play, and that too when in mens cloaths in which she far surmounted all the Actresses of that, and this age —  
29 MA 55  
Yet she had a defect scarce perceptible. Viz. her right shoulder, a little protuberant, which, when in mens cloaths was covered, by a long & campani Peruke — She was finely shaped, and had very handsome legs and feet: and her gait or walk, was free manlike and modest, when in Dress — Her virtue had its reward, both in applause

and specie, for it happened that as the Duke of Dorset, and Devonshire  
Lord Halifax, and other Nobles, over a Bottle were extolling Mrs  
Bracegirdles virtuous behaviour. "Come" says Lord Halifax — "You  
all commend her virtue, but why do we not present that incomparable  
woman, with something worthy her acceptance?" His Lordship deposited  
200 Guineas, which the rest made up 800 and sent to her, with  
eulogiums on her virtue — She was when on the Stage, diurnally  
charitable, going often into Clare Market, and giving money to the  
unemployed Basket Women, inasmuch that she could not pass that  
neighbourhood, without the thankful acclamations of people of all  
degrees, so that if any person had affronted her, they would have been  
in danger of being killed directly: and yet this good Woman was an  
Actress — she has been off the Stage, these 26 years, or more,  
but was alive July 20<sup>th</sup> 1747, for I saw her in the Strand, London,  
then — with the remains of charming Bracegirdle.

of her Life, I hope it will excuse the Liberty I take, in commemorating the Delight which the Publick received from her Appearance, while she was an Ornament to the Theatre.

Mrs. *Bracegirdle* was now, but just blooming to her Maturity; her Reputation, as an Actress, gradually rising with that of her Person; never any Woman was in such general Favour of her Spectators, which, to the last Scene of her Dramatick Life, she maintain'd, by not being unguarded in her private Character. This Discretion contributed, not a little, to make her the *Cara*, 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 Cheerfulness, 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, seem'd 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 particular Excellence, she became delightful. To speak critically of an Actress, that was extremely good, were 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 the Performance. So that, 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 uncontrollable 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 *Milhamant*, 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

A Life of Mrs Oldfield was published in 1730 — the anonymous Author of it says — "As Mrs Oldfield daily improved in her professions, a dispute was set on foot, whether first started by themselves, or by the Town. I shall not pretend to determine, whether she or Mrs Bracegirdle could best perform a part in Comedy — this contest, however it first began, grew at last so considerable, that it was agreed to make the Town the judges — Mrs Bracegirdle accordingly acted Mrs Brittle on one night, — and Mrs Oldfield acted the same part on the next night — the preference was adjudged to Mrs Oldfield — at which Mrs Bracegirdle was very much disgusted — and Mrs Oldfield's Benefit being allowed by Justice, to be in the season before Mrs Bracegirdle's, added so much to the affront, that she quitted the Stage immediately." — That Mrs Bracegirdle, and Mrs Oldfield played Mrs Brittle, in a contest for superiority may be perfectly true, but it is by no means certain — a reference to the Bills in the British Museum would determine the point. — Mrs Bracegirdle acted Rutland on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, — Venice Preserved was acted on the 22<sup>d</sup> — and Mrs Oldfield's Benefit was on the 25<sup>th</sup> — it is possible, that the Amorous Widow was played twice in the interval, but it does not seem very probable — in Curll's Life of Mrs Oldfield 1741 the dispute between Mrs Bracegirdle and Mrs Oldfield's

is slightly mentioned, but nothing is said about the character of Mrs  
Dingle — the allusion she makes to Mr Pracey's death about her Benefit, would  
be a sufficient cause for her retirement from the Stage — it was very  
unlike in Mr Field's friends to neglect the matter: and ungrateful  
in the Public not to support their old favourite — but such sort of things  
happen too often on the Stage — Bibber, well knew the case of Mrs  
Pracey's death, but says nothing about it, as she was then dead, and would not have been pleased with the  
repetition of it.

Some Account of the B. Stage.

As Mr Betterton's Benefit occurred on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, 1709, and  
as Bibber clearly means to assert, <sup>MS. A. 55</sup> that Mr Pracey had left the  
Stage twelve months before it took place, the date should have been  
1708.

which good Sense, in those Days, was not ashamed to give Praise to.

She retir'd 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. She has still the Happiness to retain her usual Cheerfulness, and to be, without the transitory Charm of Youth, agreeable.

1708.

If, in my Account of these memorable Actors, I have not deviated from Truth, which, in the least Article, I am not conscious of, may we may not venture to say, They had not their Equals, at any one Time, upon any Theatre in *Europe*? Or, if we confine the Comparison, to that of *France* alone, I believe no other Stage can be much disparag'd, by being left out of the question; which cannot properly be decided, by the single Merit of any one Actor; whether their *Baron* or our *Betterton*, might be the Superior, (take which Side you please) that Point reaches, either way, but to a thirteenth part of what I contend for, viz. That no Stage, at any one Period, could shew thirteen Actors, standing all in equal Lights of Excellence, in their Profession: And I am the bolder, in this Challenge, to any other



ther Nation, because no Theatre having so extended a Variety of natural Characters, as the *English*, can have a Demand for Actors of such various Capacities; why then, where they could not be equally wanted, should we suppose them, at any one time, to have Existed?

How imperfect soever this copious Account of them may be, I am not without Hope, at least, it may in some degree shew, what Talents are requisite to make Actors valuable: And if that may any ways inform, or assist the Judgment of future Spectators, it may, as often, be of service to their publick Entertainments; for as their Hearers are, so will Actors be; worse, or better, as the false, or true Taste applauds, or discommends them. Hence only can our Theatres improve, or must degenerate.

There is another Point, relating to the hard Condition of those who write for the Stage, which I would recommend to the Consideration of their Hearers; which is, that the extreme Severity with which they damn a bad Play, seems too terrible a Warning to those whose untried Genius might hereafter give them a good one: Whereas it might be a Temptation, to a latent Author, to make the Experiment, could he be sure that, though not approved, his Muse might, at least, be dismiss'd with Decency: But the Vivacity of our modern Criticks, is of late grown so riotous, that an unsuccessful Author has no more Mercy shewn him, than a notorious Cheat, in a Pillo-  
ry;

ry; every Fool, the lowest Member of the Mob, becomes a Wit, and will have a fling at him. They come now to a new Play, like Hounds to a Carcase, and are all in a full Cry, sometimes for an Hour together, before the Curtain rises to throw it amongst them. Sure, those Gentlemen cannot but allow, that a Play condemned after a fair Hearing, falls with thrice the Ignominy, as when it is refused that common Justice.

But when their critical Interruptions grow so loud, and of so long a Continuance, that the Attention of quiet People (though not so complete Criticks) is terrify'd, and the Skill of the Actors quite disconcerted by the Tumult, the Play then seems rather to fall by assassins, than by a Lawful Sentence. Is it possible that such Auditors can receive Delight, or think it any Praise to them, to prosecute so injurious, so unmanly a Treatment? And tho' perhaps the Compassionate, on the other side (who know they have as good a Right to clap, and support, as others have to catcall, damn, and destroy,) may oppose this Oppression; their Good-nature, alas! contributes little to the Redress; for in this sort of Civil War, the unhappy Author, like a good Prince, while his Subjects are at mortal Variance, is sure to be a Loser by a Victory on either Side; for still the Commonwealth, his Play, is, during the Conflict, torn to pieces. While this is the Case, while the Theatre is so turbulent a Sea, and so infested with Pirates, what Poetical Merchant,  
of

of any Substance, will venture to trade in it? If these valiant Gentlemen pretend to be Lovers of Plays, why will they deter Gentlemen, from giving them such as are fit for Gentlemen to see? In a word, this new Race of Criticks seem to me, like the Lion-Whelps in the *Tower*, who are so boisterously gamesome at their Meals, that they dash down the Bowls of Milk, brought for their own Breakfast.

As a good Play is certainly the most rational, and the Lightest Entertainment, that Human Invention can produce, let that be my Apology (if I need any) for having thus freely deliver'd my Mind, in behalf of those Gentlemen, who, under such calamitous Hazards, may hereafter be reduced to write for the Stage, whose Case I shall compassionate, from the same Motive, that prevail'd on *Dido*, to assist the *Trojans* in Distress.

*Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco. Virg.*

Or, as *Dryden* has it,

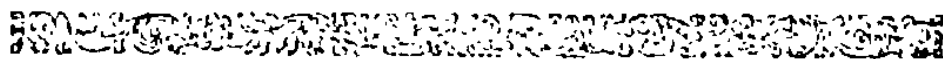
*I learn to pity Woes so like my own.*

If those particular Gentlemen have sometimes made me the humbled Object of their Wit, and Humour, their Triumph at least has done me this involuntary Service, that it has driven me a Year or two sooner into a quiet Life, than otherwise, my own want of Judgment might have led me to: I left the Stage, before my Strength left me, and tho' I came to it again, for some few Days, a Year or two after;

bibber, is said to have netted fifty guineas a night by these fugitive performances: perhaps the largest remuneration considering the relative value of money, that ever was granted to a theatrical performer. His last appearance was in 1744, but the period he alludes to was in the season of 1737-8, when he agreed with Fleetwood the Proprietor of Drury Lane, to represent Richard, Fondlewife, St John Bore, and a few more of his humorous characters.

29 M. 55

after; my Reception there not only turn'd to my Account, but seem'd a fair Invitation, that I would make my Visits more frequent: But, to give over a Winner, can be no very imprudent Resolution.



C H A P. VI.

*The Author's first Step upon the Stage. His Discouragements. The best Actors in Europe, ill us'd. A Revolution, in their Favour. King William grants them a Licence to act in Lincoln's-Inn Fields. The Author's Distress, in being thought a worse Actor than a Poet. Reduc'd to write a Part for himself. His Success. More Remarks, upon Theatrical Action. Some, upon himself.*

**H**AVING given you the State of the Theatre, at my first Admission to it; I am now drawing towards the several Revolutions it suffer'd, in my own Time. But (as you find by the setting out of my History) that I always intended myself the Heroe of it, it may be necessary to let you know me, in my Obscurity, as well as in my higher Light, when I became one of the Theatrical Triumvirat.

The Patentees, who were now Masters of this united, and only Company of Comedians, seem'd to make it a Rule, that no young Persons,

sons, desirous to be Actors, should be admitted into Pay under, at least, half a Year's Probation; wisely knowing, that how early soever they might be approv'd of, there could be no great fear of losing them, while they had, then, no other Market to go to. But, alas! Pay was the least of my Concern; the Joy, and Privilege of every Day seeing Plays, for nothing, I thought was a sufficient Consideration, 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 Salary 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,

Cross. The Prompter told Davies, that he was for some time known only by the name of Master Colley, and that after waiting impatiently a long time for the Prompter's notice, by good fortune he obtained the honour of carrying a message in some Play to Betterton — whatever was the cause Master Colley was so terrified, that the scene was disconcerted by him — Betterton, asked in some anger, who the young fellow was that had committed the blunder — Downes replied, 'Master Colley' — "Master Colley!" then "forfeit him" — "Why Sir," said Downes, "he has no salary" — "No" said Betterton, "why then put him down 10<sup>s</sup> a week, and forfeit him 5<sup>s</sup>." — to this good-natured adjustment of reward and punishment, Cibber owed the first money he ever received from the Theatre.

! Davies. !

The Author of the Laureat, says — " He was in stature of the middle size, his complexion fair, inclinable to the sandy, his legs, somewhat of the thickest, his shape, a little clumsy, not irregular, and his voice rather shrill, than loud or articulate, and cracked extremely when he endeavoured to raise it; he was in his younger days so leasur'd as to be known by the name of 'Hatchet-Face' — ; see Epilogue to *Lady's last Stake*.

The Gentlemen's Magazine says. — " his shape was well proportioned, yet not graceful easy, but not striking; when he represented a ridiculous humour, he had a mouth in every nose, and became eloquent, without speaking; his attitudes were pointed and exquisite: his expression was stronger than painting: he was beautifully absorbed by the character, and demanded and monopolized attention; his very extravagancies were coloured with propriety. "



1696. Colley Cibber first distinguished himself, in the part of the Chaplain in the Orphan, at Drury Lane Theatre.

To him obstacles were incentives: Nature, even according to his own account, had denied him almost every theatrical requisite; yet he found a substitute for all, and made study, perfectness and judgement, arrest so much the attention of the public, as others did both elegance and nature. "37 53

'Sublime History of the Stage.'

cess, was the Chaplain in the *Orphan of Otway*. There is in this Character (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 me, the next Day, in my hearing. *Goodman* often came to a Rehearsal for Amusement, and having fate 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, *Monfort* 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 Surprize 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 Content, at that time possess'd me, I will still make it a Question, whether *Alexander* himself, or *Charles the Twelfth* 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, that 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 turn'd 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

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 the Play, Mr. *Congreve* made me the Compliment of saying, That I had not only answer'd, 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

pany 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 complete a Set of Actors were under the Government of the united Patents 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 saw, 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 balance their Expence, as to keep them out of a large Debt, which it was publickly known was, about this time, contracted, and which found Work for the Court of Chancery for about twenty Years following, till one side of the Cause grew weary. But this was not all that was wrong; every Branch of the Theatrical Trade had been sacrific'd, 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 dress'd, while Singers, and Dancers were better paid, and embroider'd. These Measures, of course, created

Sull: — But now comes the great turn which seem'd to decide the  
fates of Rome and Carthage: The old House have a bawble offer'd 'em  
made out of Fletcher's Island Princess, sometime after alter'd by Metastaseo  
and now erected into an Opera by Stotter. The Actors labour at this  
at so many Galley Slaves at an oar; they call in the Fiddler, the Voice,  
the Painter, and the Carpenter to help 'em; and what neither the Poet,  
nor the Painter could do, the Mechanick must do for him. The Town had  
seen their best at the Drama, and now, it was going to say, the House  
look'd like a brisk Highway-man, who consults his Peruke-maker,  
about the newest fashion an hour before his execution: This new fangled  
invention, was a melodious whim —

Ramb: How! New fangled. It Sullen, you forget the Prodiges,  
King Arthur, and the Fairy Queen.

Sull: I remember 'em; and pray are they not new? May, if you  
go to the utmost of its antiquity, it came from no older a House than  
Dionantio, and that's new enough of all conscience: but as I was  
saying — the Opera, now possesses the Stage, and after a hard  
struggle at length it prevail'd, and something more than charges  
came in every night. The quality, who are always lovers of  
good music, flock thither, and by almost a total revolt from the

other House, gave this new life, and set it in some eminency above  
the new: this was a sad mortification to the old Stagers, in  
Lincoln's Inn Fields, but at length they too —

Sari: May there I will present you, good Mr Sullen: I must have  
the honour of this speech. At last, [as you say.] the old Stagers,  
moulded a piece of Poetry work of their own, and made a kind of  
Lenten, least with their Rinaldo and Armida: this surpris'd not only  
Drury Lane, but all the Town, no body ever dreaming of an Opera  
here —

Sull: Well, with this rigour, they ting'd awhile — all the Town  
and not a Top but ran to see, the celebrated Vigeni in a Machine.

Brit: But this merriment lasted not always: every thing has  
an end, and at length down goes Rinaldo's enchanted mountain  
it sunk as it were by Magic's, and there's now not so much as  
a Mole-hill seen nith.

! Gildon. !

Mr Powell, Senr. is mentioned by Downes as following the fortunes  
of Mohun, in his opposition to the United Companies. He was  
Father to the latter now mentioned, and died according to Gildon  
about the year 1698.

ated Murmurings, one on 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 seem'd to make this Resolution more necessary at this time, was the Loss of *Nokes, Monfort, and Leigh*, who all dy'd about the same Year: No wonder then, if when these great Pillars were at once remov'd, 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 propos'd to begin at the Head of 'em, 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, order'd 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 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



possibly mend an Audience; and was a sure Loss of that Time, in studying, which might have been better employ'd 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 uncontrollable: But farther, their first Project did not succeed; for tho' the giddy Head of *Powel*, accepted the Parts of *Betterton*; Mrs. *Bracegirdle* had a different way of thinking, and desir'd to be excus'd, 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 refus'd acting any Part that properly belong'd to her. But this Proceeding, however, was Warning enough to make *Betterton* be upon his Guard, and to alarm others, with Apprehensions 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, enter'd 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

cordingly open'd an Association on their part ; both which were severally sign'd, as the Interest or Inclination of either Side led them.

During these Contentions, which the impolitick Patentees had rais'd 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, refus'd all Terms of Accommodation. In the mean time this Dissention was so prejudicial to their daily Affairs, that I remember it was allow'd by both Parties, that before *Christmas*, the Patent had lost the getting of at least a thousand Pounds by it.

My having been a Witness of this unnecessary Rupture, was of great use to me, when many Years after, I came to be a Menager myself. I laid it down as a settled Maxim, that no Company could flourish while the chief Actors, and the Undertakers were at variance. I therefore made it a Point, while it was possible, upon tolerable Terms, to keep the valuable Actors in humour with their Station; and tho' I was as jealous of their Encroachments, as any of my Co-partners could be, I always guarded against the least Warmth, in my Expostulations with them; not but at the same time they might see, I was perhaps more determin'd in the Question, than those that gave a loose to their Resentment, and when they were cool, were as apt to recede. I do

not

not remember that ever I made a Promise to any, that I did not keep, and therefore was cautious how I made them. This Coldness, tho' it might not please, at least left them nothing to reproach me with; and if Temper, and fair Words could prevent a Disobligation, I was sure never to give Offence or receive it. But as I was but one of three, I could not oblige others to observe the same Conduct. However, by this means, I kept many an unreasonable Discontent, from breaking out, and both Sides found their Account in it.

How a contemptuous and overbearing manner of treating Actors had like to have ruin'd us, in our early Prosperity, shall be shewn in its Place: If future Menagers should chance to think my way right, I suppose they will follow it; if not, when they find what happen'd to the Patentees (who chose to disagree with their People) perhaps they may think better of it.

The Patentees then, who by their united Powers, had made a Monopoly of the Stage, and consequently presum'd they might impose what Conditions they pleas'd 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 Spectator naturally wish'd, 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

1694. "On the death of Susan Mary" ; which occurred on  
the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. ; Chetwood says. "the Theatres closed  
for six Months"  
20. M. 55

Davis has the following elucidatory Note upon this occurrence  
'By your own Dorset introduced Bellerton, Mr Barry, Mr Bracegirdle  
and others to the King, who granted them an audience. William,  
less deficient in the charm of affability and condescension with  
which Charles, his Uncle captivated all who approached him,  
was yet ready to extend his favour to the Players. He was not  
tiring as it to see in his presence, two such wonders in the  
Theatrical world as Bellerton and Mr Barry, whose keen expressions  
look commanded attention and respect. William, who had  
freed all the subjects of England from slavery, except the  
inhabitants of the mineral world, rescued them also from the  
usurpation and tyranny of their oppressors

Dramatic Miscellanies,

It is a fact which has been strangely overlooked, that St  
Robert Howard was mainly instrumental in procuring the License  
by which these Comedians were set at



CHARLES SACKVILLE,

*Earl of DERBY.*

*Engraved at Knowlton, Cheshyre, by R.A.*

sonal Merit the Publick was not so well acquainted with. From this Consideration, then, several Persons of the highest Distinction espous'd their Cause, and sometimes, in the Circle, entertain'd 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 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 solicit 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 myself, I was then too insignificant to be taken into their Councils, and consequently stood among those of little Importance, like Cattle in a Mark-

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 consider'd them as the only Subjects, whom he had not yet deliver'd from arbitrary Power; and graciously dismiss'd them, with an Assurance of Relief, and Support---Accordingly a select number of them were empower'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 of 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 the Field till the *Easter-Monday* in *April* following. Their first Attempt was a reviv'd Play, call'd *Abdazar*, or the *Moor's Revenge*, poorly written, by *Mrs. Behn*. The House was very full, but whether



\* Not a Patent.

1695 March 25<sup>th</sup>. Drury Lane Theatre opened on the 25<sup>th</sup> of  
March. ! being Easter Monday. | with Abdelazer, or the Moor's  
Revenge.

This Play was an alteration of Marlow's, Lusts Dominion.



H. R. Cook Sculp<sup>d</sup>

MRS. BENN.

1791

whether it was the Play, or the Actors, that were not approved, the next Day's Audience sunk to nothing. However, we were assured, that let the Audiences be never so low, our Masters would make good all Deficiencies, and so indeed they did, 'till towards the End of the Season, when Dues to Ballance came too thick upon 'em. But that I may go gradually on with my own Fortune, I must take this Occasion to let you know, by the following Circumstance, how very low my Capacity, as an Actor, was then rated: It was thought necessary, at our Opening, that the Town should be address'd in a new Prologue; but to our great Distress, among several, that were offer'd, not one was judg'd fit to be spoken. This I thought a favourable Occasion, to do my self some remarkable Service, if I should have the good Fortune, to produce one that might be accepted. The next (memorable) Day my Muse brought forth her first Fruit that was ever made publick; how good, or bad imports not; my Prologue was accepted, and resolv'd on to be spoken. This Point being gain'd, I began to stand upon Terms, you will say, not unreasonable; which were, that if I might speak it my self, I would expect no farther Reward for my Labour: This was judg'd as bad as having no Prologue at all! You may imagine how hard I thought it, that they durst not trust my poor poetical Brat, to my own Care. But since I found it was to be given into other Hands, I insisted that two Guineas should

should be the Price of my parting with it; which with a Sigh I received, and *Powel* spoke the Prologue: But every Line, that was applauded, went sorely to my Heart, when I reflected, that the same Praise might have been given to my own speaking; nor could the Success of the Author compensate the Distress of the Actor. However, in the End, it serv'd, in some sort, to mend our People's Opinion of me; and whatever the Criticks might think of it, one of the Patentees (who, it is true, knew no Difference between *Dryden* and *D'urfey*) said, upon the Success of it, that insooth! I was an ingenious young Man. This sober Compliment (tho' I could have no Reason to be vain upon it) I thought was a fair Promise to my being in favour. But to Matters of more Moment: Now let us reconnoitre the Enemy.

After we had stolen some few Days March upon them, the Forces of *Betterton* came up with us in terrible Order: In about three Weeks following, the new Theatre was open'd against us, with a veteran Company, and a new Train of Artillery; or in plainer *English*, the old Actors, in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* began, with a new Comedy of Mr. *Congreve's*, call'd *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. This valuable Play had a narrow Escape, from falling into the Hands of the Patentees; for before the Division of the Company, it had been read, and accepted of at the Theatre-

"The disproportion was so great at parting, that it was almost impossible in Drury Lane, to muster up a sufficient number to take in all the parts of any Play: and of them, so few were tolerable, that a Play must of necessity be damn'd that had not extraordinary favour from the Audience: No fewer than sixteen, most of the old standing, went away, and with them the very beauty and vigour of the Stage, they who were left behind, being for the most part: learners, Boys and Girls, a very unequal match, for them who revolted."

| Hildon. |

1695. April 30<sup>th</sup>. a new Theatre, built by Subscription, within the Walls of the Tennis Court, Lincoln's Inn Fields, or rather Little Lincoln's Inn Fields, as Portugal Street, was then called. | was opened under the Management of Mr Betterton, with Congreve's Comedy of, Love for Love: a License having been granted | through the interest of Sr Robert Howard. | to Mr Congreve, Mr Betterton, Mr Barry, Mr Bracegirdle, and others to perform in a separate Theatre for themselves.

| History of the Theatres. |

Love for Love 1695.

Valentine . . . . .	Mr Bellerton
Ben. the Sailor . . . . .	Mr Duggell
Fore-sight . . . . .	Mr Sandford .
Tattle . . . . .	Mr Roman .
S. Sampson Legend . . . . .	Mr Underhill .
Scandal . . . . .	Mr Smith . x
Jeremy . . . . .	Mr Bowen .
Trapland . . . . .	Mr Trefusis .
Angelica . . . . .	Mr Bracegirdle .
Mr Trail . . . . .	Madam Barry .
Miss Pove . . . . .	Mr Ayliffe .
Mr Foresight . . . . .	Mr Roman .
Morse . . . . .	Mr Leigh .

29 MA 55

x On this occasion Mr William Smith, made his re-appearance upon the Stage, in the character of Scandal.

" This comedy being extraordinarily well acted, chiefly the part of Ben. the Sailor, it took 13 days successively "

| Downes. |

Theatre-Royal: But while the Articles of Agreement for it were preparing, the Rupture, in the Theatrical State, was so far advanced, that the Author took time to pause, before he sign'd them; when finding that all Hopes of Accommodation were impracticable, he thought it advisable to let it take its Fortune, with those Actors for whom he had first intended the Parts.

Mr. Congreve was then in such high Reputation, as an Author, that besides his Profits, from this Play, they offer'd 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. Dryden, in King Charles's Time, had the same Share with the King's Company; but he bound himself to give them two Plays every Season. This you may imagine he could not hold long, and I am apt to think, he might have serv'd them better, with one in a Year, not so hastily written. Mr. Congreve, 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 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

\*: must pay

\*:

publ. 1700.

M 20 MA 55 their

only two years the Mourning Bride was printed 1697

their Opponents; yet, in the End, both Sides were great Sufferers by their Separation; the natural Consequence of two Houses, which I have already mention'd in a former Chapter.

The first Error this new Colony of Actors fell into, was their inconsiderately parting with *Williams*, and *Mrs. Monfort*, upon a too nice (not to say severe) Punctilio; in not allowing them to be equal Sharers with the rest; which, before they had acted one Play, occasioned their Return to the Service of the Patentees. As I have call'd this an Error, I ought to give my Reasons for it. Though the Industry of *Williams* was not equal to his Capacity; for he lov'd his Bottle better than his Business; and though *Mrs. Monfort* was only excellent in Comedy, yet their Merit was too great almost on any Scruples, to be added to the Enemy; and at worst, they were certainly much more above those they would have ranked them with, than they could possibly be under those, they were not admitted to be equal to. Of this Fact there is a poetical Record, in the Prologue to *Love for Love*, where the Author speaking of the, then, happy State of the Stage, 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 Deserters.

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

These



In Shakespear's time, the nightly expences for lights, supernumera-  
ries, &c. was but forty five shillings, and having deducted this charge, the  
clear emoluments were divided into shares, I supposed to be forty in  
number, I believe the Proprietors and principal Actors. In the year 1666  
the whole profit arising from acting Plays, Marquee &c. at the Kings  
Theatre, was divided into twelve shares, and three quarters, each share  
computed to produce about £250 net per annum. In St. Williams  
Dowman's Company, from the time their new Theatre was opened in  
Cortical Row, the total receipt after deducting the nightly expences, was  
divided into sixteen shares, of which it was agreed that ten should  
belong to St. Williams Dowman for various purposes, and the remainder  
be divided among the male members of his troop according to their  
rank and merit.

Dryden had a share and a quarter in the Kings Company, for which  
he bound himself to furnish, not two, but three Plays every season. The  
following Paper, which after remaining long in the Hellebrew family, came  
into the hands of the late Mr Reed, and was published by Mr Malone  
in his 'Historical Account of the English Stage' indisputably proves the  
practice alluded to. The superscription is lost, but it was probably  
addressed to the Lord Chamberlain, or the King about the year 1670.

' Oedipus ' the ground of complaint being printed in 1679 :

Whereas, upon Mr Dryden's binding himself to write three plays a yeere, he the said Mr Dryden was admitted and continued as a sharer in the Kings Playhouse for diverse yeeres, and received for his share and a quarter, three or four hundred pounds, communibus annis : but though he received the moneys, we received not the plays, not one in a yeere. After which, the house being burnt, the company in building another, contracted great debts, so that shares fell much short of what they were formerly. Thereupon Mr Dryden complaining to the company, of his want of profit, the company was so kind to him that they not only did not paye him for the plays, which he so engaged to write for them and for which he was paid beforehand, but they did also at his earnest request, give him a third day for his last new play, called, ' All for Love ' at the receipt of the money, for the said third day, he acknowledged it as a gift, and a particular kindness of the company. Yet notwithstanding this kind proceeding, Mr Dryden, has now, jointly with Mr Lee, who was in pension with us to the last day of our playing, and shall continue, written a Play called ' Oedipus ', and given it to the Dukes company, contrary to his said agreement,

his promise, and all gratitude, to the great prejudice, and almost  
undoing of the company, they being the only parts remaining to us,  
Mr Browne, being under the like agreement to the Duke's house, wrote  
a play called 'The Destruction of Jerusalem' and being forced by their  
refusal of it, to bring it to us, the said company compelled us, after  
the studying of it, and a vast expence in scenes and cloaths, to buy  
off their claime, by paying all the pension he had received from them  
amounting to one hundred and twelve pounds paid by the Kings  
Company, besides <sup>near</sup> forty pounds he the said Mr Browne paid out of his  
own pocket. These things considered if notwithstanding Mr Dryden  
said agreement promise and moneys freely given him for his said last  
new play and the many titles we have to his writings, this play be  
judged away from us, we must submit.

{ Signed. }

Charles Kellegrew

Charles Hart.

Rich Burt.

Cardell Goodman.

Mrs. Mohun

Ramb. — " You were saying you wondered how Drury Lane House,  
could stand so long, considering all those disadvantages you mentioned;  
but you must consider too, that they were in possession of the Patent, and  
the Stage, the other had neither: there was an immense charge to go through  
before they could be settled to any purpose; and after that, there must be  
allowed some time to pay Debts contracted by that charge  
Sull: 'Tis granted and I don't wonder more that they both stood, than  
that either of them stood under such oppressing hands: But I must  
needs think of the two, Drury Lane had the hardest time out: for how can  
a Stage subsist without good Actors? As to the other, 'tis true their  
charge was great, but we all know what means they found out, to  
make 'em lighter, we know what importuning and denning the  
Noblemen there was, what flattery and what promising there was,  
all at length the encouragement they received by liberal contributions  
set 'em in a condition to go on.

Ramb. In the mean time, the Mushrooms in Drury Lane, shoot  
up from such a desolate posture, into a considerable name; and  
not only grappled with their rivals, but almost eclipsed 'em "

| Hylton. !

29 MA 55

Colburn's usage of the verb, 'regret', here, may be said to confirm the  
censure of Fielding, who wrote in reviewing some other of his inadvertencies  
that it was, 'needless for a great writer to understand his grammar'.

These Lines alluded to the Revolt of the Persons above mention'd.

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, too late, convinced of their Error, in having provok'd their People to this Civil War of the Theatre! quite chang'd, and dismal, now, was the Prospect before them! their Houses thin, and the Town crowding into a new one! Actors at double Sallaries, and not half the usual Audiences, to pay them! And all this brought upon them, by those, whom their full Security had contemn'd, 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, I cannot help, in regard to Truth, remembering the rude, and riotous Havock we made of all the late dramatic Honours of the Theatre! all became at once the Spoil of Ignorance, and Self-conceit! *Shakespear* was defac'd, and tortured in every signal Character—*Hamlet*, and *Othello*, lost in one Hour all their good Sense, their Dignity, and Fame. *Brutus* and *Cassius* became noisy Blusterers, with bold unmeaning Eyes, mistaken Sentiments, and turgid Elocution! Nothing, sure, could more painfully regret a judicious Spectator, than to see, at our first setting out, with what rude

Confidence, those Habits, which actors of real Merit had left behind them, were worn by giddy Pretenders that so vulgarly disgraced them! Not young Lawyers in hir'd Robes, and Plumes, at a Masquerade, could be less, what they would seem, or more awkwardly personate the Characters they belong'd to. If, in all these Acts of wanton Waste, these Insults upon injur'd Nature, you observe, I have not yet charged one of them upon myself; it is not from an imaginary Vanity, that I could have avoided them; but that I was rather safe, by being too low, at that time, to be admitted even to my Chance of falling into the same eminent Errors: So that as none of those great Parts ever fell to my Share, I could not be accountable for the Execution of them: Nor indeed could I get one good Part of any kind, 'till many Months after; unless it were of that sort, which no body else car'd for, or would venture to expose themselves in. The first unintended Favour, therefore, of a Part of any Value, Necessity threw upon me, on the following Occasion.

As it has been always judg'd their natural Interest, where there are two Theatres, to do one another as much Mischief as they can; you may imagine it could not be long, before this hostile Policy shew'd itself, in Action. It happen'd, 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  
menaging

menaging Actors, (for they were now in a manner left to govern themselves) resolv'd, at any rate to steal a March upon the Enemy, and take Possession of the same Play the Day before them: Accordingly, *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, who, in my Opinion too much regarded it; for they shorten'd their first Orders, and resolv'd that *Hamlet* should to *Hamlet* be opposed, on the same Day; whereas, had they given notice in their Bills, that the same Play would have been acted by them the Day after, the Town would have been in no Doubt, which House they should have reserved themselves for; ours must certainly have been empty, and theirs, with more Honour, have been crowded: Experience, many Years after, in like Cases, has convinced me, that this would have been the more laudable Conduct. But be that as it may; when, in their *Monday's* Bills, it was seen that *Hamlet* was up against us, our Consternation was terrible, to find that so hopeful a Project was frustrated. In this Distress, *Powel*, who was our commanding Officer, and whose enterprising Head wanted nothing but Skill to carry him through the most desperate Attempts; for, like others of his Cast, he had murder'd many a Hero, only to get into his Cloaths. This *Powel*, I say, immediately called a Council of War; where the Question was, Whether he should fairly face the Enemy, or



make a Retreat, to some other Play of more probable Safety? It was soon resolved that to act *Hamlet* against *Hamlet*, would be certainly throwing away the Play, and disgracing themselves to little or no Audience; to conclude, *Powel*, who was vain enough to envy *Betterton*, as his Rival, 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 Motion was agreed to, *Nemine contradicente*; but, upon Enquiry, it was found, that there were not two Persons among them, who had ever acted, in that Play: But that Objection, it seems, (though all the Parts were to be study'd in six Hours) was soon got over; *Powel* had an Equivalent, *in petto*, that would balance any Deficiency on that Score; which was, that he would play the *Old Batchelor* himself, and mimick *Betterton*, throughout the whole Part. This happy Thought was approv'd with Delight and Applause, as whatever can be suppos'd to ridicule Merit, generally gives joy to those that want it: Accordingly, the Bills were chang'd, and at the Bottom insert'd;

*The Part of the Old Batchelor, to be perform'd in Imitation of the Original.*

Printed Books of the Play were sent for in haste, and every Actor had one, to pick out of it the Part he had chosen: Thus, while they were each of them chewing the Morsel, they had

There can be no doubt but that the acting at the Theatre Royal, was miserably inferior to what it had been — but perhaps Cibber's account is a little exaggerated — he had evidently a personal dislike to Powell — every thing therefore that he says, directly or indirectly against him must be received with some grain of allowance — Powell, seems to have been eager to exhibit himself in some of Belterton's best parts, whereas a more diffident Actor would have wished to avoid comparisons — we know from the Spectator that Powell was too apt to tear a professor to tatters, but still he must have been an Actor of considerable reputation at this time, or he would not have been cast for several good parts before the division of the company.

] Some Account of the English Stage. ]

had most mind to, some one 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 a-ground agen! nor was it to be conceiv'd who could make the least tolerable Shift with it. This Character had been so admirably acted by *Dogget*, that though it is only seen in the Fourth Act, it may be no Dispraise to the Play, to say, it probably ow'd the greatest Part of its Success to his Performance. But, as the Case was now desperate, any Resource was better than none. Somebody must swallow the bitter Pill, or the Play must die. At last it was recollected, that I had been heard to say in my wild way of talking, what a vast mind I had to play *Nykin*, by which Name the Character was more frequently call'd. Notwithstanding they were thus distress'd about the Disposal of this Part, most of them shook their Heads, at my being mention'd for it; yet *Powel*, who was resolv'd, at all Hazards, to fall upon *Betterton*, and having no concern for what might become of any one that serv'd his Ends or Purpose, order'd 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,

M-4 M. 25 for

for Study, as myself. But I had this casual Advantage of most of them; that having so constantly observ'd *Dogget's* Performance, I wanted but little Trouble, to make me perfect in the Words; so that when it came to my turn to rehearse, while others read their Parts, from their Books, I had put mine in my Pocket, and went thro' the first Scene without it; and though I was more abash'd to rehearse so remarkable a Part before the Actors (which is natural to most young People) than to act before an Audience, yet some of the better-natur'd encouraged me so far, as to say, they did not think I should make an ill Figure in it: To conclude, the Curiosity to see *Betterton* mimick'd, drew us a pretty good Audience, and *Powel*, (as far as Applause is a Proof of it) was allow'd to have burlesqu'd him very well. As I have question'd the certain Value of Applause, I hope I may venture, with less Vanity, to say how particular a Share I had of it, in the same Play. At my first Appearance, one might have imagin'd, by the various Murmurs of the Audience, that they were in doubt whether *Dogget* himself were 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 an Hair, was dress'd exactly like him: When I spoke, the Surprize was still greater, as if I had not only borrow'd his Cloaths, but his  
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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; after one loud *Plaudit* was ended, and sunk into a general Whisper, that seem'd still to continue their private Approbation, it reviv'd to a second, and again to a third, still louder than the former. 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 my self, 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 Characters I could be fit for. If I sollicited for any thing of a different Nature, I was answered, *That was not in my Way.* And what was  
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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 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; I still think, that a Painter, who can draw but one sort of Object, or an Actor that shines, but in one Light, can neither of them boast of that ample Genius, which is necessary to form a thorough Master of his Art: For tho' Genius may have a particular Inclination, yet a good History-Painter, or a good Actor, will, without being at a loss, give you, upon Demand, a proper Likeness of whatever nature produces. If he cannot do this, he is only an Actor, as the Shoemaker was allow'd a limited Judge of *Apelles's* Painting, but *not beyond his Last*. 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 his 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

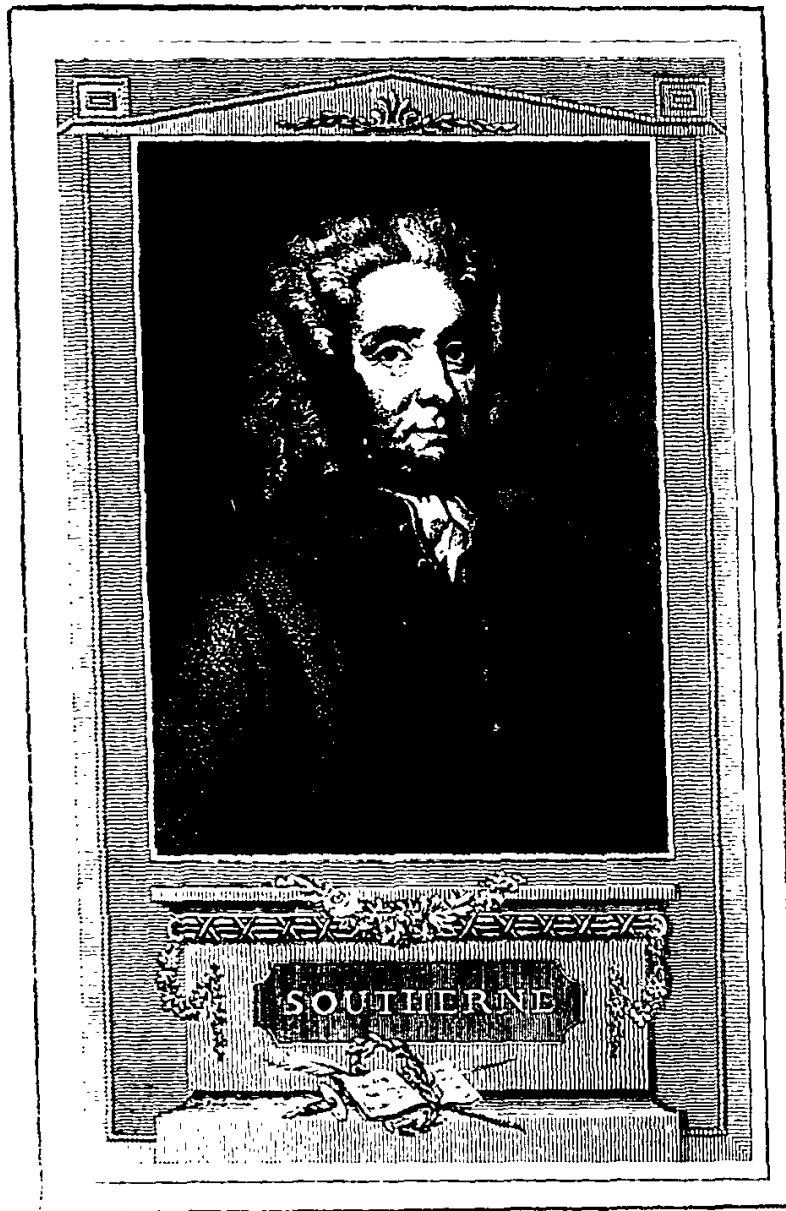
whole Tone of Voice, his Motion, his Look, and Gesture, whether in high, or lower Life, and, at the same time, keep close to those Variations, without leaving the Character they singly belong to; if his best Skill falls short of this Capacity, what Pretence have we to call him a complete Master of his Art? And tho' I do not insist, that he ought always to shew himself, in these various Lights, yet, before we compliment him with that Title, he ought, at least, by some few Proofs, to let us see, that he has them all, in his Power. 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 *Monfort*, 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 *Talboy* in the *Jovial Crew*; and when he was in great Esteem, as a Tragedian, he was, in Comedy, the most complete 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 Shapes he is able to throw himself into, you may naturally suspect, that I am all this while, leading my own Theatrical Character into 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. And to shew you, that I will conceal no Truth, that is against me, I frankly own, that had I been always left, to my own choice of Characters, I am doubtful whether I might ever have deserv'd an equal Share of that Estimation, which the Publick seem'd to have held me in: Nor am I sure, that it was not Vanity in me, often to have suspected, that I was kept out of the Parts, I had most mind to, by the Jealousy, or Prejudice of my Contemporaries; some Instances of which, I could give you, were they not too slight, to be remember'd: 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





form'd with a proportionable Negligence. But this Misfortune, if it were one, you are not to wonder at; for the same Fate attended me, more, or less, to the last Days of my remaining on the Stage. What Defect in me, this may have been owing to, I have not yet had Sense enough to find out, but I soon found out as good a thing, which was, never to be mortify'd at it: Though I am afraid this seeming Philosophy was rather owing to my Inclination to Pleasure, than Business. But to my Point. The next Year I produc'd the Comedy of *Love's last Shift*; yet the Difficulty of getting it to 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

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be a fair *Salvo*, for his favourable Judgment of the 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. But (now let me shew a little more Vanity, and my Apology for it, shall come after) the Compliment which my Lord *Dorset* (then Lord-Chamberlain) made me upon it, is, I own, what I had rather not suppress, *viz.* *That it was the best, First Play, that any Author in his Memory, had produc'd; and that for a young Fellow, to shew himself such an Actor, and such a Writer, in one Day, was something extraordinary.* But as this noble Lord has been celebrated for his Good-nature, I am contented, that as much of this Compliment should be suppos'd to exceed my Deserts, as may be imagin'd to have been heighten'd, by his generous Inclination to encourage a young Beginner. If this Excuse cannot soften the Vanity of telling a Truth so much, in my own Favour, I must lie, at the Mercy of my Reader. But there was a still higher Compliment pass'd upon me, which I may publish without Vanity, because it was not a design'd one, and apparently came from my Enemies, *viz.* That, to their certain Knowledge *it was not my own*: This Report is taken notice of in my Dedication to the Play. If they spoke Truth, if they knew what other Person it really belong'd to, I will, at least allow them true to their Trust; for above  
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Dennis, who hated Bibber for obstructing, as he imagined, the progress of one of his Tragedies, some years afterwards in every professional sense, denied his claim to this Comedy "When the Fool in Fashion, was first acted," says he critic, "Bibber was hardly twenty years of age: now could he at the age of twenty, write a Comedy, with a just design, distinguished characters, and a proper dialogue, who now, at forty, treats us with Heberman's sense, and Heberman's English?"

This Dedication was addressed to Richard Norton of Southwick Esquire, a Gentleman who was so fond of Plays and Players that he has been accused of turning his Chapel into a Theatre.

forty Years have since past, and they have not yet reveal'd the Secret.

The new Light, in which the Character of Sir *Novelty* had shewn me, one might have thought, were 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 Menagers, 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 dispos'd of, not one Part of any consequence was I preferr'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, to *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 Style of Baron of *Foppington*. This Play (the *Relapse*) from its new, and easy Turn of Wit, had great Success, and gave me, as a Comedian, a second Flight of Reputation along with it.

As the Matter I write must be very flat, or impertinent, to those, who have no Taste, or Concern for the Stage; and may to those, who delight in it too, be equally tedious, when I talk of no body but myself; I shall

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endeavour to relieve your Patience, by a Word or two more of this Gentleman, so far as he lent his Pen to the Support of the Theatre.

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 what 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 somewhere, at his Winter-Quarters, upon a very slender Acquaintance with Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, 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 rising 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 observ'd, that in *Love's last Shift*, most of the Actors had acquitted themselves, beyond what was expected of them; he took a sudden

sudden Hint from what he lik'd, in that Play, and in less than three Months, in the beginning 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, engag'd Sir *John Vanbrugh* to revise it, and give it to the Theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*. This was a Request not to be refus'd 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 Skipwith*, in the least disobliged, by so reasonable a Compliance: After which, Sir *John* was agen 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 look'd 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 exceeded them.

1697.



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 approv'd in *Æsop*, as the *Lord Foppington*, allowing the Difference, to be no less, than as Wisdom, in a Person deform'd, 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 with an Occasion to commend, than accuse himself?

Though, to write much, in a little time, is no Excuse for writing ill; yet Sir *John Vanbrugh's* Pen, is not to be a little admir'd, for its Spirit, Ease, and Readiness, in producing Plays so fast, upon the Neck of one another; for, notwithstanding this quick Dispatch, there is a clear and lively Simplicity in his Wit, that neither wants the Ornament of Learning, nor has the least Smell of the Lamp in it. As the Face of a fine Woman, with only her Locks loose, about her, may be then in its greatest Beauty; such were his Productions, only adorn'd by Nature. There is something so catching to the Ear, so easy to the Memory, in all he writ, that it has been observ'd, by all the Actors of my Time, that the Style of no Author whatsoever, gave their Memory  
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less trouble, than that of Sir *John Vanbrugh*; which I myself, who have been charg'd with several of his strongest Characters, can confirm by a pleasing Experience. And indeed his Wit, and Humour, was so little labour'd, that his most entertaining Scenes seem'd to be no more, than his common Conversation committed to Paper. Here, I confess my Judgment at a Loss, whether, in this, I give him more, or less, than his due Praise? For may it not be more laudable, to raise an Estate (whether in Wealth, or Fame) by Pains, and honest Industry, than to be born to it? Yet, if his Scenes really were, as to me they always seem'd, delightful, are they not, thus, expeditiously written, the more surprising? let the Wit, and Merit of them, then, be weigh'd by wiser Criticks, than I pretend to be: But no wonder, while his Conceptions were so full of Life, and Humour, his Muse should be sometimes too warm, to wait the slow Pace of Judgment, or to endure the Drudgery, of forming a regular Fable to them: Yet we see the *Relapse*, however imperfect, in the Conduct, by the mere Force of its agreeable Wit, ran away with the Hearts of its Hearers; while *Love's last Shift*, which (as Mr. *Congreve* justly said of it) had only in it, a great many things, that were *like* Wit, that in reality were *not* Wit. And what is still less pardonable (as I say of it myself) has a great deal of Puerility, and frothy Stage-Language in it, yet by the mere moral De-

light receiv'd from its Fable, it has been, with the other, in a continued, and equal Possession of the Stage, for more than forty Years.

As I have already promis'd 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 allow'd, 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 Endeavour 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

Sull: Louis last shift; or, the Fool in Fashion.

Ramb: Ay, marry, that Play was the Philosophers Stone; I think it did wonders.

Sull: It did so, and very deservedly: there being very few Comedies that came up to't, for purity of Plot, Manners, and Moral: It's often acted now a daies, and by the help of the Authors own good actions, it pleases to this day. "

| Gildon. |

Darborough says, in the Preface, that Powell was so drunk the first night, and had worked himself up to such a pitch of vigour, that he once thought it was all over with poor Mr Rogers.

follow intrinsic Merit; Applause will frequently open, like a young Hound, upon a wrong Scent; and the Majority of Auditors, you know, are generally compos'd 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 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 now to account for my having been, notwithstanding, so often seen, in some particular Characters in Tragedy, as *Jago, 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 is true, as true I fear (I had almost said hope) it is, I look upon it rather as 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 however, 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 injur'd, if I had pretended to any Share of it: So that you see, it

has been, as much the Dislike others had to them, as Choice, that has thrown me sometimes into these Characters. But it may be farther observ'd, that in the Characters I have nam'd, where there is so much close meditated Mischief, Deceit, Pride, Insolence, or Cruelty, they cannot have the least Cast, or Profer of the Amiable in them; consequently, there can be no great Demand for that harmonious Sound, or pleasing, round Melody of Voice, which in the softer Sentiments of Love, the Wailings of distressful Virtue, or in the Throws and Swellings of Honour, and Ambition, may be needful to recommend them to our Pity, or Admiration: So that again; my want of that requisite Voice might less disqualify me for the vicious, than the virtuous Character. This too may have been a more favourable Reason for my having been chosen for them — a yet farther Consideration, that inclin'd me to them, was that they are generally better written, thicker sown, with sensible Reflections, and come by so much nearer to common Life, and Nature, than Characters of Admiration, as Vice is more the Practice of Mankind than Virtue: Nor could I sometimes help smiling, at those dainty Actors, that were too squeamish to swallow them! as if they were one Jot the better Men, for acting a good Man well, or another Man the worse, for doing equal Justice to a bad one! 'Tis not, sure, *what* we act, but *how* we act what is allotted us, that speaks our intrinsic Value! as in real Life,  
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the wise Man, or the Fool, be he Prince, or Peasant, will, in either State, be equally the Fool, or the wise Man--- but alas! in personated Life, this is no Rule to the Vulgar! they are apt to think all before them real, and rate the Actor according to his borrow'd Vice, or Virtue.

If then I had always too careless a Concern for false, or vulgar Applause, I ought not to complain, if I have had less of it, than others of my time, or not less of it, than I desired: Yet I will venture to say, that from the common, weak Appetite of false Applause, many Actors have run into more Errors, and Absurdities, than their greatest Ignorance could otherwise have committed: If this Charge is true, it will lie chiefly upon the better Judgment of the Spectator to reform it.

But not to make too great a Merit of my avoiding this common Road to Applause, perhaps I was vain enough to think, I had more ways, than one, to come at it. 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 *Jago*, 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 with 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, or nicer Morals could bear.

These few Instances out of fifty more I could give you, may 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. How this Variety was executed (for by that only is its value to be rated) you who have so often been my Spectator, are the proper Judge: If you pronounce my Performance to have been defective, I am condemn'd by my own Evidence; if you acquit me, these Out-lines may serve for a Sketch of my Theatrical Character.





Darwin has furnished the following account of Gibber's excellence in his character, which for its spirit and fidelity, deserves the honour of transcription. " Whether he was a copy or an original in Shallow, it is certain no Audience were ever more fixed in deep attention at his first appearance, or more shaken with laughter in the progress of the scenes, than at Bolley Gibber's exhibition of this ridiculous Justice of the Peace. Some years after he had left the stage, he acted Shallow, for his Sons Benefit. I believe in 1737 when Quin was the Falstaff, and Milward the King. Whether it was owing to the pleasure the spectators felt on seeing their old friend return to them again, though for that night only, after an absence of some years, I know not, but surely no Actor, or Audience were ever better pleased with each other: his manner was so perfectly simple, his look so vacant when he questioned his Cousin Silence, about the price of Cures, and lamented in the same breath, with silly surprize the death of old Double, that it will be impossible for any surviving spectator not to smile at the remembrance of it. The want of ideas occasions Shallow to repeat almost every thing he says. Gibber's transition from asking the price of Bullocks, to bite but grave reflections on mortality, was so natural, and attended with such an unceasing roll of

his small pegs-eyes, accompanied with such an important utterance of ' tick ! tick ! tick ! ' not much louder than the balance of a Watch's pendulum. that I question if any Actor was ever superior in his conceptions or expressions of such solemn insignificance "



C H A P. VII.

*The State of the Stage continued. The Occasion of Wilks's commencing Actor. His Success. Facts relating to his Theatrical Talent. Actors more or less esteem'd from their private Characters.*

**T**HE *Lincoln's-Imm-Fields* Company were, now in 1693, a Common-wealth, like that of *Holland*, divided from the Tyranny of *Spain*: But the Similitude goes very little farther; short was the Duration of the Theatrical Power! for tho' Success pour'd in so fast upon them, at their first Opening, that every thing seem'd to support it self; yet Experience, in a Year or two shew'd them, that they had never been worse govern'd, than when they govern'd themselves! 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*, several of them wanted to govern, in their Turn; and were often out of Humour, that their Opinion was not equally regarded---- But have we not seen the same Infirmity in Senates? The Tragedians seem'd to think their Rank as much above the Comedians, as in the Characters they severally acted; when the first were in their  
Pinery,

1696.

Finery, the latter were impatient, at the Expence; and look'd 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*, upon surveying my 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 *Foppington* fill'd the House, when his bouncing *Borgia* would do little more than pay Fiddles, and Candles to it: And though a Character of Vanity, might be supposed more expensive in Dress, than possibly one of Ambition; yet the high Heart of this heroical Actor could not bear, that a Comedian should ever pretend to be as well dress'd as himself. 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 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,

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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 *Relapsé*, 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 desired 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 immovable 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  
*to be* this

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 melancholy 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 the same time, the old House, where there was scarce any other Merit than Industry, began to flourish. And indeed they seem'd not enough to consider, that the Appetite of the Publick, like that of a fine Gentleman, could only be kept warm, by Variety; that let their Merit be never so high, yet the Taste of a Town was not always constant, nor infallible: That it was dangerous to hold their Rivals in too much Contempt; for they found, that a young industrious Company were soon a Match, for the best Actors, when too securely negligent: And negligent they certainly were, and fondly fancied, that had each of their different Schemes been follow'd, their Audiences would not so suddenly have fallen off.

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,

Sull. ——— ' | at Drury Lane. | "great care being taken to act every thing as well as they could, they rubb'd on with tolerable success; after this, they braver'd each other with uncertain fortunes, this, sometimes up, that, sometimes down, so that 'twas hard to say which was most like to prevail

Ramb: ——— by this time the Town not being able to furnish out two good Audiences were day, shew'd their inclinations for the two Houses, as they found themselves inclin'd to Comedy or Tragedy: If they desir'd a Tragedy, they went to Lincoln's Inn Fields: if to Comedy they flock'd to Drury Lane: which was the reason that several days but one House acted: but by the variety of humours in the Town, they shar'd pretty equally the profit.

! yeldon. !

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 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 my self 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 of 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)



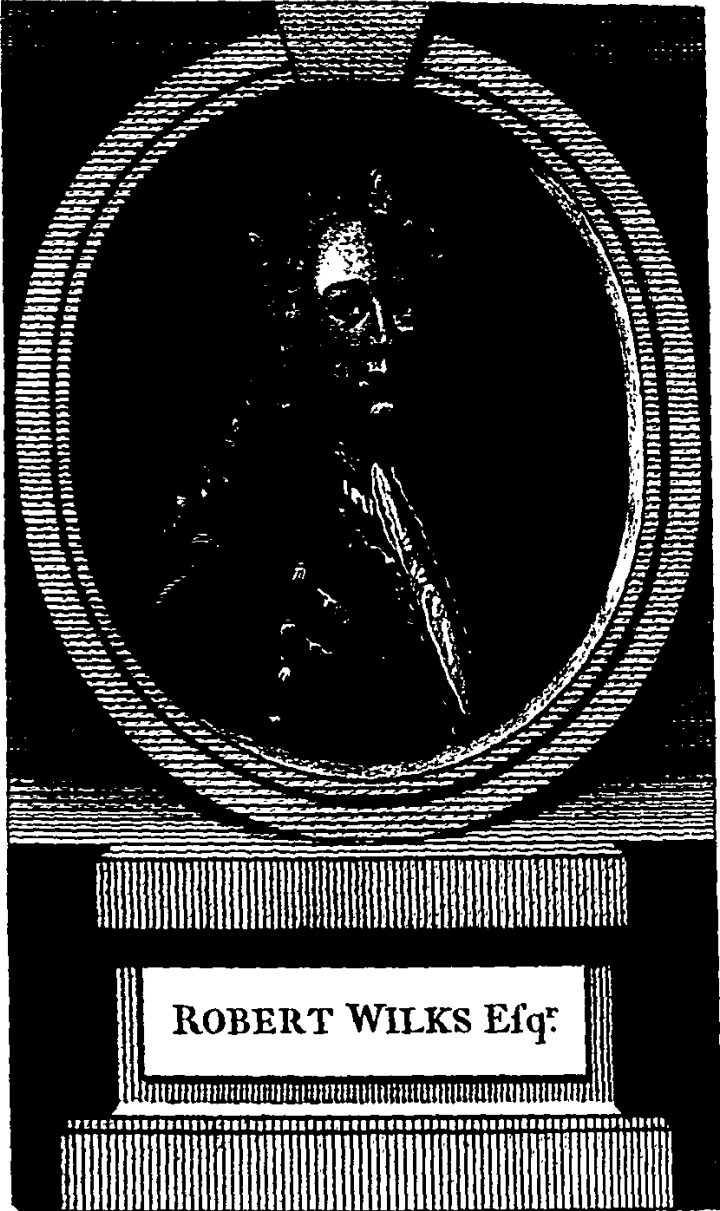
Dangers) took nothing so much to Heart, as that Partiality, wherewith he imagined the People of Quality had preferr'd the Actors of the other House, to those of his own: To balance this Misfortune, he was resolv'd, at least, to be well with their Domesticks, and therefore cunningly open'd the upper Gallery 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 Privilege (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 Privilege, so craftily given, and which from Custom, was at last ripen'd into Right, became the most disgraceful Nuisance, that ever depreciated the Theatre. How often have the most polite Audiences, in the most affecting Scenes of the best Plays, been disturb'd and insulted, by the Noise and Clamour of these savage Spectators? From the same narrow way of thinking too, were so many ordinary People, and unlick'd Cubs of Condition, admitted behind our Scenes, for Money, and sometimes without it: The Plagues and Inconveniencies of which Custom, we found so intolerable,

Dryden in his Epilogue at the Union, says.

Then for your Lacquys and your train beside,  
By what'er name or title dignity'd  
They roar so loud, you'd think behind the stairs  
Tom Dove and all the brotherhood of Bears:  
They're grown a nuisance beyond all disasters,  
Wise none so great but their unpaying masters.  
We beg you Sir, to beg your men that they  
Would please to give you leave to hear the Play.

\* Tom Dove, seems to have been a celebrated Bear-ward, he is mentioned in the Town Top — in the Maids' last Prayer — in the Epilogue to the Revial sisters — and the Prologue to the Pilgrims 1700

Bibber says, Wilkes, returned to the Theatre Royal in 1696 —  
but this is one instance among many others of Bibber's inaccuracy  
as to dates — Wilkes was certainly engaged in Dublin in 1698 —  
and could not return to the Theatre Royal till the Autumn of that  
year — probably not till the Autumn of 1699 — he might receive  
an invitation to England in 1695, but, | to use Bibber's own  
words, | his engagements in Ireland <sup>20 MA 55</sup> were too strong to be suddenly  
broken from.



ROBERT WILKS Esq.

tolerable, when we afterwards had the Stage in our Hands, that at the Hazard of our Lives, we were forced to get rid of them; and our only Expedient was, by refusing Money from all Persons, without Distinction, at the Stage-Door; by this means we preserved to ourselves the Right and Liberty of chusing our own Company there: And by a strict Observance of this Order, we brought what had been before debas'd into all the Licenses of a Lobby, into the Decencies of a Drawing-Room.

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. The considerable Figure which he so lately made upon the Stage in *London*, makes me imagine that a particular Account of his first commencing Actor may not be unacceptable, to the Curious; I shall, therefore, give it them, as I had it, from his own Mouth.

In King *James's* Reign he had been some time employ'd in the Secretary's Office in *Ireland* (his native Country) and remain'd in it, till after the Battle of the *Boyn*, which completed 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 dispersed, during the War, some private Persons agreed, in the best Manner they were able,

ble, 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 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. Here you have a much stronger Instance of an extravagant Passion for the Stage, than that, which I have elsewhere shewn in my self; I only quitted my *Hopes* of being prefer'd to the like Post, for it; but *Wilks* quitted his actual *Possession*, for the imaginary Happiness, which the Life of an Actor presented to him. And, though possibly, we might both have better'd our Fortunes, in a more honourable Station; yet whether better Fortunes might have equally gratify'd our Vanity (the universal Passion of Mankind) may admit of a Question.

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 Clats, 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,

Actors, that there was very little hope of getting forward) laid hold of a more expeditious way for his Advancement, and returned again to *Dublin*, with Mr. *Ashbury*, the Patentee of that Theatre, to act in his new Company there: There went with him, at the same time, Mrs. *Butler*, whose Character I have already given, and *Esfcourt*, who had not appeared on any Stage, and was yet only known as an excellent Mimick: *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 raised, 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 *Monfort'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 *Monfort*, and the only Actor that stood in *Wilks's* way; in seeming Civility, offer'd him his choice of whatever he thought fit to make his first Appearance in; though, in reality, the Favour was intended to hurt him. But *Wilks* rightly judg'd it more modest, to accept only of a Part

of *Powel's*, and which *Monfort* 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. *Monfort*, 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 this 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. I ought to make some Allowances too, for the Restraint he must naturally have been under, from his first Appearance upon a new Stage. But from that he soon recovered, and grew daily more in Favour not only of the Town, but likewise of the Patentee, whom *Powel*, before *Wilks's* Arrival, had treated, in almost what manner he pleas'd.

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



Gornish Comedy — The Author gave it to Powell, who in his Dedication to Rich. says " You are so much the gentleman in your candour and goodness, and the conduct of your whole administration among us, that nothing but the highest ingratitude can play the infidel with you — 'tis true you have unhappily met with too many barbarous returns, from murmurers and mistifiers, but their revolt is their shame not yours: and against such poor apostacy, I here enter my public protestation and abhorrence." — When Powell wrote this he was a sort of Manager under Rich. he afterwards turned apostate and joined the company at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

[Some Account of the English Stage.]

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 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, and that he made a worse Figure among them, than in the Company he came from, he stay'd but one Winter with them, before he return'd 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.

However trifling these Theatrical Anecdotes may seem, to a sensible Reader, yet as the different Conduct of these rival Actors may be of use, to others of the same Profession, and from thence may contribute to the Pleasure of the Publick; let that be my Excuse, for pursuing

them. 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 do 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. To be Master of this uncommon Diligence, is adding, to the Gift of Nature, all that is in an Actor's Power; and this Duty of Studying perfect, whatever Actor is remiss in, he will proportionably find, that Nature may have been kind to him, in vain, for though *Powel* had an Assurance, that cover'd this Neglect much better, than a Man of more Modesty might have done; yet with all his Intrepidity, very often the Diffidence, and Concern for what he was to *say*, made him lose the Look of what he was to *be*: While, therefore, *Powel* presided, his idle Example made this Fault so common to others, that I cannot but confess, in the general Infection, I had my Share of it; nor was my too critical Excuse for it, a good one, *viz.* That scarce  
one

" *W<sup>o</sup> Spectator* .

I am appointed to act a part in the new Tragedy, called *The Distressed Mother*: It is the celebrated *Grief of Orestes* which I am to personate; but I shall not act as I ought, for I shall feel it too intimately to be able to utter it. I was last night repeating a Paragraph to myself, which I took to be an expression of Rage, and in the middle of the sentence there was a stroke of self-pity, which quite unmanned me. Be pleased Sir to print this Letter that when I am oppressed in this manner at such an interval, a certain part of the Audience may not think that I am out; and I hope with their allowance to do it to satisfaction

I am

Sir

Your most humble Servant

George Powell.

| Original Spectator N<sup>o</sup> 290. February, 1712. |

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 consider'd, 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: And I have been astonished, to see him swallow a Volume of Froth, and Insipidity, in a new Play, that we were sure could not live above three Days, tho' favour'd, and recommended to the Stage, by some good person of Quality. Upon such Occasions, in Compassion to his fruitless Toil, and Labour, I have sometimes cry'd out with *Cato*——*Painful Præeminence!* So insupportable, in my Sense, was the Task, when the bare Praise, of not having been negligent, was sure to be the only Reward of it. But so indefatigable was the Diligence of *Wilks*, that he seem'd to love it, as a good Man does Virtue, for its own sake; of which the following Instance will give you an extraordinary Proof.

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

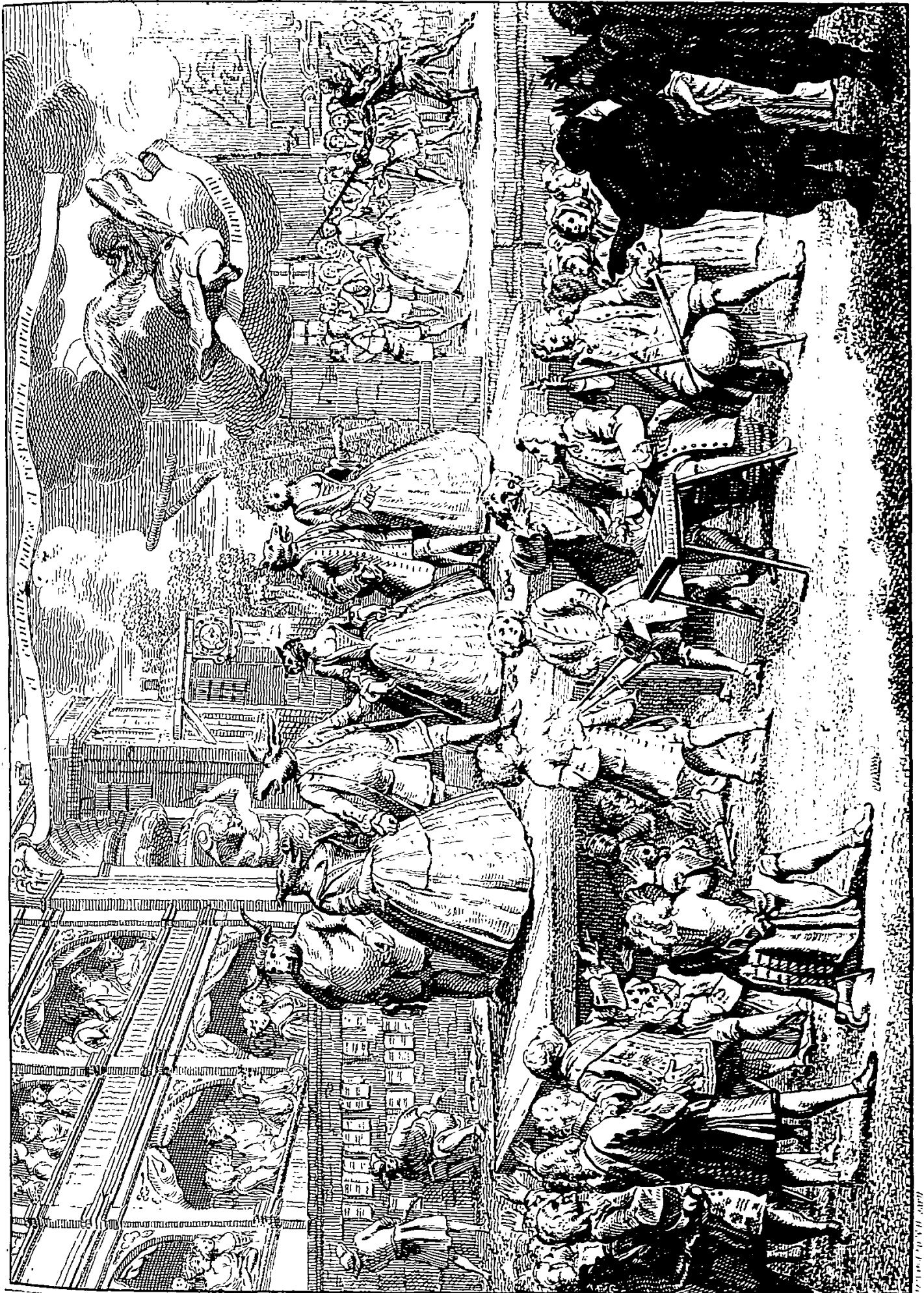
out. But, when he got home, from the Rehearsal, *Wilks* thought it such an Indignity to his Memory that any thing should be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himself perfect in that Speech, though he knew it was never to be made use of. From this singular Act of Supererogation, you may judge, how indefatigable the Labour of his Memory must have been, when his Profit, and Honour, were more concern'd to make use of it.

But besides this indispensable 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 pursu'd him; neither the Heroe, 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 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. Let me give a known Instance of it, and, at the same time, a Justification of myself, from an Imputation, that was laid upon me, many Years, before I quitted the Theatre, of which you will see the Consequence.

After

"In this last remark Bibber is too severe on Powell — for tho' the Public have an undoubted right to censure an Actor for his neglect and drunkenness, yet they have no business to concern themselves, with any faults that he may have, unconnected with the Stage — but whatever faults there may be in the remark, it comes with a bad grace from Bibber whose private conduct was so reprehensible, and whose love of Gaming rendered him a negligent Father, and unkind to his family and relations — this attention to the Gaming Table would not, we may be assured render him fatter for his business on the Stage — after many an industry run, he has arrived at the Theatre, hummed an Opera tune, and then walked on the Stage with great composure — very imperfect in the part he was to act. — Davis says, that he has seen him at fault where it was least expected in parts which he had acted an hundred times — for instance in *1<sup>st</sup> Bourlles Que*, — but Bibber dexterously supplies the deficiency of his memory by prolonging his ceremonious bow to the Lady, and drawing out, "your humble servant: Madam" to an extraordinary length — then taking a pinch of snuff and strutting deliberately across the Stage, he would gravely ask the Prompter.

"What is next?"





After the vast Success of that new Species of Dramatick Poetry, the *Beggar's Opera*; The Year following, I was so stupid, as to attempt something of the same Kind, upon a quite different Foundation, that of recommending Virtue, and Innocence; which I ignorantly thought, might not have a less Pretence to Favour, than setting Greatness, and Authority, in a contemptible, and the most vulgar Vice, and Wickedness, in an amiable Light. But behold how fondly I was mistaken! *Love in a Riddle* (for so my new-fangled Performance was called) was as vilely damn'd, and hooted at, as so vain a Presumption, in the idle Cause of Virtue, could deserve. Yet this is not what I complain of; I will allow my Poetry, to be as much below the other, as Taste, or Criticism, can sink it: I will grant likewise, that the applauded Author of the *Beggars Opera* (whom I knew to be an honest good-natur'd Man, and who, when he had descended to write more like one, in the Cause of Virtue, had been as unfortunate, as others of that Class;) I will grant, I say, that in his *Beggars Opera*, he had more skilfully gratify'd the Publick Taste, than all the brightest Authors that ever writ before him; and I have sometimes thought, from the Modesty of his Motto, *Nos' hæc novimus esse nihil*, that he gave them that Performance as a Satyr upon the Depravity of their Judgment (as *Ben. Johnson*, of old, was said to give his *Bartholomew-Fair*, in Ridicule of the vulgar Taste, which had disliked his *Sejanus*)

and that, by artfully seducing them, to be the Champions, of the Immoralities he himself detested, he should be amply reveng'd on their former Severity, and Ignorance. This were indeed a Triumph! which, even the Author of *Cato*, might have envy'd, *Cato!* 'tis true, succeed- ed, but reach'd not, by full forty Days, the Pro- gress, and Applauses of the *Beggars Opera*. Will it, however, admit of a Question, which of the two Compositions, a good Writer, would rather wish to have been the Author of? Yet, on the other side, must we not allow, that to have taken a whole Nation, High, and Low, into a general Applause, has shown a Power in Poetry, which though often attempted in the same kind, none but this one Author, could ever yet arrive at? By what Rule, then, are we to judge of our true National Taste? But, to keep a little closer to my Point,

The same Author, the next Year, had, ac- cording to the Laws of the Land transported his Heroe to the *West-Indies*, in a Second Part to the *Beggars Opera*; but so it happen'd, to the Surprize of the Publick, this Second Part was forbid to come upon the Stage! Various were the Speculations, upon this act of Pow- er: Some thought that the Author, others that the Town, was hardly dealt with; a third sort, who perhaps had envy'd him the Suc- cess of his first Part, affirm'd, when it was printed, that, whatever the Intention might be, the Fact was in his Favour, that he had been a greater Gainer, by Subscriptions to his Copy,  
than

For a particular account of the *Beggars Opera*, and  
notice of the actors in it, see *Life of Macklin*, Vol 12,  
p. 27 of this Collection.

than he could have been by a bare Theatrical Presentation. Whether any Part of these Opinions were true, I am not concerned to determine, or consider. But how they affected me, I am going to tell you. Soon after this Prohibition, my Performance was to come upon the Stage, at a time, when many People were out of Humour at the late Disappointment, and seem'd willing to lay hold of any Pretence of making a Reprizal. Great Umbrage was taken, that I was permitted, to have the whole Town to my self, by this absolute Forbiddance of what, they had more mind to have been entertain'd with. And, some few Days before my *Bawble* was acted, I was inform'd, that a strong Party would be made against it: This Report I slighted, as not conceiving why it should be true; and when I was afterwards told, what was the pretended Provocation of this Party, I slighted it, still more, as having less Reason to suppose, any Persons could believe me capable (had I had the Power) of giving such a Provocation. The Report, it seems, that had run against me, was this: That, to make way for the Success of my own Play, I had privately found means, or made Interest, that the Second Part of the *Beggars Opera*, might be suppressed. What an involuntary Compliment did the Reporters of this falshood make me? to suppose me of Consideration enough to Influence a great Officer of State to gratify the Spleen, or Envy of a Comedian, so far as to rob the Publick of an innocent

innocent Diversion (if it were such) that none, but that cunning Comedian, might be suffered to give it them. This is so very gross a Supposition, that it needs only its own senseless Face, to confound it; let that alone, then, be my Defence against it. But against blind Malice, and staring inhumanity, whatever is upon the Stage, has no Defence! There, they knew, I stood helpless, and expos'd, to whatever they might please to load, or asperse me with. I had not considered, poor Devil! that, from the Security of a full Pit, Dunces, might be Criticks, Cowards valiant, and 'Prentices Gentlemen! Whether any such were concern'd in the Murder of my Play, I am not certain; for I never endeavour'd, to discover any one of its Assassins; I cannot afford them a milder Name, from their unmanly manner of destroying it. Had it been heard, they might have left me nothing to say to them: 'Tis true, it faintly held up its wounded Head, a second Day, and would have spöke for Mercy, but was not suffer'd. Not even the Presence of a Royal Heir apparent, could protect it. But then I was reduced to be serious with them; their Clamour, then, became an Insolence, which I thought it my Duty, by the Sacrifice of any Interest of my own, to put an end to. I therefore quitted the Actor, for the Author, and, stepping forward to the Pit, told them, *That since I found they were not inclin'd, that this Play should go forward, I gave them my Word, that after this Night, it should never be acted agen: But that,*  
*in*

*in the mean time, I hop'd, they would consider, in whose Presence they were, and for that Reason, at least, would suspend what farther Marks of their Displeasure, they might imagine I had deserved.* At this there was a dead Silence; and, after some little Pause, a few civiliz'd Hands, signify'd their Approbation. When the Play went on, I observ'd about a Dozen Persons, of no extraordinary Appearance, sullenly walk'd out of the Pit. After which, every Scene of it, while uninterrupted, met with more Applause, than my best Hopes had expected. But it came too late: Peace to its *Manes!* I had given my Word it should fall, and I kept it, by giving out another Play, for the next Day, though I knew the Boxes were all lett for the same again. Such, then, was the Treatment I met with: How much of it, the Errors of the Play might deserve, I refer to the Judgment of those who may have Curiosity, and idle time enough to read it. But if I had no occasion to complain of the Reception it met with, from its *quieted* Audience, sure it can be no great Vanity, to impute its Disgraces chiefly, to that severe Resentment, which a groundless Report of me had inflam'd: Yet those Disgraces have left me something to boast of, an Honour preferable, even to the Applause of my Enemies: A noble Lord came behind the Scenes, and told me, from the Box, where he was in waiting, *That what I said, to quiet the Audience, was extremely well taken there; and that I had been com-*  
*mended*

*mended for it, in a very obliging manner.* Now, though this was the only Tumult, that I have known to have been so effectually appeas'd, these fifty Years, by any thing that could be said to an Audience, in the same Humour; I will not take any great Merit to myself upon it; because when, like me, you will but humbly submit to their doing you all the Mischief they can, they will, at any time, be satisfy'd.

I have mention'd this particular Fact, to in-force what I before observ'd, That the private Character of an Actor will always, more or less, affect his Publick Performance. And if I suffer'd so much, from the bare *Suspicion* of my having been guilty of a base Action; what should not an Actor expect, that is hardy enough, to think his whole private Character of no consequence? I could offer many more, tho' less severe Instances, of the same Nature. 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 Maiden-keel, Amintor, at my Years?* — have sometimes been a much stronger Jest, for being a true one. But these are Reproaches, which,  
in

in all Nations, the Theatre must have been us'd to, unless we could suppose Actors something more, than Human Creatures, void of Faults, or Frailties. 'Tis a Misfortune, at least, 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, from the Witlings of a Pit, has been carry'd 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 in this Discretion she was alone, few others were afraid of undeserving the finest things, that could be said, to them. 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 deceiv'd, and not suffer his Imagination, so far to wander, from the well-acted Character before him, as to gratify a frivolous Spleen, by Mocks, or personal Sneers, on the Performer, at the Expence of his better Entertainment. But I must now take up *Wilks*, and *Powel*, again, where I left them.

Though the Contention for Superiority, between them, seem'd about this time, to end in favour of the former, yet the Distress of the Patentee (in having his Servant his Master, as

*Powel*



*Powel* had lately been) was not much reliev'd by the Victory; he had only chang'd the Man, but not the Malady: For *Wilks*, by being in Possession of so many good Parts, fell into the common Error of most Actors, that of overrating their Merit, or never thinking it is so thoroughly consider'd, as it ought to be; which generally makes them proportionably troublesome to the Master; who, they might consider, only pays them, to profit by them. The Patentee therefore, found it as difficult to satisfy 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 were not grudg'd him: Not but our good Master, was as sly a Tyrant, as ever was at the Head of a Theatre; for he gave the Actors more Liberty, and fewer Days Pay, than any of his Predecessors: He would laugh with them over a Bottle, and bite them, in their Bargains: He kept them poor, that they might not be able to rebel; and sometimes merry, that they might not think of it: All their Articles of Agreement had a Clause in them, that he was sure to creep out at, *viz.* Their respective Sallaries, were to be paid, in such manner, and proportion, as others of the same Company were paid; which in effect, made them all, when he pleas'd, but limited Sharers of Loss, and himself sole Proprietor of Profits; and this Loss, or Profit, they only had such verbal Accounts of, as he thought proper to give them. 'Tis true, he would sometimes  
advance

advance them Money (but not more, than he knew at most could be due to them) upon their Bonds; upon which, whenever they were mutinous, he would threaten to sue them. This was the Net we danc'd in for several Years: But no wonder we were Dupes, while our Master was a Lawyer. This Grievance, however, *Wilks* was resolv'd for himself, at least, to remedy at any rate; and grew daily more intractable, for every Day his Redress was delay'd. Here our Master found himself under a Difficulty, he knew not well how to get out of: For as he was a close subtle Man, he seldom made use of a Confident, in his Schemes of Government: But here the old Expedient of Delay, would stand him in no longer stead; *Wilks* must instantly be comply'd with, or *Powel* come again into Power! In a word, he was push'd so home, that he was reduc'd even to take my Opinion into his Assistance: For he knew I was a Rival to neither of them; perhaps too, he had fancy'd, that from the Success of my first Play, I might know as much of the Stage, and what made an Actor valuable, as either of them: He saw too, that tho' they had each of them five good Parts to my one; yet the Applause which in my few, I had met with, was given me by better Judges, than, as yet, had approv'd of the best they done. They generally measured the goodness of a Part, by the Quantity, or Length of it: I thought none bad for being short, that were closely-natural; nor any the better, for being long,

long, without that valuable Quality. But, in this, I doubt, as to their Interest, they judg'd better, than myself; for I have generally observ'd, that those, who do a great deal not ill, have been preferr'd to those, who do but little, though never so masterly. And therefore I allow, that while there were so few good Parts, and as few good Judges of them, it ought to have been no Wonder to me, that, as an Actor; I was less valued, by the Master, or the common People, than either of them: All the Advantage I had of them, was, that by not being troublesome, I had more of our Master's personal Inclination, than any Actor of the male Sex; and so much of it, that I was almost the only one, whom at that time, he us'd to take into his Parties of Pleasure; very often *tete à tete*, and sometimes, in a *Partie quarrée*. These then were the Qualifications, however good, or bad, to which may be imputed our Master's having made choice of me, to assist him, in the Difficulty, under which he now labour'd. He was himself sometimes inclin'd to set up *Powel* again as a Check upon the over-bearing Temper of *Wilks*: Tho' to say truth, he lik'd neither of them; but was still under a Necessity, that one of them should preside; tho' he scarce knew which of the two Evils to chuse. This Question, when I happen'd to be alone with him, was often debated in our Evening Conversation; nor indeed, did I find it an easy matter to know which Party I ought to recommend

to

to his Election. I knew they were neither of them Well-wishers to me, as in common they were Enemies to most Actors, in proportion to the Merit, that seem'd to be rising, in them. But as I had the Prosperity of the Stage more at Heart, than any other Consideration, I could not be long undetermined, in my Opinion, and therefore gave it to our Master, at once, in Favour of *Wilks*. I, with all the Force I could muster, insisted, " That if *Powel* " were preferr'd, the ill Example o. .is Neg- " ligencc, and abandon'd Character (whatever " his Merit on the Stage might be) would re- " duce our Company to Contempt, and Beg- " gary; observing at the same time, in how " much better Order our Affairs went forward, " since *Wilks* came among us, of which I re- " counted several Instances, that are not so ne- " cessary to tire my Reader with. All this, " though he allow'd to be true; yet *Powel*, he " said, was a better Actor than *Wilks*, when " he minded his Business (that is to say, when " he was, what he seldom was, sober) But " *Powel*, it seems, had a still greater Merit " to him, which was, (as he observ'd) that " when Affairs were in his Hands, he had " kept the Actors quiet, without one Day's " Pay, for six Weeks together, and it was not " every body could do that; for you see, said " he, *Wilks* will never be easy, unless I give " him his whole Pay, when others have it nor, " and what an Injustice would that be to the " rest, if I were to comply with him? How " do

“ do I know, but then they may be all, in a  
 “ Mutiny, and *mayhap* (that was his Expres-  
 “ sion) with *Powel* at the Head of 'em?”  
 By this Specimen of our Debate, it may be  
 judg'd, under how particular, and merry a  
 Government, the Theatre then labour'd. To  
 conclude, this Matter ended in a Resolution,  
 to sign a new Agreement, with *Wilks*, which  
 entitled him, to his full Pay of four Pounds a  
 Week, without any conditional Deductions.  
 How far soever my Advice might have con-  
 tributed to our Master's settling his Affairs upon  
 this Foot, I never durst make the least Merit  
 of it to *Wilks*, well knowing that his great  
 Heart would have taken it as a mortal Affront,  
 had I (tho' never so distantly) hinted, that his  
 Demands had needed any Assistance, but the  
 Justice of them. From this time, then, *Wilks*  
 became first Minister, or Bustle-master-general  
 of the Company. He, now, seem'd to take  
 new Delight, in keeping the Actors close to  
 their Business; and got every Play reviv'd with  
 Care, in which he had acted the chief Part, in  
*Dublin*: 'Tis true, this might be done with a  
 particular View of setting off himself to Ad-  
 vantage; but if, at the same time, it served  
 the Company, he ought not to want our Com-  
 mendation: Now, tho' my own Conduct, nei-  
 ther had the Appearance of his Merit, nor the  
 Reward that follow'd his Industry; I cannot  
 help observing, that it shew'd me, to the best  
 of my Power, a more cordial Common-  
 wealth's Man: His first Views, in servig  
 himself

himself, made his Service to the whole but an incidental Merit; whereas, by my prosecuting the Means, to make him easy, in his Pay, unknown to him, or without asking any Favour for my self, at the same time, I gave a more unquestionable Proof of my preferring the Publick, to my Private Interest: From the same Principle I never murmur'd at whatever little Parts fell to my Share, and though I knew it would not recommend me to the Favour of the common People, I often submitted to play wicked Characters, rather than they should be worse done by weaker Actors than my self: But perhaps, in all this Patience under my Situation, I supported my Spirits, by a conscious Vanity: For I fancied I had more Reason to value myself, upon being sometimes the Confident, and Companion of our Master, than *Wilks* had, in all the more publick Favours he had extorted from him. I imagined too, there was sometimes as much Skill to be shewn, in a short Part, as in the most voluminous, which he generally made choice of; that even the coxcomby Follies of a Sir *John Daw*, might as well distinguish the Capacity of an Actor, as all the dry Enterprizes, and busy Conduct of a *Truewit*. Nor could I have any Reason to repine at the Superiority he enjoy'd, when I consider'd at how dear a Rate it was purchased, at the continual Expence of a restless Jealousy, and fretful Impatience--- These were the Passions, that, in the height of his Successes, kept him lean to his last Hour, while what I want-

ed in Rank, or Glory, was amply made up to me, in Ease and Chearfulness. But let not this Observation either lessen his Merit, or lift up my own; since our different Tempers were not, in our Choice, but equally natural, to both of us. To be employ'd on the Stage was the Delight of his Life; to be justly excused from it, was the Joy of mine: I lov'd Ease, and he Pre-eminence: In that, he might be more commendable. Tho' he often disturb'd me, he seldom could do it, without more disordering himself: In our Disputes, his Warmth could less bear Truth, than I could support manifest Injuries: 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. By this opposite Conduct, our Accounts at the End of our Labours, stood thus: While he lived, he was the elder Man, when he died, he was not so old as I am: 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; and I, by having had a less cholerick Ambition, am still tasting mine, in Health, and Liberty. But, 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--- Some Facts, that will vouch for the Truth of this Account, will be found in the

Sequel

Ramb: Wilks deserves encouragement, because he takes pains.

Crit: Too much; his feet never stand still; he is like the pendulum of a clock, perpetually shuffling from one side to t'other: that affected levity in his heels, renders him as antic as griffin is still and formal: they too make the prettiest Antitheses in the World. "

| Gildon. |



Sequel of these Memoirs. 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 though *Powel* had from Nature, much more than *Wilks*; in Voice, and Ear, in Elocution, in Tragedy, and Humour in Comedy, greatly the Advantage of him; yet, as I have observ'd, from the Neglect, and Abuse of those valuable Gifts, he suffer'd *Wilks* to be of thrice the Service to our Society. Let me give another 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, careful 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 Salary, than any Man-Actor had enjoy'd, 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* return'd from *Dublin*, *Booth*, who had commenced Actor, upon that Theatre, came over to the Company, in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*: He was then but an Under-graduate of

1701.

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 Distresses *Powel* had plung'd himself by the same Vice, he was so struck with the Terror of his Example, that he fix'd a Resolution (which from that time, to the End of his Days, he strictly observ'd) of utterly reforming it; an uncommon Act of Philoſophy in a young Man! of which in his Fame, and Fortune, he afterwards enjoy'd the Reward and Benefit. These Observations I have not merely thrown together as a Moralift, but to prove, that the briskeſt looſe Liver, or intemperate Man (though Morality were out of the Question) can never arrive at the neceſſary Excellencies of a good, or uſeful Actor.



In the Theatre Royal, there is an old snarling Lawyer.  
Master and Sovereign; a waspish ignorant Pettifogger, in Law and  
Poetry — one who understands Poetry, no more than Algebra, —  
he would sooner have the grace of Heaven, than do every body  
justice — what a plague has he to do, so far out of his way?  
Can't he pore over his Plowden and Dutton, and let Fletcher and  
Beaumont alone " 29 MA 55

| Lyden's Comparison between the two Stages, 1702. |



C H A P. VIII.

*The Patentee of Drury-Lane wiser than his Actors. His particular Management. The Author continues to write Plays. Why. The best dramattick Poets censured, by J. 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. A Complaint against him. His Authority founded upon Custom only. The late Law for fixing that Authority, in a proper Person, considered.*

**T**HOUGH the Master of our Theatre had no Conception himself of Theatrical Merit, either in Authors, or Actors; yet his Judgment was govern'd by a saving Rule, in both: He look'd into his Receipts for the Value of a Play, and from common Fame he judg'd of his Actors. But by whatever Rule he was govern'd, while he had prudently reserv'd to himself a Power of not paying them more than their Merit could get, he could not be much deceived by their being over, or under-valued. In a Word, he had, with great Skill inverted the Constitution of the Stage, and quite changed the Channel of Profits, arising from it; formerly, (when there was but one Company) the Proprietors punctually paid the

the Actors their appointed Sallaries, and took to themselves only the clear Profits: But our wiser Proprietor, took first out of every Day's Receipts two Shillings in the Pound to himself; and left their Sallaries, to be paid, only, as the less, or greater Deficiencies of acting (according to his own Accounts) would permit. What seem'd most extraordinary in these Measures, was, that at the same time, he had persuaded us to be contented with our Condition, upon his assuring us, that as fast as Money would come in, we should all be paid our Arrears: And that we might not have it always in our Power to say he had never intended to keep his Word; I remember in a few Years, after this time, he once paid us nine Days, in one Week: This happen'd, when the *Funeral*, or *Grief à la Mode* was first acted, with more than expected Success. Whether this well-tim'd Bounty was only allow'd us, to save Appearances, I will not say: But if that was his real Motive for it, it was too costly a frolick to be repeated, and was, at least the only Grimace of its kind he vouchsafed us; we never having received one Day more of those Arrears, in above fifteen Years Service.

While the Actors were in this Condition, I think I may very well be excused, in my presuming to write Plays: which I was forced to do, for the Support of my encreasing Family, my precarious Income, as an Actor, being then too scanty, to supply it, with even the Necessaries of Life.

It

It may be observable too, that my Muse, and my Spouse were equally prolifick; that the one was seldom the Mother of a Child, but in the same Year the other made me the Father of a Play: I think we had a Dozen of each Sort between us; of both which kinds, some died in their Infancy, and near an equal Number of each were alive, when I quitted the Theatre---- But it is no Wonder, when a Muse is only call'd upon, by Family Duty, she should not always rejoice, in the Fruit of her Labour: To this Necessity of writing then, I attribute the Defects of my second Play, which coming out too hastily, the Year after my first, turn'd to very little Account. But having got as much, by my first, as I ought to have expected, from the Success of 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; and that it might be peaceably forgotten, I have not given it a Place, in the two Volumes of those I publish'd in Quarto in the Year 1721. And whenever I took upon me, to make some dormant Play of an old Author, to the best of my Judgment, fitter for the Stage, it was honestly, not to be idle, that set me to work; as a good Housewife will mend old Linnen, when she has not better Employment: But when I was more warmly engag'd by a Subject entirely new, I only thought it a good Subject, when it seem'd worthy of an abler Pen, than my own, and might prove as useful to the Hearer,

as

as profitable to my self: Therefore, whatever any of my Productions, might want of Skill, Learning, Wit, or Humour, or however unqualify'd 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, upon which a Man of Sense and Probity should value himself: I mean when they do not, as well *prodesse*, as *delectare*, give Profit with Delight! The *Utile Dulci* was, of old, equally the Point; and has always been my Aim, however wide of the Mark, I may have shot my Arrow. It has often given me Amazement, 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 abus'd, 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 had 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

The Spectator says, "Such incidents as these make some ladies wholly absent themselves from the Play house; and others, never miss the first day of a new Play, least it should prove too ludicrous to admit of their going with any countenance to the second.

29 MA 55





*Idem: Ryle Pinat.*

*P. & G. Sculp.*

**M<sup>r</sup> JOHN DRYDEN.**

*Anno. 1683. Etat: 52.*

*1683*

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 Days 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*, revived 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.*

*The Life of Mr. COLLEY CIBBER, &c.*

*He tells you, that this very moral Age  
Receiv'd the first Infection from the Stage.  
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 pro-  
fane,*

*Tainted the Stage, for some small snip of Gain.  
For they, like Harlots under Bawds profess,  
Took all th'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;  
White-hall the naked Venus first reveal'd.  
Where standing as at Cyprus, in her Shrine,  
The Strumpet was ador'd with Rites di-  
vine, &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 on what Occasion they both fell to my Share, and how other Actors were affected by it.

Sir

Fielder, in his comparison of the two Stages in 1702, after mentioning the success with which Henry 4<sup>th</sup> and Henry 8<sup>th</sup> had been received at the Lincoln Inn Fields Theatre makes one of the speakers in the Dialogue say. — "The Battle continued a long time doubtful, and Victor hovering over both Camps. Betterton solicits for more auxiliaries from the same Author, and then he flanks his enemy with Measure for Measure. — 'Nay then, says the whole party at Drury Lane, will even put the Pilgrim upon him' — 'Ay, faith, so we will says Dryden, and if you will let me have the profits of the third night, I'll give you a secular Masque' — 'You', says the House, and so the bargain was struck.

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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 on what Occasion they both fell to my Share, and how other Actors were affected by it.

Sir

Johnson, in his comparison of the two Stages in 1702, after mentioning the success with which Henry 4<sup>th</sup> and Henry 8<sup>th</sup> had been received at the Lincoln Inn Fields Theatre makes one of the speakers in the Dialogue say. — "The Battle continued a long time doubtful, and Victor hovering over both Camps. Betterton solicits for more auxiliaries from the same Author, and then he flanks his enemy with Measure for Measure. — 'May then, says the whole party at Drury Lane, will even put the Pilgrim upon him' — 'Ay, faith so we will says Dryden, and if you will let me have the profits of the third night, I'll give you a secular Masque' — 'Done', says the House, and so the bargain was struck."

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, and I being then, as an Actor, in some Favour with him, he read the Play first, with me alone, and was pleas'd to offer me my Choice of what I might like best for myself, in it. But as the chief Characters were not (according to my Taste) the most shining, it was no great Self-denial in me, that I desir'd, he would first take care of those, who were more difficult to be pleas'd; I therefore only chose, for myself, 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: And when the Play came to be acted, I was not deceiv'd, in my Choice. Sir *John*, upon my being contented with so little a Share in the Entertainment, gave me the Epilogue to make up my Meas; which being written so much above the Strain of common Authors, I confess, I was not a little pleas'd with. And *Dryden*, upon his hearing me repeat it, to him, made me a farther Compliment of trusting me with the Prologue. This so particular Distinction was look'd upon, by the Actors, as something too extraordinary. But no one was so impatiently ruffled at it, 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

Treat-

Treatment; that for his Part he look'd upon it, as an Affront to all the rest of the Company; that there shou'd be but one out of the Whole judg'd fit to speak either a Prologue, or an Épilogue! to quiet him, I offer'd to decline either in his Favour, or both, if it were equally easy to the Author: 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 was resolv'd, to the best of his Power, never to let the first Offer of a Prologue escape him: Which little Ambition sometimes made him pay too dear, for his Success: The Flatness of the many miserable Prologues, that by this means fell to his Lot, seem'd wofully unequal, to the few good ones he might have Reason to triumph in.

I have given you this Fact, only as a Sample of those frequent Rubs, and Impediments I met with, when any Step was made to my being distinguish'd as an Actor; and from this Incident too, you may partly see what occasion'd so many Prologues, after the Death of *Betterton*, to fall into the Hands of one Speaker: But it is not every Successor, to a vacant Post, that brings into it, the Talents, equal to those of a Predecessor. 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



that any of the several who attempted it shew'd themselves, by far, 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, in the speaking of a Prologue, *Booth* only had the first, but attain'd not to 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: His Accents were frequently too sharp, and violent, which sometimes occasion'd 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 pleas'd to see it so glittering. In the Truth of this Criticism, I have been confirm'd by those, whose Judgment, I dare more confidently rely on, than my own: *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. And I only make this Exception, from them, to caution others from imitating, what, in his time, they might have too implicitly admir'd— But I have a Word or two more to say concerning the Immoralities of the Stage. Our Theatrical Writers were not only accus'd  
of

of Immorality, but Prophaneness; many flagrant Instances of which, were collected and published by a Non-juring Clergyman, *Jeremy Collier*, in his *View of the Stage*, &c. about the Year 1697. However just his Charge against the Authors, that then wrote for it, might be; I cannot but think his Sentence against the Stage itself is unequal; Reformation he thinks too mild a Treatment for it, and is therefore for laying his Ax to the Root of it: If this were to be a Rule of Judgment, for Offences of the same Nature, what might become of the Pulpit, where many a seditious, and corrupted Teacher has been known, to cover the most pernicious Doctrine, with the Masque of Religion? This puts me in mind of what the noted *Jo. Hains*, 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 a general Suppression of the Stage, when only some particular Authors had abus'd it? Whereas the Stage, he could not but know, was generally allow'd, when rightly conducted, to be a delightful Method of mending our Morals? "For that Reason, reply'd *Hains*: *Collier* is by Profession a Moral-mender himself, and two of Trade, you know, can never agree."

The Authors of *the old Batchelor*, and of the *Relapse*, were those, whom *Collier* most labour'd to convict of Immorality; to which they severally publish'd their Reply; the first seem'd too much hurt, to be able to defend him-



The Reverend Jeremy Collier, published his, "View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage," in March 1696. — it was answered by Congreve, Naubrough, Dryden, Dennis and others.

In the Laureat, 1740. it is said, that soon after the publication of Collier's Book, several informations were brought against the Players, at the instance and expense of the Society for the reformation of manners, for immoral words and expressions, contra bonos mores, uttered on the Stage several Informers were placed in the Pit, and other parts of the house, to note down the words spoke, and by whom, to be able to swear to them. — and many of them would have been ruined by these troublesome prosecutions, had not Queen Anne, well satisfied that these Informers lived upon their oaths, and that what they did proceeded not from conscience, but from interest, by a timely *Aboli prosequi*, put an end to the inquisition.

Gildon in his "Comparison between the two Stages" 1702. makes Sullen say — "But did you hear the news?"

Ramble. What news?

Sullen. The Trial between the Play-houses and Informers. for

profane immoral lewd scandalous, and I don't know how many such things, uttered and spoken on the stage  
criticks. Who were the persons that spoke them and what were the words?

Sullen. Belterton, Braegirdle, Ben Johnson, and others: but the words may not be repeated — are you so cunning? for aught I know  
criticks, you are a spy . . .

Ramble. Why thou scandalous rascal! dost thou take us for reformers and traitors?

Sullen. Nay I don't accuse you of being way reformed: but this you they have made it criminal to repeat the words: is not that strange?

criticks. Aye, by my faith is it! but however if the charge was well proved against the Actors, they ought to be fined: but why not the Poets?  
29 MA 55

Sullen. The Poets have been in the pinks already, and now they are for censuring the Actors — the first two were fined: but the latter was acquitted. "

*Bon Mot.*—A little after the representation of Sir John Vanbrugh's comedy of "The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger," from whence the last new play of "The Trip to Scarborough" is taken, one Jeremy Collier, a *dissenting parson*, wrote a book against the immoralities of the stage, wherein he particularly attacked Sir John and Mr. Congreve. The former laughed at it, but the latter was rather hurt, as Collyer had a strong party at his side. One night about this period, Sir John and Mr. Congreve being in the green room at Lincoln's-inn-fields Theatre, talking of this matter, the latter was expressing his astonishment, why he should be treated so personally severe, by a man he never knew, when Joe Haines, the celebrated comedian, being in the green room at the same time, replied, "Oh, dear Sir, I can very well explain the reason of it, you are both *moral-mongers*, and *two of a trade*, you know, cannot agree." 29 MA 55

Congress's pride was hurt by Collier's attack on Playe, which  
all the world had admired and commended: and no hypocrite  
showed more rancour or resentment, when unmasked, than this  
Author, so greatly celebrated for sweetness of temper, and elegance  
of manners.

21. N. 55

Lucas. |

himself, and the other felt him so little, that his Wit only laugh'd at his Lashes.

My first Play of the *Pool in Fashion*, too, being then in a Course of Success; perhaps, for that Reason, only, this severe Author thought himself oblig'd to attack it; in which, I hope, he has shewn more Zeal than Justice, his greatest Charge against it is, that it sometimes uses the Word *Faith!* as an Oath, in the Dialogue: But if *Faith* may as well signify our given Word, or Credit, as our religious Belief, why might not his Charity have taken it, in the less criminal Sense? Nevertheless, Mr. Collier's Book, was upon the whole thought so laudable a Work, that King *William*, soon after it was publish'd, granted him a *Nolo Prosequi*, when he stood answerable to the Law, for his having absolved two Criminals, just before they were executed, for High Treason. And it must be farther granted that his calling our Dramatick Writers to this strict Account, had a very wholesome Effect, upon those, who writ after this time. They were now a great deal more upon their guard; 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, who then, licens'd all Plays for the Stage, 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 reform'd, or punish'd; a

L. Q. S.

severe



severe Instance of this kind falling upon myself, may be an Excuse for my relating it: When *Richard the Third* (as I alter'd it from *Shakespeare*) came from his Hands, to the Stage, he expung'd the whole first Act, without sparing a Line of it. This extraordinary Stroke of a *Sic volo* occasion'd 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! no! he had not leisure to consider what might be separately inoffensive. 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 kill'd 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 forc'd, for some few Years, to let the Play take its Fate; with only four Acts divided into five; by the Loss of so considerable a Limb; may one not modestly suppose, it was robb'd of, at least a fifth Part of that Favour, it afterwards met with? For tho' this first Act was at last recovered, and made the Play whole again, yet the Relief came too late to repay me for the Pains I had taken in it. Nor did I ever hear that this zealous Severity of the Master of the Revels was afterwards thought justifiable. But my good Fortune in Process of time, gave me an Opportunity



portunity to talk with my Oppressor in my Turn.

The Patent granted by his Majesty King *George* the First, to Sir *Richard Steele*, and his Assigns, of which I was one, made us sole Judges of what Plays might be proper for the Stage, without submitting them to the Approbation, or License of any other particular Person. Notwithstanding which, the Master of the Revels demanded his Fee of Forty Shillings, upon our acting a new One, tho' we had spared him the Trouble of perusing it. This occasion'd my being deputed to him, to enquire into the Right of his Demand, and to make an amicable End of our Dispute. I confess, I did not dislike the Office; and told him, according to my Instructions, That I came not to defend, even our own Right, in prejudice to his; that if our Patent, had inadvertently superseded the Grant of any former Power, or Warrant, whereon he might ground his Pretensions, we would not insist upon our Broad Seal, but would readily answer his Demands upon sight of such his Warrant, any thing in our Patent to the contrary notwithstanding. This I had reason to think he could not do; and, when I found he made no direct Reply to my Question, I repeated it with greater Civilities, and Offers of Compliance, 'till I was forc'd in the end to conclude, with telling him, That as his Pretensions were not back'd with any visible Instrument of Right, and as his strongest Plea was Custom, we could

not so far extend our Complaisance, as to continue his Fees upon so slender a Claim to them: And from that Time, neither our Plays, or his Fees, gave either of us any farther trouble. In this Negotiation, I am the bolder to think Justice was on our Side, because the Law lately pass'd, by which the Power of Licensing Plays, &c. is given to a proper Person, is a strong Presumption, that no Law had ever given that Power to any such Person before.

My having mentioned this Law, which so immediately affected the Stage, inclines me to throw out a few Observations upon it: But I must first lead you gradually thro' the Facts, and natural Causes, that made such a Law necessary.

Although it had been taken for granted, from Time immemorial, that no Company of Comedians, could act Plays, &c. without the Royal License, or Protection of some legal Authority; a Theatre was, notwithstanding, erected in *Godman's-Fields*, about seven Years ago, where Plays, without any such License, were acted for some time unmolested, and with Impunity. After a Year or two, this Playhouse was thought a Nuisance too near the City: Upon which the Lord-Mayor, and Aldermen, petition'd the Crown to suppress it: What Steps were taken, in favour of that Petition, I know not, but common Fame seem'd to allow from what had, or had not been done in it, that acting Plays in the said Theatre was not evidently unlawful. However,

See Doctor's Hist. of the Theatres, Vol. 1. p. 23.

It was ordained by this Act, " that all persons pretending themselves to be Patent-gatherers, or collectors for Prisons, Gaols or Hospitals, and wandering abroad for that purpose: all Fencers, Bear-wards, common players of Interludes &c, should be deemed Rogues and Vagabonds " This Act was enforced by explanation and amendment, in the year 1737.

ever, this Question of Acting without a License, a little time after, came to a nearer Decision in *Westminster-Hall*; the Occasion of bringing it thither was this: It happened that the Purchasers of the Patent, to whom Mr. Booth and Myself had sold our Shares, were at variance with the Comedians, that were then left to their Government, and the Variance ended, in the chief of those Comedians deserting, and setting up for themselves in the little House in the *Hay-Market*, in 1733, by which Desertion the Patentees were very much distressed, and considerable Losers. Their Affairs being in this desperate Condition, they were advis'd, to put the Act of the Twelfth of Queen Anne, against Vagabonds, in force, against these Deserters, then acting in the *Hay-Market* without License. Accordingly, one of their chief Performers was taken from the Stage, by a Justice of Peace his Warrant, and committed to *Bridewell* as one within the Penalty of the said Act. When the Legality of this Commitment was disputed in *Westminster-Hall*, by all I could observe, from the learned Pleadings on both Sides (for I had the Curiosity to hear them) it did not appear to me, that the Comedian, so committed, was within the Description of the said Act, he being a House-keeper, and having a Vote for the *Westminster* Members of Parliament. He was discharged accordingly, and conducted through the Hall,

with the Congratulations of the Crowds that attended, and wish'd well to his Cause.

The Issue of this Trial threw me, at that time, into a very odd Reflexion, *viz.* That if acting Plays, without License, did not make the Performers Vagabonds, unless they wandered from their Habitations so to do, how particular was the Case of Us three late Menaging Actors, at the *Theatre-Royal*, who in twenty Years before had paid, upon an Averidge, at least Twenty Thousand Pounds, to be protected (as Actors) from a Law, that has not since appeared to be against us. Now, whether we might certainly have acted without any License at all, I shall not pretend to determine; but this I have, of my own Knowledge, to say, That in *Queen Anne's* Reign, the Stage was in such Confusion, and its Affairs in such Distress, that Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*, after they had held it about one Year, threw up the Menagement of it, as an unprofitable Post, after which, a License for Acting was not thought worth any Gentleman's asking for, and almost seem'd to go a begging, 'till some time after, by the Care, Application, and Industry of three Actors, it become so prosperous; and the Profits so considerable, that it created a new Place, and a *Sine-cure* of a Thousand Pounds a Year, which the Labour of those Actors constantly paid, to such Persons as had from time to time, Merit or Interest enough, to get their Names  
inserted

See Gents: Mag: with List of the Actors Salaries. June 1733.  
p. 301.

London May. 1734. p. p. 12. 10. 105.

On the Play-house Dispute at Westminster-Hall.

**P**LAYERS and patentees at law are bot,  
T. know who are the beggars, who are not:  
Ye maely kings and chieftains of the stage,  
On this great point suspend awhile your rage:  
But see year more at Westminster content,  
And faith ye'll all be beggars at the end.



inserted as Fourth Menagers in a License with them, for acting Plays, &c. a Preferment, that many a Sir *Francis Wronghead* would have jump'd at. But to go on with my Story. This Endeavour of the Patentees, to suppress the Comedians acting in the *Hay-Market*, proving ineffectual, and no Hopes of a Reunion then appearing, the Remains of the Company left in *Drury-Lane*, were reduced to a very low Condition. At this time a third Purchaser, *Charles Fleetwood*, Esq; stepped in; who judging the best Time to buy was, when the Stock was at the lowest Price, struck up a Bargain at once, for Five Parts in Six of the Patent; and, at the same time, gave the revolted Comedians their own Terms to return, and come under his Government in *Drury-Lane*, where they now continue to act, at very ample Salaries, as I am informed, in 1738. But (as I have observ'd) the late Cause of the prosecuted Comedian having gone so strongly in his Favour, and the House in *Goodman's-Fields* too, continuing to act with as little Authority, unmolested; these so tolerated Companies gave Encouragement to a broken Wit, to collect a fourth Company, who, for some time acted Plays in the *Hay-Market*, which House the united *Drury-Lane* Comedians had lately quitted: This enterprising Person, I say (whom I do not chuse to name, unless it could be to his Advantage, or that it were of Importance;) had Sense enough to know, that the best Plays, with bad Actors, would turn but to a very

poor Account; and therefore found it necessary to give the Publick some Pieces of an extraordinary Kind, the Poetry of which he conceiv'd ought to be so strong, that the greatest Dunce of an Actor could not spoil it: He knew too, that as he was in haste to get Money, it would take up less time to be intrepidly abusive, than decently entertaining; that, to draw the Mob after him, he must rake the Channel, and pelt their Superiors; that, to show himself somebody, he must come up to *Juvenal's* Advice, and stand the Consequence:

*Aude aliquid brevibus Gyaris, & carcere  
dignum  
Si vis esse aliquis ——— Juv. Sat. I.*

Such then, was the mettlesome Modesty he set out with; upon this Principle he produc'd several frank, and free Farces, that seem'd to knock all Distinctions of Mankind on the Head: Religion, Laws, Government, Priests, Judges, and Ministers, were all laid flat, at the Feet of this *Herculean* Satyrift! This *Dræcan* in Wit, that spared neither Friend nor Foe! who, to make his Poetical Fame immortal, like another *Erestratus*, set Fire to his Stage, by writing up to an Act of Parliament to demolish it. I shall not give the particular Strokes of his Ingenuity a Chance to be remembered, by reciting them; it may be enough to say, in general Terms, they were so openly flagrant, that the Wisdom of the Legislature thought



H. Fielding

20 11 55

The eloquence alluded to was that of Lord Bouverie, who delivered a speech against this restrictive Bill, which has left <sup>20 11 55</sup> immorttal evidence to the integrity of his spirit, and the splendour of his understanding.

29 MA 55

The eloquence alluded to was that of Lord Chesterfield, who delivered a speech against this restrictive Bill, which has left immortal evidence to the intrepidity of his spirit, and the splendour of his understanding.

28 M 55

The eloquence alluded to was that of Lord Chesterfield, who delivered a speech against this restrictive Bill, which has left <sup>28 M 55</sup> immorttal evidence to the intrepidity of his spirit, and the splendour of his understanding.

# The Dublin Journal.

From Tuesday July the 12th, to Saturday July the 16th, 1737.

Since our last arrived two British Packets, which brought two French, two Holland and one Flanders Mail, viz.

### ITALY.

Rome, June 21.

**T**HE King of Portugal has refused to ratify the Articles drawn up here for an Accommodation between this Court and his Portuguese Majesty, which Articles had been sent to Lisbon. The Pope has only granted a Cardinal's Cap to the actual Patriarch of Lisbon; but his Portuguese Majesty demands besides, that that Hat shall descend successively, and in Perpetuity to all the future Patriarchs of that City, which is what the Holy Father does not seem disposed to grant absolutely; but is nevertheless willing to consent that the succeeding Patriarchs shall enjoy the dignity of Cardinal, but not to be invested with it till they have solicited for the vacant Hat, and obtained it in Form from his Holiness for the Time being.

Rome, June 23. Several barbarous Murders have been committed here of late; among others one was on the Body of the Superior of the Scotch College, who was assassinated by a young Protestant that feign'd to have a Mind to turn Catholic and make his Abjuration to him; another was on the Towers of the Ursuline Nuns, who was stabbed in several Parts of the Body with a Knife by a Priest of the Country of Liege. Both the Assassins are fled, but the Diligence with which they are pursued gives us Reason to hope they will be taken and brought to condign Punishment.

### FRANCE.

Paris July 1. O. S. The Archbishop of Thoulouse is taken into the Management of the Affairs; and the Cardinal de Fleury will resign a great Part to him, his Eminence having a very great Opinion of the Archbishop's Skill in Politics.

### HUNGARY.

Belgrade June 26. The Garrison of this City, which was encamp'd within the Lines of Circumvallation, march'd a few Days ago to join the Troops in the Camp of Semlin; and we this Moment hear that those Troops, which only consisted of Foot, having yesterday pass'd the Saave, arriv'd this Morning at Jagodina where the Cavalry was encamped, and that the whole Army is to begin its March To-morrow towards the Frontiers. The Desertion among the Turks is almost incredible; but what is most surprizing is, that the Janissaries come over in great Numbers, and surrender themselves with their Arms to the Imperialists. We have an Account that there has been a great Fire at Nissa, which reduced above 100 Houses to Ashes.

### POLAND.

Warsaw, June 29. Our last Advices from the Frontiers are, that the Veldt-Marshal Count Munich was advanced with all the Russian Army into the Territory of Oczakow; that the Seraskier Basha of Bender was also arriv'd in the Neighbourhood of that City with several Hordes of Tartars and a Detachment of Turkish Troops; that the Van-Guard of the Ottoman Army advanced towards Bender, being very nearly followed by the rest of the Army; and that it was believed the Grand Vizir would pass the Neiter in a very few Days, in order to fight the Russians.

### GERMANY.

Vienna, July 3. The Court has received an Express from the Veldt Marshal Count Munich the 20th of last Month, who, according to his Letters, must have invested Oczakow several Days ago, if the Turks did not prevent him by giving the Russian Army Battle. We have received a Confirmation that the Veldt Marshal Count Seckendorff was march'd with the Body of Troops assembled near Belgrade.

We hear from Croatia that the Army under the Prince of Sax-Burgourghausen had been reinforced with 12,000 Men from the General of Wallachia, that the Creanons, to the Number of 14,000 Men, were encamp'd by themselves under the Command of Prince Esterhazy, Ban of Croatia; and that the other Armies were to march the 15th of last Month to go and encamp within five Leagues of Carlsburg.

L O N D O N, July 7 and 9.

Extract of a Letter from the Hague.

Mr. Trever continues to have frequent Conferences with the Ministers of the Government. The Means to prevent a Negotiation from being carried on between France, Spain, and Portugal, of which an ample Account has been given in a preceding Letter, is heartily wish'd for; and the above Conferences are held in order to find out some Expedient for the Purpose. The Court of Great Britain endeavours more and more to unite itself with the States General, to prevent the Designs of Spain. Their High Mightinesses appear forward enough to consent to such a Union; and the more so, because of the fresh Delays that the Court of Madrid makes in finishing the Affair touching the Restitution of the three Dutch Ships, which Affair has remain'd in Suspence a good while, and has very much piqu'd their High Mightinesses. The Court of Great Britain has also represented here, that the General Treaty of Peace being concluded, the Courts interest'd would probably invite the Republick to accede thereto: But that it would not be consistent with the Prudence of the Maritime Powers to enter into any Engagement in this Respect, before having a clearer Insight into the general Affairs, and particularly into those which have regard to the Commerce of the English and Dutch. In short, it appears as though the Maritime Powers had but too just a Foundation to fear that the Issue of the general Peace would be disadvantageous to them.

The King of Spain, however, refuses to sign the Treaty of Peace in quality of a contracting Power. When the Marquis de Vaugrenan represented it to his Catholick Majesty to be sign'd, that Prince ordered M. de la Quadra, two Days after, to tell him that having no Hand either in the first Negotiations of Peace between the Emperor and France or in the Conclusion of the Preliminaries to that Peace, to which he had only simply acceded, his Catholick Majesty was unwilling to sign the Treaty of Peace in any other manner than he had sign'd the Preliminaries thereto, and denied entering into any other Engagements thereupon. This Answer having extremely surpriz'd the Marquis de Vaugrenan, he immediately dispatch'd a Courier to Paris, which was directly sent back to that Ambassador with fresh Orders how to behave in this Business. The Court of France alleges, amongst other Things, that the King of Sardinia had made no Difficulty of signing the Treaty as a contracting Party, tho' he had no greater Share in the first Negotiations of the Peace than his Catholick Majesty. All that has been above related is confirmed by Letters from M. Vander Meer and Mr. Keene.

The same Letters add, that they have Advice by the way of Vienna, that the Ottoman Porte refuses the Mediation of Great Britain and Holland for its Accommodation with Russia. The Grand Vizir alledging, as a Reason for this Refusal, the Grand Signior could not accept of any Powers as Mediators, who should begin by endeavouring to engage him to give up Aloph; besides Russia had not yet declar'd herself in regard to the Mediation, whether it one should be desir'd, and the Emperor become a contracting Party, the would admit of the Maritime Powers as Mediators.

Yesterday his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales sent a Letter by the Right Hon. the Lord North, one of the Lords of his Bed-chamber, to acquaint his Majesty, that her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales was with Child.

His Majesty has been pleas'd to return a most gracious Answer upon receiving the above Letter.

The Government of the Island of Minorca, vacant by the Death of Lieutenant General Kaine, is not yet supplied and Lieutenant General Sutton is talk'd of for that Employment.

By Advices from Mulcovy we hear, that the Gentlemen Virtuoss's, who about a Year since were sent by the Czarina with a proper Guard to Siberia, in order to discover a North East Passage to China, have sent Letters to their Friends there, signifying that they have made many useful Discoveries in their Journey; but that they have at least another Year's Work before they can accomplish their intended Task.

Yesterday an Owl that had strayed from some House in the Neighbourhood, was catch'd in the Butcher-Row, and carried to the Swan Alehouse. It was immediately reported that the noted Turpin was taken, which occasioned such a Con-

course of People out of Curiosity to see him, that several Persons gave Three-pence for Admittance into the House for the poor innocent Bird to Hoot at them.

We hear—Lockart, Esq; of Carnwarth, is chosen for the Shire of Edinburgh, in the room of Robert Dundas, who is made one of the Lords of Session in Scotland.

As is also Charles Aarskine, Esq; for the Shire of Dumfries, who was made Lord Advocate for Scotland, in the room of Duncan Forbes, Esq; who is promoted to be Lord President of the Session.

By Letters from Edinburgh, we are inform'd that on Tuesday last Alexander Wilson, Esq; late Lord Provost of that City, arriv'd there from London; on which occasion there were great Rejoicings. At four in the Afternoon the Musick Bells began to play, and at Seven the great Bells were set a ringing, and continued till nine. Several Hundreds of the Citizens went out to meet him, and the Roads, particularly when he came near the City, were crowded with Thousands of Spectators. A Resolution was taken by Numbers of the Crowd, that he should march thro' the City, with the great Company that waited upon him, and for that Purpose the Out-Passages that led to the West End of the City, where he lives, were barricadoed; but, according to his wonted Modesty, he declined any such Ostentation, and privately stepped out of his Coach, and came in by Brittol-Fort: However, a great number of his Attendants went through the City on Horseback. At Night there were two Bonfires before his Lodgings, and in several other Parts of the City.

By the Mail arriv'd Yesterday from France; we learn, that the People there were very much out in their Reasoning concerning the Queen's Delivery, which however is very soon expected. Her Majesty is in good Health, and the Day before the Post came away she walk'd on the Terras at Versailles.

Cardinal de Fleury labours hard to bring the Archbishop of Thoulouse into the Ministry, but is oppos'd therein by two powerful Factions, who tho' oppos'd in other Respects, have united on this Occasion, for this Reason as we can hear but that the Merit of the Right Revd. Candidate shines too bright for them, their Principal Objection is, that this Prelate being a Native of the Territories of Avignon must be too much attach'd to the See of Rome, that as a late Mandate which he published plainly shew'd it, and that such a Man plac'd at the Head of Affairs, would prove the ruin of the Liberties of the Gallican Church. The design of this Opposition is partly to bring Mr. Chauvelin into play again. Thus are we amuf'd with Changes in the French Ministry, while projects of a dangerous Nature are thought to be hatching behind the Curtain, but as Britain is apprised of them, no doubt but they will be defeated, and 'tis with this intent that Mr. Walpole is gone to the Court of France.

Count Cambis the new French Minister who is daily expected here, is said to be Charged with a Commission of an extraordinary Nature.

In this grand Crisis of Affairs, 'tis surprizing that the haughtiness of the Turks should encrease just when Russia and Germany are ready to fall upon 'em, these Infidels now reject the Mediation of the Maritime Powers, or of any other Power upon Earth, that will lay down as a Preliminary the Cession of Aloph to the Czarina, this looks as if they expected, that some diversion would be made in Europe in their Favour.

A Weekly Paper Publish'd this Day, takes Notice of the growth of Popery in this Nation, of the great Number of private Chappels for Celebrating Mass all over the Metropolis, and of the vast Number of Popish Missionaries, who by their Indetachable Industry, and thro' Carelessness of the Protestant Teachers make a vast Number of Profolites. 'Tis therefore Expedient says this Author, that the Laws be put in force against them, lest Error and Dissaffection ground every day amongst his Majesty's Subjects.

We hear from Herfordshire, that the Wheat is so forward, that they will begin to reap the next Week in most Parts of the City.

By Letters from France we learn, that they have received Advices from their Sugar Plantations, giving an Account that they are in the same state with ours for want of Rain, and that Commodity is like to bear a great Price in France.

As we had not Room in our last Paper for the following Speech; we hope it will be agreeable to our Readers this Day.

S I R,

I Was a Correspondent of your deceased Relation, and whenever any Thing comes to my Hands worthy of Notice and tending to the Publick Good, I will communicate it to you with great Pleasure.

The restraint of Licentiousness is a very delicate Point, and an Attempt to take off this Exercise of Liberty, under a corrupt and timid Administration might justly alarm the People, and make them apprehend for that invaluable Blessing; because such a Measure, they would be sensible, must look upon the Destruction of Liberty, the only Method to screen themselves and secure the Possession of their Plunder: It is true, we are fully convinced of the Sagacity, Experience and Uprightness of the Gentlemen now in the Administration, that we can possibly apprehend any Thing tending to so vile and pernicious an Enterprize, we are furnished, like skilful Surgeons, they are able to take off the Film and not touch the Sight: However, it is not surprising to find a disinterested and zealous Patriot apprehend that what, in the Hands of wise and careful Administrations, is esteemed as a wholesome Law, may, by coming into those of less skilful and less righteous Administrations, be turned to an ill Use; nay, to such a one, as they who were the most zealous for enacting it, never designed, and would be thoroughly grieved to see. A Patriot who excites himself on so singular an Occasion, in Favour of Posterity, and to secure Liberty to latest Ages, calls for the Attention, and exacts the Veneration of all true Lovers of their Country. I therefore send you the following Speech, as a Friend of mine collected it from the Mouth of a Second Cicero. I may say, with great Justice, it ought to be handed down to Posterity with Encomiums which I dare not attempt, but which I hope it will find from a much abler Pen. I own, I feared its being buried in Oblivion, and believe the Publick, which I am sure must gratefully receive the Present, will excuse me, if I give it in the best Manner I can, tho' it must be defective of many Beauties, which gave it a Grace in the pronouncing.

Yours, &c.

My Lords,

THE Bill now before your Lordships having passed the House of Commons with so much Precipitancy, as even to get the Start of One that deserved all the Respect which could be paid it, has set me on considering why so much Regard has been paid to this; why it has been pushed into the House at the Close of a Session, and pressed in so singular a Manner; but I confess, I am yet at a Loss to find out the great Occasion. My Lords, I apprehend it to be a Bill of a very extraordinary, a very dangerous Nature; and altho' it seems designed only as a Restraint on the Licentiousness of the Stage, I fear, it looks rather and tends to a Restraint on the Liberty of the Press, a Restraint even on Liberty itself. I have gather'd from common Talk, while this Bill was moving in the House of Commons, that a Play was offered the Players, which in my Account was right, is truly of a most scandalous and most seditious Nature. What was the Effect? — Why they not only refused to act it, but carried it to a certain Person in the Administration, as a sure Method to have it suppressed. Could this be the Occasion of the Bill? Surely no, the Cause of the Players could never occasion a Law to restrain them, it is an Argument in their Favour, and a mortal One, in my Opinion, against the Bill, and is to me a Proof that the Laws are not only sufficient to deter them from acting what they know would offend, but also to punish 'em in Case they should venture to do it. My Lords, I must own I have observed of late a remarkable Licentiousness in the Stage. There were two Plays acted last Winter, that, one would have thought, should have given the greatest Offence, and yet were suffered without any Censure whatever; in one of those Plays the Author thought fit to represent Religion, Physick, and the Law, as inconsistent with Common Sense; the other was founded on a Story very unfit for a Theatrical Entertainment at this Time of Day, a Story to recent in the Minds of Englishmen, and of so solemn a Nature, that unless it be from the Poets, we ought not to be reminded of it. The Stage may want Regulation, the Stage may have it, and yet be kept within Bounds without a new Law for the Purpose. I am against this Bill, as an unnecessary and as a dangerous One, and shall give your Lordships my Reason for this Opinion. My Lords, I suppose a Power is to be lodged in the Hands of one Person only, to judge and determine

the Offences made punishable by this Bill, a Power too great to be in the Hands of any One.

When I say this, I am sure I do not mean to give the least, the most distant Offence, to that noble Person who fills the Post of Lord Chancellor, and whose natural Candour and Love of Justice, I know would not permit him to exercise that Power but with the greatest Justice and Humanity, and was it consistent with the Nature of Property, or were we sure that the Successors in that Office would always be Persons of such distinguished Qualities, I think such a Power could not be trusted in a safer Hand. My Lords, one of the greatest Goods we can enjoy is Liberty; the best Things have their Allays; Liberty has its Allay, Licentiousness is the Allay of Liberty, it is the Excess and the Ebullition of it. When I touch the One, it is with a fearful, with a trembling Hand, lest I should unwarily do a Violence to the other. Is a Play a Libel upon any One? The Law is sufficient to punish the Offender, and the Person in this Case has a singular Advantage, he can be at no Difficulty to prove who is the Publisher of it, the Player himself is the Publisher, and there can be no want of Evidence to convict him. When we complain of the Licentiousness of the Stage, I fear we have more Reason to complain of bad Measures in our Policy, and a general Decay of Virtue and good Morals among us. Let the Censure mend their Actions, and Censure will retort upon the Censurer, the Ridiculer make only himself ridiculous, and Odium will fall to the Ground. In the Roman Story there is an Instance applicable to the present Occasion: During the Triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus, and Sylla, one Dipillus, a Poet, had wrote a Play, wherein Pompey was particularly mark'd out, Pompey at that Time was as well known by the Name of Magnus as Pompey) and in a Speech of the Play where the bad Measures of the Time were exploded, it concluded with these Words, Et misera nostra tu es Magnus, upon which the Audience gave a universal Clap of Applause, and were struck with the Wit and Force of the Expression, that Cicero says, they made the Actor repeat it a hundred Times. — What did Pompey? (who was present on this Occasion) did he resent the Satyr, or the People's Applause? No, his Conduct was wise and prudent, he reflected justly within himself that some Actions he had been guilty of had made him unpopular; from that Hour he began to alter his Measures, he regained by Degrees the People's Esteem, grew Popular again, and then neither feared their Wit, nor felt their Satyr. — My Lords, the Stage, preserved and kept up to its true Purpose, should, no doubt, only represent those Incidents in the Action and Characters of Men as may tend to the Discouragement of Vice, and the promoting of Virtue, and good Life: nor does it vary from its Institution when it helps us to judge of the Vices and Follies of the Times; and tho' the Romans, at the Time I have mentioned, were declining in their Liberty, yet it is plain they had not then lost the Use of it; but when the Stage is under Power and Controul, such Instances are not to be met with. In the Life of that wonderful and excellent Genius Moliere the Author tells us, that when his Tartuffe was acted, the Archbishop of Paris thought the Play reflected upon him, and fancied that Moliere had taken his Measures for one of the principal Characters. Upon this, the Archbishop goes to the King, and makes heavy Complaints against Moliere, and tho' the Play was justly admired, as an excellent Piece, yet to please the Archbishop the King silenced the Actors, and forbid the Play. Moliere some Time after, in the Presence of the Prince de Conde, took Notice to him how hard his Fate was to be under the King's Displeasure for a Play that was founded upon the strictest Rules of Morality, Virtue, and Religion. when at the same Time Harlequin and his Italian Troop were suffered to act the most indecent Pieces imaginable, notoriously encouraging Vice and Immorality, and offensive to all Religion in the World; the Prince answered him very aptly, I am not at all surprized at it, says he, for Harlequin only ridicules Religion in general, whereas you have ventured to ridicule the Prime Minister of it. I must say freely, I am for no Power that may exert itself in an Arbitrary Manner, the Censure is always for favouring our own Schemes, and is fond of making every Thing in its Power subservient to them; our Stage has been formerly made very useful in this Particular.

In King Charles the Second's Time there was a Licencier at Court, what was the Practice then? Why, when we were out of Humour with Holland, Dryden the Laureat wrote his Play of the Cruelty of the Dutch at Amboyna. When the Affair of the Exclusion Bill was depending, he wrote his Duke of Guise. When the Court took Office at the City, (where there was some Property to preserve as well as to defend) the Plays represented the Citizens as a Parcel of Gripping Usurers, and designing Knaves, and, to make their Charac-

ters compleat, Cuckolds. The Cavaliers at that Time who were to be FLATTERED, tho' the worst of Characters, were always very warmly courted by the most distinguished Gentlemen; and the Dissenters, who were to be abused, were always Scoundrels and quarrelsome Fellows. — Tague, (a notorious Rogue that lived by Rapin and Plunder) was the first Gentleman; and he that could not follow Tague in his Politics was a bad Fellow, and capable of no Traj; whatsoever. — In this Manner was the Stage managed under a Licencier. — and though I have the greatest Esteem for that noble Lord, in whose Hands this Power at present is designed to fall, and whose Impartiality and Judgment I have the greatest Confidence in, yet sometimes a Leaning towards the Fashions of a Court is hard to be avoided, and as to Virtue and good Morals, that is not always the Place where they are to be found. My Lords, if it were necessary a Bill of this Kind should pass, I am of Opinion, the Method proposed in this, to restrain the Licentiousness complained of, will not answer the Purpose, for it does not extend to the Restraints of Printing; (which I hope it never will) it cannot produce that desired Effect.

When my Lord Chancellor has mark'd a Play with his Refusal, may it not be Printed? will it not be printed with double the Advantage, when it shall be insinuated, that it was refused for having some Character of Strokes of Wit or Satyr in it that were not suffered to come on the Stage? And will not the Printer set the Refusal in his Title-Page as a Mark of Value? Is it not natural to be fond of any Thing that is forbid, and will it not be more likely to have its effect among the People by this Means, when the printed Play may cost but a Shilling, and the seeing it acted will cost 3 or 4s? Does not the Satyr remain in print to be read and considered when the Offence in acting is over and forgot? I don't doubt, but there are People who will set down to write a Play on Purpose to have it refused, and that will be the only Merit belonging to it; for I must observe to your Lordships, that although it is very difficult to write one that is fit to be accepted, yet it is easy enough to write one that is fit to be refused. The Players, I believe, are pretty sensible there are fewer guilty of the former than the latter. — Wit is the Property of those who have it, and very often the only Property they have. — Thank God, We my Lords are better provided than to depend upon precarious Support. I must own, I am not for laying any particular Restraint upon Wit; but by this Bill Wit is to be delivered out to the Publick by retail, it is to be Excised. My Lords, and my Lord Chancellor is to have the Honour of being the Gauger, the Exciseman, the Judge, and Jury; and the poor Author, who has not so much as a worthy Commissioner to appeal to, must patiently undergo the rummaging of his Goods for fourteen Days together before he can have them returned, and returned how? Why perhaps, with a Prohibition against his Use of them. — No Play was ever wrote, but some of the Characters, Speeches, and Expressions might be interpreted to point out some Person or another; it is impossible to write any Thing to the Stage that is not liable to the most unthought of Constructions. It is not to be avoided, and tho' it may have the lawful Passport to it; yet when it comes to be acted the People will make their Applications, and here I cannot help observing, what an unthankful Office it must prove to that noble Lord, who is to make the Piece current when Reflections shall be fixed upon particular Persons, and be authorized at the same Time under his own Hand. Such Accidents will be no little Uneasiness to that noble Person, whose great Conduct in Life is well known always to avoid giving the least Offence to any one. — My Lords, from Laws of this Nature, I suspect very ill Consequences, nor can I flume to myself any one good Argument or Reason for this Bill. — It is an Arrow that does but glance upon the Stage, it gives its wound at a Distance. — No Country ever lost its Liberty at once, it is by Degrees that Work is to be done, by such Degrees as creep insensibly upon you 'till it is too late to stop the Mischief; like the shadowing of a Colour, we may trace it from its first Light into its deepest dye, but are not able to distinguish the several Gradations of it. — It is necessary that the Billets and Thorns should be removed, before Power can clear itself for Action, but then we see it taking long Strides over a Land. — The Romans lost their Liberty by restraining Licentiousness, I hope we shall never do it to dear a Rate, and yet I fear we are clearing the Way for those who may thank us hereafter for doing so much of the Work ready to their Hands. — Our Laws I am well convinced are already sufficient to punish Licentiousness in any Shape, and I can see no Reason for a new one, that may be dangerous, and impartially, must be allowed to be unnecessary.



thought it high time, to take a proper Notice of them.

Having now shewn, by what means there came to be four Theatres, besides a fifth for Operas, in *London*, all open at the same time, and that while they were so numerous, it was evident some of them must have starv'd, unless they fed upon the Trash and Filth of Buffoonry, and Licentiousness; I now come, as I promis'd, to speak of that necessary Law, which has reduced their Number, and prevents the Repetition of such Abuses, in those that remain open, for the Publick Recreation.

While this Law was in Debate, a lively Spirit, and uncommon Eloquence was employ'd against it. It was urg'd, That *one* of the greatest Goods we can enjoy, is *Liberty*. (This we may grant to be an incontestable Truth, without its being the least Objection to this Law.) It was said too, That to bring the Stage 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 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 ridicul'd, or made contemptible, in a Play, than by the same Matter only printed, and read against him, in a Pamphlet, or the strongest

Verte;

Verse; then indeed the Stage, and the Press might pretend, to be upon an equal Foot of Liberty: But when the wide Difference between these two Liberties comes 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: Let us see, at least, if the Case will not be vastly alter'd. Read what Mr. Collier, in his *Defence* of his *Short View of the Stage, &c.* Page 25, says to this Point; he sets this Difference, in a clear Light. These are his Words:

“ The Satyr of a Comedian, and another  
 “ Poet have a different effect upon Reputation:  
 “ A Character of Disadvantage, upon the  
 “ Stage, makes a stronger Impression than else-  
 “ where: Reading is but Hearing at second-  
 “ hand; now Hearing, at best, is a more lan-  
 “ guid Conveyance, than Sight. For as *Horace*  
 “ observes,

*Scgnius irritant animum, demissa per aurem,  
 Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*

“ The Eye is much more affecting, and strikes  
 “ deeper into the Memory, than the Ear: Be-  
 “ sides, upon the Stage, both the Senses are in  
 “ Conjunction. The Life of the Actor for-  
 “ tifies the Object, and awakens the Mind to  
 “ take hold of it. --- Thus a dramatic Abuse is  
 “ rivetted, in the Audience; a Jest is improv'd  
 “ into Argument, and Rallying grows up in-  
 “ to Reason: Thus a Character of Scandal  
 “ be-

“ 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 prejudic'd, 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 Range, is in effect to  
“ make them Masters of all moral Distinc-  
“ tions, 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 Laugh-  
“ ing, and Esteem, are seldom bestow'd on  
“ the same Object.”

If this was Truth, and Reason (as sure it was) 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 ? And now let us ask another Question ! Does not the general Opinion of Mankind suppose, that the Honour, and Reputation of a Minister is, or ought to be, as dear to him, as his Life ? Yet when the Law, in Queen *Anne's* Time, had made even an unsuccessful Attempt upon the Life of a Minister, capital, could any Reason be found, that the Fame, and Honour

nour of his Character should not be under equal Protection? Was the Wound that *Guiscard* gave to the late Lord *Oxford*, when a Minister, a greater Injury, than the Theatrical Insult which was offer'd to a later Minister, in a more valuable Part, his Character? Was it not as high time, then, to take this dangerous Weapon of mimical Insolence, and Defamation out of the Hands of a mad Poet, as to wrest the Knife from the lifted Hand of a Murderer? And is not that Law of a milder Nature, which *prevents* a Crime, than that which *punishes* it, after it is committed? May not one think it amazing, that the Liberty of defaming lawful Power and Dignity, should have been so eloquently contended for? or especially that this Liberty ought to triumph in a Theatre, where the most able, the most innocent, and most upright Person, must himself be, while the Wound is given, defenceless? How long must a Man so injur'd, lie bleeding, before the Pain and Anguish of his Fame (if it suffers wrongfully) can be dispell'd? or say, he had deserv'd Reproof, and publick Accusation, yet the Weight and Greatness of his Office, never can deserve it from a publick Stage, where the lowest Malice by sawcy Parallels, and abusive Inuendoes, may do every thing but name him: But alas! Liberty is so tender, so chaste a Virgin, that, it seems, not to suffer her to do irreparable Injuries, with Impunity, is a Violation of her! It cannot ture be a Principle of Liberty, that  
would

would turn the Stage into a Court of Enquiry, that would let the partial Applauses of a vulgar Audience give Sentence upon the Conduct of Authority, and put Impeachments into the Mouth of a *Harlequin*? Will not every impartial Man think, that Malice, Envy, Faction, and Mis-rule, might have too much Advantage over lawful Power, if the Range of such a Stage-Liberty were unlimited, and insisted on to be enroll'd among the glorious Rights of an *English* Subject?

I remember much such another ancient Liberty, which many of the good People of *England* were once extremely fond of; I mean that of throwing Squibs, and Crackers, at all Spectators without Distinction, upon a Lord-Mayor's Day; but about forty Years ago a certain Nobleman happening to have one of his Eyes burnt out by this mischievous Merriment, it occasion'd a penal Law, to prevent these Sorts of Jest, from being laugh'd at for the future: Yet I have never heard, that the most zealous Patriot ever thought such a Law was the least Restraint upon our Liberty.

If I am ask'd, why I am so voluntary a Champion for the Honour of this Law, that has limited the Number of Play-Houses, and which now can no longer concern me, as a Professor of the Stage? I reply, that it being a Law, so nearly relating to the Theatre, it seems not at all foreign to my History, to have taken notice of it; and as I have farther promised, to give the Publick a true Portrait of my Mind,  
I ought

I ought fairly to let them see how far I am, or am not a Blockhead, when I pretend to talk of serious Matters, that may be judg'd so far above my Capacity: Nor will it in the least discompose me, whether my Observations are contemn'd, or applauded. A Blockhead is not always an unhappy Fellow, and if the World will not flatter us, we can flatter ourselves; perhaps too it will be as difficult to convince us, we are in the wrong, as that you wiser Gentlemen are one Tittle the better for your Knowledge. It is yet a Question, with me, whether we weak Heads have not as much Pleasure too, in giving our shallow Reason a little Exercise, as those clearer Brains have, that are allow'd to dive into the deepest Doubts and Mysteries; to reflect, or form a Judgment upon remarkable things *past*, is as delightful to me, as it is to the gravest Politician to penetrate into what is *present*, or to enter into Speculations upon what is, or is not likely to come. Why are Histories written, if all Men are not to judge of them? Therefore, if my Reader has no more to do, than I have, I have a Chance for his being as willing to have a little more upon the same Subject, as I am to give it him.

When direct Arguments against this Bill were found too weak, Recourse was had to dissuasive ones: It was said, that *this Restraint upon the Stage, would not remedy the Evil complain'd of: That a Play refus'd to be licens'd, would still be printed, with double Advantage,*  
*when*

when it should be insinuated, that it was refused, for some Strokes of Wit, &c. and would be more likely, then, to have its Effect, among the People. However natural this Consequence may seem, I doubt it will be very difficult, to give a *printed* Satyr, or Libel, half the Force, or Credit of an *acted* one. The most artful, or notorious Lye, or strain'd Allusion that ever slander'd a great Man, may be read, by some People, with a Smile of Contempt, or at worst, it can impose but on one Person, at once: but when the Words of the same plausible Stuff, shall be repeated on a Theatre, the Wit of it among a Crowd of Hearers, is liable to be over-valued, and may unite, and warm a whole Body of the Malicious, or Ignorant, into a Plaudit; nay, the partial Claps of only *twenty* ill-minded Persons, among several hundreds of silent Hearers, shall, and often have been, mistaken for a general Approbation, and frequently draw into their Party the Indifferent, or Inapprehensive, who rather, than be thought not to understand the Conceit, will laugh, with the Laughers, and join in the Triumph! But alas! the *quiet* Reader of the same ingenious Matter, can only like for *himself*; and the Poison has a much slower Operation, upon the Body of a People, when it is so retail'd out, than when sold to a full Audience by wholesale. The *single* Reader too may happen to be a sensible, or unprejudiced Person; and then the merry Dose meeting with the Antidote of a sound Judgment, perhaps may have no Operation

tion at all: With such a one, the Wit of the most ingenious Satyr, will only, by its intrinsic Truth, or Value, gain upon his Approbation; or if it be worth an Answer, a printed Falshood, may possibly be confounded by printed Proofs against it. But against Contempt, and Scandal heighten'd, and colour'd by the Skill of an *Actor*, ludicrously insufing it into a Multitude, there is no immediate Defence to be made, or equal Reparation to be had for it; for it would be but a poor Satisfaction, at last, after lying long patient, under the Injury, that Time only is to shew (which would probably be the Case) that the Author of it was a desperate Indigent, that did it for Bread. How much less dangerous, or offensive, then, is the *written*, than the *acted* Scandal? The Impression the Comedian gives to it, is a kind of double Stamp upon the Poet's Paper, that raises it to ten times the intrinsic Value. Might we not strengthen this Argument too, even by the Eloquence, that seem'd to have opposed this Law? I will say for my self, at least, that when I came to read the printed Arguments against it, I could scarce believe they were the same, that had amaz'd, and rais'd such Admiracion, in me, when they had the Advantage of a lively Elocution, and of that Grace and Spirit, which gave Strength and Lustre to them, in the Delivery!

Upon the whole; if the Stage ought ever to have been reform'd; if to place a Power *somewhere* of restraining its Immoralities, was not  
inconsistent



inconsistent, with the Liberties of a civiliz'd People (neither of which, sure any moral Man of Sense can dispute) might it not have shewn a Spirit too poorly prejudiced, to have rejected so rational a Law, only because, the Honour, and Office of a Minister might happen, in some small Measure, to be protected by it.

But however little Weight there may be, in the Observations I have made upon it, I shall for my own Part always think them just; unless I should live to see (which I do not expect) some future Set of upright Ministers use their utmost Endeavours to repeal it.

And now we have seen the Consequence of what many People are apt to contend for, Variety of Play-houses! How was it possible so many could honestly subsist, on what was fit to be seen? Their extraordinary Number, of Course, reduc'd them to live upon the Gratification of such Hearers, as they knew would be best pleased with publick Offence; and publick Offence, of what kind soever, will always be a good Reason for making Laws, to restrain it.

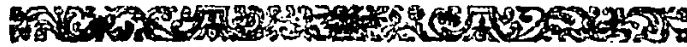
To conclude, let us now consider this Law, in a quite different Light; let us leave the political Part of it quite out of the Question; what Advantage could either the Spectators of Plays, or the Masters of Play-houses have gain'd, by its having never been made? How could the same Stock of Plays supply four Theatres, which (without such additional Entertainments, as a Nation of common Sense  
20 MORE ought

ought to be ashamed of) could not well support 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 seven 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 might be, in a way of being better entertain'd, 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 design'd to have follow'd it.



CHAP.



C H A P. IX.

*A small Apology, for writing on. The different State of the two Companies. Wilks invited over from Dublin. Estcourt, from the same Stage, the Winter following. Mrs. Oldfield's first Admission to the Theatre-Royal. Her Character. The great Theatre in the Hay-Market built, for Betterton's Company. It Answers not their Expectation. Some Observations upon it. A Theatrical State Secret.*

*u not.*

**N**OW begin to doubt, that the *Gayeté du Cœur*, in which I first undertook this Work, may have drawn me, into a more laborious Amusement, than I shall know how to away with: For though I cannot say, I have yet jaded my Vanity, it is not impossible but, by this time, the most candid of my Readers may want a little Breath; especially, when they consider, that all this Load, I have heap'd upon their Patience, contains but seven Years of the forty three I pass'd upon the Stage; the History of which Period I have enjoyn'd my self to transmit to the Judgment (or Oblivion) of Posterity. However, even my Dulness will find somebody to do it right; if my Reader is an ill-natur'd one, he will be as much pleas'd to find me a Dunc in my

my old Age, as possibly he may have been, to prove me a brisk Blockhead, in my Youth: But if he has no Gall to gratify, and would (for his simple Amusement) as well know, how the Play-houses went on forty Years ago, as how they do now, I will honestly tell him the rest of my Story, as well as I can. Left therefore the frequent Digressions, that have broke in, upon it, may have entangled his Memory, I must beg leave, just to throw together the Heads of what I have already given him, that he may again recover the Clue of my Discourse.

Let him, then, remember, from the Year 1660 to 1684, the various Fortune of the (then) King's, and Duke's, two famous Companies; their being reduced to one united; the Distinct Characters I have given of thirteen Actors, which in the Year 1690 were the most famous, then, remaining of them; the Cause of their being again divided in 1695, and the Consequences of that Division, 'till 1697; from whence I shall lead them to our Second Union in——Hold! let me see——ay, it was in that 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 *Shakespear's* Prologue to the Play, in that Play which originally consisted but of three, but *Estcourt* made it run thus:

*For*

'The Kings, and the Dukis' two famous Companies, were not embodied till the Spring of 1662. and united in November 1682.

*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 out of Humour at it. However, by this Fact, it is plain, our Theatrical Union happen'd in 1707. 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 advanc'd 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 Satiety depreciate? For though I must own, and avow, that in our highest Prosperity, I always thought we were greatly their Inferiors; 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* (and why may I not name another, tho' it be my own?) in *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 frivolous, rash, accidental Quarrel; for which a late Resident at *Venice*, Colonel *Burgejs*, and several other Persons of Distinction, took their Tryals, and were acquitted. This young Man had almost every natural 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 bury'd, 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 Shroud. He was the elder Son of Dr. *Horden* Minister of *Twickenbam*, in *Middlesex*. But this Misfortune was soon repair'd, by the Return of *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 Minick, of whom I have already spoken, 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 remembred 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,



ROBT WILKS ESQR  
*Obi 1732. Et 67*



Bibber says, Wilkes returned to the Theatre Royal in 1696 — but this is one instance, among many others of Bibber's inaccuracy as to dates — Wilkes was certainly engaged in Dublin in 1698, and could not return to the Theatre Royal till the Autumn of that year — probably not till the Autumn of 1699 — he might receive an invitation into England in 1696, but, to use Bibber's own words; his Engagements in Ireland, were too strong to be suddenly broken from.

Estcourt is said in the 'Spectator' to be 'wholly employed in the agreeable service of wit and wine.'

21. 11. 55

whole, notwithstanding his Exactness in the Out-lines, the true Spirit, that was to fill up the Figure, was not the same, but unskillfully dawb'd on, like a Child's Painting upon the Face of a *Metzo-tinto*: It was too plain to the judicious, that the Conception was not his own, but imprinted in his Memory, by another, of whom he only presented a dead Likeness. But these were Defects, not so obvious to common Spectators; no wonder, therefore, if by his being much sought after, in private Companies, he met with a sort of Indulgence, not to say Partiality, for what he sometimes did upon the Stage.

In the Year 1699, Mrs. *Oldfield* was first taken into the House, where she remain'd about a Twelvemonth 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: Notwithstanding, I own I was, then, so far deceiv'd in my Opinion of her, that I thought, she had little more than her Person, that appear'd 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 (not to say) 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 Ap-  
29 R 4 55 probation

probation is the warm Weather of a Theatrical Plant, which will soon bring it forward, to whatever Perfection Nature has design'd it. However Mrs. *Oldfield* (perhaps for want of fresh Parts) seem'd to come but slowly forward, 'till the Year 1703. Our Company, that Summer, acted at the *Bath*, during the Residence of Queen *Anne* at that Place. At that time it happen'd, that Mrs. *Verbruggen*, by reason of her last Sickness (of which she some few Months after, dy'd) was left in *London*; and though most of her Parts were, of courſe, to be dispos'd of, yet ſo earnest was the Female Scramble for them, that only one of them fell to the Share of Mrs. *Oldfield*, that of *Leonora*, in *Sir Courtly Nice*; a Character of good plain Senſe, but not over elegantly written. It was in this Part Mrs. *Oldfield* surpris'd 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 promis'd. Before ſhe had acted this Part, I had ſo cold an Expectation from her Abilities, that ſhe could ſcarce prevail with me, to rehearſe with her the Scenes, ſhe was chiefly concern'd in, with *Sir Courtly*, which I then acted. However, we ran them over, with a mutual Inadvertency of one another. I ſeem'd careleſs, as concluding, that any Aſſiſtance I could give her, would be 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

1708 " Her Majesty's Servants of the Theatre Royal, being returned  
from Bath, will open Drury Lane on the 6<sup>th</sup> ; with the Comedy of  
Love makes a Man. Performances will begin throughout the  
Winter, at 8 o'clock.

! Daily Courant for October. !

Farquhar, was the means of bringing W<sup>m</sup> Oldfield before the Public. — he accidentally at a Tavern, kept by a near relation of hers heard a person reading a Comedy in a room behind the Bar, with such just vivacity and humour of the characters as gave him infinite satisfaction and surprize — his curiosity was so prevalent that he made a pretence to go into the room, where he was astonished at her beauty and discourse — he pressed her to procure her amusement, but was obliged to depart without that satisfaction — he afterwards introduced her to Danborough — it was time before they could prevail on her, to come on the stage: No, as she afterwards told Bhetinood, she longed to be at it, and <sup>only</sup> wanted a few decent entreaties.

a just Occasion to triumph over the Error of my Judgment, by the (almost) Amazement, that her unexpected Performance awak'd me to; so forward, and sudden a Step into Nature, I had never seen; and what what made her Performance more valuable, was, that I knew it all proceeded from her own Understanding, untaught, and unassisted by any one more experienc'd Actor. Perhaps it may not be unacceptable, if I enlarge a little more upon the Theatrical Character of so memorable an Actress.

Though this 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 observ'd) that corrected my Judgment of her, and confirm'd me, in a strong Belief, that she could not fail, in very little time, of 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 Character 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

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new

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: Accordingly, the *Careless Husband* took its Fate upon the Stage, the Winter following, in 1704. Whatever favourable Reception, this Comedy has met with from the Publick; it would be unjust 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, without the least Diminution of their Sense, or Dignity. And this very Morning, where I am now writing at the *Bath*, November 11, 1738, the same Words were said of her, by a Lady of Condition, whose better Judgment of her Personal Merit, in that Light, has embolden'd me to repeat them. 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:



Booker's Life of Macklin.

Mr Oldfield. — " Her forte was in those parts of Comedy, which required vivacity and high bred manners: and in these Macklin has often said he never saw her equalled. He was present at her first representations of Lady Townly in 1728: and though the whole of that pleasant and sensible Comedy was received with the most unbounded applause, Mr Oldfield formed the centre of admiration from her looks, her dress, and her admirable performance. Most of the performers who have played this part since her time, he complained had too much tameness in their manner, under an idea of its being more easy and well bred: but Mr Oldfield who was trained in the part by the author, gave it all the rage of fashion and vivacity: she rushed upon the stage with the full consciousness of youth's beauty and attractions: and answered all her Lords questions with such a lively indifference, as to make the contrast as much in her manner of speaking as of thinking: but when she came to describe the superior privileges of a married above a single woman, she repeated the whole of that lively speech with a rapidity, and *gait de cœur*, that electrified the whole house. Their applause was so unbounded that when Wilks who played Lord Townly answered "Produce us!" the audience applied that word as a compliment to the actress and again gave her the shouts of their approbation "

fection: 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

any Hint, that she was not able to take, or improve. With all this Merit, she was tractable, and less presuming, 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 always 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 Menagers 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 Sallery, tho' by her Agreement, she was entitled 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:

*Ubi plura nitent — non ego paucis  
Offendor maculis —————*

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

What more might be said of her as an Actress,  
may

may be found in the Preface to the *Provok'd Husband*, to which I refer the Reader.

With the Acquisition, then, of so advanc'd a Comedian as Mrs. *Oldfield*, and the Addition of 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 fort. *Booth*, who was then a young Actor, among them, has often told me of the Difficulties *Betterton*, then, labour'd under, and complain'd of: How impracticable he found it, to keep their Body to that common Order, which was necessary for their Support; of their relying too much upon their intrinsic Merit; and though but few of them were young, even when they first became their own Masters, yet they were all now, ten Years older, and consequently more liable to fall into an inactive Negligence, or were only separately diligent, for themselves, 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 subsist them, for the current Year. But as 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 reduc'd to have recourse to  
foreign

The Author of, *Comptoy a-la-Mode*, 1700. says in his Preface —  
' My Play was entered at Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Bellerton did me all  
the justice I could reasonably expect; but his example was not followed.  
For Bowman kept the first character of my Play for six weeks, and then  
could hardly read 6 lines of it — how far this way of management  
makes of late for the interest and honour of that House, is easy to be  
judged — some, who valued their reputations more, were indeed rarely  
or never absent — to these, I give my thanks: but finding that 6. or  
7. people could not perform, what was designed for 15. I was obliged  
to remove it, after so many sham rehearsals, and in less than 20 days  
it was acted at Drury Lane. "

If Bellerton's influence with Bowman, who had married his  
adopted daughter, was so small what must it have been with the  
rest of the company?

} Some Account, &c.

" But as I promis'd you, I think myself oblig'd to be true to my word, and will therefore proceed to give you an account of our Stage, as it now stands: and I must tell you tis but in a very indifferent condition: for there has been a very fierce combat between the Hay-Market, and Drury-Lane: and the two Sisters, Musick and Poetry, quarrel like two Fish-Wives at Billingsgate: and then comes a whole Battalion of Subscribers, who promise to stand by the former, and inviolably maintain her right: against all intruding Tragick, Comick, Tragick-Comick, and Farceical Writers. Among the latter, the 'T- has met with success, and has the entire happiness of pleasing the Upper Galleries Betterton, and Wilks. Ben Johnson, and the best of em, now must give place to a bawling Italian Woman, whose voice to me is less pleasing than Merry Andrews, playing on the Grid-Iron. The Mourning Bride, Plain Dealer, Volpone, or Tamerlane, will hardly fetch us a tolerable audience, unless we stuff the Bills with long Entertainments, of Dances, Songs, Scaramouches, Entrées, and what not. "

! From one of her Majesties Players at Drury Lane to a Stroder at Nottingham, giving him some account of the present state of the Stage. !

Pantomime first dawned in the year 1702 at Drury Lane,  
in an Entertainment called the Tavern. Bilkers, it died the 1st night.  
It was invented by Weaver, a Dancing Master at Shrewsbury  
who, from the encouragement of the Nobility, invented a second  
called, The Loves of Mars and Venus, performed at the same  
Theatre, in the year 1716, with vast success, which occasioned  
Mr Richard Steele, to write the following lines at the back of one of  
the Play-bills at Buttons Coffee House

Weaver, competitor of this present age  
Who first taught silent seni upon the Stage

(Malcolms Manners Buttons)





*Nugent sculp.*

NICHOLAS ROWE ESQ, B.L.

foreign Novelties; *L'Abbeè, Balon,* and *Mademaiselle 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 fatiated. But alas! there was no recovering to a sound Constitution, by those mere costly Cordials; the Novelty of a Dance was but of a short Duration, and perhaps hurtful, in its consequence; for it made a Play, without a Dance, less endur'd, than it had been before, when such Dancing was not to be had. But perhaps, their exhibiting these Novelties, might be owing to the Success we had met with, in our more barbarous introducing of *French Mimicks*, and *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, seem'd to be of 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,

tion, to play every Day; not that whenever such Satiety commences, it will be any Proof of the Play's being a bad one, or of its being ill acted. In a word, Satiety is, seldom enough consider'd, by either Criticks, Spectators, or Actors, as the true, not to say just Cause of declining Audiences, to the most rational Entertainments: And tho' I cannot say, I ever saw a good new Play, not attended with due Encouragement, yet to keep a Theatre daily open, without sometimes giving the Publick a bad old one, is more than, I doubt, the Wit of human Writers, or Excellence of Actors, will ever be able to accomplish. And, as both Authors, and Comedians, may have often succeeded, where a sound Judgment would have condemn'd them, it might puzzle the nicest Critick living, to prove in what sort of Excellence, the true Value of either consisted: For, if their Merit were to be measur'd by the full Houses, they may have brought; if the Judgment of the Crowd were infallible; I am afraid we shall be reduc'd to allow, that the *Beggars Opera* was the best-written Play, and Sir *Harry Wildair* (as *Wilks* play'd it) was the best acted Part, that ever our *English* Theatre had to boast of. That Critick indeed, must be rigid, to a Folly, that would deny either of them, their due Praise, when they severally drew such Numbers after them; all their Hearers could not be mistaken; and yet, if they were all in the right, what sort of Fame will remain to those celebrated

Authors,

1699.

April 15<sup>th</sup>

" As both the Theatres have been very industrious, to entertain the Town with several eminent Masters, in Singing and Dancing, lately arriv'd, both from France and Italy, as M. Balon, Sig<sup>r</sup> Fideli, &c. we are now assur'd that the Masters of the Theatre Royal, have engaged Sig<sup>r</sup> Clementini, the famous Eunuch, servant to the Elector of Bavaria, to sing on their public Stage, for the short time of his stay in England. There is / so / great expectation of that extraordinary desert in Singing, that his yearly salary is £500 a year.



S<sup>R</sup>.JOHN VANBRUGH.

Authors, and Actors, that had so long, and deservedly been admired, before these were in Being. The only Distinction I shall make between them is, That to write, or act, like the Authors, or Actors, of the latter end of the last Century, I am of Opinion, will be found a far better Pretence to Success, than to imitate these who have been so crowded to, in the beginning of this. All I would infer from this Explanation, is, that tho' we had, then, the better Audiences, and might have more of the young World on our Side; yet this was no sure Proof, that the other Company were not, in the Truth of Action, greatly our Superiors. These elder Actors, then, besides the Disadvantages I have mention'd, having only the fewer, true Judges to admire them, naturally wanted the Support of the Crowd, whose Taste was to be pleased at a cheaper Rate, and with coarser Fare. 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 rais'd 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 publickly perform'd there, without farther Payment for his Entrance. Of this Theatre, I saw the first Stone laid, on which was inscrib'd *The little Whig*, in Honour to a Lady of extraordinary Beauty,

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 Agreement, 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, was too sanguine. As to their Prospect of new Plays, I doubt it was not enough consider'd, that good ones were Plants of a slow Growth; and tho' Sir *John Vanbrugh* had a very quick Pen, yet Mr. *Congreve* was too judicious a Writer, to let any thing come hastily out of his Hands: As to their other Dependence, the House, they had not yet discover'd, that almost every proper Quality, and Convenience of a good Theatre had been sacrificed, or neglected, to shew the Spectator a vast, triumphal Piece of Architecture! And that the best Play, for the Reasons I am going to offer, could not but be under great Disadvantages, and be less capable of delighting

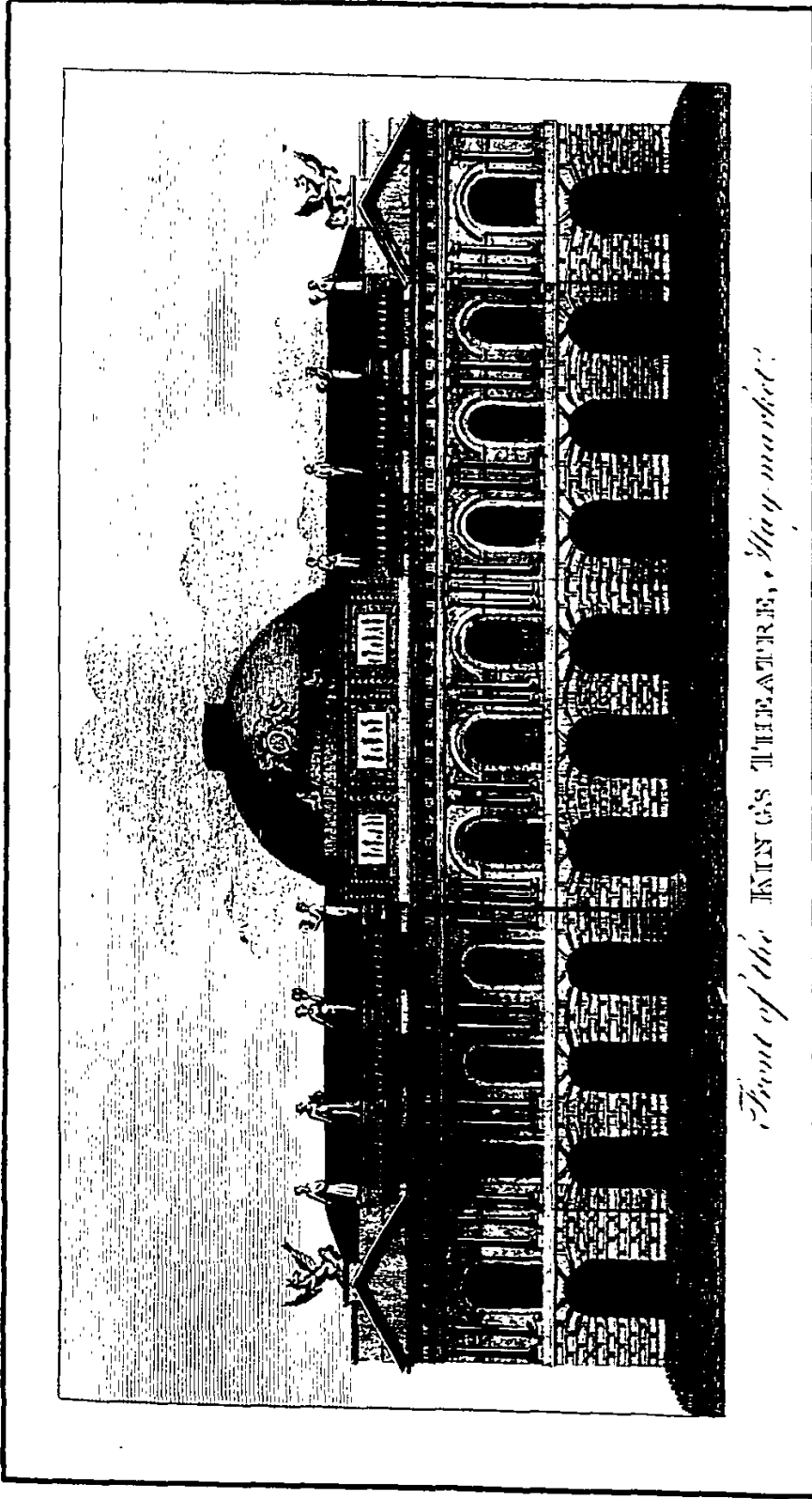
" A satirical Writer says. " The Kit-bat Club, is now grown famous and notorious all over the Kingdom, and they have built a Temple to their Dragon — the new Playhouse in the Haymarket. The foundation was laid with great solemnity, by a noble babe of grace; and over or under the foundation stone is a plate of silver, on which is graven. Kit-bat on the one side, and Little Whig on the other. This is, in honoram rei memoriam, that after ages may know by what worthy hands, and for what good ends, this stately Fabric was erected. And there was such zeal shewed, all purses open to carry on the work, that it was almost as soon finished as begun "

! The Behemoth of Observator. n° 61. May 5. 1705 !



The "Babe of Grace" or, "Little White" was the beautiful  
Lady Sunderland second Daughter of the Duke of Marlborough: here  
are some lines "On the Lady Sunderlands laying the first stone of  
her Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket." " " "

What pompous seems, and lofty columns rise  
That strike with awful strokes our wondering eyes  
And seize the raptur'd soul with sweet surprise:  
O! what a stately doom w' admiring view,  
Whose chief foundations <sup>2. M. 55</sup> owing still to you, &c.



*Front of the KING'S THEATRE, Haymarket.*

lighting the Auditor, here, than it could have been in the plain Theatre they came from. For what could their vast Columns, their gilded Cornices, their immoderate high Roofs avail, when scarce one Word in ten, could be distinctly heard in it? Nor had it, then, the Form, it now stands in, which Necessity, two or three Years after, reduced it to: At the first opening it, the flat Ceiling, that is now over the Orchestre, was then a Semi-oval Arch, that sprung fifteen Feet higher from above the Cornice: The Ceiling over the Pit too, was still more raised, being one level Line from the highest back part of the upper Gallery, to the Front of the Stage: The Front-boxes were a continued Semicircle, to the bare Walls of the House on each Side: This extraordinary, and superfluous Space occasion'd such an Undulation, from the Voice of every Actor, that generally what they said sounded like the Gabbling of so many People, in the lofty Isles in a Cathedral--- The Tone of a Trumpet, or the Swell of an Eunuch's holding Note, 'tis true, might be sweeten'd by it; but the articulate Sounds of a speaking Voice were drown'd, by the hollow Reverberations of one Word upon another. To this Inconvenience, why may we not add that of its Situation; for at that time it had not the Advantage of almost a large City, which has since been built, in its Neighbourhood: Those costly Spaces of *Hanover*, *Grosvenor*, and *Cavendish* Squares, with the many, and great adjacent Streets about them,

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were

were then all but so many green Fields of Pasture, from whence they could draw little, or no Sustenance, unless it were that of a Milk-Diet. The City, the Inns of Court, and the middle Part of the Town, which were the most constant Support of a Theatre, and chiefly to be relied on, were now too far, out of the Reach of an easy Walk; and Coach-hire is often too hard a Tax, upon the Pit, and Gallery. But from the vast Increase of the Buildings I have mention'd, the Situation of that Theatre has since that Time received considerable Advantages; a new World of People of Condition are nearer to it, than formerly, and I am of Opinion, that if the auditory Part were a little more reduced to the Model of that in *Drury-Lane*, an excellent Company of Actors would, now, find a better Account in it, than in any other House in this populous City: Let me not be mistaken, I say, an excellent Company, and such as might be able to do Justice to the best of Plays, and throw out those latent Beauties in them, which only excellent Actors can discover, and give Life to. If such a Company were now there, they would meet with a quite different Set of Auditors, than other Theatres have lately been used to: Polite Hearers would be content with polite Entertainments; and I remember the time, when Plays, without the Aid of Farce, or Pantomime, were as decently attended as Opera's, or private Assemblies, where a noisy Sloven would have past his time as uneasily, in a  
Front-

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Italian Opera House. 19<sup>th</sup> March. 1825. — "Removing  
that portion of one of the walls of the Italian Opera House,  
immediately adjoining the cellar of Mr Wright. on Saturday last  
the Workmen discovered the first stone of the old building, laid  
in 1704. The stone, was in a perfect state, and in the cavity  
formed for the purpose of receiving them, were found several  
coins of the reign of Queen Anne: a brass plate which  
covered the cavity, bore the following inscription. —

" April 18<sup>th</sup> 1704. In the third year of the happy reign  
of our Sovereign Lady Queen Anne, this corner stone of the  
Queen's Theatre was laid, by his Grace Charles Duke of  
Somerset, Master of the Horse, to her most sacred Majesty "

• Queen Theatre Haymarket. — " Talking of the fertility of the female sex. has just come in mind of the pretty baggage, that I cannot forbear telling you that a gentleman of my acquaintance who is a great admirer of the old game of *Quixote de Triel* has the curiosity of keeping an exact register of all the nymphs and goddesses in *Drury Lane*, and all the little courts and alleys adjacent and he finds by his list which is kept in as great order as a *Table of Mortality*, that since the erection of the new Play-house in *St James's* there have occurred within a fortnight in their old precincts three hundred and odd houses removed their residence to the further part of *Richmond* and the Haymarket that they may be conveniently seated against the opening of the new Theatre. "

Comical Characters in a Dialogue between Captain Bluff and Mr. Merryman  
20 M 55  
N<sup>o</sup> 1. Tuesday Nov<sup>r</sup> 7. 1754.

Front-box, as in a Drawing-room; when a Hat upon a Man's Head there would have been look'd upon, as a sure Mark of a Brute, or a Booby: But of all this I have seen too, the Reverse, where in the Presence of Ladies, at a Play, common Civility has been set at defiance, and the Privilege of being a rude Clown, even to a Nuisance, has, in a manner been demanded, as one of the Rights of *English* Liberty: Now, though I grant, that Liberty is so precious a Jewel, that we ought not to suffer the least Ray of its Lustre, to be diminish'd; yet methinks the Liberty of seeing a Play, in quiet, has as laudable a Claim to Protection, as the Privilege of not suffering you to do it, has to Impunity. But since we are so happy, as not to have a certain Power among us, which, in another Country, is call'd the *Police*, let us rather bear this Insult, than buy its Remedy at too dear a Rate; and let it be the Punishment of such wrong-headed Savages, that they never will, or can know the true Value of that Liberty, which they so stupidly abuse: Such vulgar Minds possess their Liberty, as profligate Husbands do fine Wives, only to disgrace them. In a Word, when Liberty boils over, such is the Scum of it. But to our new erected Theatre.

Not long before this Time, the *Italian* Opera began first to steal into *England*; but in as rude a disguise, and unlike it self, as possible; in a lame, hobbling Translation, into our own Language, with false Quantities, or Metre out

of Measure, to its original Notes, sung by our own unskillful Voices, with Graces misapply'd to almost every Sentiment, and with Action, lifeless and unmeaning, through every Character: The first *Italian* Performer, that made any distinguish'd Figure in it, was *Valentini*, a true sensible Singer, at that time, but of a Throat too weak, to sustain those melodious Warblings, for which the fairer Sex have since idoliz'd his Successors. However, this Defect was so well supply'd by his Action, that his Hearers bore with the Absurdity of his singing his first Part of *Turnus* in *Camilla*, all in *Italian*, while every other Character was sung and recited to him in *English*. This I have mention'd to shew not only our Tramontane Taste, but that the crowded Audiences, which follow'd it to *Drury-Lane*, might be another Occasion of their growing thinner in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*.

To strike in, therefore, with this prevailing Novelty, Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*, open'd their new *Hay-Market Theatre*, with a translated Opera, to *Italian* Musick, call'd the *Triumph of Love*, but this not having in it, the Charms of *Camilla*, either from the Inequality of the Musick, or Voices, had but a cold Reception, being perform'd but three Days, and those not crowded. Immediately, upon the Failure of this *Opera*, Sir *John Vanbrugh* produced his Comedy call'd the *Confederacy*, taken (but greatly improv'd) from the *Bourgeois à la mode* of *Dancour*: Though the  
Fate



Dr John Vandenberg, and Mr Bougrevé, opened their new Theatre, on Easter Monday, April 9<sup>th</sup> 1705. A Prologue written for the occasion, by Dr Samuel Garth, and spoken by Mr Bracegirdle, contains the following triplet.

Your own magnificence you here survey  
Majestick Columns stand where Dunghills lay  
And Cars triumphal rise from barts of Hay

after which was performed the Triumph of Love, set to Italian Music. | B. M. | — This Opera was unsuccessful, and the performers being but indifferently liked by the Gentry, were in a little time sent back to their own country: they were the worst that ever came from thence. The first Play acted was the Gamester — then followed the Amorous Widow — Duke and no Duke — she would if she could and half a score of old Plays, acted in the clothes brought from Lincoln Inn Fields — the audience fell off greatly — Downes thinks the Company would have succeeded better, if they had opened the House with a new Play, or an English Opera.

Scenes occasioned by Micolini and Valentini's first coming  
to the Haymarket Theatre.

Amphion strikes the vocal Lyre  
And ready at his call  
Harmonious Brick and stone conspire  
To raise the Theban wall.

In emulation of his praise  
Two Latian heroes come  
A sinking Theatre to raise  
And prop Wain's tottering dome.

But how this last should come to pass  
Must still remain unknown  
20 M 55  
Since these poor gentlemen, alas!  
Bring neither Brick nor Stone.

Fate of this Play was something better, yet I thought it was not equal to its Merit: For it is written with an uncommon Vein of Wit and Humour; which confirms me, in my former Observation, that the difficulty of hearing distinctly in that, then wide Theatre, was no small Impediment to the Applause, that might have followed the same Actors in it, upon every other Stage; and indeed every Play acted there, before the House was alter'd, seem'd to suffer from the same Inconvenience: In a Word, the Prospect of Profits, from this Theatre was so very barren, that Mr. *Congreve*, 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, oblig'd 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 *De pit Amoureux* of the same Author. Yet all these, however well executed, came to the Ear in the same undistinguish'd Utterance, by which almost all their Plays had equally suffered: For, what few could plainly hear, it was not likely a great many could applaud.

It must farther be consider'd too, that this Company were not now, what they had been, when they first revolted from the Patentees in *Drury-Lane*, and became their own Masters, in *Lincoln-Imm-Fields*. Several of them, excellent in their different Talents, were now dead; as *Smith*, *Kynaston*, *Sandford*, and *Leigh*: *Mrs. Betterton*, and *Underbil* being, at this time, also superannuated Pensioners, whose Places were generally but ill supply'd: Nor could it be expected that *Betterton* himself, at past seventy, could retain his former Force, and Spirit; though he was yet far distant from any Competitor. Thus then were these Remains of the best Set of Actors, that I believe were ever known, at once in *England*, by Time, Death, and the Satiety of their Hearers mould'ring to decay.

It was, now, the Town-talk, that nothing but a Union of the two Companies, could recover the Stage, to its former Reputation, which Opinion was certainly true: One would have thought too, that the Patentee of *Drury-Lane* could not have fail'd to close with it, he being, then, on the Prosperous Side of the Question, having no Relief to ask for himself, and little more to do in the matter, than to consider what he might safely grant: But it seems this was not his way of counting; he had other Persons, who had great Claims to Shares in the Profits of this Stage, which Profits, by a Union, he foresaw would be too visible, to be doubted of, and might raise up a  
new

An Attempt for the re-union of the two Companies had certainly been made about this time, and as certainly been defeated by the opposition of Rich — Farquhar in a Prologue which was spoken on the 22<sup>d</sup> of June, 1706, says

For to one House confin'd, you then must praise  
Both-curs'd Actors, and confounded Plays.

| See Addenda, for the Petition of the Players, against the Union. |

new Spirit, in those Adventurers, to revive their Suits at Law with him ; for he had led them a Chace in Chancery several Years, and when they had driven him, into a Contempt of that Court, he conjur'd up a Spirit, in the Shape of Six and eight Pence a-day, that constantly struck the Tipstaff blind, whenever he came near him : He knew the intrinsic Value of Delay, and was resolv'd to stick to it, as the surest way to give the Plaintiffs enough on't. And by this Expedient our good Master had long walk'd about, at his Leisure, cool, and contented, as a Fox, when the Hounds were drawn off, and gone home from him. But whether I am right, or not in my Conjectures, certain it is, that this close Master of *Drury-Lane*, had no Inclination to a Union, as will appear by the Sequel.

Sir *John Vanbrugh* knew too, that to make a Union worth his while, he must not seem too hasty for it, he therefore found himself under a Necessity, in the mean time, of letting his whole Theatrical Farm to some industrious Tenant, that might put it into better Condition. This is that Crisis, as I observed, in the Eighth Chapter, when the Royal Licence, for acting Plays, &c. was judg'd of so little Value, as not to have one Suiter for it. At this time then, the Master of *Drury-Lane* happen'd to have a sort of premier 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

der 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 cheerful Humour, and an indefatigable Zeal for his Interest. If I should farther say, that this Person has been well know in almost every Metropolis, in *Europe*; that few private Men have, with so little Reproach, run through more various Turns of Fortune; that, on the wrong side of Three-score, he has yet the open Spirit of a hale young Fellow of five and twenty; that though he still chuses to speak what he thinks, to his best Friends, with an undisguis'd Freedom, he is, notwithstanding acceptable to many Persons of the first Rank, and Condition; that any one of them (provided he likes them) may now send him, for their Service, to *Constantinople*, at half a Day's Warning; that Time has not, yet, been able to make a visible Change in any Part of him, but the Colour of his Hair, from a fierce coal-black, to that of a milder milk-white: When I have taken this Liberty with him, methinks it cannot be taking a much greater, if I at once should tell you, that 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 License to employ them, upon Payment of only the casual Rent of five Pounds,

upon

upon every acting Day, and not to exceed 700*l.* in the Year. Of this Propofal, Mr. *Swiney* defir'd a Day, or two to confider; for however he might like it, he would not meddle in any fort, without the Consent, and Approbation of his Friend, and Patron, the Master of *Drury Lane*. Having given the Reasons why this Patentee was averfe to a Union, it may now feem lefs a Wonder, why he immediately confented that *Swiney* fhould take the *Hay-Market* Houfe, &c. and continue that Company to act againft him; but the real Truth was, that he had a mind both Companies fhould be clandestinely under one and the fame Intereft; and yet in fo loofe a manner, that he might declare his Verbal Agreement with *Swiney* good, or null, and void, as he might beft find his Account in either. What flatter'd him, that he had this wholfom Project, and *Swiney* to execute it, both in his Power, was, that, at this time, *Swiney* happen'd to ftand in his Books, Debtor to Cash, upwards of Two Hundred Pounds: But here, we fhall 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 fuch of his Actors from *Drury-Lane*, as either from Inclination, or Difcontent, might be willing to come over to him, in the *Hay-Market*. The only one he made an Exception of, was myfelf: For tho' he chiefly depended upon his Singers, and Dancers, he faid, it would be neceffary to  
keep



keep some one tolerable Actor with him, that might enable him to set those Machines a going. Under this Limitation, of not entertaining me, *Swiney* seem'd to acquiesce, 'till after he had open'd, with the so recruited Company, in the *Hay-Market*: 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: But I must here let you know, that this Project was form'd, and put in Execution, all in very few Days, in the Summer-Season, when no Theatre was open. To all which I was entirely a Stranger, being at this time at a Gentleman's House in *Gloucestershire*, scribbling, if I mistake not, the *Wife's Repentment*.

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 stronger Party. But, I confess, I was not a little alarm'd, at this Revolution: For I consider'd, 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 necessary an Expence, so bad a Situation, and so inconvenient a Theatre. I was always of opinion too, that in changing Sides, in most Conditions, there generally were discovered more unforeseen Inconveniencies, than  
visible

visible Advantages; and that at worst, there would always some sort of Merit remain with Fidelity, tho' unsuccessful. 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 reply'd, *Don't you trouble yourself, come along, and I'll shew you.* He then led me 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 buied his Head, most part of the Vacation; for he was scarce ever, without some notable Joyner, or a Bricklayer extraordinary, in pay, for twenty Years. And there are so many odd obscure Places about a Theatre, that his Genius in Nook-building was never out of Employment; nor could the most vain-headed Author, be more deaf to an Interruption in reciting his Works, than our wise Master was, while entertaining me with the Improvements he had made in his invisible Architecture; all which, without thinking any one Part of it necessary; tho' I seem'd to approve, I could not help, now and then, breaking in, upon his Delight, with the impertinent Question of

— But

— *But, Master, where are your Actors?* But it seems I had taken a wrong time for this sort of Enquiry; his Head was full of Matters of more moment (and, as you find) I was to come another time for an Answer: A very hopeful Condition I found myself in, under the Conduct of so profound a Vertuoso, and so considerate a Master! But, to speak of him feriously, and to account for this Disregard to his Actors, his Notion was, that Singing, and Dancing, or any sort of Exotick Entertainments, 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 Strefs 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. I told him, I came to serve him, at a time, when many of his best Actors had deserted him; that he might now have the Refusal of me; but I could not afford to carry the Compliment so far, as to lessen my Income by it; that I therefore expected, either my casual Pay to be advanced, or the Payment of my former Sallery made certain, for, as many Days, as we had acted the Year before. — No, he was not willing to alter his former Method; but I might chuse whatever Parts I had a mind to act, of theirs who had left him. When I found him,

as

as I thought, so insensible, or impregnable, I look'd gravely in his Face, and told him— He knew upon what Terms, I was willing to serve him; and 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 Sallaries, 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, which were in Substance, That *Swiney* should take the *Hay-Market* House in his own Name, and have what Actors he thought necessary from *Drury-Lane*, and after all Payments punctually made, the Profits should be equally divided between these two Undertakers. 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, and was resolv'd to know what he had to trust to, before they parted; and to keep him the closer, to his Bargain, he stood upon his Right of having *Me* added to that Company, if I was willing to come in to it. But this was a Point as absolutely refus'd on one side, as insisted on, on the other. In this Contest, high Words were exchange'd 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

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 rely'd 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 happen'd in the Theatrical Government, was a nearer Step to that twenty Years of Prosperity, which Actors, under the Menagement of Actors, not long afterwards, enjoy'd. What was the immediate Consequence of this last Desertion from *Drury-Lane*, shall be the Subject of another Chapter.



CHAP.



C H A P. X.

*The recruited Actors, in the Hay-Market, encourg'd by a Subscription. Drury-Lane, under a particular Menagement. The Power of a Lord-Chamberlain, over the Theatres, consider'd. How it had been formerly exercis'd. A Digression to Tragick Authors.*

HAVING shewn the particular Conduct of the Patentee, in refusing so fair an Opportunity of securing to himself both Companies, under his sole Power, and Interest; I shall now lead the Reader, after a short View of what pass'd in this new Establishment of the *Hay-Market* Theatre, to the Accidents, that the Year following, compell'd the same Patentee, to receive both Companies, united, into the *Drury-Lane* Theatre, notwithstanding his Disinclination to it.

It may, now, be imagin'd, 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 Subsistance. Plays, by this means, began to recover

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a good Share of their former Esteem, and Favour; and the Profits of them, in about a Month, enabled our new Menager to discharge his Debt (of something more than Two hundred Pounds) to his old Friend the Patentee; who had now left him, and his Troop, in trust, to fight their own Battles. The greatest Inconvenience they still laboured under, was the immoderate Wideness of their House; in which, as I have observ'd, the Difficulty of Hearing, may be said to have bury'd half the Auditors Entertainment. This Defect seem'd evident, from the much better Reception several new Plays (first acted there) met with when they afterwards came to be play'd by the same Actors, in *Drury-Lane*: Of this Number were the *Stratagem*, and the *Wife's Regretment*; to which I may add, the *Double Gallant*. This last was a Play made up of what little was tolerable, in two, or three others, that had no Success, and were laid aside, as so much Poetical Lumber; but by collecting and adapting the best Parts of them all, into one Play, the *Double Gallant* has had a Place, every Winter, amongst the Publick Entertainments, these Thirty Years. As I was only the Compiler of this Piece, I did not publish it in my own Name; but as my having but a Hand in it, could not be long a Secret, I have been often treated as a Plagiary on that Account: Not that I think I have any right to complain, of whatever would detract from the Merit of that sort of Labour, yet, a Cobler may be allow'd to be  
useful,



LORD HALLIFAX.



useful, though he is not famous: And I hope a Man is not blameable for doing a little Good, tho' he cannot do as much as another? But so it is — Twopenny Criticks must live, as well as Eighteenpenny Authors!

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 receiv'd. The, then, Lord *Hallifax*, was not only the Patron of the Men of Genius of this Time, but had likewise a generous Concern for the Reputation, and Prosperity of the Theatre, from whence the most elegant Dramatick Labours of the Learned, he knew, had often shone in their brightest Lustre. A Proposal therefore was drawn up, and addressed to that Noble Lord, for his Approbation, and Assistance, to raise a publick Subscription for Reviving Three Plays of the best Authors, with the full Strength of the Company; 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. The Plays were *Julius Cæsar* of *Shakespeare*; the *King and no King* of *Fletcher*; and the Comic Scenes of *Dryden's Marriage à la mode*, and of his *Maiden Queen* put together, for it was judg'd, that as these comic Episodes were utterly independent of the serious Scenes, they were originally written to, they might on this occasion be

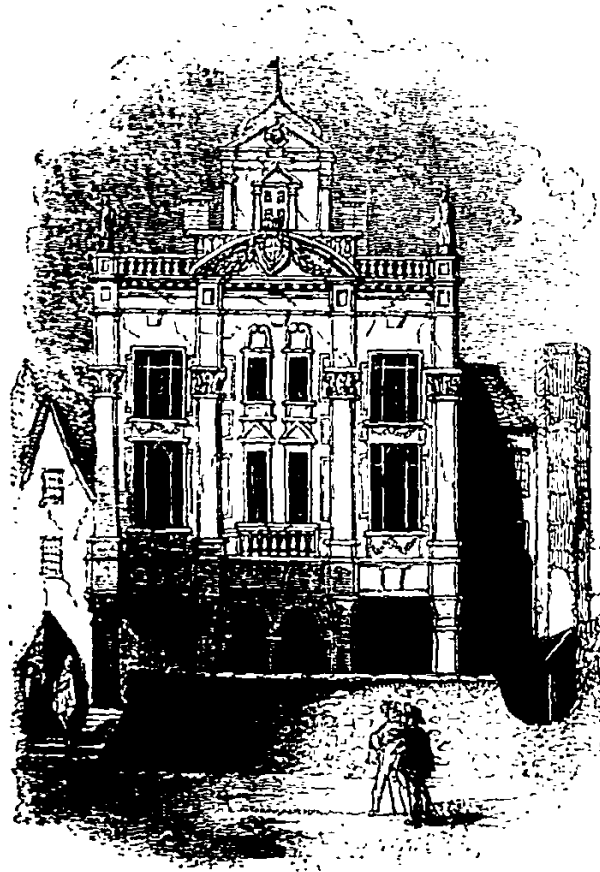
as well Episodes either to the other, and so make up five livelier Acts between them: At least the Project so well succeeded, that those comic Parts have never since, been replaced, but were continued to be jointly acted, as one Play, several Years after.

By the Aid of this Subscription, which happen'd in 1707, and by the additional Strength, and Industry, of this Company, not only the Actors, (several of which were handsomely advanc'd, in their Sallaries) were duly paid, but the Menager 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: 'Tis true, his Actors, perhaps, might not deserve much more than he gave them; yet, by what I have related, it is plain he chose not to be troubled, with such, as visibly had deserv'd more: For it seems he had not purchas'd his Share of the Patent, to mend the Stage, but to make Money of it: And to say Truth, his Sense of every thing to be shewn there, was much upon a Level, with the Taste of the Multitude, whose Opinion, and whose Money weigh'd with him full as much, as that of the best Judges. His Point was to please the Majority, who, could more easily comprehend any thing they *saw*, than the daintiest things, that could be said to them.

But

" For the encouragement of the Comedians, acting in the  
Haymarket, and to enable them to keep the division of Plays, under  
a separate interest from Operas First Gallery 2 sh: the upper one,  
1 sh: Boxes opened to the Pit, and none admitted, without  
Subscribers Tickets.



DURKS THEATRE  
1885

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, in any Play or Farce, in the Theatre (then standing) in *Dorset-Garden*. 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 of his being under this Disappointment, he put in Practice another Project of as new, though not of so bold a Nature; which was his introducing a Set of Rope-dancers, into the same Theatre; 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 so well taken, that I never after found any ill Consequences, or heard of the least Disapprobation of it: And the

\* This admirable scheme was realized by the Proprietors of *B. of S.* in the year 1692.

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.

After what I have said, it will be no wonder, that all due Regards to the original Use, and Institution of the Stage should be utterly lost or neglected: Nor was the Conduct of this Menager easily to be alter'd, while he had found the Secret of making Money out of Disorder and Confusion: For however strange it may seem, I have often observ'd him inclin'd to be cheerful in the Distresses of his Theatrical Affairs, and equally reserv'd and pensive, when they went smoothly forward with a visible Profit. Upon a Run of good Audiences, he was more frighted to be thought a Gainer, which might make him accountable to others, than he was dejected with bad Houses, which at worst, he knew would make others accountable to him: And as, upon a moderate Computation, it cannot be supposed, that the contested Accounts of a twenty Year's Wear, and Tear, in a Play-house, could be fairly adjust-ed by a Master in Chancery, under four-score Years more, it will be no Surprize, that by the Neglect, or rather the Discretion of other Proprietors, in not throwing away good Money after bad, this Hero of a Menager, who alone supported the War, should in time so fortify himself by Delay, and so tire his Enemies, that he became sole Monarch of his Theatrical Empire, and left the quiet Possession of it, to his Successors. If

If these Facts seem too trivial for the Attention of a sensible Reader, let it be consider'd, that they are not chosen Fictions, to *entertain*, but Truths necessary to *inform* him, under what low Shifts, and Disgraces, what Disorders and Revolutions the Stage labour'd, before it could recover that Strength, and Reputation, wherewith it began to flourish, towards the latter End of *Queen Anne's* Reign; and which it continued to enjoy, for a Course of twenty Years following. But let us resume our Account of the new Settlement, in the *Hay-Market*.

It may be a natural Question, why the Actors, whom *Swincy* brought over to his Undertaking, in the *Hay-Market*, would tie themselves down to limited Sallaries? for though he, as their Menager 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 nor, for that Reason, insist upon their being Sharers as well of possible Profits, as Losses? How far in this Point, they acted right, or wrong, will appear from the following State of their Case.

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 feldom more, than half

their Pay, was a Contentment that had bound-  
ed all their farther Views. Besides, as there  
could be no room to doubt of their receiving  
their 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 Sallaries, 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, in reality, had it not in their  
Power to alter any Part of it: And what in-  
duced the Court to encourage it, was, that by  
having the Theatre, and its Menager more  
immediately dependent on the Power of the  
Lord Chamberlain, it was not doubted but the  
Stage would be recover'd into such a Reputa-  
tion, as might now do Honour, to that abso-  
lute Command, which the Court, or its Offi-  
cers seem'd always fond of having over it.

Here, to set the Constitution of the Stage  
in a clearer Light, it may not be amiss, to look  
back a little on the Power of a Lord Cham-  
berlain, which, as may have been observ'd, in  
all Changes of the Theatrical Government,  
has been the main Spring without which no  
Scheme, of what kind soever, could be set in  
Motion. My Intent is not to enquire how far,  
by Law, this Power has been limited, or ex-  
tended; but merely as an Historian, to relate  
Facts, to gratify the Curious, and then leave  
them



them to their own Reflections: This, too, I am the more inclin'd to, because there is no one Circumstance, which has affected the Stage, wherein so many Spectators, from those of the highest Rank, to the Vulgar, have seem'd more positively knowing, or less inform'd in.

Though in all the Letters Patent, for acting Plays, &c. since King *Charles the First's* Time, there has been no mention of the Lord Chamberlain, or of any Subordination to his Command, or Authority---- yet it was still taken for granted, that no Letters Patent, by the bare Omission of such a great Officer's Name, could have superseded, or taken out of his Hands, that Power, which Time out of Mind, he always had exercised over the Theatre. The common Opinions then abroad were, that if the Profession of Actors was unlawful, it was not in the Power of the Crown to license it; and, if it were not unlawful, it ought to be free, and independent, as other Professions; and that a Patent to exercise it, was only an honorary Favour, from the Crown, to give it a better Grace of Recommendation to the Publick. But as the Truth of this Question seem'd to be wrapt in a great deal of Obscurity, in the old Laws made in former Reigns, relating to Players, &c. it may be no Wonder, that the best Companies of Actors should be desirous of taking Shelter under the visible Power of a Lord Chamberlain, who they knew had, at his Pleasure, favoured, and protected, or born hard upon them: But be all this as it may, a  
Lord

Lord Chamberlain (from whencesoever his Power might be derived), had, till of later Years, had always an implicit Obedience paid to it: 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 licensing, or refusing new Plays, or striking out what might be thought offensive, in them: Which Province had been, for many Years, assign'd to his inferior Officer, the Master of the Revels; yet was not this License irrevocable; for several Plays, though acted by that Permission, had been silenced afterwards. 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 Politicks of those Days, have only left us to guess. Some said, that the killing of 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. What makes this Conjecture seem to have some Foundation, is that the celebrated *Waller*, in Compliment to that Court, alter'd the last Act of this Play (which is printed at the End of his Works) and gave it a new Catastrophe, wherein the Life of the King is loyally saved, and the Lady's Matter made up, with a less  
terrible

terrible Reparation. 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 a too dangerous 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 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; nor do we hear, that he much chose, to be himself the first Gatherer of them.

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. This happen'd when King *William* was prosecuting the War, in *Ireland*. 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

The Tragedy of *Mary Queen of Scotland*, had been offer'd to the Stage twenty Years before it was 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.

Reader, by your Leave—— I will but just speak a Word, or two to any Author, that has not yet writ one Line of his next Play, and then I will come to my Point again—— What I would say to him, is this— 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 resisted, 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:

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?* Compliment the Taste of your Hearers, as much as you please with them, provided they belong to your Subject, but don't like a dainty Preacher, who has his Eye more upon this World, than the next, leave your Text for them. When your Fable is good, every Part of it will cost you much less Labour, to keep your Narration alive, than you will be forced to bestow upon those elegant Discourses, that are not absolutely conducive to your Catastrophe, or main Purpose: Scenes of that kind, shew but at best, the unprofitable, or injudicious Spirit of a Genius. It is but a melancholy Commendation of a fine Thought, to say, when we have heard it, *Well! but what's all this to the Purpose?* Take therefore, in some part, Example by the Author last mention'd! 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, barbarous Stile, that was ever able to keep Possession of the Stage, have all interested the Hearts of his Auditors. To what then could this Success be owing, but to the intrinsic, and naked Value of the well-conducted Tales, he has simply told us? There is something so happy in the Disposition of all his Fables; all his chief Characters are thrown into  
such

such natural Circumstances of Distress, that their Misery, or Affliction wants very little Assistance from the Ornaments of Stile, or Words to speak them. When a skilful Actor is so situated, his bare plaintive Tone of Voice, the Cast of Sorrow from his Eye, his slowly graceful Gesture, his humble Sighs of Resignation under his Calamities: All these I say, are sometimes without a Tongue, equal to the strongest Eloquence. At such a time, the attentive Auditor supplies from his own Heart, whatever the Poet's Language may fall short of, in Expression, and melts himself into every Pang of Humanity, which the like Misfortunes in real Life could have inspir'd.

After what I have observ'd, 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.

If I should be ask'd, why I have not always, my self, follow'd the Rules I would impose upon others; I can only answer, that whenever I have not, I lie equally open to the same critical Censure. But having often observ'd a better than ordinary Stile thrown away, upon the loose, and wandering Scenes of an ill-chosen Story, I imagin'd these Observations might convince some future Author, of how great Advantage a Fable well plann'd must be to a Man of any tolerable Genius.

All



WILLIAM III.

All this, I own, is leading my Reader out of the way; but if he has as much Time upon his Hands, as I have, (provided we are neither of us tir'd) it may be equally to the Purpose, what he reads, or what I write of. But as I have no Objection to Method, when it is not troublesome, I return to my Subject.

Hitherto we have seen no very unreasonable Instance of this absolute Power of a Lord Chamberlain, though we were to admit, that no one knew of any real Law, or Construction of Law, by which this Power was given him. I shall now offer some Facts relating to it of a more extraordinary Nature, which I leave my Reader to give a Name to.

About the middle of King *William's* Reign, an Order of the Lord Chamberlain was, then, subsisting, that no Actor of either Company, should 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* being uneasy, at the Favour, *Wilks* was then rising into, had without such Discharge, left the *Drury-Lane* Theatre, and engag'd himself to that of *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*: But by what follows, it will appear that this Order was not so much intended, to do both of them good, as to do, that which the Court chiefly favour'd (*Lincolns-Inn-Fields*) no harm. For when *Powel* grew dissatisfy'd at his Station there too, he return'd to *Drury-Lane* (as he had before gone from it) without a Discharge:  
But



But halt a little! here, on this Side of the Question, the Order was to stand, in force, and the same Offence against it now, was not to be equally pass'd over. He was the next Day taken up by a Messenger, and confin'd to the Porter's-Lodge, where, to the best of my Remembrance, he remain'd about two Days; when the Menagers of *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*, not thinking an Actor of his loose Character worth their farther Trouble, gave him up; though perhaps he was releas'd, for some better Reason. Upon this occasion, the next Day, behind the Scenes, at *Drury-Lane*, 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, or Spirit 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 provok'd at *Will's* Coffee-house, in a Dispute about the Play-house Affairs, to strike a Gentleman, whose Family had been sometimes Masters of it; a Complaint of this Insolence was, in the Absence of the Lord-Chamberlain, immediately made to the Vice-Chamberlain, who so highly resent'd 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

sent an Order to silence the whole Company, for having suffer'd *Powel* to appear upon the Stage, before he had made that Gentleman Satisfaction, although the Masters of the Theatre had had no Notice of *Powel's* Misbehaviour: However, this Order was obey'd, and remain'd in force for two or three Days, 'till the same Authority was pleas'd, or advis'd, to revoke it. From the Measures this injur'd Gentleman took for his Redress, it may be judg'd how far it was taken for granted, that a Lord-Chamberlain had an absolute Power over the Theatre.

I shall now give an Instance of an Actor, who had the Resolution to stand upon the Defence of his Liberty, against the same Authority, and was reliev'd by it.

In the same King's Reign, *Dagget*, who tho', from a severe Exactness in his Nature, he could be seldom long easy in any Theatre, where Irregularity, not to say Injustice, too often prevail'd, yet in the private Conduct of his Affairs, he was a prudent, honest Man. He therefore took an unusual Care, when he return'd to act under the Patent, in *Drury-Lane*, to have his Articles drawn firm and binding: But having some Reason to think the Patentee had not dealt fairly with him, he quitted the Stage, and would act no more, rather chusing to lose his whatever unsatisfy'd Demands, than go through the chargeable, and tedious Course of the Law to recover it. But the Patentee, who (from other People's Judgment)

ment) 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 formidable Summons. He was observ'd to obey it, with a particular Chearfulness, entertaining his Fellow-traveller, the Messenger, all the way in the Coach (for he had protested against Riding) 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. At this rate they jollily roll'd on, more with the Air of a Jaunt, than a Journey, or a Party of Pleasure, than of a poor Devil in Durance. Upon his Arrival in Town, he immediately apply'd to the 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 ditcharg'd, but the Process of his Confinement (according to common 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 since the Law has lately open'd its Mouth, and has said plainly, that some Part of this Power to govern the Theatre shall be, and is plac'd in a proper Person; and as it is evident, that the Power of that white Staff, ever since it has been in the noble Hand, that now holds it, has been us'd with the utmost Lenity, I would beg leave of the murmuring Multitude, who frequent the Theatre, to offer them a simple Question or two, *viz.* Pray, Gentlemen, how came you, or rather your Fore-fathers never to be mutinous, upon any of the occasional Facts I have related? And why have you been so often tumultuous, upon a Law's being made, that only confirms a less Power, than was formerly exercis'd, without any Law to support it? You cannot sure, say, such Discontent is either just, or natural, unless you allow it a Maxim in your Politicks, that Power exercis'd *without* Law, is a less Grievance, than the same Power exercis'd *according* to Law! Hav-

Having thus given the clearest View I was able, of the usual Regard paid to the Power of a Lord-Chamberlain, the Reader will more easily conceive, what Influence, and Operation that Power must naturally have, in all Theatrical Revolutions; and particularly in the complete Re-union of both Companies, which happen'd in the Year following.



## C H A P. XI.

*Some Chimerical Thoughts of making the Stage useful: Some, to its Reputation. The Patent unprofitable, to all the Proprietors, but one. A fourth Part of it given away to Colonel Brett. A Digression to his Memory. The two Companies of Actors re-united, by his Interest, and Menagement. The first Direction of Operas only, given to Mr. Swiney.*

**F**ROM the Time, that the Company of Actors, in the *Hay-Market*, was recruited with those from *Drury-Lane*, and came into the Hands of their new Director, *Swiney*, the Theatre, for three or four Years following, suffer'd so many Convulsions, and was thrown every other Winter under such different Interests, and Menagement, before it came to a firm and lasting Settlement, that I am doubtful, if the most candid Reader

der will have Patience, to go through a full, and fair Account of it: And yet I would fain flatter my self, that those, who are not too wise, to frequent the Theatre (or have Wit enough to distinguish what sort of Sights there, either do Honour, or Disgrace to it) may think their national Diversion no contemptible Subject, for a more able Historian, than I pretend to be: If I have any particular Qualification, for the Task, more than another, it is that I have been an ocular Witness of the several Facts, that are to fill up the rest of my Volume; and am, perhaps, the only Person living (however unworthy) from whom the same Materials can be collected; but let them come from whom they may, whether, at best, they will be worth reading; perhaps a Judgment may be better form'd after a patient Perusal of the following Digression.

In whatever cold Esteem, the Stage may be, among the Wise, and Powerful; it is not so much a Reproach, to those, who contentedly enjoy it in its lowest Condition, as that Condition of it, is to those, who (though they cannot but know, to how valuable a publick Use, a Theatre, well establish'd, might be rais'd) yet in so many civiliz'd Nations, have neglected it. This perhaps will be call'd thinking my own wiser, than all the wise Heads, in *Europe*. But I hope a more humble Sense will be given to it; at least I only mean, that if so many Governments have their Reasons, for their Disregard of their

Theatres, those Reasons may be deeper, than my Capacity has yet been able to dive into: If therefore my simple Opinion is a wrong one, let the Singularity of it expose me: And tho' I am only building a Theatre in the Air, it is there, however, at so little Expence, and in so much better a Taste, than any I have yet seen, that I cannot help saying of it, as a wiser Man did (it may be) upon a wiser Occasion:

— *Si quid novisti rectius istis,*  
*Candidus imperti; si non —* Hor.

Give me leave to play, with my Project, in Fancy.

I say then, that as I allow nothing is more liable to debase, and corrupt the Minds of a People, than a licentious Theatre; so under a just, and proper Establishment, it were possible to make it, as apparently the School of Manners, and of Virtue. Were I to collect all the Arguments, that might be given for my Opinion, or to inforce it by exemplary Proofs, it might swell this short Digression to a Volume; I shall therefore trust the Validity of what I have laid down, to a single Fact, that may be still fresh, in the Memory of many living Spectators. When the Tragedy of *Cato* was first acted, let us call to mind the noble Spirit of Patriotism, which that Play then infus'd into the Breasts of a free People, that crowded to it; with what affecting Force, was that most elevated  
of

of Human Virtues recommended? Even the false Pretenders to it felt an unwilling Conviction, and made it a Point of Honour to be foremost, in their Approbation; and this too at a time, when the fermented Nation had their different Views of Government. Yet the sublime Sentiments of Liberty, in that venerable Character, rais'd, in every sensible Hearer such conscious Admiration, such compell'd Assent to the Conduct of a suffering Virtue, as even *demand'd* two almost irreconcilable Parties to embrace, and join in their equal Applauses of it. Now, not to take from the Merit of the Writer, had that Play never come to the Stage, how much of this valuable Effect of it must have been lost? It then could have had no more immediate weight with the Publick, than our poring upon the many ancient Authors, thro' whose Works the same Sentiments have been, perhaps, less profitably dispers'd, tho' amongst Millions of Readers; but by bringing such Sentiments to the Theatre, and into Action, what a superior Lustre did they shine with? There, *Cato* breath'd again, in Life; and though he perish'd in the Cause of Liberty, his Virtue was victorious, and left the Triumph of it in the Heart of every melting Spectator. If Effects, like these, are laudable; if the Representation of such Plays can carry Conviction with so much Pleasure, to the Understanding; have they not vastly the Advantage of any other



Human Helps to Eloquence? What equal Method can be found to lead, or stimulate the Mind, to a quicker Sense of Truth, and Virtue, or warm a People into the Love, and Practice of such Principles, as might be at once a Defence, and Honour to their Country? In what Shape could we listen to Virtue with equal Delight, or Appetite of Instruction? The Mind of Man is naturally free, and when he is compell'd, or menac'd into any Opinion that he does not readily conceive, he is more apt to doubt the Truth of it, than when his Capacity is led by Delight, into Evidence and Reason. To preserve a Theatre in this Strength, and Purity of Morals, is, I grant, what the wisest Nations, have not been able to perpetuate, or to transmit long to their Posterity: But this Difficulty will rather heighten, than take from the Honour of the Theatre: The greatest Empires have decay'd for want of proper Heads to guide them, and the Ruins of them sometimes have been the Subject of Theatres, that could not be, themselves exempt, from as various Revolutions: Yet may not the most natural Inference from all this be, That the Talents requisite to form good Actors, great Writers, and true Judges, were like those of wise and memorable Ministers, as well the Gifts of Fortune, as of Nature, and not always to be found, in all Climes or Ages. Or can there be a stronger modern Evidence of the Value of Dramatick Performances, than that in many Countries, where the Papal Religion prevails,

In Michael Angelo's famous piece of the Crucifixion: who  
stab'd a person that he might do it more naturally.

Whilst his Redeemer on the canvas died,  
Stab'd at his feet his brother weltering lies;  
The daring Artist cruelly seers,  
Views the pale cheek and the distorted mien;  
He drains off life by drops: and, deaf to cries,  
Examines every spirit as it flies;  
He studies torment, dives in mortal woe  
To rouse up every pang repeats the blow;  
Each rising agony, each dreadful grace,  
Yet warm transfusing to his Saviour's face  
The glorious shaft! O noble wicked draught!  
With its full charge of death each feature fraught!  
Such wondrous force the magic colours boast,  
From his own shield he starts in horror lost.

! J<sup>r</sup> Young . !

prevails, the Holy Policy (though it allows not to an Actor Christian Burial) is so conscious of the Usefulness of his Art, that it will frequently take in the Assistance of the Theatre, to give even Sacred History; in a Tragedy, a Recommendation to the more pathetick Regard of their People. How can such Principles, in the Face of the World, refuse the Bones of a Wretch the lowest Benefit of Christian Charity, after having admitted his Profession (for which they deprive him of that Charity) to serve the solemn Purposes of Religion? How far then is this Religious Inhumanity short of that famous Painter's, who, to make his *Crucifix* a Master-piece of Nature, stabb'd the Innocent Hireling, from whose Body he drew it; and having heighten'd the holy Portrait, with his last Agonies of Life, then sent it to be the consecrated Ornament of an Altar? Though we have only the Authority of common Fame, for this Story, yet be it true or false, the Comparison will still be just. Or let me ask another Question more humanly political.

How came the *Athenians* to lay out an Hundred Thousand Pounds, upon the Decorations of one single Tragedy of *Sophocles*? Not, sure, as it was merely a Spectacle for Idleness, or Vacancy of Thought to gape at, but because it was the most rational, most instructive, and delightful Composition, that Human Wit had yet arrived at; and consequently the most worthy to be the Entertainment of a wise, and

warlike

warlike Nation: And it may be still a Question, whether the *Sophocles* inspir'd this Publick Spirit, or this Publick Spirit inspir'd the *Sophocles*?

But alas! as the Power of giving, or receiving such Inspirations from either of these Causes, seems pretty well at an End; now I have shot my Bolt, I shall descend to talk more like a Man of the Age, I live in: For, indeed, what is all this to a common *English* Reader? Why truly, as *Shakespear* terms it—*Caviare to the Multitude*! Honest *John Trott* will tell you, that if he were to believe what I have said of the *Athenians*, he is at most, but astonish'd at it; but that if the twentieth Part of the Sum I have mentioned were to be apply'd out of the Publick money, to the Setting off the best Tragedy, the nicest Noddle in the Nation could produce, it would probably raise the Passions higher in those that did Not like it, than in those that did; it might as likely meet with an Insurrection, as the Applause of the People, and so, mayhap, be fitter for the Subject of a Tragedy, than for a publick Fund to support it. — Truly, Mr. *Trott*, I cannot but own, that I am very much of your Opinion: I am only concerned, that the Theatre has not a better Pretence to the Care and further Consideration of those Governments, where it is tolerated; but as what I have said, will not probably do it any great Harm, I hope I have not put you out of Patience,

tience, by throwing a few good Wishes after an old Acquaintance.

To conclude this Digression. If for the Support of the Stage, what is generally shewn there, must be lower'd to the Taste of common Spectators; or if it is inconsistent with Liberty to mend that Vulgar Taste, by making the Multitude less merry there; or by abolishing every low and senseless Jollity, in which the Understanding can have no Share; whenever, I say, such is the State of the Stage, it will be as often liable to unanswerable Censure, and manifest Disgraces. Yet there *was* a Time, not yet, out of many People's Memory, when it subsisted upon its own rational Labours; when even Success attended an Attempt to reduce it to Decency; and when Actors themselves were hardy enough to hazard their Interest, in pursuit of so dangerous a Reformation. And this Crisis, I am myself as impatient, as any tir'd Reader can be, to arrive at. I shall therefore endeavour to lead him the shortest way to it. But as I am a little jealous of the badness of the Road, I must reserve to myself the Liberty of calling upon any Matter, in my way, for a little Refreshment to whatever Company may have the Curiosity, or Goodness to go along with me.

When the sole Menaging 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

rightly inform'd, had an equal Share with him) grew so weary of the Affair, that he actually made a Present of his entire Interest in it, upon the following Occasion.

Sir *Thomas* happen'd, in the Summer preceding the Re-union of the Companies, to make a Visit to an intimate Friend of his, Colonel *Brett*, of *Sandywell*, in *Gloucestershire*; where the Pleasantness of the Place, and the agreeable manner of passing his Time there, had rais'd him to such a Gallantry of Heart, that, in return to the Civilities of his Friend the Colonel, he made him an Offer of his whole Right in the Patent; but not to overrate the Value of his Present, told him, he himself had made nothing of it, these ten Years: But the Colonel (he said) being a greater Favourite of the People in Power, and (as he believ'd) among the Actors too, than himself was, might think of some Scheme, to turn it to Advantage, and in that Light, if he lik'd it, it was at his Service. After a great deal of Raillery on both sides, of what Sir *Thomas* had *not* made of it, and the particular Advantages the Colonel was likely to make of it; they came to a laughing Resolution, That an Instrument should be drawn the next Morning, of an Absolute Conveyance of the Premises. A Gentleman of the 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, seal'd,

170      October 6<sup>th</sup>.      "An Indenture of Assignment", was signed  
between S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Shipwith, on one part, and Henry Brett, of Albemarle  
Street, Esquire on the other: for transferring all right and title, to  
the Letters Patent, granted by King Charles 2<sup>d</sup>, to S<sup>r</sup> William  
Davenant, and Charles Kellew Esquire, for acting all sorts of  
Stage Plays, from S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Shipwith, to Henry Brett Esquire both  
aforesaid. "

feal'd, and deliver'd to the Purposes therein contain'd.

This Tranfaction may be another Instance (as I have elfewhere obferved) at how low a Value, the Interests, in a Theatrical License, were then held; tho' it was vifible, from the Succes of *Swinney* in that very Year, that with tolerable Menagement, they could, at no time, have fail'd of being a profitable Purchase.

The next Thing to be confider'd was, what the Colonel fhould do with his new Theatrical Commiffion, which, in another's Poffeffion, had been of fo little Importance. Here it may be neceffary to premife, that this Gentleman was the firft of any Confideration, fince 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 fome Weight with him: Of this Intimacy too, I am the more tempted to talk, from the natural Pleasure of calling back, in Age, the Pursuits, and happy Ardours of Youth long past, which, like the Ideas of a delightful Spring, in a Winter's Ruminatiion, are fometimes equal to the former Enjoyment of them. I fhall, therefore, rather chufe, in this Place to gratify my felf, than my Reader, by fetting the faireft Side of this Gentleman in view, and by indulging a little confcious Vanity, in fhewing how early in Life, I fell into the Poffeffion of fo agreeable a Companion: Whatever Failings he might have to others, he had none to me; nor was he, where he had them, without his



his valuable Qualities to balance or soften them. Let, then, what was not, to be commended in him, rest with his Ashes, never to be rak'd into: But the friendly Favours I received from him, while living, give me still a Pleasure, in paying this only Mite of my Acknowledgment, in my Power, to his Memory. And if my taking this Liberty may find Pardon from several of his fair Relations, still living, for whom I profess the utmost Respect, it will give me but little Concern, tho' my critical Readers should think it all Impertinence.

This Gentleman, then, *Henry*, was the eldest Son of *Henry Brett*, Esq; of *Cowley*, in *Gloucestershire*, who coming early to his Estate of about Two Thousand a Year, by the usual Negligences of young Heirs, had, before this his eldest Son came of age, sunk it to about half that Value, and that not wholly free from Incumbrances. Mr. *Brett*, whom I am speaking of, had his Education, and I might say, ended it, at the University of *Oxford*; for tho' he was settled some time after at the *Temple*, he so little followed the Law there, that his Neglect of it, made the Law (like some of his fair and frail Admirers) very often follow *him*. As he had an uncommon Share of Social Wit, and a handsome Person, with a sanguine Bloom in his Complexion, no wonder they persuaded him, that he might have a better Chance of Fortune, by throwing such Accomplishments, into the gayer World, than by shutting them  
up,



*Habit of an English Gentleman, about 1700.*

*Gentil-homme Anglois de l'année 1700.*

up, in a Study. The first View, that fires the Head of a young Gentleman of this modish Ambition, just broke loose, from Business, is to cut a Figure (as they call it) in a Side-box, at the Play, from whence their next Step is, to the *Green Room* behind the Scenes, sometimes their *Non ultra*. Hither, at last then, in this hopeful Quest of his Fortune, came this Gentleman-Errant, not doubting but the fickle Dame, while he was thus qualified to receive her, might be tempted to fall into his Lap. And though, possibly, the Charms of our Theatrical Nymphs might have their Share, in drawing him thither; yet in my Observation, the most visible Cause of his first coming, was a more sincere Passion he had conceived for a fair full-bottom'd Perriwig, which I then wore in my first Play of the *Fool in Fashion*, in the Year 1695. For it is to be noted, that, the *Beaux* of those Days, were of a quite different Cast, from the modern Stamp, and had more of the Stateliness of the Peacock in their Mien, than (which now seems to be their highest Emulation) the pert Air of a Lapwing. Now whatever Contempt Philosophers may have, for a fine Perriwig; my Friend, who was not to despise the World, but to live in it, knew very well, that so material an Article of Dress, upon the Head of a Man of Sense, if it became him, could never fail of drawing to him a more partial Regard, and Benevolence, than could possibly be hoped for, in an ill-made one. This perhaps may soften the grave

J. M. D.

Censure,

Censure, which so youthful a Purchase might otherwise, have laid upon him: In a Word, he made his Attack upon this Perriwig, as your young Fellows generally do upon a Lady of Pleasure; first, by a few, familiar Praises of her Person, and then a civil Enquiry, into the Price of it. But upon his observing me a little surprized at the Levity of his Question, about a Fop's Perriwig, he began to railly himself with so much Wit, and Humour, upon the Folly of his Fondness for it, that he struck me, with an equal Desire of granting any thing, in my Power, to oblige so facetious a Customer. This singular Beginning of our Conversation, and the mutual Laughs that ensued upon it, ended in an Agreement, to finish our Bargain that Night, over a Bottle.

If it were possible, the Relation of the happy Indiscretions which passed between us that Night, could give the tenth Part of the Pleasure, I then received from them, I could still repeat them with Delight: But as it may be doubtful, whether the Patience of a Reader may be quite so strong, as the Vanity of an Author, I shall cut it short, by only saying, that single Bottle was the Sire of many a jolly Dozen, that for some Years following, like orderly Children, whenever they were call'd for, came into the same Company. Nor indeed, did I think from that time, whenever he was to be had, any Evening could be agreeably enjoy'd without him. But the long continuance of our Intimacy, perhaps, may be thus accounted for. He

The heads of our Actors at the period spoken of, were covered with Wigs of an immoderate size, a fashion that arose in the time of Charles the second and was not entirely disused in public till about the year 1720 They were flowing and flaxen, and both Booth and Wilks as well as bibber, are said to have bestowed forty guineas each on the exorbitant thatching of their heads.

|Darius. |

He who can taste Wit<sup>d</sup> in another, may, in some sort, be said to have it himself: Now, as I always had, and (I bless my self for the Folly) still have a quick Relish of whatever did, or can give me Delight: This Gentleman could not but see the youthful Joy, I was generally raised to, whenever I had the Happiness of a *Tête à tête* with him; and it may be a moot Point, whether Wit is not as often inspired, by a proper Attention, as by the brightest Reply, to it. Therefore as he had Wit enough for any two People, and I had Attention enough for any four, there could not well be wanting a sociable Delight, on either side. And tho' it may be true, that a Man of a handsome Person is apt to draw a partial Ear to every thing he says; yet this Gentleman seldom said any thing, that might not have made a Man of the plainest Person agreeable. Such a continual Desire to please, it may be imagined, could not but, sometimes, lead him into a little venial Flattery, rather than not succeed in it. And I, perhaps, might be one of those Flies, that was caught in this Honey. As I was, then, a young successful Author, and an Actor, in some unexpected Favour, whether deservedly, or not, imports not; yet such Appearances, at least were plausible Pretences enough, for an amicable Adulation to enlarge upon; and the Sallies of it a less Vanity, than mine might not have been able to resist. Whatever this Weakness on my side might be, I was not alone in it; for I have heard a Gentle-

man of Condition say, who knew the World as well, as most Men, that live in it, that let his Discretion be ever so much upon its Guard, he never fell into Mr. *Brett's* Company, without being loth to leave it, or carrying away a better Opinion of himself, from it. If his Conversation had this Effect among the Men; what must we suppose to have been the Consequence, when he gave it, a yet softer turn among the Fair Sex? Here now, a *French* Novellist would tell you fifty pretty Lies of him; but as I chuse to be tender of Secrets of that sort, I shall only borrow the good Breeding of that Language, and tell you, in a Word, that I knew several Instances of his being *un Homme a bonne Fortune*. But though his frequent Successes might generally keep him, from the usual Disquiets of a Lover, he knew this was a Life too liquorish to last; and therefore had Reflexion enough, to be govern'd by the Advice of his Friends, to turn these his Advantages of Nature to a better use.

Among the many Men of Condition, with whom, his Conversation had recommended him, to an Intimacy; Sir *Thomas Skipwith* had taken a particular Inclination to him; and as he had the Advancement of his Fortune, at Heart, introduced him, where there was a Lady, who had enough, in her Power, to disencumber him of the World, and make him every way, easy, for Life.

While he was in pursuit of this Affair, which no time was to be lost in (for the Lady was

was

'This Lady' was the most infamous and unnatural bountifol of  
Macclesfield, who bastardised her son, Richard Savage, in order to  
procure a separation from her husband, with whom she had long lived  
upon uneasy terms. To the direct conduct of this Lady in managing  
Brett, it is said that bibber owes a chief incident in his 'barclays  
husband'



was to be in Town but for three Weeks) I one Day found him idling behind the Scenes, before the Play was begun. Upon sight of him, I took the usual Freedom he allow'd me, to rate him roundly, for the Madness of not improving every Moment, in his Power, in what was of such consequence to him. Why are you not (said I) where you know you only should be? If your Design should once get Wind, in the Town, the Ill-will of your Enemies, or the Sincerity of the Lady's Friends, may soon blow up your Hopes, which, in your Circumstances of Life, cannot be long supported, by the bare Appearance of a Gentleman.— But it is impossible to proceed, without some Apology, for the very familiar Circumstance, that is to follow.— Yet, as it might not be so trivial in its Effect, as I fear it may be in the Narration, and is a Mark of that Intimacy, which is necessary should be known, had been between us, I will honestly make bold with my Scruples, and let the plain Truth of my Story take its Chance for Contempt, or Approbation.

After twenty Excuses, to clear himself of the Neglect, I had so warmly charged him with, he concluded them, with telling me, he had been out all the Morning, upon Business, and that his Linnen was too much soil'd, to be seen in Company. Oh, ho! said I, is that all? Come along with me, we will soon get over that dainty Difficulty: Upon which

I haul'd him, by the Sleeve, into my Shifting-Room, he either staring, laughing, or hanging back all the way. There, when I had lock'd him in, I began to strip off my upper Cloaths, and bad him do the same; still he either did not, or would not seem to understand me, and continuing his Laugh, cry'd, What! is the Puppy mad? No, no, only positive, said I; for look you, in short, the Play is ready to begin, and the Parts that you, and I, are to act to Day, are not of equal consequence; mine of young *Reveller* (in *Greenwich-Park*) is but a Rake; but whatever you may be, you are not to appear so; therefore take my Shirt, and give me yours; for depend upon't, stay here you shall not, and so go about your Business. To conclude, we fairly chang'd Linnen, nor could his Mother's have wrap'd him up more fortunately; for in about ten Days he marry'd the Lady. In a Year or two after his Marriage, he was chosen a Member of that Parliament, which was sitting, when King *William* dy'd. And, upon raising of some new Regiments, was made Lieutenant-Colonel, to that of Sir *Charles Hotham*. But as his Ambition extended not beyond the Bounds of a Park Wall, and a pleasant Retreat in the Corner of it, which, with too much Expence he had just finish'd, he, within another Year, had leave to resign his Company to a younger Brother.

This was the Figure, in Life, he made, when Sir *Thomas Skipwith* thought him the most

" Colonel Brett was a particular handsome man. The Countess of Rivers looking out of her window on a great disturbance in the Street, saw the Colonel assaulted by some Bailiffs, who were going to arrest him. She paid his debt, released him from their pursuit, and soon after married him. When she died, she left him more than he expected: with which he bought an Estate in the country, built a very handsome house upon it, and furnished it in the highest taste. Went down to see the finishing of it, returned to London in hot weather, and in too much hurry: got a Fever by it, and died — Nobody had a better taste of what would please the town: and his opinion was much regarded by the Actors and Dramatic Poets. "

Spencer's Anecdotes.

most proper Person, to oblige (if it could be an Obligation) with the Present of his Interest in the Patent. And from these Anecdotes of my Intimacy with him, it may be less a Surprise, when he came to Town invested with this new Theatrical Power, that I should be the first Person, to whom he took any Notice of it. And 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, though it might be generous in him to make, 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 Menaging Patentee of *Drury-Lane*, and demand immediate Entrance to a joint Possession of all Effects, and Powers, to which that Deed had given him an equal Title. After which, if he met with no Opposition, to this Demand (as upon sight of it he did not) that he should be watchful against any Contradiction, from his Colleague, in whatever he might propose, in carrying on the Affair, but to let him see, that he was determin'd in all his Measures. Yet to heighten that Resolution, with an Ease and Temper in his manner, as if he took it for granted,

granted, there could be no Opposition 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 car'd 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 comply'd with: For if he once suffer'd his Colleague to seem wiser than himself, there would be no end of his perplexing him with absurd, and dilatory Measures; direct, and plain Dealing being a Quality his natural Diffidence would never suffer him to be Master of; of which, his not complying with his Verbal Agreement with *Swincy*, when the *Hay-Market* House was taken for both their Uses, was an Evidence. And though some People thought it Depth, and Policy in him, to keep things often in Confusion, it was ever my Opinion they over-rated his Skill, and that, in reality his Parts were too weak, for his Post, in which he had always acted, to the best of his Knowledge. That his late Colleague, *Sir Thomas Shipwith*, had trusted too much to his Capacity, for this sort of Business; and was treated by him accordingly, without ever receiving any Profits from it, for several Years: Insomuch that when he found his Interest in such desperate Hands, he thought the best thing he could do with it was, (as he  
saw

law) to give it away. Therefore if he (Mr. Brett) could once fix himself, as I had advis'd, upon a different Foot, with this, hitherto untractable, Menager, the Business would soon run through whatever Channel, he might have a mind to lead it. And though I allow'd the greatest Difficulty he would meet with, would be in getting his Consent to a Union of the two Companies, which was the only Scheme, that could raise the Patent to its former Value, and which, I knew, this close Menager 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 suffer'd to keep his Title to it: If his Hat were taken from his Head, in the Street, he would make no farther Resistance, than to 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 resolv'd to go thro' with them.

Now though I knew my Friend was as thoroughly acquainted with this Patentee's Temper, as myself, yet I thought it not amiss to quicken and support his Resolution, by confirming to him, the little Trouble he would meet with, in pursuit of the Union I had advis'd

vis'd him to; for it must be known, that on our side, Trouble was a sort of Physick we did not much care to take: But as the Fatigue of this Affair was likely to be lower'd by a good deal of Entertainment, and Humour, which would naturally engage him, in his dealing with so exotick a Partner; I knew that this softening the Business, into a Diversion, would lessen every Difficulty, that lay in our way to it.

However copiously I may have indulg'd my self in this Commemoration of a Gentleman, with whom I had pass'd so many of my younger Days, with Pleasure, yet the Reader may by this Insight into his Character, and by that of the other Patentee, be better able to judge of the secret Springs, that gave Motion to, or obstructed so considerable an Event, as that of the Re-union of the two Companies of Actors in 1708. In Histories of more weight, for want of such Particulars, we are often deceiv'd in the true Causes of Facts, that most concern us, to be let into; which sometimes makes us ascribe to Policy, or false Appearances of Wisdom, what perhaps, in reality, was the mere Effect of Chance, or Humour.

Immediately after Mr. *Brett* was admitted as a joint Patentee, he made use of the Intimacy he had with the Vice-Chamberlain to assist his Scheme of this intended Union, in which he so far prevail'd, that it was soon after left to the particular Care of the same Vice-Cham-

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 approv'd 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.

As the Condition of the Comedians at this time, is taken notice of in my *Dedication* of the *Wife's Resentment*, to the Marquis (now Duke) of *Kent*, and then Lord-Chamberlain, which was publish'd above thirty Years ago, when I had no thought of ever troubling the World, with this Theatrical History, I see no Reason, why it may not pass, as a Voucher of the Facts I am now speaking of; I shall, therefore give them, in the very Light I then saw them. After some Acknowledgment for his Lordship's Protection of our (*Hay-Market*) Theatre, it is further said ———

“ The Stage has, for many Years, 'till of  
“ late, groan'd under the greatest Discourage-  
“ ments, which have been very much, if not  
“ wholly owing to the Mismanagement of  
“ those, that have awkwardly govern'd it.  
“ Great Sums have been ventur'd upon empty  
“ Projects, and Hopes of immoderate Gains;  
“ and when those Hopes have fail'd, the Loss  
“ has been tyrannically deducted out of the  
“ Actors Sallary. And if your Lordship had  
“ not



*The Life of Mr. COLLEY CIBBER, &c.*

“ not redeem'd them --- *This is meant of our being suffer'd to come over to Swiney* ----- they were very near being wholly laid aside, or, at least, the Use of their Labour was to be swallow'd up, in the pretended Merit of Singing, and Dancing.”

What follows, relates to the Difficulties in dealing with the then impracticable Menager, *viz.*

“ --- And though your Lordship's Tenderness of oppressing, is so very just, that you have rather staid to convince a Man of your good Intentions to him, than to do him even a Service against his Will; yet since your Lordship has so happily begun the Establishment of the separate Diversions, we live in hope, that the same Justice, and Resolution, will still persuade you, to go as successfully through with it. But while any Man is suffer'd to confound the Industry, and Use of them, by acting publickly, in opposition, to your Lordship's equal Intentions, under a false, and intricate Pretence of not being able to comply with them; the Town is likely to be more entertain'd with the private Diffensions, than the publick Performance of either, and the Actors, in a perpetual Fear, and Necessity of petitioning your Lordship every Season, for new Relief.”

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 clearer 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 oblig'd 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 Matter easy. The Inclination of our People of Quality for foreign Operas, had now reach'd 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 perform'd at the *Hay-Market* House; the Actors were all order'd to return to *Drury-Lane*, there to remain (under the Patentees) her Majesty's only Company of Comedians.

CHAP.



## C H A P. XII.

*A short View of the Opera, when first divided from the Comedy. Plays recover their Credit. The old Patentee uneasy at their Success. Why. The Occasion of Colonel Brett's throwing up his Share in the Patent. The Consequences of it. Anecdotes of Goodman the Actor. The Rate of favourite Actors, in his Time. The Patentees, 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. The original and present Form of the Theatre in Drury-Lane, compar'd. Operas fall off. The Occasion of it. Farther Observations upon them. The Patentee dispossest of Drury-Lane Theatre. Mr. Collier, with a new License, heads the Remains of that Company.*

**P**LAYS, and Operas, being thus establish'd, 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 excessive Charge, it cannot live long among us; especially while the nicest  
Con-



CARLO BROSCHI,  
DETTO FARINELLI.

*Connoisseurs* in Musick fall into such various Heresies in Taste, every Sect pretending to be the true one: Yet, as it is call'd a Theatrical Entertainment, and by its Alliance, or Neutrality, has more, or less affected our Domestick Theatre, a short View of its Progress may be allow'd a Place in our History.

After this new Regulation, the first Opera that appear'd, was *Pyrrhus*. Subscriptions, at that time were not extended, as of late, to the whole Season, but were limited to the first Six Days only of a new Opera. 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 appear'd, as *Nicolini*. At most, the Difference between him, and the greatest Favourite of the Ladies, *Farinelli*, amounted but to this, that he might sometimes more exquisitely surprize us, but *Nicolini* (by pleasing the Eye, as well as the Ear) fill'd us with a more various, and *rational* Delight. Whether in this Excellence, he has since had any Competitor, perhaps, will be better judg'd, by what the Critical Censor of *Great Britain* says of him in his 115th *Tatler*, viz. *W. J.* "Nico-

*The Life of Mr. COLLEY CIBBER, &c.*

“ *Nicolini* sets off the Character he bears  
 “ in an Opera, by his Action, as much as he  
 “ does the Words of it, by his Voice; eve-  
 “ ry Limb, and Finger, contributes to the  
 “ Part he acts, insomuch that a deaf Man  
 “ might go along with him in the Sense of  
 “ it. There is scarce a beautiful Posture, in an  
 “ old Statue, which he does not plant him-  
 “ self in, as the different Circumstances of the  
 “ Story give occasion for it— He performs  
 “ the most ordinary Action, in a manner sui-  
 “ table to the Greatness of his Character, and  
 “ shews the Prince, even in the giving of a  
 “ Letter, or dispatching of a Message, &c.

His Voice at this first time of being among us, (for he made us a second Visit when it was impair'd) had all that strong, clear, Sweetness of Tone, so lately admir'd in *Senesino*. A blind Man could scarce have distinguish'd them; but in Volubility of Throat, the former had much the Superiority. This so excellent Performer's Agreement was Eight Hundred Guineas for the Year, which is but an eighth Part more, than half the Sum that has since been given, to several, that could never totally surpass him: The Consequence of which is, that the Losses by Operas, for several Seasons, to the End of the Year 1738, have been so great, that those Gentlemen of Quality, who last undertook the Direction of them, found it ridiculous any longer to entertain the Publick, at so extravagant an Expence, while no one particular Person thought himself oblig'd by it. Mrs.



FRANCESCO BERNARDO SENESINO.

Mrs. *Tofts*, who took her first Grounds of Musick here in her own Country, before the *Italian* Taste had so highly prevail'd, 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 proportion'd Figure, and exquisitely sweet, silver Tone of her Voice, with that peculiar, rapid Swiftnefs of her Throat, were Perfections not to be imitated by Art, or Labour. *Valentini* I have already mention'd, therefore need only say farther of him, that though 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 have succeeded them; their Novelty, at least, was a Charm that drew vast Audiences of the fine World 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



luxurious Season, like the fine Wife of a roving Husband, began to loose its Charms, and every Day discover'd to our Satiety, Imperfections, which our former Fondness had been blind to: But of this I shall observe more in its Place: in the mean time, let us enquire into the Productions of our native Theatre.

It may easily be conceiv'd, that by this 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. Such a Choice of Actors added a Richness to every good Play, as it was, then, serv'd up, to the publick Entertainment: The common People crowded to them, with a more joyous Expectation, and those of the higher Taste, return'd to them, as to old Acquaintances, with new Desires after a long Absence. 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 mould'ring from his own Hands, into thole 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. Although this grave Theatrical Minister, of  
whom

whom I have been oblig'd to make such frequent mention, had acquired the Reputation of a most profound Politician, by being often incomprehensible, yet I am not sure, that his Conduct at this Juncture, gave us not an evident Proof, that he was, like other frail Mortals, more a Slave to his Passions, than his Interest; for no Creature ever seem'd more fond of Power, that so little knew how to use it, to his Profit and Reputation; otherwise he could not possibly have been so discontented, in his secure and prosperous State of the Theatre, as to resolve, at all Hazards, to destroy it. We shall now see what infallible Measures he took, to bring this laudable Scheme to Perfection.

He plainly saw, that as this disagreeable Prosperity was chiefly owing to the Conduct of Mr. *Brett*, there could be no hope of recovering the Stage to its former Confusion, but by finding some effectual Means to make Mr. *Brett* weary of his Charge: The most probable he could, for the Present, think of, in this Distress, was to call in the Adventurers (whom for many Years, by his Defence in Law, he had kept out) now to take care of their visibly improving Interests. This fair Appearance of Equity, being known to be his own Proposal, 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*, who had so visibly alienated the Hearts of his Theatrical Subjects, and now began to govern without him. When the Ad-  
Y<sup>e</sup> J<sup>r</sup> venturers,

venturers, therefore, were re-admitted to their old Government; after having recommended himself to them, by proposing to make some small Dividend of the Profits (though he did not design that Jest should be repeated) he took care that the Creditors of the Patent, who were, then, no inconsiderable Body, should carry off the every Weeks clear Profits, in proportion to their several Dues and Demands. This Conduct, so speciously just, he had Hopes would let Mr. *Brett*, see that his Share, in the Patent, was not so valuable an Acquisition as, perhaps, he might think it; and probably make a Man of his Turn to Pleasure, soon weary of the little Profit, and great Plague it gave him. 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*, prevailed with him to lay it down: For in the midst of this flourishing State of the Patent, Mr. *Brett* was surpriz'd with a Subpœna into Chancery, from 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. (Whatever the Intent might be, the Deed it self, which I then read, made no mention of any Trust whatever.) But whether Mr. *Brett*, as Sir *Thomas* farther asserted, had previously, or after the Deed was sign'd, given his Word of Honour, that if he should ever make the Stage turn to any Account, or Profit, he

March 31<sup>st</sup>. 1708. By an Indenture of this date made between Henry Brett Esq of the one part, and Robert Wilkes, Richard Costcourt, and Colley Gibber, Gentlemen of the other part, Brett departed Wilkes, Costcourt, and Gibber to perform Plays, new or old, "to take in, discharge, advance, take down, encourage, and support all Actors, Officers, Servants, or Agents &c — no sum was to be expended that exceeded in one Week forty shillings, but with consent of all three — they covenanted to use their skill and endeavour to support the right of the Patent, and after the 10<sup>th</sup> of June following, there was to be "no benefit day or play" without depositing with the Treasurer £40 — an Actor whose Salary did not amount to £4 per Week to leave in the hands of the Treasurer one part in four of the clear profits of such benefit play — and Actor who had not above 50<sup>s</sup> a full third part — and those not above 40<sup>s</sup> one moiety or half part for use and benefit of the Patent and "of the business in general" — not to be any benefit play before the last Week in February, and not more than one in a Week, from said last week in February to the Month of May next following

he would certainly restore it: That indeed, I can say nothing to; but be the Deed valid, or void, the Facts that apparently follow'd were, that tho' Mr. *Brett*, in his Answer to this Bill, absolutely deny'd his receiving this Assignment, either in Trust, or upon any limited Condition, of what kind soever; yet he made no farther Defence in the Cause. But since he found Sir *Thomas* had thought fit, on any Account to sue for the Restitution of it; and Mr. *Brett* being himself conscious, that, as the World knew, he had paid no Consideration for it; his keeping it might be misconstrued, or not favourably spoken of; or perhaps finding, tho' the Profits were great, they were constantly swallowed up (as has been observ'd) by the previous Satisfaction of old Debts, he grew so tir'd of the Plague, and Trouble, the whole Affair had given him, and was likely still to engage him in, that in a few Weeks after, he withdrew himself, from all Concern with the Theatre, and quietly left Sir *Thomas* to find his better Account in it. 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*.

Our Politician, the old Patentee, having thus fortunately got rid of Mr. *Brett*, who had so rashly brought the Patent once more to be a profitable Tenure, was now again at Liberty, to chuse rather to lose all, than not to have it all to himself.

I have, elsewhere, observ'd, that nothing can so effectually secure the Strength, or contribute to the Prosperity of a good Company, as the Directors of it having always, as near as possible, an amicable Understanding, with three or four of their best Actors, whose good, or ill-will, must naturally make a wide Difference, in their profitable, or useles manner of serving them: While the Principal are kept reasonably easy, the lower Class can never be troublesome, without hurting themselves: But when a valuable Actor is hardly treated, the Master must be a very cunning Man, that finds his Account in it. We shall now see how far Experience will verify this Observation.

The Patentees thinking themselves secure, in being restor'd to their former absolute Power, over this, now, only Company, chose rather to govern it by the Reverse of the Method I have recommended: For tho' the daily Charge of their united Company amounted not, by a good deal, to what either of the two Companies, now in *Drury-Lane*, or *Covent-Garden*, singly, arises; they notwithstanding fell into their former Politicks, of thinking every Shilling taken from a hired Actor, so much clear Gain to the Proprietor: Many of their People, therefore, were actually, if not injudiciously, reduced in their Pay, and others given to understand, the same Fate was design'd them; of which last Number I, my self, was one; which occurs to my Memory, by the Answer I made to one of the Adventurers; who, in Justification

tion of their intended Proceeding, told me, that my Sallery, tho' it should be less, than it was, by ten Shillings a Week, would still be more than ever *Goodman* had, who was a better Actor, than I could pretend to be: To which I reply'd, This may be true, but then you know, Sir, it is as true, that *Goodman* was forced to go upon the High-way for a Livelihood. As this was a known Fact of *Goodman*, my mentioning it, on that Occasion, I believe, was of Service to me; at least my Sallery was not reduced after it. To say a Word or two more of *Goodman*, so celebrated an Actor, in his Time, perhaps may set the Conduct of the Patentees in a clearer Light. Tho' *Goodman* had left the Stage, before I came to it, I had some slight Acquaintance with him. About the Time of his being expected to be an Evidence against Sir *John Fenwick*, in the Assassination-Plot, in 1696, I happen'd to meet him at Dinner, at Sir *Thomas Skipwith's*, who, as he was an agreeable Companion himself, liked *Goodman* for the same Quality. Here it was, that *Goodman*, without Disguise, or sparing himself, fell into a laughing Account of several loose Passages of *his* younger Life; as his being expell'd the University of *Cambridge*, for being one of the hot-headed Sparks, who were concern'd in the cutting, and defacing the Duke of *Monmouth's* Picture, then Chancellor of that Place. But this Disgrace, it seems, had not disqualified him for the Stage; which, like the Sea-Service, refuses no Man, for his Morals, that is able-bodied: There, as

an Actor, he soon grew into a different Reputation; but whatever his Merit might be, the Pay of a hired Hero, in those Days, was so very low, that he was forced, it seems, to take the Air (as he call'd it) and borrow what Money the first Man he met, had about him. But this being his first Exploit of that kind, which the Scantiness of his Theatrical Fortune had reduced him to, King *James* was prevail'd upon, to pardon him: Which *Goodman* said, was doing him so particular an Honour, that no Man could wonder, if his Acknowledgment had carried him, a little farther, than ordinary, into the Interest of that Prince: But as he had, lately, been out of Luck, in backing his old Master, he had now no way to get home the Life he was out, upon his Account, but by being under the same Obligations to King *William*.

Another Anecdote of him, though not quite so dishonourably enterprising, which I had from his own Mouth, at a different Time, will equally shew, to what low Shifts in Life, the poor Provision for good Actors, under the early Government of the Patent, reduced them. In the younger Days of their Heroism, Captain *Griffin*, and *Goodman* were confined by their moderate Sallaries, to the Oeconomy of lying together, in the same Bed, and having but one whole Shirt between them: One of them being under the Obligation of a Rendezvous, with a fair Lady, insisted upon his wearing it, out of his Turn, which occasion'd so high a Dispute, that the Combat was immediately



diately demanded, and accordingly their Pretensions to it, were decided by a fair Tilt upon the Spot, in the Room, where they lay: But whether *Clytus*, or *Alexander* was obliged to see no Company, till a worse could be wash'd for him, seems not to be a material Point in their History, or to my Purpose.

By this Rate of *Goodman*, who, 'till the Time of his quitting the Stage, never had more, than what is call'd forty Shillings a Week, it may be judg'd, how cheap the Labour of Actors had been formerly; and the Patentees thought it a Folly to continue the higher Price, (which their Divisions had since raised them to) now there was but one Market for them; but alas! they had forgot their former fatal Mistake of squabbling with their Actors, in 1695; nor did they make any Allowance for the Changes and Operations 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 restrain'd 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: Or, if an unexpected Success should, notwithstanding, make the Profits, in any gross Disproportion, greater than the Wages; the

Wages will always have something worse, than a Murmur, at the Head of them, that will not only measure the Merit of the Actor, by the Gains of the Proprietor, but will never naturally be quiet, till every Scheme of getting into Property has been tried, to make the Servant his own Master: And this, as far as Experience can make me judge, will always be, in either of these Cases, the State of our *English* Theatre. What Truth there may be, in this Observation, we are now coming to a Proof of.

To enumerate all the particular Acts of Power, in which the Patentees daily bore hard, upon *this*, now only Company of Actors, might be as tedious, as unnecessary; I shall therefore come, at once, to their most material Grievance, upon which they grounded their Complaint to the Lord Chamberlain, who, in the Year following, 1709, took effectual Measures for their Relief.

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; began to think their own Interests too much neglected, by these partial Favours of the Town, to their Actors; and therefore judg'd, it would not be impolitick, in such wholesome annual Profits, to have a Fellow-feeling with them. Accordingly, an *Indulto* was laid of one Third, out of the Profits of every Benefit, for the proper Use, and Behoof of the Patent. But, that a clear Judgment may be form'd of the Equity, or Hardship

" After Mr Rich was again restored to the management of the Play house he made an order to stop a certain proportion of the clear profits of every Benefit play, without exception; which being done, and reaching the chief players as well as the underlings, zealous application was made to the Lord Chamberlain, to oblige Mr Rich to return the money stopped to each particular. The dispute lasted some time, and Mr Rich, not giving full satisfaction upon that head, was silenced; during the time of which silence, the chief players &c &c set up for themselves, and got into possession of the Play house in Drury Lane. "

| Answer to Steele's state of the case. 1720. |

Rich in this business, made out his right before the Attorney General and other Lawyers, and then petitioned the Council, who, refusing to determine the matter, referred him to Law, and there matters rested, till he built a new house in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

ship of this Imposition, it will be necessary to shew from whence, and from what Causes, the Actors Claim to Benefits originally proceeded.

During the Reign of King *Charles*, an Actor's Benefit had never been heard of. The first Indulgence of this kind, was given to Mrs. *Barry* (as has been formerly observed) in King *James's* Time, in Consideration of the extraordinary Applause, that had followed her Performance: But there this Favour rested, to her alone, 'till after the Division of the only Company in 1695, at which time 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 (however binding their Agreements might be) were too poor, or too wise to go to Law with a Lawyer; and therefore rather chose to compound their Arrears, for their being admitted to the Chance of having them made up, by the Profits of a Benefit-Play. This Expedient had this Consequence; that the Patentees, tho' their daily Audiences, might, and did sometimes, mend, still kept the short Subsistence of their Actors, at a stand, and grew more steady in their Resolution so to keep them, as they found them less apt to mutiny, while their Hopes of being clear'd off, by a Benefit, were depending. In a Year, or two, these Benefits grew so advantageous, that they became, at last, the chief Article, in every Actor's Agreement.

Now

Now though the Agreements of these united Actors, I am speaking of in 1708, were as yet, only Verbal; yet that made no difference in the honest Obligation, to keep them: But, as Honour at that time happen'd to have but a loose hold of their Consciences, the Patentees rather chose to give it the slip, and went on with their Work without it. No Actor, therefore, could have his Benefit fix'd, 'till he had first sign'd a Paper, signifying his voluntary Acceptance of it, upon the, above, Conditions, any Claims from Custom, to the contrary, notwithstanding. Several at first refus'd to sign this Paper; upon which the next in Rank were offer'd on the same Conditions, to come before the Refusers; this smart Expedient got some few of the Fearful the Preference to their Seniors; who, at last, seeing the Time was too short for a present Remedy, and that they must either come into the Boat, or lose their Tide, were forc'd to comply, with what, they, as yet, silently, resent as the severest Injury. In this Situation, therefore, they chose to let the principal Benefits be over, that their Grievances might swell into some bulk, before they made any Application for Redress to the Lord-Chamberlain; who, upon hearing their general Complaint, order'd the Patentees to shew cause, why their Benefits had been diminish'd one Third, contrary to the common Usage? The Patentees pleaded the sign'd Agreement, and the Actors Receipts of the other two Thirds, in full Satisfaction. But these

these were prov'd to have been exacted from them, by the Methods already mentioned. They notwithstanding insist upon them as lawful. But as Law, and Equity do not always agree, they were look'd upon as unjust, and arbitrary. Whereupon the Patentees 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* (who was then sole Director of the Opera only) had Permission to enter into a private Treaty, with such of the united Actors in *Drury-Lane*, as might be thought fit to head a Company, under their own Management, and to be Sharers with him in the *Hay-Market*. The Actors chosen for this Charge, were *Wilks*, *Dogget*, *Mrs. Oldfield*, and Myself. But, before I proceed, lest it should seem surprizing, that neither *Betterton*, *Mrs. Barry*, *Mrs. Bracegirdle*, or *Booth*, were Parties in this Treaty; it must be observ'd, that *Betterton* was now Seventy-three, and rather chose, with the Infirmities of Age upon him, to rely on such Sallary, as might be appointed him, than to involve himself, in the Cares, and Hurry, that must unavoidably attend the Regulation of a new Company. As to the two celebrated Actresses I have named, this has been my first proper Occasion of making

king it known, that they had both quitted the Stage the Year before this Transaction was thought of. And *Booth*, as yet, was scarce out of his Minority as an Actor, or only in the Promise of that Reputation, which in about four or five Years after, he happily arriv'd at. However, at this Juncture, he was not so far overlook'd, as not to be offer'd a valuable Addition to his Sallary: But this he declin'd, being, while the Patentees were under this Distress, as much, if not more, in favour, with their chief Menager, as a Schematist, than as an Actor: And indeed he appear'd, to my Judgment, more inclin'd to risque his Fortune in *Drury-Lane*, where he should have no Rival in Parts, or Power, than on any Terms to embark in the *Hay-Market*; where he was sure to meet with Opponents in both. However this his Separation from our Interest, when our All was at stake, afterwards kept his Advancement, to a Share with us, in our more successful Days, longer postpon'd, than otherwise it probably might have been.

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 Menagement of them. He therefore hop'd, that if we offer'd Mrs. *Oldfield* a *Carte Blanche*, instead of a Share, she would not think herself slighted. This was instantly agreed to, and  
Mrs.

1730. Thursday. May 7<sup>th</sup>. ----- We hear that W<sup>m</sup> Oldfield, the celebrated  
Comedian, hath obtained a reversionary grant of the Patent of Master of  
the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, granted by his Majesty King George  
the 1<sup>st</sup> to the late S<sup>r</sup> Richard Steele, Esq<sup>r</sup>, which expires in 1732.

| S<sup>r</sup> James's Evening Post. |

" As W<sup>m</sup> Oldfield is to be Master, our Author should have informed  
us, who is to be Mistress "

| Memoirs of the Society of York Street. |



Mrs. *Oldfield* receiv'd it rather as a Favour, than a Disobligation : Her Demands therefore were Two Hundred Pounds a Year certain, and a Benefit clear of all Charges; which were readily sign'd to. Her Easiness on this Occasion, some Years after, when our Establishment was in Prosperity, made us, with less Reluctancy, advance 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 engag'd, under our Confederacy 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 Apprehensions of what might fall upon them, from their late Usurpations on the Benefits 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. How often does History shew us, in the same State of Courts, the same Politics have been practis'd? All this while, the other Party were passively silent; 'till one Day, the Actor who particularly solicited their  
Cause,

Cause, at the Lord-Chamberlain's Office, being shewn 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 an erected Look, and a Theatrical Spirit, at once threw off the Mask, and roundly told him———*Sir, I have now no more Business Here, than 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 cold formal Declaration, *That if he would not do his Work, he should not be paid.*—— But now, to complete the Catastrophe of these Theatrical Commotions, 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 delivered the Order, the Actor throwing his Head over his Shoulder, towards the Patentee, in the manner of *Shakespeare's Harry the Eighth* to Cardinal *Wolsey*, cry'd—*Read o'er that! and now — to Breakfast, with what Appetite you may.* Tho' these Words might be spoken, in too vindictive,  
and

"The Play-house Ser<sup>u</sup>ll<sup>e</sup>, or palour obedience kicht off the Stage, being  
a true relation of new Tragi-comedies as it was acted last Week at the  
Play-house in Drury Lane: by several notorious Actors frequently called  
her Majesty's Servants, but of late termed their own Masters. In two  
Volumes printed for J. Bell in Castle Alley, in Birch-street Lane and sold  
by John Mozibus near St. Dunstons in Fleet

29 MA 55

The Supplement N<sup>o</sup> 384 June 28-30. 1710.

and insulting a manner, to be commended; yet from the Fulness of a Heart injuriously treated, and now reliev'd by that instant Occasion, why might they not be pardon'd?

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 mentioned: From whence that Power might be deriv'd, as I have already said, I am not Lawyer enough to know; however it is evident that a Lawyer obey'd it, though to his Cost; which might incline one to think, that the Law was not clearly against it: Be that as it may, since the Law has lately made it no longer a Question, let us drop the Enquiry, and proceed to the Facts, which 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 plagued with; yet there is a Medium, which, if cautiously ob-

observed 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. If the Government of a well-establish'd Theatre were to be compar'd to that of a Nation; there is no one Act of Policy, or Misconduct in the one, or the other, in which the Manager might not, in some parallel Case (laugh, if you please) be equally applauded, or condemned with the Statesman. Perhaps this will not be found so wild a Conceit, if you look into the 193d *Tatler*, Vol. 4. where the Affairs of the State, and those of the very Stage, which I am now treating of, are, in a Letter from *Downs* the Promptor, compar'd, and with a great deal of Wit, and Humour, set upon an equal Foot of Policy. The Letter is suppos'd to have been written, in the last Change of the Ministry in Queen *Anne's* Time. I will therefore venture, upon the Authority of that Author's Imagination, to carry the Comparison as high, as it can possibly go, and say, That as I remember one of our Princes, in the last Century, to have lost his Crown, by too arbitrary a Use of his Power, though he knew how fatal the same Measures had been to his unhappy Father before him; why should we wonder, that the same Passions taking

taking Possession of Men, in lower Life, by an equally impolitick Usage of their Theatrical Subjects, should have involved the Patentees, in proportionable Calamities.

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, notwithstanding his being so miserably maim'd, or over-match'd: He had no more Regard to Blows, than a blind Cock of the Game; he might be beaten, but would never yield, the Patent was still in his Possession, and the Broad-Seal to it visibly as fresh as ever: Besides, he had yet some Actors in his Service, at a much cheaper Rate than those who had left him, the Sallaries of which last now they would not work for him, he was not oblig'd to pay. 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; nor had his Politicks yet div'd, into the Secret, that the Court Power, with which the Patent had been so long, and often at variance, had now a  
"Z" mind

mind to take the publick Diversions more absolutely into their own Hands: 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, Power having then a different Aspect, the Patent found no Difficulty in being permitted to exercise its former Authority for acting Plays, &c. which, however from this time of their lying still, in 1709, 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* was open'd, where the first Play acted was the *Recruiting Officer*, under the Management of his Heirs, and Successors. But of that Theatre, it is not yet time to give any further Account.

The first Point resolv'd on, by the Comedians now re-established in the *Hay-Market*, was to alter the Auditory Part of their Theatre; the Inconveniencies of which have been fully enlarg'd upon in a former Chapter. What embarrass'd them most in this Design, was, their want of Time to do it in a more complete manner than it now remains in, otherwise they had brought it, to the original Model of that in *Drury-Lane*, only in a larger Proportion, as the wider Walls of it would require; as there are not many Spectators who may remember what Form the *Drury-Lane* Theatre stood in, about forty Years ago, before the old Patentee,

tentee, to make it hold more Money, took it in his Head to alter it, it were but Justice to lay the original Figure, which Sir *Christopher Wren* first gave it, and the Alterations of it, now standing, in a fair Light; that equal Spectators may see, if they were at their choice, which of the Structures would incline them to a Preference. But in this Appeal, I only speak to such Spectators as allow a good Play, well acted, to be the most valuable Entertainment of the Stage. Whether such Plays (leaving the Skill of the dead, or living Actors equally out of the Question) have been more, or less, recommended in their Presentation, by either of these different Forms of that Theatre, is our present Matter of Enquiry.

It must be observ'd then, that the Area, or Platform of the old Stage, projected about four Foot forwarder, in a Semi-oval Figure, parallel to the Benches of the Pit; and that the former, lower Doors of Entrance for the Actors were brought down between the two foremost (and then only) Pilasters; in the Place of which Doors, now the two Stage-Boxes are fixt. That where the Doors of Entrance now are, there formerly stood two additional Side-Wings, in front to a full Set of Scenes, which had then almost a double Effect, in their Loftiness, and Magnificence.

By this Original Form, the usual Station of the Actors, in almost every Scene, was advanc'd at least ten Foot nearer to the Audience, than they now can be; because, not on-



ly from the Stage's being shorten'd, in front, but likewise from the additional Interposition of those Stage-Boxes, the Actors (in respect to the Spectators, that fill them) are kept so much more backward from the main Audience, than they us'd to be: But when the Actors were in Possession of that forwarder Space, to advance upon, the Voice was then more in the Centre of the House, so that the most distant Ear had scarce the least Doubt, or Difficulty in hearing what fell from the weakest Utterance: All Objects were thus drawn nearer to the Sense; every painted Scene was stronger; every grand Scene and Dance more extended; every rich, or fine-coloured Habit had a more lively Lustre: Nor was the minutest Motion of a Feature (properly changing with the Passion, or Humour it suited) ever lost, as they frequently must be in the Obscurity of too great a Distance: And how valuable an Advantage the Facility of hearing distinctly, is to every well-acted Scene, every common Spectator is a Judge. A Voice scarce raised above the Tone of a Whisper, either in Tenderness, Resignation, innocent Distress, or Jealously suppress'd, often have as much concern with the Heart, as the most clamorous Passions; and when on any of these Occasions, such affecting Speeches are plainly heard, or lost, how wide is the Difference, from the great or little Satisfaction received from them? To all this, a Master of a Company may say, I now receive Ten Pounds more, than could  
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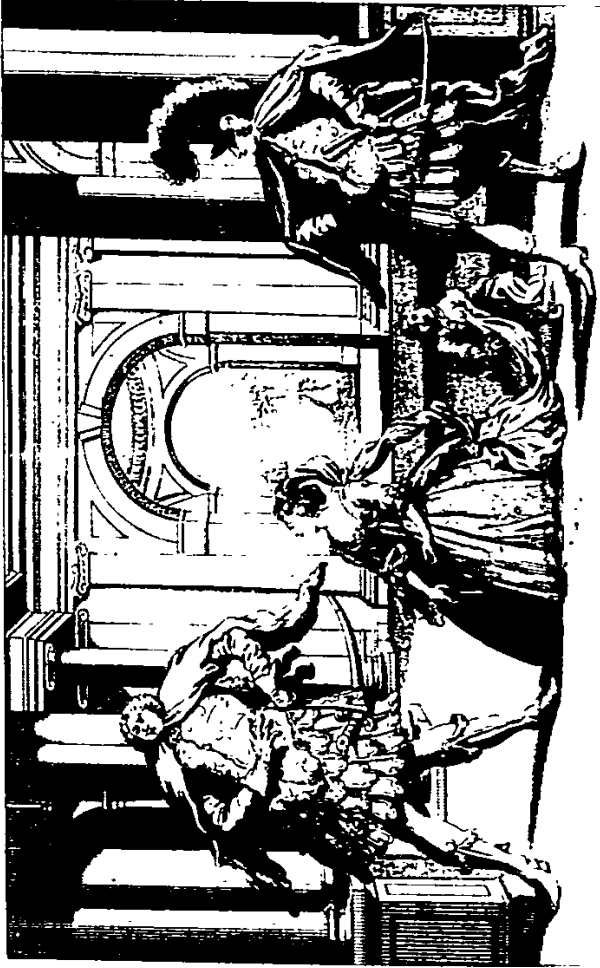
have been taken formerly, in every full House! Not unlikely. But might not his House be oftener full, if the Auditors were oftener pleas'd? Might not every bad House too, by a Possibility of being made every Day better, add as much to one Side of his Account, as it could take from the other? if what I have said, carries any Truth in it, why might not the original Form of this Theatre be restor'd? but let this Digression avail what it may, the Actors now return'd to the *Hay-Market*, as I have observ'd, wanting nothing but length of Time, to have govern'd their Alteration of that Theatre, by this original Model of *Drury-Lane*, which I have recommended. As their time therefore was short, they made their best use of it; they did something to it: They contracted its Wideness, by three Ranges of Boxes on each side, and brought down its enormous high Ceiling, within so proportionable a Compass, that it effectually cur'd those hollow Undulations of the Voice formerly complain'd of. The Remedy had its Effect; their Audiences exceeded their Expectation. There was now no other Theatre open against them; they had the Town to themselves; they were their own Masters, and the Profits of their Industry came into their own Pockets.

Yet with all this fair Weather, the Season of their uninterrupted Prosperity was not yet arriv'd; for the great Expence, and thinner Audiences of the Opera (of which they then were equally Directors) was a constant Draw-

back upon their Gains, yet not so far, but that their Income this Year was better than in their late Station at *Drury-Lane*. But by the short Experience we had then had of Operas; by the high Reputation they seem'd to have been arriv'd at, the Year before; by their Power of drawing the whole Body of Nobility, as by Enchantment, to their Solemnities; by that Prodigality of Expence, at which they were so willing to support them; and from the late extraordinary Profits *Swiney* had made of them; what Mountains did we not hope from this Mole-hill? But alas! the fairy Vision was vanish'd, this bridal Beauty was grown familiar to the general Taste, and Satiety began to make Excuses for its want of Appetite: Or what is still stranger, its late Admirers now as much valued their Judgment, in being able to find out the Faults of the Performers, as they had before, in discovering their Excellencies. The Truth is, that this kind of Entertainment being so entirely sensual, it had no Possibility of getting 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. From this Natural Cause, we have seen within these two Years, even *Farinelli* singing to an Audience of five and thirty Pounds; and yet, if common Fame may be credited, the same Voice, so neglected in one Country has  
in



The Monarch alluded to, I suppose, was Victor Amadeus, King of Sardinia. Carlo Brocchi, better known by the name of Farinelli, was born in the Duchedom of Modena, in 1705, and suffered emasculation from an accident when young. The Spanish King, Ferdinand, created him a Knight of Calatrava, honoured him with his friendship, and added to his fortune. He returned to Italy, on his Patrious death, and died in 1782.



THE WIFE OF THE BARRISTER

in another had Charms sufficient to make that Crown sit easy on the Head of a Monarch, which the Jealousy of Politicians (who had their Views in his keeping it) fear'd without some such extraordinary Amusement, his Satiety of Empire might tempt him, a second time, to resign.

There is too, in the very Species of an *Italian* Singer, such an innate, fantastical Pride, and Caprice, that the Government of them (here at least) is almost impracticable. This Distemper, as we were not sufficiently warn'd, or apprized of, threw our musical Affairs into Perplexities, we knew not easily how to get out of. There is scarce a sensible Auditor in the Kingdom, that has not, since that Time, had Occasion to laugh at the several Instances of it: But what is still more ridiculous, these costly Canary-Birds have sometimes infested the whole Body of our dignified Lovers of Musick, with the same childish Animosities: Ladies have been known to decline their Visits, upon account of their being of a different musical Party. *Cæsar*, and *Pompey* made not a warmer Division, in the *Roman* Republick, than those Heroines, their Country Women, the *Fauslina* and *Cuzzoni* blew up in our Common-wealth, of Academical Musick, by their implacable Pretensions to Superiority! And while this Greatness of Soul, is their unalterable Virtue, it will never be practicable to make two capital Singers of the same Sex, do as they should do, in one Opera, at the same time! no, not tho' *England* were to double the Sums

it has already thrown after them: For even in their own Country, where an extraordinary Occasion has called a greater Number of their best, to sing together, the Mischief they have made has been proportionable; an Instance of which, if I am rightly inform'd, hap pen'd at *Parma*, where upon the Celebration of the Marriage of that Duke, a Collection was made of the most eminent Voices, that Expence, or Interest could purchase, to give as complete an Opera, as the whole vocal Power of *Italy* could form. But when it came to the Proof of this musical Project, behold! what woful Work they made of it! every Performer would be a *Cæsar*, or Nothing; their several Pretensions to Preference were not to be limited within the Laws of Harmony; they would all choose their own Songs, but not more to set off themselves, than to oppose, or deprive another of an Occasion to shine: Yet any one would sing a bad Song, provided no body else had a good one, till at last, they were thrown together like to many feather'd Warriors, for a Battle-royal, in a Cock-pit, where every one was oblig'd to kill another, to save himself! What Pity it was these froward Misses, and Masters of Musick had not been engag'd to entertain the Court of some King of *Morocco*, that could have known a good Opera, from a bad one! with how much Ease would such a Director have brought them to better Order? But alas! as it has been said of greater Things,

*Sais et ipsa Roma viribus ruit.* Hor.

Im-





HENRY SACHEVERELL,

(Obit. 1724.)

Imperial *Rome* fell, by the too great Strength of its own Citizens! So fell this mighty Opera, ruin'd by the too great Excellency of its Singers! For, upon the whole, it proved to be as barbarously bad, as if Malice it self had composed it.

Now though something of this kind, equally provoking, has generally embarrass'd the State of Operas, these thirty Years; yet it was the Misfortune of the menaging Actors, at the *Hay-Market*, to have felt the first Effects of it: The Honour of the Singer, and the Interest of the Undertaker were so often at Variance, that the latter began to have but a bad Bargain of it. 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*: By the way, it must be observed, that this Company was not under the Direction of the Patent (which continued still silenced) but was set up by a third Interest, with a License 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; what sort of Favour he was in, with the People, then, in Power, may be judg'd, from his being often admitted to partake with them those detach'd Hours of Life, when Business was to give way to Pleasure:

Be:

But this was not all his Merit, he was, at the same time, a Member of Parliament for *Truro* in *Cornwall*, and we cannot suppose a Person so qualified could be refused such a Trifle, as a License to head a broken Company of Actors. This sagacious Lawyer, then, who had a Lawyer to deal with, observing that his Antagonist kept Possession of a Theatre, without making use of it, and for which he was not obliged to pay Rent, unless he actually *did* use it, wisely conceived it might be the Interest of the joint Landlords, since their Tenement was in so precarious a Condition, to grant a Lease to one, who had an undisputed Authority, to be liable, by acting Plays in it, to pay the Rent of it; especially when he tempted them with an Offer of raising it from three, to four Pounds *per Diem*. His Project succeeded, the Lease was sign'd; but the Means of getting into Possession were to be left to his own Cost, and Discretion. This took him up but little Time, he immediately laid 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 Approaches, and Design, time enough to carry off every thing, that was worth moving, except a great Number of old Scenes, and new Actors, that could not easily follow him.

A ludicrous Account of this Transaction, under fictitious Names, may be found in the 99th *Tatler*, Vol. 2. which this Explanation may now render

A license was granted by Letter from the Lord Chamberlain to Mr Collier, who was empowered to act Tragedy and Comedies, in consequence of the surrender of the interest of the holders of De Witt and Hildgum's Patent, into the Lord Chamberlain's hands. This Letter went the length of fixing the date, on which the first Play should be acted: and also contained a strong prohibition, under pain of forfeiture to allow of Rich's interference, or any way giving directions: also, to suffer no idlers behind the scenes, or to stand on the Stage.

November 29<sup>th</sup>. Being a rejoicing night, Mr Collier, with a hired rabble, broke into the premises of Drury Lane Theatre, turned Mr Rich out, and obtained possession of the Theatre.

"The lawful ruler of Drury Lane set up an Attorney to expect an Attorney, and chose a name dreadful to the Stage, who alone seemed capable to beat Divito out of his inbrenchments — on Nov. 22. a night of public rejoicing, the enemies of Divito made a bonfire for the populace, and distributed plenty of liquors — the artful rival of Divito, observing them prepared for enterprize, presented the Proprietors of the neighbouring Theatre, and shewed his deputation under him — War immediately ensued upon the peaceable empire of Wit and the Muses — but when they had forced their entrance, they found that the experienced Divito had detached all his subjects, and evacuated all his stores — the neighbouring inhabitants report that the refuse of Divito's followers marched off the night before disguised in magnificence — Door keepers came out clad like cardinals, and scene drawers like Heathen gods — Divito himself was wrapped up in one of his black clouds, and left to the enemy nothing, but an empty Stage, full of Trap-doors, known only to himself and his adherents.

" Thus ended Rich's power over Drury Lane, — he seems in his public capacity of Patentee and Manager to have been a despicable character — without spirit to bring the power of the Lord Chamberlain to a legal test — without honesty to account to the other Proprietors for the receipts of the Theatre — without any feeling for his Actors — and without the least judgement as to Players and Plays. "

| Genest. |

The Author in his Preface, says, that, "three years ago he put his Comedy into the hands of a famous Comedian belonging to the Haymarket, who took care to beat down the value of it so much, as to offer to make it fit to appear on the Stage, on condition of having half the profits of the third day and the Dedication entire that is as much as to say, that it might pass for one of his, according to custom — when <sup>28. M. 55</sup> Booth saw it, he said with a little alteration it would please the Town." —

der more intelligible, to the Readers of that agreeable Author.

This other new License being now in Possession of the *Drury-Lane* Theatre; those Actors, whom the Patentee, ever since the Order of Silence, had retain'd in a State of Inaction, all to a Man came over to the Service of *Collier*. Of these, *Booth* was then the chief. The Merit of the rest had as yet made no considerable Appearance, and as the Patentee had not left a Rag of their Cloathing behind him, they were but poorly equip'd for a publick Review; consequently, at their first Opening, they were very little able to annoy us. But during the Trial of *Sacheverel*, our Audiences were extremely weaken'd, by the better Rank of People's daily attending it: While, at the same time, the lower Sort, who were not equally admitted to that grand Spectacle, as eagerly crowded into *Drury-Lane*, to a new Comedy, call'd *The fair Quaker of Deal*. This Play, having some low Strokes of natural Humour in it, was rightly calculated, for the Capacity of the Actors, who play'd it, and to the Taste of the Multitude, who were now, more disposed, and at leisure to see it: But the most happy Incident, in its Fortune, was the Charm 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



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 dramatick Attempt, upon which the Support of their weak Society depended.

But when the Trial, I have mention'd, and the Run of this Play was over, the Tide of the Town beginning to turn again in our Favour, *Collier* was reduced to give his Theatrical Affairs a different Scheme; which advanced the Stage another Step towards that Settlement, which, in my Time, was of the longest Duration.



Thlyi . . . . . Leigh .  
Meyen . . . . . Pack .  
Worthing . . . . . Booth .  
Rowwell . . . . . Powell .  
Indent . . . . . Knipp .  
Eary . . . . . Gony .  
S<sup>r</sup> b Pleasant . . . . . Bickerstaff .  
Bribeage . . . . . Brington .  
Scuple . . . . . Freeman .  
boxen . . . . . Norris .

Belinda . . . . . Mrs Moore ,  
Anabella . . . . . Mr Bradshaw .  
Dorcas Teal . . . . . Miss Saulton .  
Jenny Pricati . . . . . Mr Spiller .

February 25<sup>th</sup> 1710 .

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