CURRENT.

What then, you own I have gueſſed right? How kind to prefer me to him! Where is your retreat? I will come to you the moment he is gone to reſt. One kiſs firſt—

ALMADINE.

Raſh mortal, forbear! Know, I am not of your ſpecies—

CURRENT.

My dear lady, you have lived in this damned iſland till you have forgot your own language—You mean, you are not of my ſex.—I ſee it by that ſnowy boſom, and I flatter myſelf you are not ſorry that we are of different ſpecies. Lord! what pleaſure it will be to hear our children prattle!

ALMADINE.

Offend not the purity of ſupernatural organs by your licentious ideas—I tell you I am—

CURRENT.

A ſupernatural beauty, I allow; but your organs, I truſt, are not over-natural.

ALMADINE.

Be dumb for a moment, if poſſible. I am a fairy.

CURRENT.

The devil you are! You are monſtrouſly grown. I have always heard that fairies were not a thought taller than Lilliputians.

ALMADINE.

I am of a ſuperior order. This iſland is under my patronage. I am ſovereign of the weſtern ocean. You and Padlock were both ſhipwrecked on this coaſt by my order. Your deſtiny is in my hands. You can never depart hence but by my permiſſion: and I repeat it to you, your life will end the moment you reveal the inviolable ſecret of having ſeen me.

CURRENT.

What, not even to Padlock?

ALMADINE.

Above all men, not to him.

CURRENT.

Bring any other man hither, and I will not deſire to tell Padlock; for, between you and me, he is the worſt perſon upon earth for a confident.

ALMADINE.

What, is he as communicative as yourſelf?

CURRENT.

Oh, lord! for a fairy you are a woful gueſſer! He communicative! Why, he would not tell if I bid him—nay, I don't think he would, even if I ſwore him to ſecrecy.

ALMADINE.

I find the truſt I place in you, is in good hands—but you know the penalty. [*vaniſhes.*]

CURRENT, *alone.*

Stay, ſtay; where the devil is ſhe? Madam fairy, lady patroneſs, what's your name, queen of the ocean—Zounds, ſhe is gone.—Supernatural indeed! Not ſay I have ſeen you? 'Faith, I don't know whether I have or not. I had fifty queſtions to aſk her—Seen her; ſeen whom? Whom can I ſay I have ſeen? A gentlewoman ſtalks in from behind a rock, acquaints a body with her ſupernaturality, which was not at all the thing I wanted with her, tells me I am a dead man if I mention having ſeen her, and whiſk! ſhe is out of ſight, without even leaving me a card with her direction. Who the devil will believe me? Aye, and moreover ſhe ſays ſhe ordered me to be ſhipwrecked—Very kind, truly! I am certainly bound in honour to keep ſo obliging a ſecret.—And Padlock, too—ſhe ſhipwrecked him likewiſe—Well, ſhe did not bid me not to tell that. I may certainly acquaint him with what relates to himſelf—I will do it, thus: "A certain fairy, that ſhall be nameleſs—Don't, Padlock, don't preſs me—a lady's name, you know, muſt not be imparted to the neareſt friend—nay, nor don't aſk me how I came to know it; but be aſſured a certain fairy—not that I have ſeen her, I don't ſay I have; I cannot help what you may conjecture."—Ay, that will do; I can never be ſtruck dead for what he may gueſs—I hope he

will gueſs.—Gueſs! what can he gueſs? If I was to tell him ever ſo plainly, he would not believe me.—Padlock, with all his religion, I am convinced is an unbeliever—and therefore where can be the harm of telling him what he will think a lie?—Well, but ſuppoſe I tell him upon my honour I have not ſeen a woman theſe twelve hours—his ſuſpicious nature will conclude by the abruptneſs of the aſſertion that I have ſeen one, and thus he will find out my ſecret while I endeavour to keep it from him. It ſhall be ſo.

ECHO. It ſhall be ſo.

CURRENT.

Ha! who was that? 'Faith, I believe it was an echo—What a fortunate diſcovery!—Egad, I'll tell Echo the ſecret; and if ſhe tells Padlock, it is no fault of mine—If he is within a mile he ſhall know it—[*bawls very loud*] Padlock, Padlock, I have ſeen a— [ALMADINE *appears.*] —a tiger.

[*She diſappears.*]

CURRENT.

A fairy, quotha! Why, ſhe is an errant hocus pocus—It is good, however, to have preſence of mind—I ſee I muſt be upon my guard—Now for telling my ſecret, without telling it—[*bawls*] Padlock, Padlock, don't believe I have juſt ſeen a fairy—

ECHO. Believe I have juſt ſeen a fairy.

CURRENT. [ALMADINE *appears.*]

Oh! oh! I am a dead man!

ALMADINE.

What were thoſe ſounds I heard? Is this your ſecrecy? Do you inſult my power? Do you proclaim to the echos what I charged you never to utter?

CURRENT.

As I hope to be ſaved, your majeſty, that Echo is a damned liar. She blunders like an Iriſh footman. I was but dictating a card to her to carry a ſtone's throw, and ſhe forgot the firſt word of it.

ALMADINE.

ALMADINE.

As you have not totally diſobeyed me, for the preſent your life is reſpited —but as you are in ſome degree guilty, you will ere long be deprived of faculties that are very dear to you.

CURRENT.

Lord, madam, which? which? If I muſt be deprived of ſome of my faculties, may I not at leaſt chooſe which?

[ALMADINE *diſappears.*]

ECHO. Chooſe which.

CURRENT.

Alack! alack! what ſhall I do? How can I chooſe? My poor dear faculties, which of you muſt I give up? My eyes, my ears, my tongue, my hands, my—Oh, it is impoſſible to reſolve—Yes, yes, yes, I have it—I have an averſion to ſorrow—Echo, take notice, I have made my option; I will give up my tears—

ECHO. Ears.

CURRENT.

Ha! my ears! No, no, thou abominable jeſuitical quibbling proſtitute! I did not ſay my ears—

ECHO. Ears.

CURRENT.

No, no; I tell you [*as loud as he can bawl*] my tears, my t, e, a, r, s.

ECHO. E, a, r, s.

Enter FINETTE.

Methought I heard a man's voice—I have not ſeen a human creature ſince I was in this diſmal place.—There he is—Sure he will not hurt me—I have been told I am pretty, and that no man will hurt a pretty woman; I'll venture.—[*curtſies*]—Good ſir, have compaſſion on an innocent virgin—

CURRENT.

CURRENT.

She is a ſweet creature—but why does not ſhe ſpeak? Her lips move, but no ſound comes from them. Who are you, pretty maiden? Can you ſpeak Engliſh?

FINETTE.

Yes, an' pleaſe you.

CURRENT.

Do you mock me, child? Are you a fairy too? Can't you articulate?

FINETTE.

I don't underſtand your honour.

CURRENT.

Child, I am not deaf; I don't comprehend the motion of the lips without ſounds. Speak aloud, if you have a mind I ſhould know what you mean. I am not uſed to talk in dumb ſhow.

FINETTE.

What can he mean? Perhaps he is a little deafiſh—I'll ſpeak louder. My name is Finette, your honour; my parents are poor, but very honeſt, I aſſure ye.

CURRENT.

This is certainly ſome trick of the fairy. Young woman, I'll kiſs you till you find your voice—

FINETTE.

O dear, I hope your honour won't be rude—Indeed I will cry out.

CURRENT.

Very well; I have no objections to the conditions, if you have not—ſince kiſſes muſt do the buſineſs—[*offers to kiſs her.*]

[FINETTE *ſcreams.*]

Enter PADLOCK.

What have we here? Current and a pretty wench! Very well, very well, Mr. Current, I wiſh you much joy!

CURRENT.

Oh, Padlock, I was trying to open this girl's lips; ſhe does nothing but make mouths at me. Try if you can make her ſpeak.

PADLOCK.

Very willingly, if I may make uſe of your method.

CURRENT.

What the devil, are you dumb too?—Have you learnt the ſilent language of this country? You was taciturn enough before.

PADLOCK.

I thought the language I found you practiſing was the tongue of every country.

CURRENT.

Ha, what, ha! Come, come, have done fooling. You don't want to be kiſſed too, I hope?

FINETTE, *to* PADLOCK.

Alas, ſir, the poor gentleman is either deaf or mad. I have ſcreamed as loud as I could.

PADLOCK.

Yes, in good truth, for I heard you to the bottom of the hill.

CURRENT.

They talk to one another—ſeem to underſtand one another—and yet I don't hear a word they ſay.—Lord, lord, lord, ſure I am not deaf! Padlock, am I deaf?

PADLOCK.

You are not dumb, at leaſt; your tongue runs as faſt as ever.

CURRENT.

Now, for heaven's ſake, Padlock, tell me, I conjure you; have you ſpoken aloud to me? Am I deaf? Or are you in a plot with this imp of the fairies to torment me?

PADLOCK.

The girl's in the right, he is certainly gone mad—he has talked himſelf out of his ſenſes.

FINETTE.

FINETTE.

Indeed, your honour, I am afraid the poor gentleman's head is a little aſkew, as it were—pardon my boldneſs.

CURRENT.

What ſhall I do to know whether I am really deaf or not? Dear Padlock, ſweet laſs, bawl as loud as you can.

PADLOCK *and* FINETTE.

Do you hear me?

CURRENT.

Pho! you only gape.

PADLOCK.

I tell you, we roared.

FINETTE.

Yes, indeed did us.

CURRENT.

O lord, I don't hear a word they ſay.—I will go let off a piſtol at my own ear. [*Runs out.*]

PADLOCK, FINETTE.

PADLOCK.

Well, pretty maiden, don't look after that fool—my friend, I mean. He is a little apt to be thick of hearing—he is quick at times.

FINETTE.

Indeed, your honour, his worſhip ſeems to be a very civil gentleman in the main.

PADLOCK.

Oh, he does, does he? And pray how long have his worſhip and you been acquainted?

FINETTE.

Oh, not the time of drawing a drap of ſmall beer, indeed and indeed!

PADLOCK.

But what made you ſcream out ſo luſtily?

FINETTE.

Oh,—ſtay; yes, he trod upon my beſt gown.

PADLOCK.

So you did not cry out becauſe he kiſſed you?

FINETTE.

Yes; no—yes, I might ſcream, but indeed I believe the gentleman meant matrimony. Don't all gentlemen that kiſs poor girls, mean to make them their wives?

PADLOCK.

Oh, yes, yes, ſome time or other. But are you poor; very poor?

FINETTE.

Yes, an' pleaſe your honour; and it would be an act of charity, if you would be ſo good as to give me away.

PADLOCK.

Give you away! To whom?

FINETTE.

To yon fine gentleman in the gay clothes that was here awhile agon.

PADLOCK.

Why, ſure you don't like that ſot?—my friend, I mean. He is a very worthy man; but he will never marry you without a portion. You ſhall marry me—and as there is no clergyman in the iſland, we may live as man and wife in the mean time; and if ever we get back to England, or Scotland—

Enter CURRENT.

O lord! Padlock, I am certainly deaf, ſtone-deaf! I fired a piſtol, and did not hear it—I bawled to the echo, I banged great ſtones againſt the anchor, and all in vain: nay, I don't hear my own voice—Do I ſpeak? I hope I am not dumb too.

PADLOCK.

[*Aſide.*] I wiſh you were. Egad, I will make him believe he is; and then the double misfortune may make him drown himſelf. [*Shakes his head.*]

CURRENT.

CURRENT.

No, you don't ſay ſo! What, don't you hear me? [PADLOCK *ſhakes his head.*] Upon your honour! Oh, I ſhall go diſtracted—[*bawls very loud.*] —Don't you hear me yet? [PADLOCK *ſhakes his head.*] Oh, undone, undone, undone!—To have but three people in this world, and not be able to hear them, nor make them hear me!—And you, my angel, don't you hear me neither?

FINETTE.

Yes, indeed, your honour; and I never heard ſo fine a ſpoken gentleman in all my born days.

PADLOCK.

[*Aſide.* The girl's a fool, and in love with him; but at leaſt he does not hear her: I'll make him believe ſhe does not diſtinguiſh a word he ſays.

[*Puſhes her aſide, points to her, and ſhakes his head, as if* FINETTE *did not hear* CURRENT.]

CURRENT.

Don't ſhe, upon your ſoul?—Oh! what will become of me? I cannot even have the ſatisfaction of a dialogue with the echo.

FINETTE, *angrily, to* PADLOCK.

Don't impoſe upon the poor gentleman; you may be aſhamed of yourſelf. [*To* CURRENT.] Sir, I do hear you: ſpeak to me. [*Very loud.*]

PADLOCK.

O nature, nature, didſt thou form fools only to baffle the cunning of wiſe men? Now will love teach this ſimple girl to defeat all my art!

[FINETTE *points to* CURRENT'S *mouth, then to her own ear, and then nods to him.*]

PADLOCK.

Ay, ay; ſee, I ſaid it would be ſo.——Damn her, but I muſt have her—

CURRENT.

'Faith, I believe *ſhe does* hear me.—My life, my angel, nod again if you hear me. [FINETTE *nods, and ſmiles upon him.*] Oh! tranſport! You have a deviliſh

a deviliſh pretty mouth, when you ſmile; but the quickneſs of your ears is ten times better ſtill——And does Padlock hear me too? [FINETTE *nods.*] I thought ſo.—Now do I long to tell them both the ſecret—but if that curſed fairy is within reach, ſhe may make them deaf to. Oh, but now I remember, ſhe did not forbid my telling it to this girl—Lord, it is quite reviving to have ſomebody to tell a ſecret to.—Heark you, heark you, my dear; a word in your ear.

PADLOCK.

[*Aſide.*] He is going to tell her ſomething to my prejudice. I muſt prevent him.

[*Pulls* FINETTE *away, and makes profeſſions to* CURRENT, *by laying his hand to his heart; and expreſſing concern for his deafneſs, by pointing to* CURRENT's *ears, and looking grieved.*]

FINETTE.

It is very unhandſome in you, Mr. Padlock, to interrupt lovyers. The gentleman might be going to propoſe matrimony, for aught you know.

CURRENT.

Good Padlock, let us alone; I was going to tell her a ſecret, and I dare ſwear ſhe will tell it you the moment my back is turned—I muſt go about a little buſineſs the moment I have whiſpered her, and will leave you alone.

PADLOCK.

[*Aſide.*] Good! One fool at leaſt counteracts another. We cunning people always ſucceed ſooner or later. [*To* FINETTE.] Go, go and hear what the gentleman has to ſay to you. It is no buſineſs of mine.

FINETTE.

So I will, without your leave. One may whiſper with one's ſweetheart without offence, I hope. [CURRENT *whiſpers her.*] A fairy! Have you ſeen a fairy? Lord, you make me trimble all over.

PADLOCK.

[*Aſide.*] What nonſenſe is the blockhead talking to her?

CURRENT.

[*Aſide.*] I hope ſhe has told him. [*To her.*] Why, ſure you have not divulged my ſecret? Padlock, you muſt not believe her. Where ſhould I have ſeen a fairy? I do not ſay there are no ſuch beings—nay, I know there are—Not that I ſay I ever ſaw one—I may, or I may not—

PADLOCK.

His brain is certainly cracked—

FINETTE.

For ſartain, it is for love—And yet, Mr. Padlock, you will bear me witneſs I have not been cruel. Would it not be better, think you, if I made him ſigns that I will marry him?

PADLOCK.

Pray, my dear, what ſigns will you make him? [*Aſide.*] As he is mad already, I don't know but matrimony may bring him to his ſenſes.

FINETTE.

Oh, you ſhall ſee in a trice.

[*She takes a ring from* CURRENT's *finger, gives it him, and holds out her own finger; then pulls* PADLOCK *between them, takes out a prayer-book and turns to "Matrimony," ſhows it to* CURRENT, *and then gives the book to* PADLOCK.]

CURRENT.

What the devil is all this? Matrimony? What, child, have you a mind I ſhould marry you? Nay, with all my heart—[*Aſide.*] It is the beſt way of ſecuring the only woman in the iſland to myſelf.—But, my angel, who is to give you away?

ALMADINE *appears.*

That ſhall be my office.

CURRENT.

Oh! ecſtacy! at leaſt I can hear fairies ſpeak.

ALMADINE.

ALMADINE.

And every body elſe: your hearing is reſtored. Know, Current, and thou, Padlock, that a vain endeavour to correct nature has cured me of preſumption; though I have not been able to amend the reſpective faults in each of you. I cauſed you all three to be tranſported hither to make the experiment. What has been the reſult? You, Padlock, in an uninhabited iſland, have not been able to diveſt yourſelf of caution, reſerve, ſuſpicion, cunning, ſelf-intereſt and treachery. One man alone was your companion; it was out of his power to betray you; and yet you could not bring yourſelf to truſt him: the firſt woman you ſaw, tempted you to betray him. Of what uſe has good ſenſe been to you? It has only given edge to the badneſs of your heart. Go back to men; you are fit to live amongſt them. You, Current, are more fool than knave; but you too are incorrigible. The threats of death, the loſs of hearing, could not cure you of your loquacity. It would be hard to puniſh you for what you cannot help. This innocent pretty creature loves you ſincerely, loves you honeſtly. I will ſee you married; you ſhall remain here with her for ever, and ſhall be as happy as your nature will ſuffer you to be. It is no more in my power to make you happier, than it was to make you better.

FINETTE.

Dear gracious, ſhall I live alone with this fine gentleman for ever?

CURRENT.

No, no; I hope her majeſty will now and then have a fit of making experiments, and ſend us more company. Adieu! Padlock; be ſure you put all that has happened to us into the newſpapers.

ALMADINE.

That he will not. He does not like newſpapers meddling with characters like his.

FINIS.

THOUGHTS ON TRAGEDY:

IN THREE LETTERS

TO

ROBERT JEPHSON, Esq.

LETTER I.

AFTER the very great and general applauſe given to Braganza, my admiration of it, ſir, can be of little value, though very precious to me, as it has procured me ſo very obliging, and, forgive my ſaying, far too flattering, a mark of attention from you. The pleaſure I once had of being acquainted with you naturally attracted my expectation from your play. It is but true to ſay, that it far exceeded it. I did not expect that a firſt production in a way in which I did not know you, would prove the work of a maſter-poet. Even on hearing the three firſt acts, I was ſtruck, not only with the language, metaphors and ſimilies, which are as new as noble and beautiful, but with the modulation of the numbers. Your ear, ſir, is as perfect as your images, and no poet we have excels you in harmony. It enchanted me ſo much, that it had juſt the contrary effect from what it ought to have had; for, forgetting how bad a figure I ſhould make by appearing in company with ſuch verſes, I could not refuſe Mr. Tighe's requeſt of writing an epilogue, though I never was a poet, and have done writing—but in excuſe, I muſt ſay I complied, only becauſe an epilogue was immediately wanted. You have by this time, I fear, ſir, ſeen it in the newſpapers: it was written in one evening; I knew it was not only bad, but moſt unworthy of ſuch a play; and

when I heard it ſpoken, though pronounced better than it deſerved, I thought I never heard, to any play, a flatter epilogue. I beg your pardon, ſir; I am aſhamed of it—the prologue is really a very fine one—but you wanted no aſſiſtance, no props; the immenſe applauſe which you drew from the audience was owing to yourſelf alone. Mrs. Yates and Mr. Smith played well, not quite equally to their parts—Two other principal parts were ſo indifferently performed, that your own merit appeared the greater; and I will venture to ſay, that Braganza will always charm more when read, than when ſeen; for I doubt there never will be found a whole ſet of actors together, who can do it full juſtice. For my own part, though ſo diſcontent with my epilogue, I ſhall always be proud of having facilitated and haſtened Braganza's appearance on the ſtage, by the zeal with which I ſolicited the licence, and which I hope atones for my miſcarriage in the other. I am indifferent to fame on my own account, but glory in having ſerved yours.

My ſelf-condemnation ought to deter me from obeying your further commands, however graciouſly laid on me. Can you want counſel, ſir, who have produced Braganza? Or am I fit to give counſel, who have written a tragedy that never can appear on any ſtage? and who am not only ſenſible of the intrinſic fault in the choice of the ſubject, but of many others that happily will not come into queſtion?

It is true, I have thought often on the ſubject, though not of late till I ſaw your tragedy. I was very attentive to that, and obſerved what parts made impreſſion on the audience, and which did not; for every part even of ſo beautiful a compoſition, and ſo faultleſs in the poetry, could not have equal effect on a vaſt audience, where the greater part could not be judges but from the operation on their paſſions. My letter, ſir, is already too long, nor can I delay thanking you till I have time to recollect my thoughts. I ſhall certainly never pretend to give you inſtruction; but if either in the future choice of a ſubject, or in any obſervations which I have made on the conſtruction of tragedies, I can furniſh you with any hints (for I certainly do not mean to write a treatiſe, or even methodize my thoughts), I will ſo far obey you as to lay them before you—though I own I wiſh rather to ſee you perform what I am ſure I can give no advice upon. As I hold a good comedy the chef-œuvre of human genius, I wiſh, I ſay, you would try comedy—though you

you will be unpardonable too if you neglect tragedy, for which you have ſo marked a vocation.

I have the honour to be, SIR,
With the greateſt reſpect,
eſteem and admiration,
Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

Arlington-Street,
Feb. 24, 1775.

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER II.

SIR,

IN conſequence of your orders and of my own promiſe, I will venture to lay before you, not advice, but ſome indigeſted thoughts on ſubjects for tragedy, and on the compoſition of one—rather for the ſake of talking with you on a matter agreeable to us both, than to dictate on what I have but once attempted, and never ſufficiently ſtudied; indeed not at all till I had executed ſome part of my piece.

I am ill qualified, ſir, to recommend a ſubject to you; ſince, though I confeſs I thought I had found ſome talent in myſelf for tragedy (after having vainly tried at comedy, to which I was more inclined), I have never been able to find a ſecond ſtory that pleaſed me—at leaſt, that touched me enough to purſue it. My wiſh was to work on that of ſir Thomas More—but the difficulties were various and too great. In the firſt place, it would not be painting him, to omit his characteriſtic pleaſantry. Yet who but Shakeſpeare could render mirth pathetic? His exquiſite ſcene of the grave-diggers is an inſtance of that magic and creative power—now ſo overwhelmed by the ignorance of French criticiſm, that it is acted no more!—And would not ſuch barbarous blunders ſtifle genius itſelf? Not to miſcarry in an imitation of Shakeſpeare, would be to be Shakeſpeare—it would be ſtill meritorious to aim at it. But there are other difficulties: one muſt paſs cenſure on ſir Thomas's bigotry; or draw him as a martyr to a ridiculous worſhip, without cenſuring that worſhip; for

even an oblique cenſure on it out of the mouth of one of his *reformed* perſecutors would flatten the glory of his martyrdom.—Theſe two difficulties combined made me drop all thoughts of that ſtory, though ſo fertile of great and bold ſituations. Anne Boleyn would pleaſe me; but Henry VIII. is too perfectly drawn by Shakeſpeare to admit a ſecond and much weaker edition.

There is one ſubject, a very favourite one with me, and yet which I alone was accidentally prevented from meddling with—Don Carlos. Otway, the next to Shakeſpeare in boldneſs, though only next but one in ſtrokes of nature, in my opinion, as I prefer the tragic ſcenes in The Fatal Marriage and Oroonoko to Venice Preſerved and The Orphan, has miſcarried wofully in Don Carlos. Sir Charles Williams, who had long intended to write a tragedy on that ſubject, and who I believe had no tragic powers, never ſet about it till he was mad—and madneſs did not aſſiſt him as it did Lee; nor allowed him to finiſh it. Yet how many capital ingredients in that ſtory! Tenderneſs, cruelty, heroiſm, policy, pity, terror! The impetuous paſſions of the prince, the corrected and cooler fondneſs and virtue of the queen, the king's dark and cruel vengeance, different ſhades of policy in Rui Gomez, policy and art with franker paſſions in the ducheſs of Eboli—how many contraſts!—And what helps from the religion and hiſtory of the times, or even of the preceding reign!—In ſhort, ſir, I ſee nothing againſt it but the notoriety of the ſtory, which I think always diſadvantageous, as it prevents ſurpriſe—though a known ſtory ſaves the author ſome details—which if exhibited, as the French practice, by telling you all the preceding circumſtances in the firſt ſcene, appear to me a greater crime than any of the improprieties that Shakeſpeare has crowded into The Winter Evening's Tale; for novelty, however badly introduced, can never be ſo inſipid or more improbable than two courtiers telling one another what each muſt know more or leſs, though one of them may have been abſent two or three years. Shakeſpeare's prologues are far more endurable.

Why I gave up this fruitful canvas, was merely becauſe the paſſion is inceſtuous, as is moſt unfortunately that of my Myſterious Mother, though at different points of time, and that of Carlos a pardonable and not diſguſting one. I ſhall rejoice at having left it, if you will adopt it.

For

For all other ſubjects, I have ſaid not one pleaſed me exactly. I think it would not be unadviſable to take any you like, changing the names and the country of the perſons; which would prevent the audience being foreſtalled —though this is leſs an inducement to you, ſir, who have rendered the laſt act of Braganza the moſt intereſting, though half the audience expected the cataſtrophe—not indeed ſo ſtrikingly as you have made it touch them. Still, as the denouement is your own, and one of the fineſt coups de théatre I ever met with, it proves that a known ſtory wants ſome novelty; and I confeſs that, in your moſt tender ſcenes, I felt leſs than I ſhould have done had I not foreknown the proſperous event.

Changing the perſons and country is juſt the reverſe of the bungling contrivance in Le Comte de Warvic, where the author has groſsly perverted a known ſtory without amending it.

One art I think might be uſed, though a very difficult one; and yet I would not recommend it to you, ſir, if I did not think you capable of employing it; and that is, *a very new and peculiar ſtyle.* By fixing on ſome region of whoſe language we have little or no idea, as of the Peruvians in the ſtory of Atabalipa, you might frame a new diction, even out of Engliſh, that would have amazing effect, and ſeem the only one the actors could properly uſe. It is much eaſier to conceive this, than to give rules for it—but Milton certainly made a new Engliſh language; and Shakeſpeare, always greater than any man, has actually formed a ſtyle for Caliban that could ſuit no other kind of being. Dryden, vaſt as his genius was, tried the ſame thing more than once, but failed. He wanted to conceive how the Mexicans muſt have felt the miracles of ſhips, and gunpowder, &c. imported by the Europeans—he wrote moſt harmoniouſly for them; and it might be poetry, but was not nature. He miſcarried ſtill more, when he wanted to forget all he had learned by eyeſight, and to think for blind Emmeline:—he makes her talk nonſenſe:—when ſhe ſuppoſes her lover's face is of *ſoft black gold*, it conveys no idea at all. When blind profeſſor Sanderſon ſaid, he ſuppoſed ſcarlet was like the ſound of a trumpet; it proved he had been told that ſcarlet was the moſt vivid of colours, but ſhowed he had no otherwiſe an idea of it.

The religion of the Peruvians, their demons, which I would allow to be real

real exiſtencies, oracles and prophecies foretelling their ruin and the arrival of ſtrangers, would add great decoration. I love decorations whenever they produce unexpected coups de théatre. In ſhort, we want new channels for tragedy, and ſtill more for poetry. You have the ſeeds, ſir; ſow them where you will, they will grow. Had I your genius, I would hazard a *future* American ſtory—ſuppoſe empires to be founded there—give them new cuſtoms, new manners—But I grow viſionary—and this letter is too long—I will try to have more common ſenſe in the next, not having left room enough in this to tell you how much I am

Your obedient ſervant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

LETTER III.

YOU have drawn more trouble on yourſelf, ſir, than you expected; and would probably excuſe my not performing the reſt of my promiſe: but though I look upon myſelf as engaged to ſend you my thoughts, you are neither bound to anſwer them, nor regard them. They very likely are not new, and it is preſumption in me to ſend hints to a much abler writer than myſelf. I can only plead in apology, that I intereſt myſelf in your fame; and as you are the only man capable of reſtoring and improving our ſtage, I really mean no more than to exhort and lead you on to make uſe of your great talents.

I have told you, as is true, that I am no poet. It is as true that you are a genuine one; and therefore I ſhall not ſay one word on that head. For the conſtruction of a drama—it is mechanic, though much depends on it. A byſtander may be a good director at leaſt; for mechaniſm certainly is independent of, though eaſily poſſeſſed by, a genius. Banks never wrote ſix tolerable lines, yet diſpoſed his fable with ſo much addreſs, that I think three plays have been conſtructed on his plot of The Earl of Eſſex, not one of which

is

is much better than the original. The diſpoſition is the next ſtep to the choice of a ſubject, on which I have ſaid enough in a former letter. A genius can ſurmount defects in both. If there is art in Othello and Macbeth, it ſeems to have been by chance; for Shakeſpeare certainly took no pains to adjuſt a plan, and in his hiſtoric plays ſeems to have turned Hollinſhed and Stowe into verſe and ſcenes as faſt as he could write—though every now and then his divine genius flaſhed upon particular ſcenes and made them immortal; as in his King John, where nature itſelf has ſtamped the ſcenes of Conſtance, Arthur and Hubert with her own impreſſion, though the reſt is as defective as poſſible. He ſeems to recall the Mahometan idea of lunatics, who are ſometimes inſpired, oftener changelings. Yet what ſignifies all his rubbiſh? He has ſcenes, and even ſpeeches, that are infinitely ſuperior to all the correct elegance of Racine. I had rather have written the two ſpeeches of lady Percy, in the ſecond part of Henry IV. than all Voltaire, though I admire the latter infinitely, eſpecially in Alzire, Mahomet and Semiramis. Indeed, when I think over all the great authors of the Greeks, Romans, Italians, French, and Engliſh (and I know no other languages), I ſet Shakeſpeare firſt and alone, and then begin anew.

Well, ſir, I give up Shakeſpeare's dramas; and yet prefer him to every man. Why? For his exquiſite knowledge of the paſſions and nature; for his ſimplicity too, which he poſſeſſes too when moſt natural. Dr. Johnſon ſays he is bombaſt whenever he attempts to be ſublime: but this is never true but when he aims at ſublimity in the expreſſion; the glaring fault of Johnſon himſelf.—But as ſimplicity is the grace of ſublime, who poſſeſſes it like Shakeſpeare? Is not the

Him, wondrous Him!

in lady Percy's ſpeech, exquiſitely ſublime and pathetic too? He has another kind of ſublime which no man ever poſſeſſed but he; and this is, his art in dignifying a vulgar or trivial expreſſion. Voltaire is ſo groſsly ignorant, and taſteleſs, as to condemn this, as to condemn *the bare bodkin*—But my enthuſiaſm for Shakeſpeare runs away with me.

I was ſpeaking of the negligence of his conſtruction. You have not that

fault. I own I do not admire your choice of Braganza, becauſe in reality it admits of but two acts, the conſpiracy and the revolution. You have not only filled it out with the moſt beautiful dialogue, but made the intereſt riſe, though the revolution has ſucceeded. I can never too much admire the appearance of the friar, which diſarms Velaſquez: and yet you will be ſhocked to hear, that, notwithſtanding all I could ſay at the rehearſal, I could not prevail to have Velaſquez drop the dagger inſtantly, the only artful way of getting it out of his hand; for, as lady *P*——— obſerved, if he kept it two moments, he would recollect that it was the only way of preſerving himſelf. But actors are not always judges. They perſiſted, for ſhow-ſake, againſt my remonſtrances, to exhibit the duke and ducheſs on a throne in the ſecond act; which could not but make the audience conclude that the revolution had even then taken place.

If I could find a fault in your tragedy, ſir, it would be a want of more ſhort ſpeeches, of a ſort of ſerious repartee, which gives great ſpirit. But I think the moſt of what I have to ſay may be compriſed in a recommendation of keeping the audience in ſuſpenſe, and of touching the paſſions by the pathetic familiar. By the latter, I mean the ſtudy of Shakeſpeare's ſtrokes of nature, which, ſoberly uſed, are alone ſuperior to poetry, and, with your ear, may eaſily be made harmonious.

If there is any merit in *my* play, I think it is in interrupting the ſpectator's fathoming the *whole* ſtory till the laſt, and in making every ſcene tend to advance the cataſtrophe. Theſe arts are mechanic, I confeſs; but at leaſt they are as meritorious as the ſcrupulous delicacy of the French in obſerving, not only the unities, but a fantaſtic decorum, that does not exiſt in nature, and which conſequently reduce all their tragedies, wherever the ſcene may lie, to the manners of modern Paris. Corneille could be Roman; Racine never but French, and, conſequently, though a better poet, leſs natural and leſs various. Both indeed have prodigious merit. Phedre is exquiſite, Britannicus admirable; and both excite pity and terror. Corneille is ſcarce ever tender, but always grand; yet never equal in a whole play to Racine. Rodogune, which I greatly admire, is very defective; for the two princes are ſo equally good, and the two women ſo very bad, that they divide both our eſteem and indignation. Yet I own, Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire ought to rank before all

our tragedians, but Shakeſpeare. Jane Shore is perhaps our beſt play after his. I admire All for Love very much; and ſome ſcenes in Don Sebaſtian, and Young's Revenge. The Siege of Damaſcus is very pure—and Phædra and Hippolitus fine poetry, though wanting all the nature of the original. We have few other tragedies of ſignal merit, though the four firſt acts of The Fair Penitent are very good. It is ſtrange that Dryden, who ſhowed ſuch a knowledge of nature in The Cock and Fox, ſhould have ſo very little in his plays—he could rather deſcribe it than put it into action. I have ſaid all this, ſir, only to point out to you what a field is open for you—and though ſo many ſubjects, almoſt all the known, are exhauſted, nature is inexhauſtible, and genius can achieve any thing. We have a language far more energic, and more ſonorous too, than the French. Shakeſpeare could do what he would with it in its unpoliſhed ſtate. Milton gave it pomp from the Greek, and ſoftneſs from the Italian; Waller now and then, here and there, gave it the elegance of the French. Dryden poured muſic into it; Prior gave it eaſe; and Gray uſed it maſterly for either elegy or terror. Examine, ſir, the powers of a language you command, and let me again recommend to you a diction of your own *, at leaſt in ſome one play. The majeſty of Paradiſe Loſt would have been leſs impoſing, if it had been written in the ſtyle of The Eſſay on Man. Pope pleaſes, but never ſurpriſes; and aſtoniſhment is one of the ſprings of tragedy. Coups de théatre, like the ſublime one in Mahomet, have infinite effect. The incantations in Macbeth, that almoſt border on the burleſque, are ſtill terrible. What French criticiſm can wound the ghoſts of Hamlet or Banquo? Scorn rules, ſir, that cramp genius, and ſubſtitute delicacy to imagination in a barren language. Shall not we ſoar, becauſe the French dare not riſe from the ground?

You ſeem to poſſeſs the *tender*. The *terrible* is ſtill more eaſy, at leaſt I know to me. In all my tragedy, Adeliza contents me the leaſt. Contraſts, though mechanic too, are very ſtriking; and though Moliere was a comic writer, he might give leſſons to a tragic. But I have paſſed all bounds; and yet ſhall be glad if you can cull one uſeful hint out of my rhapſodies. I here put an end to them; and wiſh, out of all I have ſaid, that you may remember

* Mr. Jephſon followed this advice in his Law of Lombardy—but was not happy in his attempt. H. W.

nothing, ſir, but my motives in writing, obedience to your commands, and a hearty eagerneſs for fixing on our ſtage ſo ſuperior a writer.

I am, Sir,

With great eſteem and truth,

Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

HOR. WALPOLE.

P. S. I muſt beg you, ſir, not to let theſe letters go out of your hands; for they are full of indigeſted thoughts, ſome perhaps capricious, as thoſe on novel diction—but I wiſh to tempt genius out of the beaten road; and originality is the moſt captivating evidence of it.

THOUGHTS ON COMEDY;

Written in 1775 and 1776.

OUR old comedies are very valuable from their variety of characters, and for preſerving cuſtoms and manners; but they are more defective in plans and conduct than excellent in particular parts. Some are very pedantic, the greater part groſs in language and humour, the latter of which is ſeldom true. Ben Jonſon was more correct, but ſtill more pedantic. Volpone is faulty in the moral, and too elevated in the dialogue: The Alchymiſt is his beſt play: The Silent Woman, formed on an improbable plan, is unnaturally loaded with learning. Beaumont and Fletcher are eaſier than Jonſon, but leſs happy in executing a plan than in conceiving it.

The next age dealt in the intricacies of Spaniſh plots, enlivened by the moſt licentious indecency. Dryden and the fair ſex rivalled each other in violating all decorum. Wycherley naturalized French comedy, but proſtituted it too. That chaſte ſtage bluſhed at our tranſlations of its beſt pieces. Yet Wycherley was not incapable of eaſy dialogue. The ſame age produced almoſt the beſt comedy we have, though liable to the ſame reprehenſion: The Man of Mode ſhines as our firſt genteel comedy; the touches are natural and delicate, and never overcharged. Unfortunately the tone of the moſt faſhionable people was extremely indelicate; and when Addiſon, in the Spectator, anathematiſed this play, he forgot that it was rather a ſatire on the manners of the court, than an apology for them. Leſs licentious converſation would not have painted the age. Vanbrugh, the beſt writer of dialogue we have ſeen, is more

blameleſs in his language, than in his images. His expreſſions are ſterling, and yet unſtudied: his wit is not owing to deſcription or caricature; neither ſought nor too abundant. We are pleaſed both with the duration of his ſcenes and with the reſult of them. We are entertained, not ſurpriſed or ſtruck. We are in good company while with him; and have neither adventures nor bons mots to repeat afterwards. It is the proof of conſummate art in a comic writer, when you ſeem to have paſſed your time at the theatre as you might have done out of it—it proves he has exactly hit the ſtyle, manners, and character of his cotemporaries. Plot, the vital principle of Spaniſh and female plays, ought to be little laboured; nor is ſcarcely more neceſſary than to put the perſonages into action and to releaſe them. Vanbrugh's plays, The Man of Mode, and The Careleſs Huſband, have no more intrigue than accounts for the meeting of the characters, as a paſſion or an intended marriage may do. The Double Dealer, the ground-work of which is almoſt ſerious enough for tragedy in private life, perplexes the attention; and the wit of the ſubordinate characters is neceſſary to enliven the darkneſs of the back ground.

Congreve is undoubtedly the moſt witty author that ever exiſted. Though ſometimes his wit ſeems the effort of intention, and, though an effort, never failed; it was ſo natural, that, if he ſplit it into ever ſo many characters, it was a polypus that ſoon grew perfect in each individual. We may blame the univerſality of wit in all his perſonages, but nobody can ſay which ought to have leſs. It aſſimilated with whatever character it was poured into: and, as Congreve would certainly have had wit in whatever ſtation of life he had been born; as he would have made as witty a footman or old lady, as a fine gentleman; his gentlemen, ladies old or young, his footmen, nay his coxcombs (for they are not fools but puppies) have as much wit, and wit as much their own, as his men of moſt parts and beſt underſtandings. No character drops a ſentence that would be proper in any other mouth. Not only Lady Wiſhfor't and Ben are characteriſtically marked, but Scandal, Mrs. Frail, and every fainter perſonage, are peculiarly diſtinct from each other. Sir Wilful Witwoud is unlike Sir Joſeph Wittol. Witwoud is different from Tattle, Valentine from Mellefont, and Cynthia from Angelica. That ſtill each play is unnatural, is only becauſe four aſſemblages of different perſons could never have ſo much wit as Congreve has beſtowed on them. We want breath or attention to follow their repartees; and are ſo charmed with what every body

ſays,

ſays, that we have not leiſure to be intereſted in what any body does. We are ſo pleaſed with each perſon, that we wiſh ſucceſs to all; and our approbation is ſo occupied, that our paſſions cannot be engaged. We even do not believe that a company who ſeem to meet only to ſhow their wit, can have any other object in view. Their very vices ſeem affected, only to furniſh ſubject for gaiety: thus the intrigue of Careleſs and Lady Pliant does not ſtrike us more than a ſtory that we know is invented to ſet off the talents of the relator. For theſe reaſons, though they are ſomething more, I can ſcarce allow Congreve's to be true comedies. No man would be corrected, if ſure that his wit would make his vices or ridicules overlooked.

The delicate and almoſt inſenſible touches of The Careleſs Huſband are the reverſe of Congreve's ungovernable wit. The affected characters of Lady Betty Modiſh and Lord Foppington are marked with the pencil of nature as much as Sir Charles, Lady Eaſy, and Lady Graveairs. It is in drawing *refined* or *affected nature* that conſiſts the extreme difficulty of painting what is called *high life*, where affectation, politeneſs, faſhion, art, intereſt, and the attentions exacted by ſociety, reſtrain the ſallies of paſſion, colour over vice, diſguiſe crimes, and confine man to an uniformity of behaviour, that is compoſed to the ſtandard of not ſhocking, alarming, or offending thoſe who profeſs the ſame rule of exterior conduct. Good breeding conceals their ſenſations, intereſt their crimes, and faſhion legitimates their follies. Good ſenſe forms the plan, education ripens it, converſation gives the varniſh, and wit the excuſe. Yet under all theſe diſguiſes nature lets out its ſymptoms. Proteſtations are ſo generally the marks of falſehood, that the more liberally they are dealt, the more they indicate what they mean to conceal. Ceremonious behaviour is the ſubſtitute for pride, and equally demands return of reſpect. A faſhionable man banters thoſe whom in a ſtate of nature he would affront. Thus good company have the ſame paſſions with low life, and have only changed the terms and moderated the diſplay. The firſt inſtance of good breeding in the world was complimenting the fair ſex with ſubſtituting the word *love* for *luſt*. Courts and ſociety have changed all the other denominations of our paſſions, and regulated their appearance. The feuds of great barons are now marked by not bowing to each other, or not viſiting. The rancour is not decreaſed, but ſociety could not ſubſiſt if they fought whenever they met. In former days fields of battle were the only public places; but ſince wealth and luxury and elegance, and unreſtrained converſation with the other ſex, have ſoftened our manners,

manners, nature finds its account in leſs turbulent gratification of the paſſions; and good-breeding, which ſeems the current coin of humanity, is no more than bank bills real treaſure: but it increaſes the national fund of politeneſs, and is taken as current money; though the acceptor knows it is no more addreſſed to him than the bill to the firſt perſon to whom it was made payable; but he can pay it away, and knows it will always be accepted.

The comic writer's art conſiſts in ſeizing and diſtinguiſhing theſe ſhades, which have rendered man a fictitious animal, without deſtroying his original compoſition. The French, who have carried the *man of ſociety* farther than other nations, no longer exhibit the naked paſſions. Their characters are all graduated. The *miſanthrope* and the *avare* are exploded perſonages. *L'homme du jour ou les dehors trompeurs*, *Le Glorieux*, *Le Méchant*, are the beings of artificial habitude, not the entities that would exiſt in a ſtate of nature *. If any vice predominates, it acts according to the rules within which it is circumſcribed by the laws of ſociety. Ambition circumvents, not invades; luſt tempts, but does not raviſh. Ill-nature whiſpers, rather than accuſes. Huſbands and wives can hate, without ſcolding. A duel is tranſacted as civilly

* This is ſo true, that the French, obſerving how much general paſſions are exhauſted, have of late written pieces on compound characters, as the Bourru bienfaiſant, L'Avare faſtueux, &c. Such characters muſt ariſe in the advanced ſtate of ſociety, and may even be natural; but it requires great addreſs and delicacy to manage them: and though it may not be univerſally true that there is a *ruling paſſion* in every man, it is ſtill very improbable that two predominant paſſions ſhould be ſo equally balanced as to produce ſuch a contraſt or oppoſition as the buſineſs of comedy may require: and yet unleſs the two contending paſſions are nearly equal in force, the ſuperior or predominant one will relapſe into the old comedy, which exhibited ſuch a ſingle paſſion or vice. The difficulty will be increaſed by theſe reflections; one of the paſſions in the compounded character may be, and probably is, an affected one; eſpecially if the latter is at war with the ruling paſſion: for inſtance, an oſtentatious miſer can only *affect* generoſity; for a generous man is not likely to *act* avarice, becauſe, generoſity being a quality eſteemed, and covetouſneſs held in averſion, the latter may be glad to conceal a vice; but few men are ſuch good Chriſtians as to diſguiſe the beauty of their minds beneath an ugly maſk. The parſimony then of the miſer will certainly preponderate; and the poet's art muſt diſtinguiſh between his natural fordidneſs and adopted liberality, and muſt take care not to make the oppoſition farcical. Another difficulty will be, that compound characters cannot be general; and, therefore, when an author blends two paſſions, he will ſeem to draw a portrait rather than a character. Yet ſuch compound of paſſions may open a new field, and enrich the province of comedy. The extenſive miſchiefs of ambition have appropriated that paſſion to tragedy; but might not very comic ſcenes be produced by repreſenting *an ambitious miſer* perpetually deſtroying his own views by grudging and ſaving the money, which, if expended, would promote his ambition? H. W.

as

as a viſit. Kings, inſtead of challenging, mourn for each other, though in open war.

Even the lower ranks of people could not be brought on the ſtage in this age, without ſoftening the outline. A ſhopkeeper's daughter is a *young lady with a handſome fortune* and neceſſary *accompliſhments*. Her brother *acts plays* for his diverſion, is of a club, and games. Footmen have all the graces of their maſters; and even highwaymen die genteelly.

One reads that in China even carmen make excuſes to one another for ſtopping up the way. Half the time of the Chineſe is paſſed in ceremony. I conclude their comedies cannot be very ſtriking. Where one kind of poliſh runs through a whole nation, the operation of the paſſions muſt be leſs diſcernible. All common characters are not only exhauſted, but concealed. In this nation we have certainly more characters than are ſeen in any other, owing perhaps to two cauſes, our liberty and the uncertainty of our climate. But this does not help the comic writer. Though he may every day meet with an original character, he cannot employ it—for, to be taſted, the humour muſt be common enough to be underſtood by the generality. Peculiarities in character are commonly affectations, and the affectation of a private or ſingle perſon is not prey for the ſtage. I take *Cimberton* in The Conſcious Lovers to be a portrait; probably a very reſembling one—but as nobody knows the original, nobody can be much ſtruck with the copy. Still, while the liberty of our government exiſts, there will be more originality in our manners than in thoſe of other nations, though an inundation of politeneſs has ſoftened our features as well as weakened our conſtitution. Engliſhmen uſed to exert their independence by a certain brutality, that was *not* honeſty, but often produced it; for a man that piques himſelf on ſpeaking truth grows to have a pride in not diſgracing himſelf.

As the great outlines of the paſſions are ſoftened down by urbanity, faſhionable follies uſurp the place which belonged to criticiſm on characters; and when faſhions are the object of ridicule, comedies ſoon grow obſolete and ceaſe to be uſeful. Alchymy was the purſuit in vogue in the age of Ben Jonſon; but, being a temporary folly, ſatire on it is no longer a leſſon. Faſhions puſhed to exceſs produce a like exceſs in the reproof; and comedies degenerate into farce and buffoonery, when follies are exaggerated in the repreſentation.

ſentation. The traits in The Miſer that exhibit his extreme avarice are within the operation of the paſſions: in The Alchymiſt an epidemic folly, grown obſolete, is food for a commentator, not for an audience.

In fact, exaggeration is the fault of the author. If he is maſter enough of his talent to ſeize the preciſe truth of either paſſion or affectation, he will pleaſe more, though perhaps not at the firſt repreſentation. Falſtaff is a fictitious character, and would have been ſo had it exiſted in real life: yet his humour and his wit are ſo juſt, that they never have failed to charm all who are capable of taſting him in his own tongue.

Some leſſons of the drama, or at leaſt the ſhortneſs of its duration, have reduced even Shakeſpeare to precipitate his cataſtrophe. The reformation of the termagant wife in The Taming of the Shrew is too ſudden. So are thoſe of Margaritta in Rule a Wife and have a Wife, and of Lady Townly in The Provoked Huſband. Time or grace only operates ſuch miracles.

In my own opinion, a good comedy, by the paſſions being exhauſted, is at preſent the moſt difficult of all compoſitions, if it repreſents either nature or fictitious nature; I mean mankind in its preſent ſtate of civiliſed ſociety.

The enemies of *ſentimental comedy* (or, as the French, the inventors, called it, *comédie larmoyante*) ſeem to think that the great buſineſs of comedy is to make the audience laugh. *That* may certainly be effected without nature or character. A Scot, an Iriſhman, a Mrs. Slipſlop, can always produce a laugh, at leaſt from half the audience. For my part, I confeſs I am more diſpoſed to weep than to laugh at ſuch poor artifices. The advocates of merry comedy appeal to Moliere. I appeal to him too. Which is his better comedy, The *Miſanthrope*, or the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme?* The *Tartuffe*, or The *Etourdi?* In reality, did not Moliere in The *Miſanthrope* give a pattern of ſerious comedy? What is finer than the ſerious ſcenes of Maſkwell and Lady Touchwood in The Double Dealer? I do not take the *comédie larmoyante* to have been ſo much a deficience of pleaſantry in its authors, as the effect of obſervation and reflection. Tragedy had been confined to the diſtreſſes of kings, princeſſes, and heroes; and comedy reſtrained to making us laugh at paſſions puſhed to a degree of ridicule. In the former, as great perſonages only were concerned, language was elevated to ſuit their rank, rather than their ſentiments; for real

paſſion

paſſion rarely talks in heroics. Had tragedy deſcended to people of ſubordinate ſtations, authors found the language would be too pompous. I ſhould therefore think that the firſt man who gave a *comédie larmoyante*, rather meant to repreſent a melancholy ſtory in private life, than merely to produce a comedy without mirth. If he had therefore not married two ſpecies then reckoned incompatible, that is tragedy and comedy, or, in other words, diſtreſs with a cheerful concluſion; and, inſtead of calling it *comédie larmoyante*, had named his new genus *tragédie mitigée*, or, as the ſame purpoſe has ſince been ſtyled, *tragédie bourgeoiſe*; he would have given a third ſpecies to the ſtage.

The French, who feel themſelves and their genius cramped by the many impertinent ſhackles they have invented for authors, have taught theſe to eſcape, in thoſe pieces which ſhake off all fetters, and leave genius and imagination at full liberty—I mean in their *comédie Italienne*, where under the *cannon* of Harlequin, and in defiance of all rules, they indulge their gaiety and invention. In ſhort, a man who declares he writes without rules, may ſay what he pleaſes. If he invents happily, he ſucceeds, is indulged, and his piece laſts in ſpite of Ariſtotle and Boſſu. If he does not compenſate by originality, fancy, wit, or nature, for ſcorning rule, the author is deſervedly damned, at the ſole expence to the public of having been tired by dulneſs for one evening.

I will finiſh this rhapſodical eſſay with remarking, that comedy is infinitely more difficult to an Engliſh than to a French man. Not only their language, ſo inferior in numbers, harmony and copiouſneſs, to ours for poetry and eloquence, is far better adapted to converſation and dialogue; but all the French, eſpecially of the higher ranks*, pique themſelves on ſpeaking their own language correctly and elegantly; the women eſpecially. It was not till of late years with us that the language has been correctly ſpoken even in both houſes of parliament. Before Addiſon and Swift, ſtyle was ſcarce aimed at even by our beſt authors. Dryden, whoſe proſe was almoſt as harmonious and beautiful as his poetry, was not always accurate. Lord Shafteſbury proved that when a man of quality ſoared above his peers, he wrote bombaſtly, turgidly,

* I include men of learning in the higher ranks, becauſe in France they are admitted into the beſt company, who certainly give the tone to the elegance of any language, and in that ſenſe only the higheſt company are the beſt company; for the term *beſt* has been raviſhed from the loweſt ranks of men, who I doubt are the moſt virtuous of the community, and given to, or uſurped by, the richeſt and moſt noble. H. W.

poetically. Lord Chatham gave the tone to fine language in oratory. Within theſe very few years, our young orators are correct in their common converſation. Our ladies have not yet adopted the patronage of our language. Thence correct language in common converſation ſounds pedantic or affected. Mr. Gray was ſo circumſpect in his uſual language, that it ſeemed unnatural, though it was only pure Engliſh. My inference is, that attention to the ſtyle in comedy runs a riſk of not appearing eaſy. Yet I own The Careleſs Huſband and Vanbrugh are ſtandards—and The School for Scandal and The Heireſs have ſhewn that difficulties are no impediments to genius; and that, however paſſions and follies may be civiliſed, refined, or complicated, ſubjects for comedy are not wanting, and can be exhibited in the pureſt language of eaſy dialogue, without ſwelling to pedantry, or ſinking to incorrectneſs. The authors of thoſe two comedies have equalled Terence in the graces of ſtyle, and excelled him in wit and character: conſequently we have better comedies than Greece or Rome enjoyed. It is even remarkable that the Grecians, who perfected poetry and eloquence, and invented tragedy and comedy, ſhould have made ſo little progreſs in the laſt. Terence's plays, copied from Menander, convey little idea of that author's talent; and when ſo many of the farces of Ariſtophanes have been preſerved, it is difficult to conceive that only a few ſcraps of Menander would have been tranſmitted to us, if his merit had been in proportion to the excellence of their tragic writers. Moliere will probably be as immortal as Corneille and Racine.

DETECTION

DETECTION of a late FORGERY

CALLED

Teſtament Politique du Chevalier Robert Walpoole*.

Ergo age, chare pater, cervici imponere noſtræ:
Ipſe ſubibo humeris, nec me labor iſte gravabit. ÆNEID. II.

THOUGH nothing is leſs worth while in general than to refute ſilly books and printed lies, both becauſe they periſh of themſelves, and becauſe the evil grows faſter than the remedy can follow it; yet there are ſome forgeries which it may be neceſſary to expoſe, leſt malice and ill-deſigning men ſhould treaſure them up, preſerve them from merited oblivion, and conſign them to poſterity, like baſe metals, which become reverenced for the heads with which they have been ſtamped, or valued for their antiquity, which beſtows a kind of authenticity on them, when no other cotemporary memorials exiſt.

I have juſt turned over a ſpurious production called Teſtament politique du chevalier Walpoole, comte d'Orford, coined the Lord knows where, and ſaid to be ſtamped in that mint of forgeries, Holland. If the editor has floundered in the very orthography of my father's name, he has at leaſt improved his ſpelling in the title, if he was the author, as he ſeems to intimate he was,

* The *Teſtament Politique du Chevalier Robert Walpoole* meeting with the contempt and oblivion it deſerved, and never being tranſlated into Engliſh, Mr. Walpole found all public detection of it needleſs, and never publiſhed this anſwer, but left it to appear with the reſt of his poſthumous works.

of a wretched rhapſody called A hiſtory of ſir Robert Walpole's adminiſtration, printed three or four years ago. I think there were two or three volumes of that work, I forget exactly how many: but I know in the title-page of every one he called ſir Robert Walpole earl of Oxford: ſo competent a biographer was he of a man whoſe very title he confounded! He is more correct now by a whole letter. I ſhall give inſtances hereafter that he does not improve very faſt, even in the eaſy and trifling accuracy of titles.

The author's firſt piece was a wretched compilation from newſpapers, pamphlets and magazines, full of blunders and yet void of facts. But peace be with the dead! I haſten to bury its ſucceſſor along with it.

It muſt ſurpriſe every man who has a grain of ſenſe, that the preſent work in queſtion ſhould firſt appear in French. This ill omen, attendant on its birth, never belies itſelf. All the ideas are as foreign as the language. No account is given how the original, ſuppoſing it had ever been compoſed in Engliſh, which it was not, came into poſſeſſion of the editor. Did the ſuppoſed author leave no children, no relations, no friends to whom he communicated or entruſted his work? No child, no relation, no friend ever heard, before or ſince ſir Robert Walpole's death, of ſuch a performance. The editor will perhaps urge that the ſuppoſed author (ſir Robert himſelf) never communicated his work to any perſon connected with him; and, had he written it, he would have been in the right. He was too tender a parent, too amiable a friend, to give his family and friends the mortification of hearing him contradict with his laſt breath every virtuous, every rational principle which had ſo uniformly governed his whole conduct. Their firſt care after his death would have been to burn a writing, that, while it diſgraced his heart, would have proved that his underſtanding was decayed: an event, that in the melancholy hours of his deceaſe was never ſuperadded to the grief of his family and his friends. The ſtrength of his abilities, the ſoundneſs of his judgment, the fortitude of his temper, his calmneſs, his pleaſantries, his patience, his humanity, were never more illuſtrious than in the laſt ſcene of his life. His patriotiſm, his love of his country, his attachment to the royal family on the throne, dignified and occupied moſt of the moments of his laſt hours. I could give proofs and atteſtations of all—but it is not in anſwer to an impoſtor that I ſhall deign to proſtitute ſuch venerable materials.

Should the editor aſſume an air of honeſt roguery, and plead that he had

ſtolen the original MS., I promiſe him he need not fear any proſecution from the family: they will never claim what they know they never had any title to poſſeſs.

No ſatisfaction being given to the public of the means by which the ſuppoſed original came into the hands of the editor, the moſt diſintereſted and indifferent reader will conclude that no ſuch ſatisfaction could be given. I ſhall go farther, and prove inconteſtably that ſir Robert Walpole was not the author of a ſingle line of this fictitious trumpery. Theſe proofs ſhall be produced after a few remarks: but firſt, the editor is hereby called upon to produce the original MS. in ſir Robert Walpole's own hand. From the time that he retired from buſineſs, he kept no ſecretary. If he had occaſion to have even a letter tranſcribed, he made uſe of no hand but that of his two youngeſt children, lady Mary Churchill, and the author of theſe ſheets, who both reſided conſtantly in the houſe with him from the time of his retirement to his death. They, and his other ſurviving ſon ſir Edward Walpole, who was with his father almoſt daily in London, and much with him in the country, never heard of their father's compoſing a ſingle line after his retreat; and all three declare ſolemnly the preſent work to be a groſs impoſition.

Prefixed to the work are ſome abſurd letters, as unlike the ſtyle and manner of ſir Robert Walpole, as they are repugnant to his undeviating principles. His family cannot even gueſs to whom by far the greater part of them are pretended to be addreſſed. They are ſtuffed with maxims and reflections, or common-place obſervations, which whoever knew ſir Robert Walpole knows he never uſed. He wrote few letters, ſcarce any but on neceſſary buſineſs, and none like authors and eſſayiſts.

The very firſt paſſage, which ſets out with a prophecy, is ſo ridiculous, that, had he written it, the prophecy would never have been accompliſhed, nor would he have correſponded with a man ſilly enough to make it. "*You foretold*," ſays ſir Robert, "*that if ever I was choſen for Lynn, I ſhould become miniſter.*" We beg to know of the editor, what connection there was between a ſeat for Lynn, and an appointment to the miniſtry—Could ſir Robert Walpole come into parliament for no other borough in the kingdom? And how was this prophecy fulfilled? By his being of the council to prince George of Denmark, as lord high admiral. I do not know what are called *miniſters*

at

at Paris or at Amſterdam, but no Engliſhman ever called a commiſſioner of the admiralty a miniſter.

The reflections in the next letter are unfortunately out of their place. When a *queen* was on the throne, a queen who at that time had no conteſts with her ſubjects, and a queen to whom Mr. Walpole had then no acceſs (for his poſt gave him none); is it probable, he ſhould have ſaid, *What prudence is neceſſary to pleaſe a king irritated at the privileges of his ſubjects!* At the beginning of the ſame letter, a vain-glorious lie is put into the mouth of the ſame perſon. He ſays he was no ſooner called to the prince's council than he attained a ſingular aſcendant there. Nothing was leſs true. The prince, who was inclined to the Tories, and whoſe confidence was engroſſed by a brother of the duke of Marlborough, never had the leaſt partiality to Mr. Walpole. The perſon who firſt diſtinguiſhed his abilities and protected him, was the lord treaſurer Godolphin, who is not mentioned, though ſir Robert Walpole ſolely aſcribed to him his promotion. It was his pride to the end of his life; he loved lord Godolphin more than any man he ever knew; and a gratitude that flouriſhed in its full vigour for forty years afterwards, was not likely to be ſilent in the firſt overflowing of its ſenſibility.

The ſilly anecdote in a ſubſequent letter of madame Maintenon and Forbin is of a piece with the reſt. I refer to madame Maintenon's own letter, to have it decided, whether a female pique about a ceremonial between her and king James's queen occaſioned the defeat of Forbin's enterpriſe. Thoſe good ladies, who governed their bigoted huſbands, were not likely to quarrel when the cauſe of enthuſiaſm was in queſtion. Queen Mary paid ample homage to queen Maintenon: both ruined the affairs of their reſpective monarchs, and both hoped to have their ambition pardoned by extending the yoke of popery. Mary's ſpirit drove her weaker huſband on the laſt extremities. The Maintenon, more timid, more patient, more artful, had more difficulties to encounter. She had a bigot to make, and the ſelf-ſufficience of her huſband to ſubdue, and his paſſion for glory to lull aſleep. She did ruin his glory, but not by deſign; and ſhe dreaded him too much to counter-work his plans intentionally. Nothing could have raiſed her intereſt with him like reſtoring king James—nothing could have raiſed her own glory ſo high—and I believe nobody thinks, that, however inſenſible to *his* fame, ſhe was indifferent to her own. Her piety was a farce, and only a ſupplement to her ambition: and though,

though if ſhe and Cromwell wore a maſk till it fitted them, certainly neither were *born* enthuſiaſts.

A following letter undertakes a vain and extravagant attempt to make Mr. Walpole paſs for a Jacobite by principle. Thank God that cauſe is reduced to piteous extremities, when it flies to ſir Robert Walpole's grave for countenance! Many good proteſtants have been ſaid to declare themſelves papiſts on their death-bed. This is the firſt inſtance of a champion of liberty being called to depoſe in the cauſe of Jacobitiſm, two-and-twenty years after his deceaſe.

Hoc Ithacus velit, & magno mercentur Atridæ.

Walpole, whoſe hero was king William, who ſuffered impriſonment under Anne for his devotion to the Hanover ſucceſſion, who rejected with ſcorn the offers of Harley, who contributed ſo much to the overthrow of Bolinbroke, the exile of Atterbury, and the deſtruction of the arms and councils of the Jacobites, is made to *doubt*, during the whig-miniſtry of queen Anne, (p. 24, vol. i.) whether the timid flight and abdication of king James left the nation at liberty to chooſe their ſovereign—And did not Hampden doubt whether he had a right to oppoſe the arbitrary impoſition of ſhip-money? But be it ſo. While living, let us withſtand every encroachment of prerogative—and when we are dead, let Jeſuits, if they pleaſe, make our wills and recant for us. I am glad they have ſo little elſe to do: it is more harmleſs than ſtabbing kings.

Amidſt all the lies the fictitious author has hazarded, he obſerves one caution; which is, giving no dates to his letters. My father was remarkably attentive to this circumſtance—but it expoſes an impoſtor to detection. However, the ſeeds of falſehood ſeldom produce a crop of truth. Here is an inſtance, in p. 27: Mr. Walpole, after the death of the queen—he who, when only a counſellor of the admiralty, had vaunted himſelf a miniſter, is now grown ſo modeſt as to call himſelf only an apprentice in parliament. He had ſitten there before the death of king William, and through all the reign of queen Anne, till driven thence by violence. He was a principal actor there in the new reign—and yet pretends to find great difficulty in preventing ſir William Windham from being chairman of the committee of ways and means: ſir William Windham, who, ſays the writer, boaſts openly of his oppoſition

to the houſe of Hanover. That this blemiſh in the life of ſo able a man as ſir W. Windham ſhould here be recalled, is not ſurpriſing. It is well known from the conſequences of lord Bolinbroke's letter to that gentleman, how thoroughly he renounced his former miſtaken prejudices; and it does much more honour to his memory to have abjured them, than it can do hurt to have entertained them.

In the next letter Mr. Walpole acquaints the unknown lord his friend, that he is appointed paymaſter of the forces, of guards and garriſons, and of Chelſea-hoſpital. His friend muſt have been very ignorant, not to have known that the laſt article followed the firſt of courſe. It is juſt what an accurate Frenchman would have detailed, and what an Engliſhman would not.

Such truths are only ridiculous. The next lie is ſerious. Mr. Walpole is made to ſay, "Il faut que je faſſe les informations neceſſaires pour trouver des coupables. J'eſperé que j'y parviendrai; car vous ſçavez que dans les revolutions il faut en trouver pour alimenter le reſſentiment du peuple, et celui du parti qui prend le deſſus. Le ſang du juſte, dût-il couler, ces ſortes d'injuſtices deviennent legitimes par la conſtitution de notre gouvernement."—What! did ſir Robert Walpole feel, or dare to write, theſe ſhocking words! tantumque nefas patrio excidit ore!—words that never iſſued from the mouth of a Ravaillac! Was there ever a political aſſaſſin who did not believe, or at leaſt affect to believe, that conſcience guided his frantic arm? Was there a murderer in the Ligue, or in the maſſacre of Paris, that avowed to ſhed the blood of the *juſt*? Catherine of Medicis, Philip II. or Charles IX. who muſqueted his own ſubjects as they ſwam the Seine to eſcape his fury, were ſcarce capable of daring to breathe ſuch deteſtable maxims. Oh! my father, moſt humane of men, is this the teſtament you bequeathed to your children? What inſtant of your moſt amiable life was ſtained with blood? In the height of their reſentment and rage, what ſingle man of your enemies ever reproached you with cruelty? Did they tax you with imaginary crimes, and forget ſo foul a ſtain? How did this black letter eſcape their penetration? Did you not pardon Bolinbroke in ſpite of the remonſtrances and oppoſition of your friends? Did you hunt for criminals?—Nay, when did you not pardon your enemies? the moſt inveterate of them! At what moment could you not have ſaid with fervent innocence, Forgive us our treſpaſſes as we forgive thoſe that treſpaſs againſt us! What brighter teſtimony have I of your preſent felicity, than the mildneſs and gentleneſs of your

your whole life!—Go, impoſtor, rake the annals of ſcandal, and produce a paſſage that reproaches that honourable name with blood-thirſtineſs. Conſult ſurviving Jacobites, whom he diſcovered, and left unpuniſhed—aſk them if he had occaſion to hunt for criminals! I could ſay more: but let thoſe periſh in oblivion whom his indulgence abandoned to it.

The duplicity which, in p. 34, the miniſter is made to brag of, is almoſt a virtue compared to what went before. But falſehood was as diſſonant from his nature as cruelty. His frankneſs often hurt himſelf. But this is no place for his panegyric—ſuffice it to confute calumnies.

The next letter grows comic from its improbability. It is addreſſed to my lord T. K.; and Œdipus, if he can, may find out who is meant by thoſe letters. It deſires the lord to truſt his ſon to Mr. Walpole, who will promote him; but his lordſhip is requeſted to adviſe his ſon not to talk jacobitiſm too openly. How conſonant to this is the ardour for diſcovering criminals! Intemperate Jacobites were exactly the ſubjects that ſuch a miniſter would have voluntarily recommended to the new prince on the throne! How well the author is acquainted with the man and the times he repreſents!

Follows a letter to my lord S. D. D. which promiſes another from my lord M. O. The latter may be my lord Matthew Onſlow, or any other peer that never exiſted. The former, we are informed by a curious note, was my lord Sunderland, who betrayed king James; and ſo I dare ſwear the author intended it. Unluckily, the earl of Sunderland who was miniſter to king James died Sept. 28, 1702: and it was his ſon who was miniſter to king George the firſt. This blunder I place ſolely to the editor, though there is no doubt but he was the author too.

In the next piece is a miſtake, which could not be made by ſir Robert Walpole: he calls the earl of Oxford my lord Harley. No Engliſhman could have made the miſtake; as lord Harley was the title of the ſon, not of the father, who was created earl at the firſt ſtep, and never was lord Harley. So afterwards Bolinbroke is ſometimes called earl of Bolinbroke and ſometimes viſcount. *Comte* and *vicomte* are eaſily confounded by a foreigner; but what reſemblance in ſound is there between *earl* and *viſcount*?

In p. 46, is ſuch a recapitulation of the crimes of queen Anne's miniſters, as ſurely did not reduce the miniſters to *hunt* for criminals.

Next comes a droll puniſhment intended to be inflicted on the earl of Oxford, in caſe he ſhould eſcape the ſentence of the law. The king, ſays his ſuppoſed miniſter, will certainly forbid him the court:—a dreadful puniſhment in the eyes of a foreigner, but not conſidered in England with equal horror. Lord Oxford had thruſt himſelf amidſt the crowd on the king's acceſſion, to kiſs his hand; but was not noticed. Severe treatment, no doubt, *before his trial*. I queſtion if he would have felt it ſo ſenſibly afterwards. However, Mr. Walpole was certainly not very ſanguinary by nature, if he contented himſelf with baniſhing ſo great a rival from St. James's. At the bottom of p. 50, the editor accuſes himſelf of ſtealing this letter from himſelf: nobody will diſpute his right to the property of it.

A letter to my lady P. T. promiſes favour to Mr. A. which, ſays the editor, means Mr. Prior. The Jacobites and perſons who dabble in treaſon make uſe of falſe names and falſe initials; but what occaſion had a powerful miniſter for ſuch reſerve? When he engaged to ſerve a priſoner, why diſguiſe his name to that priſoner's friend? How ſagacious was the editor in penetrating a needleſs myſtery of his own making! In the ſame letter is an inſtance of the author's groſs ignorance of the Engliſh conſtitution; Mr. Walpole is made to call himſelf one of Prior's judges. Is there an Engliſhman who does not know that judicature is not of the competence of the houſe of commons? Mr. Walpole was chairman of the committee of ſecrecy which examined Prior. Was it poſſible that Mr. Walpole could call himſelf one of Prior's judges, and ſay he had pronounced ſentence on him? With equal truth might a witneſs at the Old Bailey call himſelf lord mayor.

In ſome ſubſequent letters is much diſcourſe on Mr. Walpole's reſignation, without a ſingle hint at the open, known, avowed cauſe of it—the breach between the king and prince—a circumſtance which Mr. Walpole never diſguiſed, though it ſeems the editor-author never heard of it;—ſo difficult is it to forge a work that can ſtand the very firſt inſpection! In the ſame letter Mr. Edgcumbe is called Edgcumbe eſquire. Country fellows ſay, 'ſquire Edgcumbe; gazetteers, Edgcumbe eſquire; but what gentleman ever uſed either term?

Then follows a declaration of the court againſt Mr. Walpole; the moſt abſurd piece of ſtuff that can be imagined, and too ridiculous for even a newſpaper. I ſcarce think it was forged even by the party-writers of the time.

Another letter, p. 82, begins with this beautiful conceit, *I acquaint you that I am no longer any thing; for what is a miniſter when he is not a miniſter?* &c. puts one in mind of the blunder which the old editions beſtowed on Shakeſpear:

Cæſar did never wrong, but with juſt cauſe.

In the ſame letter is a term, of which I beg the editor to give us the original in Engliſh. It is *ex-miniſtre*—a galliciſm, to which we have no word that correſponds; conſequently the French is the original.—But enough of theſe detections; you can no longer doubt that the work is a clumſy impoſture. I will take notice but of two paſſages more in the letters, and leave them to the obloquy they deſerve.

In the negotiations with the court of France, ſir Robert and his brother Horace write ſeveral letters to one another, in which they both mention lord Harrington as embaſſador in Spain. Theſe letters, though without date, muſt have been written before March 11, 1727, becauſe Mr. Stanhope did not quit Madrid till that day, and it was not till Nov. 29, N. S. that he was created lord Harrington. I ſhould be glad to ſee the original letters.

The other article is the penſion of an hundred thouſand livres granted by king George I. to the Pretender. The editor confeſſes that he can diſcover no trace of its having been ever granted, but in this letter. If he had not put it into that letter himſelf, he would not have found it even there.

The Oppoſition to ſir Robert Walpole accuſed him of being penſioner to the Pretender. It ſeems they did not know that the reverſe was true! What humiliation for the houſe of Stuart to be charged with ſtooping to accept between four and five thouſand pounds a year from their ſucceſsful antagoniſt! But I believe they were as innocent of it as ſir Robert Walpole was of the facts with which the forger of his teſtament has endeavoured to load him. The hiſtorians of Amſterdam and the will-makers of Paris are not in much vogue. This performance will not raiſe their reputation. There was an age when

nobody diſputed whatever forgeries were fabricated in convents. But great changes have happened ſince the donation of Conſtantine could paſs uncontroverted: and it required more addreſs than modern monks poſſeſs, and more ignorance than the preſent age is bleſſed with, to ſupport and endure palpable forgeries. Learned men have laid down rules for examining internal and external evidence; that is, with much ſolemnity they have furniſhed common ſenſe with terms, and thought they taught it to uſe its own lights. But when common ſenſe is not reſtrained by power and prejudice, it can make its way without the aſſiſtance of thoſe grave midwives, the Learned, who deſtroy at leaſt as many children as they ſave.

I will now make a few remarks on the work itſelf, and they ſhall be but few; for when letters which ſir Robert Walpole is ſuppoſed to have written in his life, are proved fictitious, the work to which they are an introduction, and which now firſt appears ſo long after his death, is likely to meet with little credit.

In page 4, ſir Robert Walpole is made to complain of being abandoned by his friends. This is for once an undeſerved ſatire on mankind. No fallen miniſter ever experienced ſuch firm attachment from his friends as he did. His firſt levee after his fall was ſo crowded, that thoſe of the new miniſters became a proverb for their emptineſs. He remained the oracle of his party during his three ſurviving years: and for the ſix weeks of his laſt illneſs, his houſe and his door were extraordinarily frequented by all ranks of men. Both then and before he was conſulted by the king and duke of Cumberland, and different miniſters—But I muſt ſtop; I am not writing his hiſtory, but confuting falſehoods.

I muſt obſerve that the firſt volume tends to decry commerce; the ſecond adviſes the Engliſh to mind little or nothing elſe. Are theſe contradictions like the good ſenſe of ſir Robert Walpole, or the nonſenſe of an impoſtor?

With equal truth, and equal abſurdity, the ſuppoſed author, page 10, is made to harangue againſt the adopted royal family. To ſtate ſuch paſſages, is to refute them. In page 12, is a ſimilar argument in favour of popery. How low is each cauſe ſunk when ſir Robert Walpole is borrowed for their miſſionary!

I paſs

hereditary right are in the wrong to falſify and depreciate his birth. When ſo many royal lines produce ſo many fools, they ſhould not remind the world that it ought to ſeek for great princes wherever they can be found. Cromwell was not ſo great a tyrant as Henry VIII. or James II. or Louis XIV. and he was a much abler prince. The firſt was a bubble abroad, the ſecond a fool at home and abroad, the third a deſtroyer of mankind. England never made a greater figure than under Cromwell; and though the duke of Marlborough and Mr. Pitt extended farther the glory of our arms, we ſtill enjoy Jamaica, which was not raviſhed from us by contemptible treaties, as the fruits have been of the ſucceſſes obtained by thoſe other great men.

The conqueſts made by Mr. Pitt are not mentioned by me improperly. They were the true ſource of half the blunders before me. The author preaches againſt them in every page of his work. Unfortunately he forgot that when ſir Robert Walpole died, there was no queſtion of conqueſt. He remained in power a very ſhort time after the beginning of the war in 1741. Admiral Vernon had taken Porto Bello, and miſcarried before Carthagena. The ſucceeding miniſters were no heroes. Lord Granville talked very big, but achieved nothing; and was removed before ſir Robert's death. The duke of Newcaſtle, Mr. Pelham, and lord Hardwick were of no heroic mould, and accordingly did nothing. An invaſion had been apprehended under marſhal Saxe, which, though it miſcarried, left the nation alarmed at the views of France and the Jacobites. Sir Robert Walpole, for the laſt year of his life, had nothing in his thoughts but the dangers to which the crown would ſoon be expoſed: often and often did he repeat, "*Within a twelvemonth this crown will be fought for on Engliſh ground.*" His words were prophetic. The rebellion broke out in three months after his death; yet is he made to talk as if he condemned the meaſures of Mr. Pitt, and had lived to ſee Martinico, Guadaloupe, Quebec, Louiſbourg, the Havannah, conquered, the fleets of France and Spain deſtroyed, and both Indies at the mercy of Great Britain. Alas! his laſt hours were gilded with no ſuch pleaſing viſions! He felt all that patriot melancholy which would have caſt a gloom over his fainting ſoul, if he had lived to ſee the treaty of Utrecht renewed. Turn to pp. 68 and 72. Les profits de ces grandes conquêtes n'equivalent donc pas les frais qu'elles entrainent, ſays the ſuppoſed miniſter, who had been dead 14 or 15 years before they were made. In the very next page we are aſked, Comment la nation Angloiſe oſe-t-elle publier que la France touche au moment de ſa decadence?

decadence? Was that the language of 1742, 43, 44, and the beginning of 45; or of 1758, 59, and 60?

This is an abſolute proof of the forgery. Here is another: In page 144, the author ſays, En Angleterre on n'a pas gratis l'air même qu'on y reſpire. This means the tax on windows—which was not laid till after ſir Robert's death. The groſſneſs of theſe blunders made me run through the reſt of the work very curſorily. I did not want to know ſo ſilly an author's ideas, but to ſhow that they were not my father's. The work is below criticiſm; but the author deſerved to be burnt in the hand for an impoſtor, and that I have done for him. It is unneceſſary to ſpecify more of his ignorance, and even on points on which it was impoſſible for the moſt trifling Engliſh miniſter to miſtake; as in p. 214, where he thinks the houſe of commons has *ſolely* the right of propoſing bills, and the lords of approving and rejecting; not knowing that both houſes have both rights in common. In the note to this clumſy blunder, it is ſaid that the king confirms a bill by touching it with his ſceptre, an ornament which the king of England *never* uſes but at his coronation. I only mention theſe inaccuracies for foreigners. For them too I muſt take notice of another piece of ignorance, of which a miniſter of this country could not be guilty. The author, p. 219, talks of *governors of provinces*. We have no ſuch thing, except that ſhadow, lords lieutenants. I ſuppoſe the author meant the latter, becauſe he is ſpeaking of elections of members of parliament, and ſays, to ſecure a parliament, the court appoints ſuch governors of provinces as it can confide in. I repeat it to foreigners, we have no governors of provinces. Lords lieutenants have no power in elections but by their perſonal intereſt, if they happen to have any. Sheriffs, mayors, and ſuch like, are the returning officers, and are annual. The author may take his choice of what he pretends to have meant.

But of all his blunders, none is more ſtriking than the following, p. 223. La nation Britannique croit-elle avoir ſecoué le joug, pour être parvenue à rendre le parlement triennial? I call this a moſt ſtriking blunder, though not a more capital anachroniſm than what he had ſaid on our conqueſts, but becauſe ſo immediately relative to ſir Robert Walpole. During his whole adminiſtration, the Oppoſition to him contended for triennial parliaments, which had been ſuperſeded ever ſince the year 1716, when ſeptennial parliaments were eſtabliſhed.

eſtabliſhed. The latter were maintained by ſir Robert Walpole, continued to exiſt to his death, and do continue to this very moment, February 1767.

Here is another inſtance of the ſame ſtamp. Sir Robert Walpole is made to call the number of members in the houſe of commons 513—The real number is 558, by the addition of the 45 Scotch members, on the Union in queen Anne's reign. I think 518 balloted on the queſtion of examining into the conduct of the earl of Orford, after he had quitted the adminiſtration and was created a peer in 1742. Is it very likely that between that æra and his death in 1745 he ſhould forget a number ſo memorable to himſelf, and recollect only what had been the number fifty years before?—So much for volume the firſt!

The ſecond ſhall give me and the reader very little trouble. It is as dull, as uninformed, confuſed, and contradictory as the firſt; and entirely founded on events ſubſequent to the death of ſir Robert Walpole; though the author, a little more upon his guard, takes care to aſcribe a prophetic ſpirit to the miniſter, by making him foreſee exactly the deſertion of Auſtria to France, the affairs of Portugal, and the enterpriſes of the king of Pruſſia. My father had ſagacity and penetration, but certainly did not foreſee the exact hiſtory of twenty years. The genuine author was however ſo hurt at our conqueſts, that they put him off his guard. In p. 77, he ſays, Il faudra bien du tems pour que l'impreſſion favorable que la nation a donnée d'elle puiſſe s'effacer. But of all the improprieties that he has put into the mouth of ſir Robert Walpole, nothing exceeds his making him quote Corneille. Sir Robert Walpole could not ſpeak a word of French, did read letters of buſineſs in that language with difficulty, was converſant with no French authors, and moſt aſſuredly had never read one of their poets. He had little eſteem for thoſe of his own country, and I dare aver had not even ſeen all the pieces of Pope that were publiſhed in his own time. He had very little leiſure; and, when he had, did not beſtow it on reading.

This ſecond volume is chiefly compoſed of a tedious diſcuſſion of the various intereſts of the European powers, miſunderſtood and miſapplied, and teeming with anachroniſms. For inſtance, p. 96, the author ſays, after every war we pay dearly to the landgrave of Heſſe for the ravages committed in

his country. This has undoubtedly been the caſe ſince my father's death, but when was it ſo in his life-time?

I am weary of tracking ſo miſerable a writer, but I cannot help laughing at one particular chapter, which begins p. 179 and continues to the end of 229. Would one believe that theſe fifty dull pages ſhould be put into the mouth of ſir Robert Walpole, and be a diſſertation on the conſtitution of Poland? How exactly the author knew the miniſter! and how perfectly was ſir Robert acquainted with that country! How important muſt he have thought it to his country to examine ſo barbarous, ſo confuſed, and ſo inſignificant a ſyſtem! Les Towavizs, ſays he, forment d'aſſez bonnes troupes. Sir Robert Walpole certainly knew much of the Towavizs; about as much as he did of Gentoos, who now compoſe ſo intereſting a part of our literature. In a note at the end of this wonderful chapter, it is ſuggeſted that ſir Robert borrowed moſt of his ideas from the Jus Polonicum. Whether that work was publiſhed in my father's time or not, I know not. I never ſaw it myſelf, who have dabbled in dull books, which he never did. Had this chapter been aſcribed to lord Granville, who with all his wit, and fire, and talents, condeſcended to read, or condeſcended to pretend to read, the bad Latin of German civilians, it would not have been out of character. Sir Robert Walpole would as ſoon have read The divine legation as the Jus Polonicum.

I have done with this impoſture, and will add but few words.

Sir Robert Walpole did not leave a ſheet of paper of his compoſition behind him, as all his family know. They had earneſtly wiſhed, and at times reſpectfully preſſed him to give ſome account of his own adminiſtration; but neither his health nor inclination permitted it. He reſigned his places in February 1742, and was engaged by the ſecret committee till June of that year, when he went into the country for about three months. He was in town all the ſucceeding winter, as he was thoſe of 1743 and 44, ſitting at home, receiving conſtant viſits from his friends and party, conſulted by miniſters, and ſometimes attending parliament. He paſſed the two ſummers of 1743 and 44 at Houghton, the only time in which he had any leiſure: in thoſe ſummers I was not two whole months abſent from him, and do declare he never attempted to write any thing but neceſſary letters. In one of thoſe ſummers, I forget which, deſirous of amuſing him, which his ill health re-

quired, I propoſed to read to him. He ſaid, What will you read? I anſwered, as moſt young men would to a ſtateſman, Hiſtory, ſir. No child, ſaid he, I know that cannot be true.—Judge if he was likely to write hiſtory, or a teſtament politique.

I ſhould have ſaid, that in the winter of 1743 he was much engaged in allaying the heats raiſed by the partiality of the late king to the troops of Hanover, and was the ſole author of compoſing thoſe animoſities. In the winter of 1744, he was ſtill more warmly and zealouſly employed in alarming the nation on the intended invaſion under marſhal Saxe; he went to the houſe of lords, and exerted his former ſpirit and eloquence with ſuch diſtinction, that the late prince of Wales, who was preſent, was ſtruck, and ſignified to him his pardon of all that had paſſed between them while my father was miniſter—as if he had never been eſſentially ſerviceable to the houſe of Hanover before! His health at that time declined greatly; and he could no longer go abroad from the inconvenience of ſtones in his bladder. In this melancholy ſtate, during the ſummer of 1744, he read the works of Dr. Sydenham, whom he much eſteemed; and Dr. Jurin's Treatiſe on Mrs. Stephens's medicine for diſſolving the ſtone being put into his hands, he found a reſemblance in it to the opinions of Sydenham. This determined him to try Jurin's preparation. He was brought to town with great difficulty, took Jurin's medicine, and was killed by it in March 1745.

This ſolemn account of the concluſion of ſo reſpectable a life was not due to ſo grovelling an author as he who wrote The teſtament politique; but it was due to truth, to the public, and to the beſt of fathers. He wants no monument that ſuch weak hands as mine can raiſe; but while they have motion, they ſhall defend his memory againſt forgeries. Calumnies I heed not: but he ſhall not be made to calumniate himſelf, while there is ſenſibility in the ſoul of

His affectionate ſon

HORACE WALPOLE.

February 16, 1767.

THE

THE

LIFE

OF THE

REVEREND MR. THOMAS BAKER,

OF

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE IN CAMBRIDGE.

Written in 1778.

THE

LIFE OF MR. THOMAS BAKER.

THE deep or extenſive learning of a man of letters is but a barren field for biography. His notions are ſpeculation; his adventures, enquiry. If his ſtudies fermented or conſolidated into compoſitions, the hiſtory of his life commonly proves but a regiſter of the ſquabbles occaſioned by his works, of the patrons he flattered, of the preferments he obtained or miſſed. The dates of his publications and their editions form the outlines of his ſtory; and frequently the plans or projects of works he meditated are taken to aid the account; the day of his death is ſcrupulouſly aſcertained:—and thus, to compoſe the life of a man who did very little, his biographer acquaints us with what he did not do, and when he ceaſed to do any thing.

Nor are authors ſuch benefactors to the world, that the trifling incidents of their lives deſerve to be recorded. The moſt ſhining of the claſs have not been the moſt uſeful members of the community. If Newton unravelled ſome arcana of nature, and exalted our ideas of the Divinity by the inveſtigation of his works; what benefactions has Homer or Virgil conferred on mankind but a fund of harmonious amuſement? Barren literati, who produce nothing, are innocent drones, whom the world has been ſo kind as to agree to reſpect for having entertained themſelves gravely in the manner moſt agreeable to their taſte. When they have devoured libraries, they are ſuppoſed to be prodigies of knowledge, though they are but walking or temporary dictionaries. Yet the republic of letters, confining its own honours to its own corporation, fondly decrees the diſtinction of biography to moſt of its active, and to ſome of its mute members.

Comprehenſive as his ſtudies were, his learning or his works were not my incentives to recording memorials of Mr. Thomas Baker. His publications were very few, and his long-protracted life was marked by as few events as

could well be ſprinkled through ſo extended a ſpace, and in a period ſo memorable for a revolution that left no man an unintereſted ſpectator. Yet, though his abilities reſcued his name from oblivion, and though he ſhone as a confeſſor for his principles; his ſingular modeſty ſo little ſought the double portion of fame he merited, that, though an accurate and indefatigable recorder of the actions of others, he ſeems to have humbly declined all care of regiſtering any memoranda of his own ſtory.

That modeſty, and that unaffected courage of conſcience, with other virtues, particularly one that ſeldom coaleſces with martyrdom for conſcience, I mean, impartiality—theſe were themes that I thought deſerved to be tranſmitted to poſterity; not only for the ſake of the actor, but for the inſtruction and imitation of mankind. The example of a virtuous man reſigning his fortune rather than violate his oath, preſerving charity for his antagoniſts, and contracting neither virulence nor pride from his ſufferings, was an inſtance too ſingular not to merit ſelection. One ſuch action, executed with intrepidity yet without oſtentation, could dignify a whole life; and ought to rank the ſufferer with his more exalted companions in the ſame cauſe. If *they* ſacrificed mitres to their integrity, *he* gave his *all;* and on the altar of conſcience the firſtling of a flock, we know, is as acceptable as a hecatomb of bulls.

Simplicity, the graee that flows from and moſt becomes good ſenſe, and which naturally ought to accompany the purſuit of wiſdom and the command of our paſſions, has in all ages been forgotten in the ceremonial of philoſophers. In fact, their very pretenſions exclude ſo humble an attribute. The Grecian ſages announced their own claims: their apes, the moderns, have not relinquiſhed any demands on any part of the ſucceſſion. Hence the modeſt Mr. Baker, who was patient, humble, temperate; who ſought neither fame nor riches; who was content with the poverty he embraced from duty; who ſearched after truth, rather than wiſdom; never attained the title of *philoſopher:* the inference whence is not unfair, that it is a title oftener aſſumed by the wearers than conferred. Mr. Baker was what his piety enjoined him to be, and what prohibits all aſſumption of merit—a chriſtian philoſopher.

Born with parts and induſtry, glowing with virtue, and fortified with reſolution to adhere to the dictates of his judgment and conſcience, the earlieſt bloſſom of his talents was dedicated to the ſame cauſe which the uniform

tenour of his life maintained. Smitten with the love of improving his mind, he waded early into ſcience: yet, though he ſaw its beauties, he diſcerned its defects, and haſtened to diſcloſe the deluſions of the ſyren, while he diſcovered that he had taſted of her moſt valuable favours. In the ardour of youth, and enamoured of knowledge, he anticipated experience; and his firſt production proclaimed what maturity of years alone inculcates into others, that all is vanity but religion. To lower learning and diſplay it, has not been a rare effort of the love of paradox, which is the love of fame. Mr. Baker deſpiſed the dexterity of the former, nor aſpired to the latter: he gave his book without his name. It was a tribute to his conviction, and a caution to the proud of knowledge. He meant not to check enquiry, but to point out its proper goal.

With the ſame affection to truth he could turn his mind from the enchanting worlds of inveſtigation to the dry collection of little facts. With ſhining parts he could condeſcend to be an antiquary. From a companion of Newton he could ſtoop to aſſociate with Antony Wood and Thomas Hearne. Gratitude, as well as ſituation, ſeems to have given this complexion to his ſtudies. Attached to a ſociety that rejected him from its boſom, and yet harboured him in its arms, he dedicated many days and hours to the hiſtory of St. John's college. Though a ſincere proteſtant, the tender effuſions of his gratitude made him almoſt a devotee of a female ſaint. The pious foundreſs, Margaret of Richmond, owes more to this Lutheran ſon than to all that have riſen from her alms to epiſcopal thrones in either church—But I am anticipating his character, which will dart more conſpicuouſly from his conduct. It was a ſtar that ſeemed to occupy one only little point; but it was a fixed ſtar; and when we examine it through the glaſs of truth, we find it magnified without exaggeration.

I have warned the reader that it has been with difficulty that any particulars of the life of this good man have been recovered. The higheſt quality he ever aſſumed himſelf was that of *ſocius ejectus*, which he ſometimes ſubſcribed. The induſtry of a * gentleman, who reſembles Mr. Baker in his primitive ſimplicity and attachment to the univerſity, has retrieved the few notices that I am able to impart—but genealogy and circumſtances are but adventitious ornaments to a character that was ſimple, conſiſtent and heroic. Yet Mr. Baker,

* The Rev. Mr. William Cole, formerly of Clare-hall and King's college, and now rector of Burnham in Buckinghamſhire.

though

though he voluntarily deſcended to poverty, did not ſpring from neceſſitous or ignoble parents. It was not returning to his natural condition, when he abandoned the good things of this world. Sordid natures are more capable of reverting to a mean ſtate, than men of gentle birth of embracing the deprivation of comforts. His continuance among thoſe who ſtripped him of enjoyments was the nobleſt emanation of a mind incapable of envy or reſentment. He quitted what he proved he loved, by remaining on a ſoil that no longer yielded him any thing but a ſtone for his pillow.

Thomas Baker, a younger ſon of ſir George Baker of Crooke-hall * Lancaſter in the county of Durham, was born September 14, 1656. With his elder brother George he was admitted penſioner of St. John's college in Cambridge June 13, 1674; and Thomas was received as ſcholar of the ſame college in November 1676; and as perpetual fellow of the ſame ſociety in March 1680. In the books of the college is mention of a Thomas Baker as elected librarian in 1699, and Hebrew reader in 1700: but as our Mr. Thomas Baker was then fellow only by connivance, and was actually deprived of his fellowſhip in 1717; the gentleman who communicated this intelligence reaſonably concludes that the ſociety did not heap additional favours on one whom they only tolerated amongſt them: and he confirms this conjecture by obſerving, that, on Mr. Baker's expulſion, he is ſtyled ſenior Baker for diſtinction.

At what age Mr. Baker dedicated himſelf to the church, does not appear. That it was the profeſſion he voluntarily embraced, cannot be doubted from the unvaried colour of his life and ſtudies, and from his having adhered to a monaſtic life, when diveſted of the privilege of exerciſing his miniſtry. Born under a tempeſt of contending ſects, his reaſon no ſooner began to develop itſelf than he heard nothing but the conflict of the like warring elements. The jealouſy of popery, that had alarmed the ſtaunchеſt proteſtants under a devout king, blazed with reaſon under his profligate ſon, who was influenced by a brother, whoſe underſtanding he deſpiſed, in the point that moſt demands the exerciſe of one's own judgment. The controverſy was managed, at leaſt on the ſide of the church of England, with the higheſt abilities; yet when

* By his admiſſion in the College regiſter it appears that his father was then only an eſquire, and I do not believe he was afterwards knighted. The name of the place is Lancheſter, and it is ſo ſpelt in the will.

Mr.

Mr. Baker conſecrated his ſervices to that church, though it was the predominant, it neither enjoyed the partiality of the crown, nor promiſed a life of eaſe and tranquillity, at leaſt to one who fathomed every duty, nor diſpenſed with himſelf in the performance of the moſt difficult. This is not mere conjecture, nor drawn from the tenor of his delicate conſcience. Mr. Baker early and boldly bore teſtimony to his religious ſentiments. Here are the proofs:

In the library of St. John's college is a collection of the London gazettes. That of July 5, 1688, contains thoſe emanations of loyalty that attend *all* princes in poſſeſſion (and had not been wanting to Richard Cromwell), and an account of the rejoicings made on the birth of king James's ſuppoſed ſon, in particular of thoſe celebrated at Durham, under the auſpices of biſhop Crewe, to whom Mr. Baker ſeems to have been chaplain. On the margin of that gazette Mr. Baker has written theſe words: "This account was drawn up by the biſhop, as his ſecretary Mr. Peters told me. I was preſent at the ſolemnity. If I did not rejoice as I ought, pardon me, O God, that ſin!"

What delicacy of conſcience! The good man trembled for his religion, yet doubted whether the Omnipotent did not expect that he ſhould exult in whatever good luck befell his vicegerent—But, of what religion were they who invented ſuch principles? If the Ruler of the univerſe viſits a ſinful world with peſtilence, can he require us to rejoice at the calamity? In other words, can Almighty Wiſdom exact our feeling contradictory ſenſations? Though a pious perſon ſays he rejoices, does he rejoice? Such doctors enjoin lip-worſhip, as if the All-ſeeing could be impoſed on by a formulary of words. This is abſurd caſuiſtry, deviſed by bigots, and recommended by knaves. Nor could Mr. Baker's good ſenſe have ſwallowed ſuch nonſenſe, if the tenderneſs of his piety had not been alarmed by what he had been told was his duty. He thought it ſafer to truſt to his conſcience than his judgment. Nor had paſſive obedience ever a ſincerer victim, or did good ſenſe ever loſe a worthier ſon miſled by authority. Biſhop Crewe proved leſs ſincere, or leſs firm.

In the ſame gazette is an account from Whitehall of July 6, of the removal of the Judges, (a clear indication that the king was acting againſt law) and of the alteration of thoſe appointed to hold the ſummer aſſizes on the northern circuit. There too Mr. Baker has atteſted his own conduct, with the ſame

dubitation whether he had not tranſgreſſed his duty in obeying the dictates of his conſcience. It is ſtill more remakable, that he wept his want of devotion to his worldly maſter *after* king James was diveſted of power. There can be no doubt but ſuch contrition would not have been felt, if king James had been ſucceſsful. Mr. Baker's ſcruples never led him to ſacrifice his religion to his prince, while in poſſeſſion. Had James triumphed, we may juſtly conclude that Mr. Baker would have laid down his life for his faith. The relinquiſhment of fortune is nearer to the ſtake, than to a time-ſerving compliance. It was generous to bewail his own want of blind zeal for an unfortunate prince. He would have ſeen James's folly in its true light, if reduced to the option of emolument or the croſs. The death of Charles I. has won him many hearts, that would have abhorred his tyranny if it had been ſucceſsful.

"At Durham," ſays Mr. Baker, "I preached before the judges (three of the eccleſiaſtic commiſſioners being then preſent). I could eaſily obſerve the ſermon gave offence (and indeed juſtly); and yet it paſſed without cenſure. I have ſince burnt it, as I did the reſt."

Here good nature pauſes to lament thoſe confeſſors who reſiſted king James, and thought it their duty to become victims to their oaths. Indignation takes their part, and condemns oaths that are not mutual, and that are ſuppoſed to bind but one ſide. What foundation can there be for ſubjects devoting themſelves to their prince, if he is bound by no reciprocal ties? If they are his chattels, his herd, his property, oaths are frivolous. He has power to puniſh them if they revolt, whether they are ſworn to him or not. To ſwear to a king, without reciprocity from him, is ſubjecting our ſouls to him as well as our bodies. We are to be damned to all eternity if he makes his tyranny intolerable. Proclaim him God at once. God alone can be truſted with power over our minds: God alone can judge how much we can endure. Shall one of ourſelves be emperor of the mind?—No, ſaid Mr. Baker—yet repented that he had ſaid ſo!—And we muſt admire the beauty of that integrity, which, inſtead of recurring to the refinements of caſuiſtry to diſcover a ſalvo that would conſole it, bowed to arguments againſt itſelf, and diſtruſted its own reaſon more than its ſcruples.

A conteſt ſo nice ought to make us, who ſtand at a diſtance, view the combatants with impartiality. Sancroft, who preferred his oath to his mitre, and Tillotſon,

I paſs over witticiſms, ſtrained alluſions, jargon of modern philoſophy, ſophiſticated ſyſtems, and blundering ideas of commerce and government. I wiſh they who approve this work may conduct themſelves by its maxims.

Page 23, the ferocity of the Engliſh is attributed to the uſe of coal-fires. The author ſays, we were not ſo melancholy and ſavage before we adopted that uſage. This piece of hiſtory and philoſophy is not the leaſt diverting folly in the book.

In the next letter but one is an invective againſt liberty. Eraſe the name of ſir Robert Walpole from the title-page, and ſubſtitute that of father Peters, confeſſor of James II. and the work would really have an air of probability.

The note to page 33, in which the editor explains the form of paſſing bills, is, like all the reſt, full of miſtakes; but theſe he is ſo good as to take to his own account; and therefore I leave him in poſſeſſion. In another note, page 35, he informs us, that if a king of England declares war on a perſonal account, he wages it at his own private expence. This is new to us Engliſh.

Then follows a deduction of the hiſtory of England, the tendency of which is to deny Magna Charta. If thoſe worthy labourers the teſtament-makers of this age had exiſted ſeventeen hundred years ago, I ſuppoſe they would have made Julius Cæſar leave behind him an invective againſt uſurpation. They ſcorn the leaſt grain of probability, and yet expect credit!

The reign of Henry IV. by whom I am ſo charitable as to believe the author meant Henry V. is ſaid to have been a continued ſeries of victories over France. I do not know whom he means, when he ſays Henry VIII. governed his parliaments by maintaining them in all their prerogatives. It was a very gentle way of guarding their privileges, by threatening their heads if they denied him a ſubſidy.

Elizabeth's haughty tone is forgotten, and James I. figures next as a monarch of ſpirit. Such hiſtory is worthy of ſuch ſyſtems!

Cromwell is called by this vulgar writer a brewer's ſon. The partiſans of hereditary

Tillotſon, who, in accepting it, adhered to the principles that he had avowed when perſecution, not emolument, was the probable conſequence of his reſiſtance, deſerve to be eſteemed honeſt men. James, who had violated his coronation oath, and yet expected that the miniſters of religion ſhould prefer their oaths to their religion, was guilty, if either Sancroft or Tillotſon was in the wrong. The chief magiſtrate of any country, who is a rock of offence to the conſciences of his ſubjects, deſerves no commiſeration. The profuſion of advantages that are ſhowered on kings to enforce the authority of magiſtracy, and to reward them for their ſuperintendency of the whole community, enhances their guilt when they ſet an example of trampling on the laws which it is both their duty and their intereſt to preſerve inviolate—and none but womaniſh minds will pity them, when they provoke their ſubjects to throw off allegiance, and incur the penalty of their crimes. The blindeſt bigot to the memory of Charles I. or James II. cannot deny, that both were the original aggreſſors. Had they both acted conformably to the conſtitution and laws, no man living can think that any part of the nation would have revolted. Did not ſhip-money and diſuſe of parliaments precede the rebellion, or were the cauſes of it? Did not James in the dawn of his reign hoiſt the banner of popery? Had not Sancroft and the ſix biſhops been impriſoned for withſtanding the diſpenſing power? If Sancroft was a ſincere proteſtant, could he believe that his oath bound him to an idolatrous king, who had perjured himſelf by promoting idolatry? Might not Tillotſon think that the king's perjury abſolved his ſubjects from their oaths? Sancroft, I verily believe, was ſo weak as to be of the contrary opinion. He was deluded by the conduct of the primitive Chriſtians, who ſubmitted to the higher powers—But how wide was the difference! The pagan emperors of Rome had never ſworn to maintain pure chriſtianity—and the early Chriſtians themſelves (if not the firſt, who had no opportunity of reſiſtance) were not very paſſive, as ſoon as their numbers enabled them to uſe temporal weapons for the defence of their religion. Mr. Baker, of a more enlightened underſtanding than Sancroft's, yet acted the ſame diſintereſted part. But what ſevere reflections does the purity of their conduct call forth on a ſet of men who in the ſame cauſe acted and have acted the counterpart to thoſe confeſſors!—I mean thoſe Jacobites, who did take the oaths to king William and the ſucceeding princes down to the preſent reign, and yet conſtantly promoted the intereſts of a family they had ſo ſolemnly abjured! Let their conduct be tried by the

ſtandard of their own Sancroft, and let us hear by what caſuiſtry they will be abſolved from guilt and contempt!

The three eccleſiaſtic commiſſioners alluded to by Mr. Baker in his preceding note, were, probably, Crewe, biſhop of Durham, and two of the new judges.

Thoſe commiſſioners ordered an account to be returned to them of the names of all ſuch of the clergy as refuſed to read his Majeſty's Declaration of April 7, for liberty of conſcience.

On the margin of the Gazette for Auguſt 23, 1688, Mr. Baker has written this note: "I was ordered by the biſhop of Durham [a commiſſioner] to attend the archdeacon, Dr. Granville, for the execution of this order; which I readily did, knowing it to be enjoined me as a penance for my former diſobedience, having refuſed to read the Declaration in his chapel, and forbid my curate to read it at my living *. The good man's anſwer was, that he would obey the king and the biſhop, and the firſt man he returned ſhould be the archdeacon, his curates not having read it in his abſence; but had he been preſent, he would have read it himſelf. Not long after he and I were both of us deprived for diſobedience of another kind, and the commanding biſhop ſaved himſelf by his uſual compliance."

Here Mr. Baker's underſtanding and conſcience appear in their full luſtre. He ſaw it was not his duty to obey the king againſt his religion. He diſobeyed. Yet when James had deſervedly loſt his crown, Mr. Baker ſacrificed his fortune rather than take an oath to another. Dr. Denis Granville, dean and archdeacon of Durham, acted the ſame part, though with leſs merit, having been ready to humour the king in his injunctions. His biſhopric was the religion of biſhop Crewe, and he was ready for the toleration of popery or for ſuppreſſion of it, according to the humour of the king on the throne. But when biſhops ſit ſo looſe to both religions, one may be very ſure they are not ſincere in either, but would be Mahometans if the archiepiſcopal

* This ſhows that Mr. Baker loſt a living as well as his fellowſhip; and it appears from his will that it was the pariſh of Long-Newton in the biſhopric of Durham.

mitre were turned into a turban. They have not been ſo pliable towards any reformed church of Chriſtians who do not admit of an opulent clergy. The whole tenour and ſpirit of the goſpel inculcate poverty, charity, and ſelf-denial. It is not ſo eaſy to prove from the New Teſtament that archbiſhoprics and biſhoprics, in the modern ſenſe, are of divine inſtitution. St. Peter and St. Paul would have ſtared at being ſaluted by the titles of your grace and your lordſhip; and on what text are founded deaneries, prebends, chapters, and eccleſiaſtical courts, thoſe popiſh excreſcencies of a ſimple religion, we are yet to ſeek. Tranſlations from one ſee to another are no doubt authoriſed by the ſame chapter of one of the four evangeliſts, though I know not of which, wherein prelates are enjoined to vote always with the prime miniſter for the time being; as the Swiſs fight for the prince, whatever his religion is, who takes them into his pay.

Theſe notes on the gazette that I have cited, and the firmneſs of his ſubſequent conduct, prove that Mr. Baker was prepared to meet every ſtorm that could fall on him in the cauſe of his religion. It was the ſtamp of a mind ſtill more diſintereſted, that he was not equally ready to triumph with his religion, when it was victorious. He had not foreſeen the fall of the tyrant, nor had conſidered royalty on the great ſcale of the intereſts of the public, and as an office only held by the poſſeſſor for the benefit of the people. The ſufferings of Charles I. whoſe crimes were not of the magnitude of his ſon's, had raiſed a ſpirit of enthuſiaſm in his partiſans, and conjured up in their minds a profane idolatry of kings, that was inconſiſtent both with true religion and common ſenſe; and had been extended even to genealogic ſucceſſion—as if being born of a certain race could entitle any family to a right of violating with impunity all laws, both divine and human. Mr. Baker had unhappily imbibed thoſe prejudices; but, as his virtue corrected the errors of his underſtanding, himſelf was the only perſon whom he attempted to ſacrifice to his miſtaken loyalty. He was never ſuſpected of caballing againſt the new eſtabliſhed government; and, while his own order and both univerſities, Oxford in particular, ſwarmed with factious prieſts, and engendered ſome whoſe zeal dipped them even in plots of aſſaſſination againſt the deliverer of the proteſtant religion, the meek Mr. Baker was content with the croſs he had embraced, and never profaned his piety by rebellious intrigues. He even lived in charity, in communion, in friendſhip with churchmen of the moſt oppoſite principles. He aſſiſted the ſtudies and publications of archbiſhop Wake and biſhop Kennet: and

and while turbulent incendiaries and Jacobite prieſts, who had taken the oaths to king William, poured deluges of filth and malevolence on the head of biſhop Burnet, for having, like an honeſt man, ventured his life in the cauſe of his religion, and for having (his greateſt crime) recorded the crimes of the Stuarts and their miniſters and creatures, Mr. Baker did juſtice to the character of the man, and contributed to his Hiſtory of the reformation of that church to which they both adhered, and which other proteſtant divines have endeavoured to ſubject again to a Roman catholic ſovereign. Mr. Baker's conduct is the moſt ſevere anſwer to all ſuch libellers and renegades.

That prejudice and obſtinacy were not the ſole arbiters of this good man's conſcience, appeared from his being diſpoſed to take the oaths to the new government, as ſoon as his old maſter king James was no more; whoſe tampering, in concert with that other royal ſaint, Louis XIV. in the aſſaſſination-plot, and from which their memories will never be waſhed *, had ſhaken the allegiance of many of his warmeſt devotees. But the impoſition of an oath of abjuration diſpelled all thoughts in Mr. Baker of conformity: perhaps not from mere tenderneſs. He was too conſcientious to take an oath to king William with any intention of tranſgreſſing it, like ſo many others, on a good

* The marſhal duke of Berwick, ſon of king James, in his own Memoirs written by himſelf, has theſe words: "Pendant mon ſejour à Londres, ayant eté informé qu'il s'y tramoit une conſpiration contre la perſonne du prince d'Orange, je crus que, ma principale miſſion etant finie, je ne devois pas perdre le tems à regagner la France pour ne point me trouver confondu avec les conjurés, dont le deſſein me paroiſſoit difficile à executer." Vol. i. p. 145. Not a word of abhorrence of ſo atrocious a deſign; it was the difficulty of the execution that ſtaggered the good duke, and made him conſult his ſafety. In the next page he is ſtill more explicit; he owns that, Louis and James being appriſed of the conſpiracy, James waited on the ſea-coaſt for the event of the plot. It is true, the duke pretends that the conſpirators aimed only at ſeizing king William: but the words *quelque evenement* imply that any event of the conſpiracy would not be unwelcome. It was proved that the conſpirators actually intended to ſhoot the king; and lord Portland remonſtrated to Louis himſelf at Verſailles againſt the appearance of the duke of Berwick there, as privy to the plot of aſſaſſination. Lord Portland tells king William ſo in his letters:—and who can doubt it, when he himſelf acknowledges ſo much? Had the conſpirators been able to ſeize the perſon of William, would they have heſitated at murder if he or his guards had reſiſted? William had James in his power, and facilitated his eſcape from Rocheſter. A man who had the meanneſs to *ſee*, and triumph over, the duke of Monmouth, and then put him to death, would, no doubt, have been tender of William's life, if the conſpirators had had ſo little zeal, after ſucceeding in carrying off the king, as not to have ſaved James the trouble of ſigning the warrant for his death! After owning the plot, it is folly to endeavour to palliate it, and as great folly to believe the palliation!

opportunity;

opportunity; but having fallen into ſuch difficulties by his religious obſervance of the oath he had taken, he was probably averſe to entangling himſelf in more ſnares. And ſince the experience of ſeveral reigns has demonſtrated how little binding oaths are but to the moſt virtuous of mankind, it were to be wiſhed that they were adminiſtered with great circumſpection. The perjuries at the Cuſtom-houſe, and in the caſe of elections, call for the abrogation of a ſacrament that has loſt all ſanctity.

Mr. Baker retained his fellowſhip to the death of queen Anne, by the connivance of Dr. Jenkin the maſter, who at firſt had been himſelf a non-juror, but on taking the oaths had been elected head of the college. The acceſſion of a new family of foreigners, who were not lineal heirs, and whoſe relation to the crown was too remote not to offend the prejudices of the vulgar, incited the vigilance of government to be ſtrict in impoſing the oath of fidelity. It was tendered to and refuſed by Mr. Baker. In his life in the Biographia Britannica, it is aſſerted, that he had hoped to continue to be ſcreened by the maſter, and was offended at that indulgence being withdrawn; but the proof of that aſſertion is very inadequate to the inference. He wrote himſelf in the blank leaves of all the books he afterwards gave to the college *ſocius ejectus*. If, when a conſcientious man ſacrifices his fortune to his integrity, it is demanded that he ſhould have no ſenſe of the ſacrifice; the demand would not only be abſurd, but would deſtroy half the beauty of the action. What merit is there in conquering paſſions to which we are inſenſible? Is it not rather a contradiction in terms? How remote too is indignation and a lively ſenſe of our loſs, from patience? Or can any words convey leſs reſentment than *ſocius ejectus*? Me, I own, they ſtrike as humble and reſigned; and were I to ſearch for an invidious interpretation, the utmoſt I could diſcover in the words *ſocius ejectus* would be a teſtimonial borne by the victim to his own virtuous deed. If, after all, Mr. Baker retained a lively ſenſe of his deprivation, the long remainder of his days was a conſtant triumph over his anger; for he remained in the college, under the juriſdiction of the maſter who had expelled him, in charity with his late colleagues, and dedicated many of his hours to the illuſtration of the hiſtory of his college. His meek, modeſt, inoffenſive behaviour never varied. Avarice, the prepoſterous paſſion that often increaſes with our decay, never ſtained Mr. Baker's ſimplicity. He had little, but thought it enough; and had the greatneſs of mind to decline offers of what would have been wealth in his circumſtances.

It

It is indeed aſſerted in the new edition of the Biographia Britannica, that Mr. Prior ceded to Mr. Baker the profits of his fellowſhip after his expulſion. If he did, the generous act was worthy of ſo honeſt and amiable a man as Mr. Prior; and it is not to detract from the generoſity of one whoſe ſoul glowed with friendſhip and good-nature, and whoſe poetry owed not one of its graceful and genteel beauties to aſperity, that I am obliged, on the remarks of the gentleman to whom this tract is chiefly indebted, to doubt of the reality of the gift. Though Mr. Baker could have enjoyed the benefit of the ceſſion but very few years, he being ejected in 1717, and Mr. Prior dying in 1721; the generoſity was complete, Mr. Prior not being able to cede his fellowſhip but while he enjoyed it. But on the authority above mentioned, I muſt queſtion the fact; not from the want of humanity in Mr. Prior, but from his own circumſtances, which could ill allow him to be ſo munificent. Mr. Prior bequeathed books to the value of 200*l.* (together with the portraits of himſelf and the earl of Jerſey) to St. John's college, in acknowledgment for having held the fellowſhip during his life. It is no proof, though perhaps a preſumption, that he would not have been ſo ſenſible of the obligation, if he had ceded it to another; but in fact Mr. Prior's own fortune was ſo far from ſplendid, that he was little enabled to be a patron. He had had the intrinſic merit of having raiſed himſef by his abilities from obſcurity to ſhining eminence both in poetry and in the ſtate—and yet there is no trace of his having been greedy of wealth. He left a very inconſiderable fortune, and at the very moment of Mr. Baker's ſacrifice Mr. Prior's own friends were fallen into ſudden diſgrace, one of his patrons * was in the Tower, and the other in exile, and he himſelf under proſecution by parliament. It appears from his friend Dr. Swift, that Mr. Prior had prepared no pecuniary ſhelter againſt the ſtorm. "Our friend Prior," ſays he, "not having had the viciſſitude of human things before his eyes, is likely to end his days in as forlorn a ſtate as any other poet has done before him, if his friends do not take more care of him than he did of himſelf." Swift's Letters from 1703 to 1740, publiſhed by Dr. Hawkſworth in 1766, in 3 vols. octavo, p, 50. Accordingly the Dean, with Mr. Pope, Dr. Arbuthnot, and Mr. Gay, with a zeal that will for ever illuſtrate that friendly ſociety of men of the firſt genius, who never ſuffered either jealouſy or even party to interfere with their eſteem for congenial merit, ſet on foot, promoted, and carried into execution a ſubſcription for the publi-

* Robert Harley earl of Oxford.

cation

cation of Mr. Prior's works.—Mr. Prior, with his other virtues, was a man of no oſtentation; would he have accepted a ſubſcription for himſelf, while ceding an independent, though ſmall, income to another? Yet the aſſertion is poſitive. It is not decent to contradict a gentleman of unimpeached character on what he affirms; yet it may be preſumed, that, being a matter of tradition, at the diſtance of near ſixty years the original reporter may have been miſtaken.

There is ſtill leſs foundation for believing what is aſſerted in a marginal note in the firſt edition of the Biographia Britannica, p. 3726, that biſhop Burnet allowed Mr. Baker an annuity. That they had literary connections is well known, probably commenced by Mr. Baker's ſending the prelate many corrections of his Hiſtory of the Reformation, which his lordſhip mentions with great gratitude and eſteem, in the introduction to his third volume, where he has alſo printed Mr. Baker's obſervations. But the terms employed by the biſhop are far from implying either familiarity or patronage; and as that was his laſt publication, being dedicated to George I. and as Burnet died in March 1715, near two years before Mr. Baker loſt his fellowſhip, it is not probable that the biſhop would have ſelected a nonjuror for the object of his bounty, and leſs probable that Mr. Baker would have accepted it; he, who, when reduced to much narrower circumſtances, would not ſtoop to accept emoluments from the head of the triumphant church. Having aſſiſted archbiſhop Wake in his work on the ſtate of the church, his grace offered to Mr. Baker the nomination of any friend he would recommend to a living of 200*l.* a year, ſince he could not accept it himſelf. This generous gratitude Mr. Baker declined, and deſired that his grace's favour might be confined to a preſent of the book in queſtion. Nor can it eaſily be believed, that a man who never boaſted of the diſtinctions he received, would have been ſilent on obligations. Mr. Baker certainly did receive pecuniary preſents from Edward Harley the ſecond earl of Oxford, and it is ſaid they were an annuity of 60*l.* a year. Mr. Baker ever gratefully acknowledged the patronage of the noble Mæcenas, to whoſe houſe at Wimple he was always a welcome gueſt. More of their connection will appear, when we come to ſpeak of the diſpoſition of Mr. Baker's works.

Excluded from the church, in whoſe ſervice he had intended to exert his activity and pious labours, he was reduced to the exerciſe of his private

virtues, and at liberty, if ever man was, to indulge his paſſion for ſtudy. It was the occupation of the reſt of his life; and from the æra of his deprivation there is no trace of events in his long courſe but ſuch as were literary. I ſhall therefore confine what I have farther to ſay of Mr. Baker to the chapter of his writings; and even check the pleaſure I have in doing juſtice to his virtues, unleſs where they break out indirectly from circumſtances that attended his own compoſitions, or the communications with which he aſſiſted other authors.

Mr. Baker's firſt publication was his Reflections on Learning, publiſhed in octavo, 1699, without his name. It is a work full of learning, wit, and ingenuity, and deſervedly raiſed the author's reputation; yet as much as I admire it, it would be the partiality of a biographer to his hero, not to allow that it has conſiderable defects. The editors of the new Biographia have juſtly reprehended Mr. Baker's ſtyle, which is far from poſſeſſing modern elegance, and from being formed by a good ear. It is not ſo univerſally replete with coarſe and vulgar language, as the ſtyles of Dr. Echard, Dr. Bentley, and Dr. Wootton; men whom however I rather mention with Mr. Baker as luminaries of ſcience and wit, than to cenſure the harſhneſs and want of purity in their diction. But Mr. Baker's book had a more conſiderable fault than the defect of elegance. It wanted a logical concluſion. The title of his work explains his ſcope. "Reflections upon Learning; wherein is ſhewn the inſufficiency thereof in its ſeveral particulars, in order to evince the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of Revelation."

The fathers who decried human learning in order to enforce the one thing neceſſary, religion, argued conſequentially, ſuppoſing God implanted a propenſity to arts and ſciences in the heart of man, and yet did not intend that he ſhould make any uſe of the powers beſtowed. The fathers too, who held that abſurd doctrine, had at leaſt the excuſe of apprehending that the end of the world was at hand. But ſeventeen hundred years have pretty well exploded that viſion; and therefore we muſt be the more ſurpriſed to hear an ingenious man argue like enthuſiaſts of the ſecond or third century.

That human induſtry has not perfected, probably cannot perfect, every ſcience, is a ſelf-evident truth, but perhaps not a melancholy one. The inveſtigation is delightful; and ſo exquiſite is the goodneſs of the creator, that he

he has taught us to ſtrike out numerous enjoyments even from imperfect knowledge. Where he has not given us ſpecifics, he has beſtowed ſuccedaneums. If the pyramids were raiſed by ſlender ſkill in mechanics, though by great labour, they might be erected in leſs time now, yet would not laſt longer. The natives of Otaheite could carve without iron. A Grecian or Roman could execute works in cameo or intaglia without microſcopic glaſſes, which we cannot imitate with ſuperior advantages. But how does revelation ſupply the defects of knowledge, except in what it was given to reveal? I will mention a few of Mr. Baker's topics, to which revelation ſeems a very inadequate ſupplement. In fact, except morality, I ſee not what revelation was intended to improve, has improved, or could improve. If it even has not improved morality, it is not the fault of revelation, but of thoſe to whom it has been diſpenſed.

But, ſays Mr. Baker, language, grammar, hiſtory, chronology, geography, civil law, canon law, phyſic, oriental and ſcholaſtic learning, are ſtill imperfect.

In his preface he declares he does not mean wholly to diſcredit the uſe of human learning; yet as in one place he apprehends that the thirſt of learning will ſubſtitute natural to revealed religion, we might infer that he fears knowledge is no great friend to revelation—but at leaſt the whole ſcope of his book and the avowed declaration of the concluſion is, that no complete ſatisfaction is to be had but from revelation. If he meant, that no complete happineſs can flow but from religion, it is an undeniable truth, and the defects of knowledge are by no means the greateſt evils againſt which we need that conſolatory cordial. But when he runs through the defects of hiſtory, phyſic, and canon law, &c. and ſends us to revelation, one ſhould ſuppoſe that in revelation were to be found the diſcoveries not yet made in any of thoſe ſciences. Otherwiſe his diſſertation is a nugatory declamation, and a vain parade of his own examination of ſo many branches of knowledge. I ſhould trifle if I replied, that I cannot ſee how revelation can improve phyſic, or ſupply its place, ſince the power of curing diſeaſes has not been tranſmitted from the apoſtles to their ſucceſſors. Or if I applied revelation to the canon law, which is, or is pretended to be, drawn from the goſpel. Or if, inſtead of believing that revelation could amend ſcholaſtic learning, I ſhould aſſert that

nothing can improve nonſenſe and abſurdity; and that the learning of the ſchools was ſo far from being learning, that it barred all knowledge, and that the world never recovered its ſenſes till it exploded the ſchools.

But reaſonable piety will never confound things that have no coherence. The goſpel was intended to correct our paſſions, and preach purer morality than had been diſcovered by the force of human reaſon. Ten thouſand inventions, ſyſtems, and doctrines have been built upon it, to which it gave no foundation. The precepts of Chriſt were plain and ſimple. He enjoined, he forbad, nothing but what he expreſſed. He came not to inſtruct us in chronology, nor to teach us to write hiſtory. His own diſciples indeed did not always underſtand him, or conjectured more from his words than they implied. The more their ſucceſſors have fancied themſelves illuminated, the farther they have wandered in the dark; and good Mr. Baker has not been the moſt free from error, if he really thought, as his argument leads us to ſuppoſe, that the goſpel could ſupply any other conſolation to the imperfection of ſcience, than reſignation to the divine will. All human knowledge, except morality, might have made all the progreſs it has made, had revelation never been diſpenſed: and it would puzzle Mr. Baker himſelf to ſhow, that any other ſcience has been improved by lights drawn from the goſpel: and if in near two thouſand years it has contributed nothing to ſcience, it probably never will. Mr. Baker was cautiouſly in the right not to refer us to the older teſtament for improving the ſciences, as it was remarkably unfortunate in ſome, particularly in hiſtory, geography, and aſtronomy—defects ſolved by the ſuppoſition that God conformed himſelf to the ideas of men—a very irreligious ſolution: but the old law being abrogated by the new, we have no buſineſs to uphold the former; nor could we without falling into contradictions; the ſpirit of Jewiſh invaſions and maſſacre, and their want of charity for their neighbours, being totally abhorrent from the ſpirit of the meek Jeſus.

Mr. Baker's Reflections on learning drew him into a controverſy with Le Clerc, a diſpute detailed in the Biographia, and which therefore I ſhall not repeat. It ſeems to have been the only moment of his life in which he did not preſerve his temperate politeneſs, but exchanged it, yet only to a moderate degree, for that boiſterous indelicacy of the literati of the preceding age, the Scaligers, Scioppiuſes, and Salmaſiuſes, who hurled Latin ordures at the heads

heads of their foes, and were proud of being able to be as ſcurrilous as the coblers * of old Rome and in the ſame terms.

May I be allowed to think that a fault which a man commits but once in a long life, is a beauty in his character; at leaſt a foil, that heightens the reſt of his virtues, and implies a greater amendment? In Mr. Baker it was redeemed by communications even to men of the moſt oppoſite principles. He knew to diſtinguiſh between the members of the republic of letters, and the adherents to a party in the ſtate from which he diſſented.

His next, and ſole other, publication was a new edition of biſhop Fiſher's funeral ſermon on Margaret counteſs of Richmond and Derby; to which he added an account of her charities, foundations, &c.

The reſt of his life was paſſed in the ſtudy of antiquity and in laborious collections of antique papers, great numbers of which he tranſcribed with his own hand, relating to our tranſactions both in the church and the ſtate. From theſe ſtores, and his own indefatigable reading, he aſſiſted many men of congenial ſtudies in their ſeveral publications; and he was ſuppoſed to have been engaged for many years in compiling for his own univerſity a work ſimilar to Wood's Athenæ Oxonienſes: but there is no ſufficient warrant for believing that he ever meditated ſuch a digeſtion; and he certainly left nothing beyond materials for it.

Of his own college he actually undertook and executed a very valuable hiſtory; valuable ſtill leſs for its accuracy and fidelity, than for its author's ſingular impartiality. It is the chef-d'œuvre of temper in a martyr. It is brightened too with rays of judgment and good ſenſe that ſhine unexpectedly from ſuch brute matter; and though too dry to charm without the walls of its own college, it is ſo honourable both to the ſociety and the author, that it is rather ſurpriſing a few copies at leaſt have not been preſerved by the preſs: at leaſt it would be a model to writers of that claſs, if the ſcribblers of antiquities could be taught to have taſte, and to abandon bigotry and prejudice, and uſeleſs trifles, which have no value but that of exiſtence.

The authors and editors his cotemporaries, whoſe ſtudies were congenial

* Dr. Bentley ſaid of Joſhua Barnes, that he knew as much Greek as a Grecian cobler.

with

with Mr. Baker's, were gratefully fond of acknowledging their obligations to him, and of bearing teſtimony to his exemplary virtues. Mr. Brown Willis, Dr. Knight in his Life of Eraſmus, Dr. Richardſon in his edition of Godwin De præſulibus Angliæ, Profeſſor Ward in his Hiſtory of Greſham College, Dr. Fiddes in his Life of Wolſey, and Hearne in ſeveral of his publications, all hold the ſame language on the communicative humanity and other excellencies of this primitive confeſſor.

More might be ſaid on this head; but where genuine virtues ſhine ſo conſpicuouſly by their own light, they want no adventitious rays. The preceding age had leaned ſo heavily on thoſe collateral crutches, compliments from cotemporaries, that panegyrics of that kind ſunk into total diſuſe. Mr. Pope's juvenile works were I think the laſt ſo gilded, and his own effulgence made all thoſe leſſer ſtars

Hide their diminiſh'd heads.

In thoſe indefatigable reſearches, in collections, in benevolent and friendly communications, and in the exerciſe of every duty and of every charity within the limits of his contracted fortune, Mr. Baker reached the eighty-fourth year of his age, when his life terminated as mildly, though ſuddenly, as it had been paſſed. On Saturday the 28th of June, 1740, in the afternoon, he was found lying upon the floor of his chamber; his face ſo much convulſed that his ſpeech was almoſt inarticulate; a ſtupor hung on his ſenſes, and one ſide was dead. At times he ſeemed to diſregard what was paſſing around him; at others he knew thoſe preſent, and recommended himſelf to their prayers for an eaſy death; expreſſing perfect reſignation, as he perceived, he ſaid, that his time was come, and thanking his friends for their kind offices. In this eaſy ſtate of tranſition he laſted till the following Wedneſday; and being almoſt incapable of ſwallowing, he took little nouriſhment and leſs of medicine, accepting with uneaſineſs any aſſiſtance, but to change his linen, as he deemed all remedy impoſſible and but a delay of his departure; ſo that his friends forbore to diſturb him more than was requiſite to mark that there was no neglect.

This was the end he had often wiſhed, preceded by a ſhort illneſs, and accompanied by little or no pain. He was interred in the anti-chapel of St.