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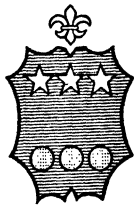
COLLEY CIBBER

"*Master Colley, then to fit him*"

Original painting by B. Wesley Rand

Beaux & Belles of England



Colley Cibber

Volume I.

Written by Himself

The Grolier Society
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EDITION DE LUXE

Limited to One Thousand Copies

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INTRODUCTION

COLLEY CIBBER'S famous Autobiography has always been recognised as one of the most delightful books of its class ; but to students of theatrical history, the charm of its author's ingenuous frankness has been unable altogether to overweigh the inaccuracy and vagueness of his treatment of matters of fact. To remove this cause of complaint is the principal object of the present edition. But correcting errors is only one of an editor's duties, and by no means the most difficult. More exacting, and almost equally important, are the illustration of the circumstances surrounding the author, the elucidation of his references to current events, and the comparison of his statements and theories with those of judicious contemporaries. In all these particulars I have interpreted my duty in the widest sense, and have aimed at giving, as far as in me lies, an exhaustive commentary on the "Apology."

I am fortunate in being able to claim that my work contains much information which has never before been made public. A careful investigation

of the MSS. in the British Museum, and of the records of the Lord Chamberlain's Office (to which my access was greatly facilitated by the kindness of Mr. Edward F. S. Pigott, the licenser of plays), has enabled me to give the exact dates of many transactions which were previously uncertain, and to give references to documents of great importance in stage history, whose very existence was before unknown. How important my new matter is, may be estimated by comparing the facts given in my notes regarding the intricate transactions of the years 1707 to 1721, with any previous history of the same period. Among other sources of information, I may mention the Cibber Collections in the Forster Library at South Kensington, to which my attention was drawn by the kindness of the courteous keeper, Mr. R. F. Sketchley; and I have also, of course, devoted much time to contemporary newspapers.

In order to illustrate the "Apology," two tracts of the utmost rarity, the "Historia Histrionica" and Anthony Aston's "Brief Supplement" to Cibber's "Lives of the Actors," are reprinted in this edition. The "Historia Histrionica" was written, all authorities agree, by James Wright, barrister-at-law, whose "History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland" is quoted by Cibber in his first chapter (vol. i. p. 65). The historical value of this pamphlet is very great, because it contains the only formal account in existence of the gener-

ation of actors who preceded Betterton, and because it gives many curious and interesting particulars regarding the theatres and plays, as well as the actors, before and during the Civil Wars. As Cibber begins his account of the stage (see chap. iv.) at the Restoration, there is a peculiar propriety in prefacing it by Wright's work; a fact which has already been recognised, for the publisher of the third edition (1750) of the "Apology" appended to it "A Dialogue on Old Plays and Old Players," which is simply a reprint of the "Historia Histrionica" under another title, and without the curious preface.

Following the "Historia Histrionica" will be found a copy of the patent granted to Sir William Davenant, one of the most important documents in English stage history. A similar grant was made to Thomas Killigrew, as is noted on page 145 of this volume.

These documents form a natural introduction to Cibber's history of the stage and of his own career, which commences, as has been said, at the Restoration, and ends, somewhat abruptly, with his retirement from the regular exercise of his profession in 1733. To complete the record of Cibber's life, I have added a supplementary chapter to the "Apology," in which I have also noted briefly the chief incidents of theatrical history up to the time of his death. In this, too, I have told with some degree of minuteness the story of his

famous quarrel with Pope; and to this chapter I have appended a list of Cibber's dramatic productions, and a bibliography of works by, or relating to him.

Anthony Aston's "Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber, Esq.; His Lives of the Late Famous Actors and Actresses," of which a reprint is given with this edition, is almost, if not quite, the rarest of theatrical books. Isaac Reed, says Genest, "wrote his name in his copy of Aston's little book, with the date of 1769; he says: 'This pamphlet contains several circumstances concerning the performers of the last century, which are nowhere else to be found; it seems never to have been published.' He adds: 'Easter Monday, 1795 — though I have now possessed this pamphlet twenty-six years, it is remarkable that I never have seen another copy of it.'" Of Aston himself, little is known. According to his own account he came on the stage about 1700, and we know that he was a noted stroller; but as to when he was born, or when he died, there is no information. He is supposed, and probably with justice, to be the "trusty Anthony, who has so often adorned both the theatres in England and Ireland," mentioned in Estcourt's advertisement of his opening of the Bumper Tavern, in the *Spectator* of 28th and 29th December, 1711; and he was, no doubt, a well-known character among actors and theatre-goers. He would thus be well qualified for his

undertaking as biographer of the actors of his time; and, indeed, his work bears every mark of being the production of a writer thoroughly well acquainted with his subject. This valuable pamphlet has been, until now, practically a sealed book to theatrical students.

The "Apology" of Cibber has gone through six editions. I have reprinted the text of the second, because it was certainly revised by the author, and many corrections made. But I have carefully compared my text with that of the first edition, and, wherever the correction is more than merely verbal, I have indicated the fact in a note (*e. g.* vol. i. p. 129). The only edition which has been annotated is that published in 1822, under the editorship of Edmund Bellchambers. Whether the notes were written by the editor or by Jacob Henry Burn, who annotated Dickens's "Grimaldi," is a point which I have raised in my "Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature" (p. 373). I have been unable to obtain any authentic information on the subject, so give Burn's claim for what it is worth. The statement as to the latter's authorship was made in his own handwriting on the back of the title-page of a copy of the book, sold by a well-known bookseller some years ago. It was in the following terms:

"In 1821, while residing at No. 28 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, the elder Oxberry, who frequently called in as he

passed, found me one day adding notes in MS. to Cibber's 'Apology.' Taking it up, he said he should like to reprint it; he wanted something to employ the spare time of his hands, and proffered to buy my copy, thus annotated. I think it was two pounds I said he should have it for; this sum he instantly paid, and the notes throughout are mine, not Bellchambers's, who having seen it through the press or corrected the proofs whilst printing, added his name as the editor. — J. H. BURN."

Whether Burn or Bellchambers be the author, the notes, I find, are by no means faultlessly accurate. I have made little use of them, except that the biographies, which are by far the most valuable of the annotations, are reprinted at the end of my second volume. Even in these, it will be seen, I have corrected many blunders. Some of the memoirs I have condensed slightly, and as the biographies of Booth, Dogget, and Wilks were in all essential points merely a repetition of Cibber's narrative, I have not reprinted them. In all cases where I have made any use of Bellchambers's edition, or have had a reference suggested to me by it, I have carefully acknowledged my indebtedness.

Among the works of contemporary writers which I have quoted, either in illustration, in criticism, or in contradiction of Cibber, it will be noticed that I make large drafts upon the anonymous pamphlet entitled "The Laureat: or the Right Side of Colley Cibber, Esq." (1740). I

have done this because it furnishes the keenest criticism upon Cibber's statements, and gives, in an undeniably clever style, the views of Cibber's enemies upon himself and his works. I am unable even to guess who was the author of this work, but he must have been a man well acquainted with theatrical matters.

Another pamphlet from which I quote, "The Egotist: or Colley upon Cibber" (1743), is interesting as being, I think without doubt, the work of Cibber himself, although not acknowledged by him.

Many of the works which I quote in my notes have gone through only one edition, and my quotations from these are easily traced; but, for the convenience of those who may wish to follow up any of my references to books which have been more than once issued, I may mention that in the case of Davies's "Dramatic Miscellanies" I have referred thoughout to the edition of 1785; that Dr. Birkbeck Hill's magnificent edition of Boswell's "Life of Johnson" is that which I have quoted; and that the references to Nichols's reprint of Steele's "Theatre," the "Anti-Theatre," etc., are to the scarce and valuable edition in two volumes duodecimo, 1791. My quotations from the *Tatler* have been made from a set of the original folio numbers, which I am fortunate enough to possess; and I have made my extracts from the "Roscius Anglicanus" from Mr. Joseph Knight's beautiful fac-

simile edition. The index, which will be found at the end of the second volume, has been the object of my special attention, and I have spared no pains to make it clear and exhaustive.

ROBERT W. LOWE.

LONDON, *September, 1888.*

HISTORIA HISTRIONICA

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE

ENGLISH STAGE

Shewing the ancient Use, Improvement and Perfection
of Dramatick Representations in this nation
in a Dialogue of Plays and Players

PREFACE

MUCH has been writ of late, pro and con, about the stage, yet the subject admits of more, and that which has not been hetherto toucht upon; not only what that is, but what it was, about which some people have made such a busle. What it is we see, and I think it has been sufficiently display'd in Mr. Collier's book; what it was in former ages, and how used in this kingdom, so far back as one may collect any memorialls, is the subject of the following dialogue. Old plays will be always read by the curious, if it were only to discover the manners and behaviour of several ages, and how they alter'd. For plays are exactly like portraits drawn in the garb and fashion of the time when painted. You see one habit in the time of King Charles I., another quite different from that, both for men and women, in Queen Elizabeth's time; another under Henry the Eighth different from both; and so backward all various. And in the several fashions of behaviour and conversation, there is as much mutability as in that of cloaths. Religion and religious matters was once as much the mode in publick entertain-

ments as the contrary has been in some times since. This appears in the different plays of several ages: and to evince this, the following sheets are an essay or specimen.

Some may think the subject of this discourse trivial, and the persons herein mention'd not worth remembering. But besides that I could name some things contested of late with great heat, of as little, or less consequence, the reader may know that the profession of players is not so totally scandalous, nor all of them so reprobate, but that there has been found under that name, a canonised saint in the primitive Church, as may be seen in the Roman Martyrology on the 29th of March; his name Masculas, a master of interludes (the Latin is *archimimus* and the French translation *un maitre comedien*), who under the persecution of the Vandals in Africa, by Geisericus, the Arian king, having endured many and greivious torments and reproaches for the confession of the truth, finisht the course of this glorious combat, saith the said Martyrology.

It appears from this, and some further instances in the following discourse, that there have been players of worthy principles as to religion, loyalty, and other virtues; and if the major part of them fall under a different character, it is the general unhappiness of mankind, that the most are the worst.

A DIALOGUE OF PLAYS AND PLAYERS

LOVEWIT, TRUMAN.

LOVEW. Honest old cavalier! well met, 'faith I'm glad to see thee.

TRUM. Have a care what you call me. Old is a word of disgrace among the ladies; to be honest is to be poor, and foolish (as some think), and cavalier is a word as much out of fashion as any of 'em.

LOVEW. The more's the pity: but what said the Fortune-teller in Ben. Johnson's mask of "Gypsies," to the then lord privy seal, —

"Honest and old!
In those the good part of a fortune is told."

TRUM. Ben. Johnson? How dare you name Ben. Johnson in these times? When we have such a crowd of poets of a quite different genius; the least of which thinks himself as well able to

correct Ben. Johnson, as he could a country school mistress that taught to spell.

LOVEW. We have indeed poets of a different genius; so are the plays: but in my opinion, they are all of 'em (some few excepted) as much inferior to those of former times, as the actors now in being (generally speaking) are, compared to Hart, Mohun, Burt, Lacy, Clun, and Shatterel; for I can reach no farther backward.

TRUM. I can; and dare assure you, if my fancy and memory are not partial (for men of my age are apt to be over indulgent to the thoughts of their youthful days), I say the actors that I have seen before the wars, Lowin, Tayler, Pollard, and some others, were almost as far beyond Hart and his company, as those were beyond these now in being.

LOVEW. I am willing to believe it, but cannot readily; because I have been told, that those whom I mention'd were bred up under the others of your acquaintance, and follow'd their manner of action, which is now lost. So far, that when the question has been askt, why these players do not revive the "Silent Woman," and some other of Johnson's plays (once of highest esteem), they have answer'd, truly, because there are none now living who can rightly humour those parts; for all who related to the Black-friers (where they were acted in perfection) are now dead, and almost forgotten.

TRUM. 'Tis very true, Hart and Clun were bred up boys at the Black-friers, and acted women's parts. Hart was Robinson's boy or apprentice: he acted the Dutchess in the tragedy of "The Cardinal," which was the first part that gave him reputation. Cartwright and Wintershal belong'd to the private house in Salisbury-court, Burt was a boy first under Shank at the Black-friers, then under Beeston at the Cockpit; and Mohun and Shatterel were in the same condition with him, at the last place. There Burt used to play the principal women's parts, in particular Clariana in "Love's Cruelty;" and at the same time Mohun acted Bellamente, which part he retain'd after the Restauration.

LOVEW. That I have seen, and can well remember. I wish they had printed in the last age (so I call the times before the Rebellion) the actors' names over against the parts they acted, as they have done since the Restauration. And thus one might have guest at the action of the men, by the parts which we now read in the old plays.

TRUM. It was not the custome and usage of those days, as it hath been since. Yet some few old plays there are that have the names set against the parts, as "The Dutchess of Malfy;" "The Picture;" "The Roman Actor;" "The Deserving Favourite;" "The Wild Goose Chace" (at the Black-friers); "The Wedding;" "The Renegado;" "The Fair Maid of the West;"

"Hannibal and Scipio;" "King John and Matilda" (at the Cockpit); and "Holland's Leaguer" (at Salisbury Court).

LOVEW. These are but few indeed. But pray, sir, what master-parts can you remember the old Black-friers men to act, in Johnson, Shakespear, and Fletcher's plays?

TRUM. What I can at present recollect I'll tell you; Shakespear (who, as I have heard, was a much better poet than player), Burbadge, Hemmings, and others of the older sort, were dead before I knew the town; but in my time, before the wars, Lowin used to act, with mighty applause, Falstaffe, Morose, Volpone, and Mammon in the "Alchymist;" Melancius, in the "Maid's Tragedy," and at the same time Amyntor was played by Stephen Hammerton (who was at first a most noted and beautiful woman actor, but afterward he acted with equal grace and applause a young lover's part); Tayler acted Hamlet incomparably well, Jago, Truewit in the "Silent Woman," and Face in the "Alchymist;" Swanston used to play Othello; Pollard and Robinson were comedians; so was Shank, who us'd to act Sir Roger in "The Scornful Lady." These were of the Black-friers. Those of principal note at the Cockpit were, Perkins, Michael Bowyer, Sumner, William Allen, and Bird, eminent actors, and Robins, a comedian. Of the other companies I took little notice.

LOVEW. Were there so many companies?

TRUM. Before the wars, there were in being all these play-houses at the same time. The Black-friers, and Globe on the Bankside, a Winter and Summer House, belonging to the same company, called the King's Servants; the Cockpit or Phœnix, in Drury-lane, called the Queen's Servants; the private house in Salisbury-court, called the Prince's Servants; the Fortune near White-cross-street, and the Red Bull at the upper end of St. John's-street. The two last were mostly frequented by citizens, and the meaner sort of people. All these companies got money, and liv'd in reputation, especially those of the Black-friers, who were men of grave and sober behaviour.

LOVEW. Which I admire at: that the town, much less than at present, could then maintain five companies, and yet now two can hardly subsist.

TRUM. Do not wonder, but consider, that tho' the town was then, perhaps, not much more than half so populous as now, yet then the prices were small (there being no scenes) and better order kept among the company that came; which made very good people think a play an innocent diversion for an idle hour or two, the plays themselves being then, for the most part, more instructive and moral. Whereas of late the play-houses are so extreamly pestered with vizard-masks and their trade (occasioning continual quarrels and abuses)

that many of the more civilised part of the town are uneasy in the company, and shun the theater as they would a house of scandal. It is an argument of the worth of the plays and actors of the last age, and easily inferr'd that they were much beyond ours in this, to consider that they cou'd support themselves meerly from their own merit, the weight of the matter, and goodness of the action, without scenes and machines; whereas the present plays, with all that shew, can hardly draw an audience, unless there be the additional invitation of a Signior Fideli, a Monsieur l'Abbe, or some such foreign regale exprest in the bottom of the bill.

LOVEW. To waive this digression, I have read of one Edward Allin, a man so famed for excellent action, that among Ben. Johnson's epigrams I find one directed to him, full of encomium, and concluding thus:

> "Wear this renown, 'tis just that who did give
> So many poets life, by one should live."

Was he one of the Black-friers?

TRUM. Never, as I have heard (for he was dead before my time). He was master of a company of his own, for whom he built the Fortune Play-house from the ground, a large, round brick building. This is he that grew so rich that he purchased a great estate in Surrey and elsewhere; and having no issue, he built and largely endow'd

Dulwich College, in the year 1619, for a master, a warden, four fellows, twelve aged poor people, and twelve poor boys, etc. A noble charity.

LOVEW. What kind of play-houses had they before the wars?

TRUM. The Black-friers, Cockpit, and Salisbury-court were called private houses, and were very small to what we see now. The Cockpit was standing since the Restauration, and Rhode's company acted there for some time.

LOVEW. I have seen that.

TRUM. Then you have seen the other two, in effect; for they were all three built almost exactly alike, for form and bigness. Here they had pits for the gentry, and acted by candle-light. The Globe, Fortune, and Bull were large houses, and lay partly open to the weather, and there they alwaies acted by daylight.

LOVEW. But, prithee, Truman, what became of these players when the stage was put down, and the Rebellion rais'd?

TRUM. Most of 'em, except Lowin, Tayler, and Pollard (who were superannuated), went into the king's army, and like good men and true serv'd their old master, tho' in a different, yet more honourable, capacity. Robinson was kill'd at the taking of a place (I think Basing House) by Harrison, he that was after hang'd at Charing-cross, who refused him quarter, and shot him in the head when he had laid down his arms; abus-

ing Scripture at the same time, in saying, "Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently." Mohun was a captain (and after the wars were ended here, served in Flanders, where he received pay as a major), Hart was a lieutenant of horse under Sir Thomas Dallison, in Prince Rupert's regiment, Burt was cornet in the same troop, and Shatterel quarter-master. Allen, of the Cockpit, was a major, and quarter-master general at Oxford. I have not heard of one of these players of any note that sided with the other party, but only Swanston, and he profest himself a Presbyterian, took up the trade of a jeweller, and liv'd in Aldermanbury, within the territory of Father Calamy. The rest either lost or expos'd their lives for their king. When the wars were over, and the Royalists totally subdued, most of 'em who were left alive gather'd to London, and for a subsistence endeavour'd to revive their old trade, privately. They made up one company out of all the scatter'd members of several; and in the winter before the king's murder, 1648, they ventured to act some plays with as much caution and privacy as cou'd be, at the Cockpit. They continu'd undisturb'd for three or four days; but at last, as they were presenting the tragedy of the "Bloudy Brother" (in which Lowin acted Aubrey, Tayler Rollo, Pollard the Cook, Burt Latorch, and I think Hart Otto), a party of foot souldiers beset the house, surpris'd 'em about the midle of the play,

and carried 'em away in their habits, not admitting them to shift, to Hatton-house, then a prison, where having detain'd them some time, they plunder'd them of their cloths and let 'em loose again. Afterwards in Oliver's time, they used to act privately, three or four miles, or more, out of town, now here, now there, sometimes in noblemen's houses, in particular Holland-house at Kensington, where the nobility and gentry who met (but in no great numbers) used to make a sum for them, each giving a broad peice, or the like. And Alexander Goffe, the woman actor at Black-friers (who had made himself known to persons of quality), used to be the Jackal, and give notice of time and place. At Christmass, and Bartlemew-fair, they used to bribe the officer who commanded the guard at Whitehall, and were thereupon connived at to act for a few days, at the Red Bull; but were sometimes notwithstanding disturb'd by soldiers. Some pickt up a little money by publishing the copies of plays never before printed, but kept up in manuscript. For instance, in the year 1652, Beaumont and Fletcher's "Wild Goose Chace" was printed in folio, for the public use of all the ingenious (as the title-page says) and private benefit of John Lowin and Joseph Tayler, servants to his late Majesty, and by them dedicated to the honour'd few lovers of dramatick poesy: wherein they modestly intimate their wants. And that with sufficient cause; for what-

ever they were before the wars, they were, after, reduced to a necessitous condition. Lowin in his latter days kept an inn (the Three Pidgions) at Brentford, where he dyed very old (for he was an actor of eminent note in the reign of K. James the First), and his poverty was as great as his age. Tayler dyed at Richmond and was there buried. Pollard, who lived single, and had a competent estate, retired to some relations he had in the country, and there ended his life. Perkins and Sumner, of the Cockpit, kept house together at Clerkenwel, and were there buried. These all dyed some years before the Restauration. What follow'd after, I need not tell you: you can easily remember.

LOVEW. Yes, presently after the Restauration, the King's Players acted publickly at the Red Bull for some time, and then removed to a new-built play-house in Vere-street, by Clare-market. There they continued for a year or two, and then removed to the Theater Royal in Drury-lane, where they first made use of scenes, which had been a little before introduced upon the publick stage by Sir William Davenant at the Duke's Old Theater in Lincoln's-Inn-fields, but afterwards very much improved, with the addition of curious machines, by Mr. Betterton at the New Theater in Dorset-Garden, to the great expence and continual charge of the players. This much impair'd their profit o'er what it was before; for I have

been inform'd (by one of 'em) that for several years next after the Restauration, every whole sharer in Mr. Hart's company got £1,000 per an. About the same time that scenes first enter'd upon the stage at London, women were taught to act their own parts; since when, we have seen at both houses several excellent actresses, justly famed as well for beauty as perfect good action. And some plays (in particular "The Parson's Wedding") have been presented all by women, as formerly all by men. Thus it continued for about 20 years, when Mr. Hart and some of the old men began to grow weary, and were minded to leave off; then the two companies thought fit to unite; but of late, you see, they have thought it no less fit to divide again, though both companies keep the same name of his Majesty's servants. All this while the play-house musick improved yearly, and is now arrived to greater perfection than ever I knew it. Yet for all these advantages, the reputation of the stage, and people's affection to it, are much decay'd. Some were lately severe against it, and would hardly allow stage-plays fit to be longer permitted. Have you seen Mr. Collier's book?

TRUM. Yes, and his opposer's.

LOVEW. And what think you?

TRUM. In my mind Mr. Collier's reflections are pertinent, and true in the main; the book ingeniously writ and well intended: but he has

overshot himself in some places; and his respondents, perhaps, in more. My affection inclines me not to engage on either side, but rather mediate. If there be abuses relating to the stage (which I think is too apparent), let the abuse be reformed, and not the use, for that reason only, abolish'd. 'Twas an old saying, when I was a boy, —

"*Absit abusus, non desit totaliter usus.*"

I shall not run through Mr. Collier's book; I will only touch a little on two or three general notions, in which I think he may be mistaken. What he urges out of the primitive councils, and Fathers of the Church, seems to me to be directed against the heathen plays, which were a sort of religious worship with them, to the honour of Ceres, Flora, or some of their false deities; they had always a little altar on their stages, as appears plain enough from some places in Plautus. And Mr. Collier himself, p. 235, tells us out of Livy that plays were brought in upon the score of religion, to pacify the gods. No wonder, then, they forbid Christians to be present at them, for it was almost the same as to be present at their sacrifices. We must also observe that this was in the infancy of Christianity, when the Church was under severe, and almost continual persecutions, and when all its true members were of most strict and exemplary lives, not knowing when they should be

call'd to the stake, or thrown to wild beasts. They communicated daily, and expected death hourly; their thoughts were intent upon the next world, they abstain'd almost wholly from all diversions and pleasures (though lawfull and innocent) in this. Afterwards, when persecution ceased and the Church flourisht, Christians, being then freed from their former terrors, allow'd themselves, at proper times, the lawfull recreations of conversation, and among other (no doubt) this of shewes and representations. After this time, the censures of the Church indeed might be continued, or revived, upon occasion, against plays and players; tho' (in my opinion) it cannot be understood generally, but only against such players who were of vicious and licencious lives, and represented profane subjects, inconsistant with the morals and probity of manners requisite to Christians; and frequented chiefly by such loose and debaucht people, as were much more apt to corrupt than divert those who associated with them. I say, I cannot think the canons and censures of the Fathers can be applyed to all players, *quatenus* players; for if so how could plays be continued among the Christians, as they were, of divine subjects, and Scriptural stories? A late French author, speaking of the original of the Hotel de Bourgogne (a play-house in Paris), says that the ancient dukes of that name gave it to the Brotherhood of the Passion, established in the Church of

Trinity-Hospital in the Rue S. Denis, on condition that they should represent here interludes of devotion: and adds that there have been public shews in this place 600 years ago. The Spanish and Portuguize continue still to have, for the most part, such ecclesiastical stories for the subject of their plays: and, if we may believe Gage, they are acted in their churches in Mexico, and the Spanish West-Indies.

LOVEW. That's a great way off, Truman; I had rather you would come nearer home, and confine your discourse to old England.

TRUM. So I intend. The same has been done here in England; for otherwise how comes it to be prohibited in the 88th Canon, among those past in Convocation, 1603. Certain it is that our ancient plays were of religious subjects, and had for their actors (if not priests) yet men relating to the Church.

LOVEW. How does that appear?

TRUM. Nothing clearer. Stow, in his "Survey of London," has one chapter "Of the Sports and Pastimes of Old Time used in This City;" and there he tells us, that in the year 1391 (which was 15 R. 2) a stage-play was play'd by the parish-clerks of London, at the Skinner's-well beside Smithfield, which play continued three days together, the king, queen, and nobles of the realm being present. And another was play'd in the year 1409 (11 H. 4) which lasted eight days, and

was of matter from the creation of the world; whereat was present most part of the nobility and gentry of England. Sir William Dugdale, in his "Antiquities of Warwickshire," p. 116 speaking of the Gray-friers (or Franciscans) at Coventry, says, before the suppression of the monasteries, this city was very famous for the pageants that were play'd therein upon Corpus-Christi Day; which pageants being acted with mighty state and reverence by the friers of this house, had theatres for the several scenes very large and high, plac'd upon wheels, and drawn to all the eminent parts of the city, for the better advantage of the spectators; and contain'd the story of the New Testament, composed in old English rhime. An ancient manuscript of the same is now to be seen in the Cottonian Library, Sub Effig. Vespat. D. 8. Since the Reformation, in Queen Elizabeth's time, plays were frequently acted by quiristers and singing boys; and several of our old comedies have printed in the title-page, "Acted by the Children of Paul's" (not the school, but the church), others, "By the Children of Her Majesty's Chappel;" in particular, "Cinthia's Revels," and the "Poetaster" were play'd by them, who were at that time famous for good action. Among Ben. Johnson's Epigrams you may find "An Epitaph on S. P. (Sal Pavy), one of the Children of Queen Elizabeth's Chappel," part of which runs thus:

"Years he counted scarce thirteen
When Fates turn'd cruel,
Yet three fill'd zodiacks he had been
The stage's jewell;
And did act (what now we moan)
Old men so duly,
As, sooth, the Parcæ thought him one,
He play'd so truly."

Some of these chappel boys, when they grew men, became actors at the Black-friers; such were Nathan Feild and John Underwood. Now I can hardly imagine that such plays and players as these are included in the severe censure of the councils and Fathers; but such only who are truly within the character given by Didacus de Tapia, cited by Mr. Collier, p. 276; viz., "The infamous play-house; a place of contradiction to the strictness and sobriety of religion; a place hated by God, and haunted by the devil." And for such I have as great an abhorrance as any man.

LOVEW. Can you guess of what antiquity the representing of religious matters, on the stage, hath been in England?

TRUM. How long before the Conquest I know not, but that it was used in London not long after, appears by Fitz-Stevens, an author who wrote in the reign of King Henry the Second. His words are: "Londonia pro spectaculis theatralibus, pro ludis scenicis, ludos habet sanctiores, representa-

tiones miraculorum, quæ sancti confessores operati sunt, seu representationes passionum quibus claruit constantia Martyrum." Of this, the manuscript which I lately mention'd, in the Cottonian Library, is a notable instance. Sir William Dugdale cites this manuscript, by the title of "Ludus Coventriæ;" but in the printed catalogue of that library, p. 113, it is named thus: "A Collection of Plays in old English Metre. *h. e.* Dramata sacra in quibus exhibentur historiæ Veteris & N. Testamenti, introductis quasi in scenam personis illic memoratis, quas secum invicem colloquentes pro ingenio fingit poeta. Videntur olim coram populo, sive ad instruendum sive ad placendum, a fratribus mendicantibus repræsentata." It appears by the latter end of the prologue, that these plays or interludes were not only play'd at Coventry, but in other towns and places upon occasion. And possibly this may be the same play which Stow tells us was play'd in the reign of King Henry IV., which lasted for eight days. The book seems by the character and language to be at least three hundred years old. It begins with a general prologue, giving the arguments of forty pageants or gesticulations (which were as so many several acts or scenes) representing all the histories of both Testaments, from the Creation, to the choosing of St. Mathias to be an Apostle. The stories of the New Testament are more largely exprest: viz., The Annunciation, Nativity, Visitation; but

more especially all matters relating to the Passion very particularly, the Resurrection, Ascention, the choice of St. Mathias; after which is also represented the Assumption and Last Judgment. All these things were treated of in a very homely style (as we now think), infinitely below the dignity of the subject: but it seems the gust of that age was not so nice and delicate in these matters; the plain and incurious judgment of our ancestors being prepared with favour and taking everything by the right and easiest handle. For example, in the scene relating to the Visitation:

"*Maria.* But husband of oo thyng pray you most mekely,
I haue knowing that our Cosyn Elizabeth with childe is,
That it please yow to go to her hastyly,
If ought we myth comfort her it wer to me blys.
Joseph. A Gods sake, is she with child, sche?
Than will her husband Zachary be mery.
In Montana they dwelle, fer hence, so moty the,
In the city of Juda, I know it verily;
It is hence I trowe myles two a fifty,
We ar like to be wery or we come at the same.
I wole with a good will, blessyd wyff Mary;
Now go we forth then in goddys name," etc.

A little before the Resurrection:

"*Nunc dormient milites, & veniet anima Christi de inferno, cum* Adam & Eva, Abraham, John Baptist, & *aliis.*

Anima Christi. Come forth Adam, and Eve with the,
And all my fryndes that herein be,

In Paradys come forth with me
In blysse for to dwelle.
The fende of hell that is yowr foo
He shall be wrappyd and woundyn in woo:
Fro wo to welth now shall ye go,
With myrth euer mor to melle.
Adam. I thank the Lord of thy grete grace
That now is forgiuen my gret trespace,
Now shall we dwellyn in blyssful pace," etc.

The last scene or pageant, which represents the Day of Judgment, begins thus:

"*Michael.* *Surgite*, All men aryse,
Venite ad judicium,
For now is set the High Justice,
And hath assignyd the day of Dome:
Kepe you redyly to this grett assyse,
Both gret and small, all and sum,
And of yowr answer you now advise,
What you shall say when that yow com," etc.

These, and such like, were the plays which in former ages were presented publickly: whether they had any settled and constant houses for that purpose, does not appear; I suppose not. But it is notorious that in former times there was hardly ever any solemn reception of princes, or noble persons, but pageants (that is, stages erected in the open street) were part of the entertainment. On which there were speeches by one or more persons, in the nature of scenes; and be sure one of the speakers must be some saint of the same

name with the party to whom the honour is intended. For instance, there is an ancient manuscript at Coventry, call'd the "Old Leet Book," wherein is set down in a very particular manner (fo. 168) the reception of Queen Margaret, wife of H. 6, who came to Coventry (and I think, with her, her young son, Prince Edward) on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy-Cross, 35 H. 6 (1456). Many pageants and speeches were made for her welcome; out of all which, I shall observe but two or three, in the old English, as it is recorded:

"*St. Edward.* Moder of mekenes, Dame Margarete, princes most excellent,
I King Edward wellcome you with affection cordial,
Certefying to your highnes mekely myn entent,
For the wele of the King and you hertily pray I shall,
And for prince Edward my gostly chylde, who I love principal.
Praying the, John Evangelist, my help therein to be,
On that condition right humbly I giue this Ring to the."

"*John Evangelist.* Holy Edward crowned King, Brother in Verginity,
My power plainly I will prefer thy will to amplefy.
Most excellent princes of wymen mortal, your Bedeman will I be.
I know your Life so vertuous that God is pleased thereby.
The birth of you unto this Reme shall cause great Melody:
The vertuous voice of Prince Edward shall dayly well encrease
St. Edward his Godfader and I shall pray therefore doubtlese."

"*St. Margaret.* Most notabul princes of wymen earthle,
Dame Margarete, the chefe myrth of this Empyre,
Ye be hertely welcome to this Cyte.
To the plesure of your highnesse I wyll set my desyre;
Both nature and gentlenesse doth me require,
Seth we be both of one name, to shew you kindnesse;
Wherefore by my power ye shall have no distresse.

"I shall pray to the Prince that is endlese
To socour you with solas of his high grace;
He will here my petition this is doubtlesse,
For I wrought all my life that his will wace.
Therefore, Lady, when you be in any dredfull case,
Call on me boldly, thereof I pray you,
And trust in me feythfully, I will do that may pay you."

In the next reign (as appears in the same book, fo. 221) another Prince Edward, son of King Edward the 4, came to Coventry on the 28 of April, 14 E. 4 (1474), and was entertain'd with many pageants and speeches, among which I shall observe only two; one was of St. Edward again, who was then made to speak thus:

"Noble Prince Edward, my Cousin and my Knight,
And very Prince of our Line com yn dissent,
I Saint Edward have pursued for your faders imperial Right,
Whereof he was excluded by full furious intent.
Unto this your Chamber as prince full excellent
Ye be right welcome. Thanked be Crist of his sonde,
For that that was ours is now in your faders honde."

The other speech was from St. George; and thus saith the book:

". . . Also upon the Condite in the Croscheping was St. George armed, and a kings daughter kneling afore him with a Lamb, and the fader and the moder being in a Towre aboven beholding St. George saving their daughter from the Dragon, and the Condite renning wine in four places, and Minstralcy of Organ playing, and St. George hauing this Speech underwritten."

"O mighty God our all succour celestiall,
Which this Royme hast given in dower
To thi moder, and to me George protection perpetuall
It to defend from enimys fer and nere,
And as this mayden defended was here
By thy grace from this Dragons devour,
So, Lord preserve this noble prince, and ever be his socour."

LOVEW. I perceive these holy matters consisted very much of praying; but I pitty poor St. Edward the confessor, who in the compass of a few years was made to promise his favour and assistance to two young princes of the same name indeed, but of as different and opposite interests as the two poles. I know not how he could perform to both.

TRUM. Alas! they were both unhappy, notwithstanding these fine shews and seeming caresses of Fortune, being both murder'd, one by the hand, the other by the procurement of Rich. Duke of Glocester. I will produce but one example more of this sort of action, or representations, and that is of later time, and an instance of much higher nature than any yet mentioned; it was at the marriage of Prince Arthur, eldest son of King Henry 7, to the Princess Catherine of Spain, an

1501. Her passage through London was very magnificent, as I have read it described in an old MS. chronicle of that time. The pageants and speeches were many; the persons represented St. Catherine, St. Ursula, a Senator, Noblesse, Virtue, an Angel, King Alphonse, Job, Boetius, etc.; among others one is thus described:

"When this Spech was ended, she held on her way tyll she cam unto the Standard in Chepe, where was ordeyned the fifth Pagend made like an hevyn, theryn syttyng a Personage representing the fader of hevyn, beyng all formyd of Gold, and brennying beffor his trone vii Candyilis of wax standyng in vii Candylstykis of Gold, the said personage beyng environed wyth sundry Hyrarchies off Angelis, and sytting in a Cope of most rich cloth of Tyssu, garnishyd wyth stoon and perle in most sumptuous wyse. Foragain which said Pagend upon the sowth syde of the strete stood at that tyme, in a hows wheryn that tyme dwellyd William Geffrey habyrdasher, the king, the Quene, my Lady the Kingys moder, my Lord of Oxynfford, with many othir Lordys and Ladys, and Perys of this Realm, wyth also certayn Ambassadors of France lately sent from the French King; and so passyng the said Estatys, eyther guyvyng to other due and convenyent Saluts and Countenancs, so sone as hyr grace was approachid unto the sayd Pagend, the fadyr began his Spech as followyth:

"*Hunc veneram locum, septeno lumine septum.*
Dignumque Arthuri totidem astra micant.

"I am begynyng and ende, that made ech creature
My sylfe, and for my sylfe, but man esspecially
Both male and female, made aftyr myne aun fygure,

Whom I joyned togydyr in Matrimony
And that in Paradyse, declaring opynly
That men shall weddyng in my Chyrch solempnize,
Fygurid and signifyed by the erthly Paradyze.

"In thys my Chyrch I am allway recydent
As my chyeff tabernacle, and most chosyn place,
Among these goldyn candylstikkis, which represent
My Catholyk Chyrch, shynyng affor my face,
With lyght of feyth, wisdom, doctryne, and grace,
And mervelously eke enflamyd toward me
Wyth the extyngwible fyre of Charyte.

"Wherefore, my welbelovid dowgthyr Katharyn,
Syth I have made yow to myne awn semblance
In my Chyrch to be maried, and your noble Childryn
To regn in this land as in their enherytance,
Se that ye have me in speciall remembrance:
Love me and my Chyrch yowr spiritual modyr,
For ye dispysing that oon, dyspyse that othyr.

"Look that ye walk in my precepts, and obey them well:
And here I give you the same blyssyng that I
Gave my well beloved chylder of Israell;
Blyssyd be the fruyt of your bely;
Yower substance and frutys I shall encrease and multyply;
Yower rebellious Enimyes I shall put in yowr hand,
Encreasing in honour both yow and yowr land."

LOVEW. This would be censured nowadays as profane to the highest degree.

TRUM. No doubt on't; yet you see there was a time when People were not so nicely censorious in these matters, but were willing to take things in the best sence: and then this was thought a

noble entertainment for the greatest king in Europe (such I esteem King H. 7 at that time), and proper for that day of mighty joy and triumph. And I must farther observe out of the Lord Bacon's history of H. 7 that the chief man who had the care of that day's proceedings was Bishop Fox, a grave councelor for war or peace, and also a good surveyor of works, and a good master of cerimonies, and it seems he approv'd it. The said Lord Bacon tells us farther, that whosoever had those toys in compiling, they were not altogether pedantical.

LOVEW. These things however are far from that which we understand by the name of a play.

TRUM. It may be so; but these were the plays of those times. Afterwards, in the reign of K. H. 8, both the subject and form of these plays began to alter, and have since varied more and more. I have by me, a thing called "A Merry Play between the Pardoner and the Frere, the Curate and Neybour Pratte." Printed the 5 of April, 1533, which was 24 H. 8 (a few years before the dissolution of monasteries). The design of this play was to redicule friers and pardoners. Of which I'll give you a taste. To begin it, the fryer enters with these words:

"*Deus hic;* the holy Trynyte
Preserue all that now here be.
Dere bretherne, yf ye will consyder
The Cause why I am com hyder,

Ye wolde be glad to knowe my entent;
For I com not hyther for mony nor for rent,
I com not hyther for meat nor for meale,
But I com hyther for your Soules heale," etc.

After a long preamble, he addresses himself to preach, when the pardoner enters with these words,

"God and St. Leonarde send ye all his grace
As many as ben assembled in this place," etc., —

And makes a long speech, shewing his bulls and his reliques, in order to sell his pardons for the raising some money towards the rebuilding —

"Of the holy Chappell of sweet saynt Leonarde,
Which late by fyre was destroyed and marde."

Both these speaking together, with continual interruption, at last they fall together by the ears. Here the curate enters (for you must know the scene lies in the church):

"Hold your hands; a vengeance on ye both two
That euer ye came hyther to make this ado,
To polute my Chyrche," etc.

"*Fri.* Mayster Parson, I marvayll ye will give Lycence
To this false knaue in this Audience
To publish his ragman rolles with lyes.
I desyred hym ywys more than ones or twyse
To hold his peas tyll that I had done,
But he would here no more than the man in the mone.

Pard. Why sholde I suffre the, more than thou me?
Mayster parson gaue me lycence before the.
And I wolde thou knowest it I have relykes here,
Other maner stuffe than thou dost bere:
I wyll edefy more with the syght of it,
Than will all thy pratynge of holy wryt;
For that except that the precher himselfe lyve well,
His predycacyon wyll helpe never a dell," etc.

"*Pars.* No more of this wranglyng in my Chyrch;
I shrewe your hertys bothe for this lurche.
Is there any blood shed here between these knaues?
Thanked be god they had no stauys,
Nor egotoles, for then it had ben wronge.
Well, ye shall synge another songe."

Here he calls his neighbour Prat the constable, with design to apprehend 'em, and set 'em in the stocks. But the frier and pardoner prove sturdy, and will not be stockt, but fall upon the poor parson and constable, and bang 'em both so well-favour'dly, that at last they are glad to let 'em go at liberty: And so the farce ends with a drawn battail. Such as this were the plays of that age, acted in gentlemen's halls at Christmas, or such like festival times, by the servants of the family, or strowlers who went about and made it a trade. It is not unlikely that[1] lords in those days, and persons of eminent quality, had

[1] Till the 25 year of Queen Elizabeth, the queen had not any players; but in that year 12 of the best of all those who belonged to several lords were chosen and sworn her servants, as grooms of the chamber. "Stow's Annals," p 698.

their several gangs of players, as some have now of fidlers, to whom they give cloaks and badges. The first comedy that I have seen that looks like regular, is "Gammer Gurton's Needle," writ I think in the reign of King Edward 6. This is composed of five acts, the scenes unbroken, and the unities of time and place duly observed. It was acted at Christ Colledge in Cambridge; there not being as yet any settled and publick Theaters.

LOVEW. I observe, Truman, from what you have said, that plays in England had a beginning much like those of Greece, the monologues and the pageants drawn from place to place on wheels, answer exactly to the cart of Thespis, and the Improvements have been by such little steps and degrees as among the ancients, till at last, to use the words of Sir George Buck (in his "Third University of England") dramatick poesy is so lively exprest and represented upon the publick stages and theatres of this city, as Rome in the auge (the highest pitch) of her pomp and glory, never saw it better perform'd, I mean (says he) in respect of the action and art, and not of the cost and sumptiousness. This he writ about the year 1631. But can you inform me Truman, when publick theaters were first erected for this purpose in London?

TRUM. Not certainly; but I presume about the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign. For Stow in his "Survey of London" (which book was

first printed in the year 1598) says, Of late years, in place of these stage-plays (i. e. those of religious matters) have been used comedies, tragedies, interludes, and histories, both true and feigned; for the acting whereof certain publick places, as the theatre, the curtine, etc., have been erected. And the continuator of "Stow's Annals," p. 1004, says, That in sixty years before the publication of that book (which was An. Dom. 1629) no less than 17 publick stages, or common playhouses, had been built in and about London. In which number he reckons five inns or common osteries, to have been in this time turned into play-houses, one cock-pit, St. Paul's singing school, one in the Blackfriers, one in the Whitefriers, and one in former time at Newington Buts; and adds, before the space of 60 years past, I never knew, heard, or read, of any such theaters, set stages, or playhouses, as have been purposely built within man's memory.

LOVEW. After all, I have been told, that stage-plays are inconsistant with the laws of this kingdom, and players made rogues by statute.

TRUM. He that told you so strain'd a point of truth. I never met with any law wholly to suppress them: Sometimes indeed they have been prohibited for a season; as in times of Lent, general mourning or publick calamities, or upon other occasions, when the government saw fit. Thus by proclamation, 7 of April, in the first year of

Queen Elizabeth, plays and interludes were forbid till All hallow-tide next following. Hollinshed, p. 1184. Some statutes have been made for their regulation or reformation, not general suppression. By the Stat. 39 Eliz. c. 4 (which was made for the suppressing of rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars) it is enacted,

S. 2, That all persons that be, or utter themselves to be, proctors, procurers, patent gatherers, or collectors for gaols, prisons or hospitals, or fencers, barewards, common players of interludes and ministrels, wandering abroad (other than players of interludes belonging to any baron of this realm, or any other honourable personage of greater degree, to be authoriz'd to play under the hand and seal of arms of such baron or personage). All juglers, tinkers, pedlers, and petty chapmen, wandering abroad, all wandring persons, etc., able in body, using loytering, and refusing to work for such reasonable wages as is commonly given, etc. These shall be ajudged and deemed rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars, and punished as such.

LOVEW. But this priviledge of authorising or licensing is taken away by the Stat. 1 Ja. 1. ch. 7, S. 1, and therefore all of them (as Mr. Collier says, p. 242) are expresly brought under the foresaid penalty, without distinction.

TRUM. If he means all players, without distinction, 'tis a great mistake. For the force of the queen's statute extends only to wandring players, and not to such as are the king or queen's servants, and establisht in settled houses by royal

authority. On such, the ill character of vagrant players (or as they are now called, Strolers) can cast no more aspersion, than the wandring proctors, in the same statute mentioned, on those of doctors-commons. By a Stat. made 3 Ja. I. ch. 21. It was enacted,

> That if any person shall in any stage-play, enterlude, shew, Maygame, or pageant, jestingly or prophanely speak or use the holy name of God, Christ Jesus, the Holy Ghost, or of the Trinity, he shall forfeit for every such offence, 10*l.*

The Stat. 1 Char. I. ch. 1, enacts,

> That no meetings, assemblies, or concourse of people shall be out of their own parishes, on the Lord's day, for any sports or pastimes whatsoever, nor any bear-bating, bull-bating, enterludes, common plays, or other unlawful exercises and pastimes used by any person or persons within their own parishes.

These are all the statutes that I can think of relating to the stage and players; but nothing to suppress them totally, till the two ordinances of the Long Parliament, one of the 22 of October 1647, the other of the 11 of Feb. 1647. By which all stage-plays and interludes are absolutely forbid; the stages, seats, galleries, etc., to be pulled down; all players tho' calling themselves the king or queen's servants, if convicted of acting within two months before such conviction, to be pun-

ished as rogues according to law; the money received by them to go to the poor of the parish; and every spectator to pay 5*s.* to the use of the poor. Also cock-fighting was prohibited by one of Oliver's acts of 31 Mar. 1654. But I suppose no body pretends these things to be laws; I could say more on this subject, but I must break off here, and leave you, Lovewit; my occasions require it.

LOVEW. Farewel, old cavalier.

TRUM. 'Tis properly said; we are almost all of us, now, gone and forgotten.

15 January, 14 Car. II. 1662.

A Copy of the LETTERS PATENTS then granted by King Charles II. under the Great Seal of England, to SIR WILLIAM D'AVENANT, KNT., his Heirs and Assigns, for erecting a new Theatre and establishing of a company of actors in any place within London or Westminster, or the Suburbs of the same: And that no other but this company, and one other company, by virtue of a like Patent, to THOMAS KILLIGREW, ESQ., should be permitted within the said liberties.

CHARLES the Second, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, etc., to all to whom all these presents shall come, greeting.

Recites former patents, 14 Car. I. ann. 1639, to Sir Will. D'avenant.

Whereas our royal father of glorious memory, by his letters patents under his great seal of England bearing date at Westminster the 26th day of March, in the 14th year of his reign, did give and grant unto Sir William D'avenant (by the name of William D'avenant, Gent.), his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, full power, licence, and authority, That he, they, and every

of them, by him and themselves, and by all and every such person and persons as he or they should depute or appoint, and his and their laborers, servants, and workmen, should and might, lawfully, quietly, and peaceably, frame, erect, new build, and set up, upon a parcel of ground, lying near unto or behind the Three Kings ordinary in Fleet-street, in the parishes of St. Dunstan's in the West, London; or in St. Bride's, London; or in either of them, or in any other ground in or about that place, or in the whole street aforesaid, then allotted to him for that use; or in any other place that was, or then after should be assigned or allotted out to the said Sir William D'avenant by Thomas Earl of Arundel and Surry, then Earl Marshal of England, or any other commissioner for building, for the time being in that behalf, a theatre or playhouse, with necessary tiring and retiring rooms, and other places convenient, containing in the whole forty yards square at the most, wherein plays, musical entertainments, scenes, or other the like presentments might be presented. And our said royal father did grant unto the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs, executors, and administrators and assignes, that it should and might be lawful to and for him the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assignes, from time to time, to gather together, entertain, govern, privilege, and keep, such and so many players and persons to exercise ac-

tions, musical presentments, scenes, dancing, and the like, as he the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs, executors, administrators, or assignes, should think fit and approve for the said house. And such persons to permit and continue, at and during the pleasure of the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs, executors, administrators, or assignes, from time to time, to act plays in such house so to be by him or them erected, and exercise musick, musical presentments, scenes, dancing, or other the like, at the same or other houses or times, or after plays are ended, peaceably and quietly, without the impeachment or impediment of any person or persons whatsoever, for the honest recreation of such as should desire to see the same; and that it should and might be lawful to and for the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, to take and receive of such as should resort to see or hear any such plays, scenes, and entertainments whatsoever, such sum or sums of money as was or then after, from time to time, should be accustomed to be given or taken in other play-houses and places for the like plays, scenes, presentments, and entertainments as in and by the said letters patents, relation being thereunto had, more at large may appear.

13 Car. II. exemplification of said letters patents.

And whereas we did by our letters patents under the great seal of England, bearing date the 16th day of May, in the 13th year of our reign,

exemplifie the said recited letters patents granted by our royal father, as in and by the same, relation being thereunto had, at large may appear.

Surrender of both to the king in the Court of Chancery.

And whereas the said Sir William D'avenant hath surrendered our letters patents of exemplification, and also the said recited letters patents granted by our royal father, into our Court of Chancery, to be cancelled; which surrender we have accepted, and do accept by these presents.

New grant to Sir William D'avenant, his heirs and assignes.

Know ye that we of our especial grace, certain knowledge, and meer motion, and upon the humble petition of the said Sir William D'avenant, and in consideration of the good and faithful service which he the said Sir William D'avenant hath done unto us, and doth intend to do for the future; and in consideration of the said surrender, have given and granted, and by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors, do give and grant, unto the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, full power, licence, and authority, that he, they, and every one of them, by him and themselves, and by all and every such person and persons as he or they should depute or appoint, and his or their labourers, servants, and workmen, shall and may lawfully, peaceably, and quietly, frame, erect, new build, and set up, in any place within our cities of

To erect a theatre in London or Westminster, or the suburbs.

London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof, where he or they shall find best accommodation for that purpose; to be assigned and allotted out by the surveyor of our works; one theatre or play-house, with necessary tiring and retiring rooms, and other places convenient, of such extent and dimention as the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs or assigns shall think fitting: wherein tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, musick, scenes, and all other entertainments of the stage whatsoever may be shewed and presented.

And we do hereby, for us, our heirs and successors, grant unto the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs and assigns, full power, licence, and authority, from time to time, to gather together, entertain, govern, priviledge and keep, such and so many players and persons to exercise and act tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, and other performances of the stage, within the house to be built as aforesaid, or within the house in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, wherein the said Sir William D'avenant doth now exercise the premises; or within any other house, where he or they can best be fitted for that purpose, within our cities of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof; which said company shall be the servants of our dearly beloved brother, James, Duke of York, and shall consist of such number as the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs or assigns, shall from time

And to entertain players, etc., to act without the impeachment of any person.

to time think meet. And such persons to permit and continue at and during the pleasure of the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs or assigns, from time to time, to act plays and entertainments of the stage, of all sorts, peaceably and quietly, without the impeachment or impediment of any person or persons whatsoever, for the honest recreation of such as shall desire to see the same.

And that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs and assigns, to take and receive of such our subjects as shall resort to see or hear any such plays, scenes and entertainments whatsoever, such sum or sums of money, as either have accustomably been given and taken in the like kind, or as shall be thought reasonable by him or them, in regard of the great expences of scenes, musick, and such new decorations, as have not been formerly used.

And further, for us, our heirs, and successors, we do hereby give and grant unto the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs and assigns, full power to make such allowances out of that which he shall so receive, by the acting of plays and entertainments of the stage, as aforesaid, to the actors and other persons imployed in acting, representing, or in any quality whatsoever, about the said theatre, as he or they shall think fit; and that the said company shall be under the sole government and authority of the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs and assigns. And all scandalous

and mutinous persons shall from time to time be by him and them ejected and disabled from playing in the said theatre.

That no other company but this, and one other, under Mr. Killigrew, be permitted to act within London or Westminster or the suburbs.

And for that we are informed that divers companies of players have taken upon them to act plays publicly in our said cities of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof, without any authority for that purpose; we do hereby declare our dislike of the same, and will and grant that only the said company erected and set up, or to be erected and set up by the said Sir William D'avenant, his heirs and assigns, by virtue of these presents, and one other company erected and set up, or to be erected and set up by Thomas Killigrew, Esq., his heirs or assigns, and none other, shall from henceforth act or represent comedies, tragedies, plays, or entertainments of the stage, within our said cities of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof; which said company to be erected by the said Thomas Killigrew, his heirs or assigns, shall be subject to his and their government and authority, and shall be stiled the Company of Us and our Royal Consort.

No actor to go from one company to the other.

And the better to preserve amity and correspondency betwixt the said companies, and that the one may not incroach upon the other by any indirect means, we will and ordain, That no actor or

other person employed about either of the said theatres, erected by the said Sir William D'avenant and Thomas Killigrew, or either of them, or deserting his company, shall be received by the governor or any of the said other company, or any other person or persons, to be employed in acting, or in any matter relating to the stage, without the consent and approbation of the governor of the company, whereof the said person so ejected or deserting was a member, signified under his hand and seal. And we do by these presents declare all other company and companies, saving the two companies before mentioned, to be silenced and suppressed.

And forasmuch as many plays, formerly acted, do contain several prophane, obscene, and scurrilous passages; and the women's parts therein have been acted by men in the habits of women, at which some have taken offence: for the preventing of these abuses for the future, we do hereby straitly charge and command and enjoyn, that from henceforth no new play shall be acted by either of the said companies, containing any passages offensive to piety and good manners, nor any old or revived play, containing any such offensive passages as aforesaid, until the same shall be corrected and purged, by the said masters or governors of the said respective companies, from all such offensive and scandalous passages, as aforesaid. And we do

To correct plays, etc.

likewise permit and give leave that all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies for the time to come, may be performed by women, so long as these recreations, which, by reason of the abuses aforesaid, were scandalous and offensive, may by such reformation be esteemed, not only harmless delights, but useful and instructive representations of humane life, to such of our good subjects as shall resort to see the same.

These letters patents to be good and effectual in the law, according to the true meaning of the same, although, etc.

And these our letters patents, or the inrolment thereof, shall be in all things good and effectual in the law, according to the true intent and meaning of the same, any thing in these presents contained, or any law, statute, act, ordinance, proclamation, provision, restriction, or any other matter, cause, or thing whatsoever to the contrary, in any wise notwithstanding; although express mention of the true yearly value, or certainty of the premises, or of any of them, or of any other gifts or grants by us, or by any of our progenitors or predecessors, heretofore made to the said Sir William D'avenant in these presents, is not made, or any other statute, act, ordinance, provision, proclamation, or restriction heretofore had, made, enacted, ordained, or provided, or any other matter, cause, or thing whatsoever to the contrary thereof, in any wise notwithstanding. In witness whereof, we have caused these our letters

to be made patents. Witness our self at Westminster, the fifteenth day of January, in the fourteenth year of our reign.

By the King.

HOWARD.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE LIFE OF MR. COLLEY CIBBER, COMEDIAN

TO A CERTAIN GENTLEMAN

SIR,

BECAUSE I know it would give you less concern to find your name in an impertinent satyr, than before the daintiest dedication of a modern author, I conceal it.

Let me talk never so idly to you, this way; you are, at least, under no necessity of taking it to yourself: nor when I boast of your favours, need you blush to have bestow'd them. Or I may now give you all the attributes that raise a wise and good-natur'd man to esteem and happiness, and

[1] The Right Honourable Henry Pelham. Davies ("Life of Garrick," ii. 377) says that the "Apology" was dedicated to "that wise and honest minister," Pelham. John Taylor ("Records of My Life," i. 263) writes: "The name of the person to whom the dedication to the 'Apology' was addressed is not mentioned, but the late Mr. John Kemble assured me that he had authority for saying it was Mr. Pelham, brother to the Duke of Newcastle." From the internal evidence it seems quite clear that this is so. In the verses to Cibber quoted in "The Egotist," p. 69, the authoress writes:

> "Some praise a patron and reveal him:
> You paint so true, you can't conceal him.
> Their gaudy praise undue but shames him,
> While your's by likeness only names him."

not be censured as a flatterer by my own or your enemies — I place my own first; because as they are the greater number, I am afraid of not paying the greater respect to them. Yours, if such there are, I imagine are too well-bred to declare themselves; but as there is no hazard or visible terror in an attack upon my defenceless station, my censurers have generally been persons of an intrepid sincerity. Having therefore shut the door against them while I am thus privately addressing you, I have little to apprehend from either of them.

Under this shelter, then, I may safely tell you, that the greatest encouragement I have had to publish this work, has risen from the several hours of patience you have lent me at the reading it. It is true, I took the advantage of your leisure in the country, where moderate matters serve for amusement; and there, indeed, how far your good-nature for an old acquaintance, or your reluctance to put the vanity of an author out of countenance, may have carried you, I cannot be sure; and yet appearances give me stronger Hopes: for was not the complaisance of a whole evening's attention as much as an author of more importance ought to have expected? Why then was I desired the next day to give you a second lecture? Or why was I kept a third day with you, to tell you more of the same story? If these circumstances have made me vain, shall I say, sir, you are accountable for them? No, sir, I will rather

so far flatter myself as to suppose it possible that your having been a lover of the stage (and one of those few good judges who know the use and value of it, under a right regulation) might incline you to think so copious an account of it a less tedious amusement than it may naturally be to others of different good sense, who may have less concern or taste for it. But be all this as it may; the brat is now born, and rather than see it starve upon the bare parish provision, I chuse thus clandestinely to drop it at your door, that it may exercise one of your many virtues, your charity, in supporting it.

If the world were to know into whose hands I have thrown it, their regard to its patron might incline them to treat it as one of his family; but in the consciousness of what I am, I chuse not, sir, to say who you are. If your equal in rank were to do publick justice to your character, then, indeed, the concealment of your name might be an unnecessary diffidence: but am I, sir, of consequence enough, in any guise, to do honour to Mr. ——? Were I to set him in the most laudable lights that truth and good sense could give him, or his own likeness would require, my officious mite would be lost in that general esteem and regard which people of the first consequence, even of different parties, have a pleasure in paying him. Encomiums to superiors from authors of lower life, as they are naturally liable to suspicion,

can add very little lustre to what before was visible to the publick eye: such offerings (to use the stile they are generally dressed in), like pagan incense, evaporate on the altar, and rather gratify the priest than the deity.

But you, sir, are to be approached in terms within the reach of common sense: the honest oblation of a chearful heart is as much as you desire or I am able to bring you; a heart that has just sense enough to mix respect with intimacy, and is never more delighted than when your rural hours of leisure admit me, with all my laughing spirits, to be my idle self, and in the whole day's possession of you! Then, indeed, I have reason to be vain; I am then distinguish'd by a pleasure too great to be conceal'd, and could almost pity the man of graver merit that dares not receive it with the same unguarded transport! This nakedness of temper the world may place in what rank of folly or weakness they please; but 'till wisdom can give me something that will make me more heartily happy, I am content to be gaz'd at as I am, without lessening my respect for those whose passions may be more soberly covered.

Yet, sir, will I not deceive you; 'tis not the lustre of your publick merit, the affluence of your fortune, your high figure in life, nor those honourable distinctions, which you had rather deserve than be told of, that have so many years made my plain heart hang after you: these are

but incidental ornaments, that, 'tis true, may be of service to you in the world's opinion; and though, as one among the crowd, I may rejoice that Providence has so deservedly bestow'd them, yet my particular attachment has risen from a meer natural and more engaging charm, the agreeable companion. Nor is my vanity half so much gratified in the honour, as my sense is in the delight of your society. When I see you lay aside the advantages of superiority, and by your own chearfulness of spirits call out all that nature has given me to meet them; then 'tis I taste you! then life runs high! I desire! I possess you!

Yet, sir, in this distinguish'd happiness I give not up my farther share of that pleasure, or of that right I have to look upon you with the publick eye, and to join in the general regard so unanimously pay'd to that uncommon virtue, your Integrity! This, sir, the world allows so conspicuous a part of your character, that, however invidious the merit, neither the rude license of detraction, nor the prejudice of party, has ever once thrown on it the least impeachment or reproach. This is that commanding power that, in publick speaking, makes you heard with such attention! This it is that discourages and keeps silent the insinuations of prejudice and suspicion; and almost renders your eloquence an unnecessary aid to your assertions: even your opponents, con-

scious of your integrity, hear you rather as a witness than an orator. But this, sir, is drawing you too near the light; integrity is too particular a virtue to be cover'd with a general application. Let me therefore only talk to you, as at Tusculum (for so I will call that sweet retreat, which your own hands have rais'd), where like the fam'd orator of old, when publick cares permit, you pass so many rational, unbending hours: there, and at such times, to have been admitted, still plays in my memory more like a fictitious than a real enjoyment! How many golden evenings, in that theatrical paradise of water'd lawns and hanging groves, have I walk'd and prated down the sun in social happiness! Whether the retreat of Cicero, in cost, magnificence, or curious luxury of antiquities, might not out-blaze the *simplex munditiis*, the modest ornaments of your villa, is not within my reading to determine: but that the united power of nature, art, or elegance of taste, could have thrown so many varied objects into a more delightful harmony, is beyond my conception.

When I consider you in this view, and as the gentleman of eminence surrounded with the general benevolence of mankind, I rejoice, sir, for you and for myself; to see you in this particular light of merit, and myself sometimes admitted to my more than equal share of you.

If this apology for my past life discourages you not from holding me in your usual favour, let me

quit this greater stage, the world, whenever I may, I shall think this the best-acted part of any I have undertaken, since you first condescended to laugh with,

SIR,

Your most obedient,
most obliged, and
most humble Servant,
COLLEY CIBBER.

Novemb. 6.
1739.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE LIFE OF MR. COLLEY CIBBER, ETC.[1]

CHAPTER I.

The Introduction — The Author's Birth — Various Fortune at School — Not Liked by Those He Lov'd There — Why — A Digression upon Raillery — The Use and Abuse of It — The Comforts of Folly — Vanity of Greatness — Laughing, No Bad Philosophy.

YOU know, sir, I have often told you that one time or other I should give the publick some memoirs of my own life; at which you have never fail'd to laugh, like a friend, without saying a word to dissuade me from it; concluding, I suppose, that such a wild thought could not possibly require a serious answer. But you see I was in earnest. And now you will

[1] Cibber, in chapter ix., mentions that he is writing his Apology at Bath, and Fielding, in the mock trial of "Col. Apol." given in *The Champion* of 17th May, 1740, indicts the prisoner "for that you, not having the Fear of Grammar before your Eyes, on the of at a certain Place, called the Bath, in the County of Somerset, in Knights-Bridge, in the

For all these considerations I have neither fondness nor indifference: if I obtain none of them, the amusement, at worst, will be a reward that must constantly go along with the labour. But behind all this there is something inwardly inciting, which I cannot express in few words; I must therefore a little make bold with your Patience.

A man who has pass'd above forty years of his life upon a theatre, where he has never appear'd to be himself, may have naturally excited the curiosity of his spectators to know what he really was when in nobody's shape but his own; and whether he, who by his profession had so long been ridiculing his benefactors, might not, when the coat of his profession was off, deserve to be laugh'd at himself; or from his being often seen in the most flagrant and immoral characters, whether he might not see as great a rogue when he look'd into the glass himself as when he held it to others.

fits, and the sale of his plays singly, his dramatic works, in quarto, by subscription, published 1721, produced him a considerable sum of money. It is computed that he gained, by the excellent Apology for his Life, no less than the sum of £1,500." "The Laureat" (1740) is perhaps Davies's authority for his computation. "Ingenious indeed, who from such a pile of indigested incoherent ideas huddled together by the misnomer of a history, could raise a contribution on the town (if fame says true) of fifteen hundred pounds." — *Laureat*, p. 96.

Cibber no doubt kept the copyright of the first and second editions in his own hands. In 1750 he sold his copyright to Robert Dodsley for the sum of fifty guineas. The original assignment, which bears the date "March y^{e} 24th, 1749–50," is in the collection of Mr. Julian Marshall.

It was doubtless from a supposition that this sort of curiosity wou'd compensate their labours that so many hasty writers have been encourag'd to publish the lives of the late Mrs. Oldfield, Mr. Wilks, and Mr. Booth, in less time after their deaths than one could suppose it cost to transcribe them.[1]

Now, sir, when my time comes, lest they shou'd think it worth while to handle my memory with the same freedom, I am willing to prevent its being so odly besmear'd (or at best but flatly white-wash'd) by taking upon me to give the publick this, as true a picture of myself as natural vanity will permit me to draw: for to promise you that I shall never be vain, were a promise that, like a looking-glass too large, might break itself in the making: nor am I sure I ought wholly to avoid that imputation, because if vanity be one of my natural features, the portrait wou'd not be like me without it. In a word, I may palliate and soften as much as I please; but upon an honest examination of my heart, I am afraid the same

[1] Of Mrs. Oldfield there was a volume of "Authentick Memoirs" published in 1730, the year she died; and in 1731 appeared Egerton's "Faithful Memoirs," and "The Lover's Miscellany," in which latter are memoirs of Mrs. Oldfield's "Life and Amours." Three memoirs of Wilks immediately followed his death, the third of which was written by Curll, who denounces the other two as frauds. Benjamin Victor wrote a memoir of Booth which was published in the year of his death, and there was one unauthorised memoir issued in the same year. Bellchambers instances the Life of Congreve as another imposition.

vanity which makes even homely people employ painters to preserve a flattering record of their persons, has seduced me to print off this *chiaro oscuro* of my mind.

And when I have done it, you may reasonably ask me of what importance can the History of my private life be to the publick? To this, indeed, I can only make you a ludicrous answer, which is, that the publick very well knows my life has not been a private one; that I have been employ'd in their service ever since many of their grandfathers were young men; and tho' I have voluntarily laid down my post, they have a sort of right to enquire into my conduct (for which they have so well paid me) and to call for the account of it during my share of administration in the state of the theatre. This work, therefore, which I hope they will not expect a man of hasty head shou'd confine to any regular method (for I shall make no scruple of leaving my history when I think a digression may make it lighter for my reader's digestion), this work, I say, shall not only contain the various impressions of my mind (as in Louis the Fourteenth his cabinet you have seen the growing medals of his person from infancy to old age), but shall likewise include with them the theatrical history of my own time, from my first appearance on the stage to my last exit.[1]

[1] From this expression it appears that Cibber did not contemplate again returning to the stage. He did, however, make a few

If then what I shall advance on that head may any ways contribute to the prosperity or improvement of the stage in being, the publick must of consequence have a share in its utility.

This, sir, is the best apology I can make for being my own biographer. Give me leave therefore to open the first scene of my life from the very day I came into it; and tho' (considering my profession) I have no reason to be asham'd of my original, yet I am afraid a plain dry account of it will scarce admit of a better excuse than what my brother Bays makes for Prince Prettyman in the *Rehearsal*, viz. I only do it for fear I should be thought to be nobody's son at all;[1] for if I have led a worthless life, the weight of my pedigree will not add an ounce to my intrinsic value. But be the inference what it will, the simple truth is this.

I was born in London, on the 6th of November, 1671,[2] in Southampton Street, facing Southamp-

final appearances, his last being to support his own adaptation of Shakespeare's "King John," which he called "Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John," and which was produced at Covent Garden on 15th February, 1745.

[1] "The Rehearsal," act iii. sc. 4.

[2] The christening of Colley Cibber is recorded in the baptismal register of the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields The entry reads:

"November 1671 Christnings
20. Colly sonne of Caius Gabriell Sibber and Jane ux."

ton-House.[1] My father, Caius Gabriell Cibber,[2] was a native of Holstein, who came into England some time before the Restoration of King Charles II. to follow his profession, which was that of a statuary, etc. The *basso relievo* on the pedestal of the great column in the city, and the two figures of the lunaticks, the raving and the melancholy, over the gates of Bethlehem-Hospital,[3] are no ill monuments of his fame as an artist. My mother was the daughter of William Colley, Esq.; of a very ancient family of Glaiston in Rutlandshire, where she was born. My mother's brother, Edward Col-

[1] Mr. Laurence Hutton, in his "Literary Landmarks of London," page 52, says: "Southampton House, afterwards Bedford House, taken down in the beginning of the present century, occupied the north side of Bloomsbury Square. Evelyn speaks of it in his diary, October, 1664, as in course of construction. Another and an earlier Southampton House in Holborn, 'a little above Holborn Bars,' was removed some twenty years before Cibber's birth. He was, therefore, probably born at the upper or north end of Southampton Street, facing Bloomsbury Square, where now are comparatively modern buildings, and not in Southampton Street, Strand, as is generally supposed."

[2] Caius Gabriel Cibber, born at Flensborg in Holstein in 1630; married, as his second wife, Jane Colley, on 24th November, 1670; died in 1700. He was, as Colley Cibber states, a sculptor of some note.

[3] "Where o'er the gates, by his fam'd father's hand,
Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand."
— *Final edition of* "*The Dunciad*," i. verses 31-2.

Bellchambers notes that these figures were removed to the new hospital in St George's Fields. They are now in South Kensington Museum.

ley, Esq. (who gave me my Christian name) being the last heir male of it, the family is now extinct. I shall only add, that in Wright's "History of Rutlandshire," publish'd in 1684, the Colleys are recorded as sheriffs and members of Parliament from the reign of Henry VII. to the latter end of Charles I., in whose cause chiefly Sir Antony Colley, my mother's grandfather, sunk his estate from three thousand to about three hundred per annum.[1]

In the year 1682, at little more than ten years of age, I was sent to the free-school of Grantham in Lincolnshire, where I staid till I got through it, from the lowest form to the uppermost. And such learning as that school could give me is the most I pretend to (which, tho' I have not utterly forgot, I cannot say I have much improv'd by study) but even there I remember I was the same inconsistent creature I have been ever since! always in full spirits, in some small capacity to do right, but in a more frequent alacrity to do wrong; and con-

[1] "It was found by office taken in the 13th year of H. 8. that John Colly deceased, held the mannour and advowson of Glaiston of Edward Duke of Buckingham, as of his castle of Okeham by knight's service." — Wright's "History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland," p. 64.

"In the 26. Car. 1. (1640) Sir Anthony Colly knight, then lord of this mannor, joyned with his son and heir apparent, William Colly Esquire, in a conveyance of divers parcels of land in Glaiston, together with the advowson of the church there, to Edward Andrews of Bisbroke in this county, Esquire: which advowson is since conveyed over to Peterhouse in Cambridge." — *Ibid.* p. 65.

sequently often under a worse character than I wholly deserv'd. A giddy negligence always possess'd me, and so much, that I remember I was once whipp'd for my theme, tho' my master told me, at the same time, what was good of it was better than any boy's in the form. And (whatever shame it may be to own it) I have observ'd the same odd fate has frequently attended the course of my later conduct in life. The unskilful openness, or in plain terms, the indiscretion I have always acted with from my youth, has drawn more ill-will toward me, than men of worse morals and more wit might have met with. My ignorance and want of jealousy of mankind has been so strong, that it is with reluctance I even yet believe any person I am acquainted with can be capable of envy, malice, or ingratitude:[1] and to shew you what a mortification it was to me, in my very boyish days, to find myself mistaken, give me leave to tell you a school story.

A great boy, near the head taller than myself, in some wrangle at play had insulted me; upon which I was foolhardy enough to give him a box on the ear; the blow was soon return'd with

[1] Fielding ("Joseph Andrews," chap. iii.), writing of Parson Adams, says: "Simplicity was his characteristic: he did, no more than Mr. Colley Cibber, apprehend any such passions as malice and envy to exist in mankind; which was indeed less remarkable in a country parson, than in a gentleman who has passed his life behind the scenes — a place which has been seldom thought the school of innocence."

another that brought me under him and at his mercy. Another lad, whom I really lov'd and thought a good-natur'd one, cry'd out with some warmth to my antagonist (while I was down) Beat him, beat him soundly! This so amaz'd me that I lost all my spirits to resist, and burst into tears! When the fray was over I took my friend aside, and ask'd him, how he came to be so earnestly against me? To which, with some glouting[1] confusion, he reply'd, Because you are always jeering and making a jest of me to every boy in the school. Many a mischief have I brought upon myself by the same folly in riper life. Whatever reason I had to reproach my companion's declaring against me, I had none to wonder at it while I was so often hurting him: thus I deserv'd his enmity by my not having sense enough to know I had hurt him; and he hated me because he had not sense enough to know that I never intended to hurt him.

As this is the first remarkable error of my life I can recollect, I cannot pass it by without throwing out some further reflections upon it; whether flat or spirited, new or common, false or true, right or wrong, they will be still my own, and consequently like me; I will therefore boldly go on; for I am only oblig'd to give you my own, and not a good picture, to shew as well the weakness as the

[1] Glout is an obsolete word signifying "to pout, to look sullen."

strength of my understanding. It is not on what I write, but on my reader's curiosity I relie to be read through: at worst, tho' the impartial may be tir'd, the ill-natur'd (no small number) I know will see the bottom of me.

What I observ'd then, upon my having undesignedly provok'd my school-friend into an enemy, is a common case in society; errors of this kind often sour the blood of acquaintance into an inconceivable aversion, where it is little suspected. It is not enough to say of your raillery that you intended no offence; if the person you offer it to has either a wrong head, or wants a capacity to make that distinction, it may have the same effect as the intention of the grossest injury: and in reality, if you know his parts are too slow to return it in kind, it is a vain and idle inhumanity, and sometimes draws the aggressor into difficulties not easily got out of. Or to give the case more scope, suppose your friend may have a passive indulgence for your mirth, if you find him silent at it; tho' you were as intrepid as Cæsar, there can be no excuse for your not leaving it off. When you are conscious that your antagonist can give as well as take, then indeed the smarter the hit the more agreeable the party. A man of chearful sense among friends will never be grave upon an attack of this kind, but rather thank you that you have given him a right to be even with you. There are few men

(tho' they may be masters of both) that on such occasions had not rather shew their parts than their courage, and the preference is just; a bull-dog may have one, and only a man can have the other. Thus it happens that in the coarse merriment of common people, when the jest begins to swell into earnest; for want of this election you may observe, he that has least wit generally gives the first blow. Now, as among the better sort, a readiness of wit is not always a sign of intrinsick merit; so the want of that readiness is no reproach to a man of plain sense and civility, who therefore (methinks) should never have these lengths of liberty taken with him. Wit there becomes absurd, if not insolent; ill-natur'd I am sure it is, which imputation a generous spirit will always avoid, for the same reason that a man of real honour will never send a challenge to a cripple. The inward wounds that are given by the inconsiderate insults of wit to those that want it, are as dangerous as those given by oppression to inferiors; as long in healing, and perhaps never forgiven. There is besides (and little worse than this) a mutual grossness in raillery that sometimes is more painful to the hearers that are not concern'd in it than to the persons engaged. I have seen a couple of these clumsy combatants drub one another with as little manners or mercy as if they had two flails in their hands; children at play with case-knives could not give you more apprehension of their doing one

another a mischief. And yet, when the contest has been over, the boobys have look'd round them for approbation, and upon being told they were admirably well match'd, have sat down (bedawb'd as they were) contented at making it a drawn battle. After all that I have said, there is no clearer way of giving rules for raillery than by example.

There are two persons now living, who tho' very different in their manner, are, as far as my judgment reaches, complete masters of it; one of a more polite and extensive imagination, the other of a knowledge more closely useful to the business of life: the one gives you perpetual pleasure, and seems always to be taking it; the other seems to take none till his business is over, and then gives you as much as if pleasure were his only business. The one enjoys his fortune, the other thinks it first necessary to make it; though that he will enjoy it then I cannot be positive, because when a man has once pick'd up more than he wants, he is apt to think it a weakness to suppose he has enough. But as I don't remember ever to have seen these gentlemen in the same company, you must give me leave to take them separately.[1]

[1] Bellchambers suggests that these two persons were the Earl of Chesterfield and "Bubb Doddington." As to the former he is no doubt correct, but I cannot see a single feature of resemblance between the second portrait and Lord Melcombe. "The Laureat" says (p. 18) that the portraits were "L—d C—d and Mr. E—e" [probably Erskine]. Bellchambers seems to have supposed that "Bubb" was a nickname.

The first of them, then, has a title, and — no matter what; I am not to speak of the great, but the happy part of his character, and in this one single light; not of his being an illustrious, but a delightful companion.

In conversation he is seldom silent but when he is attentive, nor ever speaks without exciting the attention of others; and tho' no man might with less displeasure to his hearers engross the talk of the company, he has a patience in his vivacity that chuses to divide it, and rather gives more freedom than he takes; his sharpest replies having a mixture of politeness that few have the command of; his expression is easy, short, and clear; a stiff or studied word never comes from him; it is in a simplicity of style that he gives the highest surprise, and his ideas are always adapted to the capacity and taste of the person he speaks to: perhaps you will understand me better if I give you a particular instance of it. A person at the university, who from being a man of wit easily became his acquaintance there, from that acquaintance found no difficulty in being made one of his chaplains: this person afterwards leading a life that did no great honour to his cloth, obliged his patron to take some gentle notice of it; but as his patron knew the patient was squeamish, he was induced to sweeten the medicine to his taste, and therefore with a smile of good humour told him that if to the many vices he had already he would

give himself the trouble to add one more, he did not doubt but his reputation might still be set up again. Sir Crape, who could have no aversion to so pleasant a dose, desiring to know what it might be, was answered, hypocrisy, doctor, only a little hypocrisy! This plain reply can need no comment; but *ex pede Herculem*, he is everywhere proportionable. I think I have heard him since say, the doctor thought hypocrisy so detestable a sin that he dy'd without committing it. In a word, this gentleman gives spirit to society the moment he comes into it, and whenever he leaves it they who have business have then leisure to go about it.

Having often had the honour to be myself the but of his raillery, I must own I have received more pleasure from his lively manner of raising the laugh against me, than I could have felt from the smoothest flattery of a serious civility. Tho' wit flows from him with as much ease as common sense from another, he is so little elated with the advantage he may have over you, that whenever your good fortune gives it against him, he seems more pleas'd with it on your side than his own. The only advantage he makes of his superiority of rank is, that by always waving it himself, his inferior finds he is under the greater obligation not to forget it.

When the conduct of social wit is under such regulations, how delightful must those *convivia*,

those meals of conversation be, where such a member presides; who can with so much ease (as Shakespear phrases it) set the table in a roar.[1] I am in no pain that these imperfect out-lines will be apply'd to the person I mean, because every one who has the happiness to know him must know how much more in this particular attitude is wanting to be like him.

The other gentleman, whose bare interjections of laughter have humour in them, is so far from having a title that he has lost his real name, which some years ago he suffer'd his friends to railly him out of; in lieu of which they have equipp'd him with one they thought had a better sound in good company. He is the first man of so sociable a spirit that I ever knew capable of quitting the allurements of wit and pleasure for a strong application to business; in his youth (for there was a time when he was young) he set out in all the heyday expences of a modish man of fortune, but finding himself over-weighted with appetites, he grew restiff, kick'd up in the middle of the course, and turn'd his back upon his frolicks abroad, to think of improving his estate at home: in order to which he clapt collars upon his coach-horses, and that their mettle might not run over other people, he ty'd a plough to their tails, which tho' it might give them a more slovenly air, would enable him to keep them fatter in a foot pace, with a whist-

[1] "Set the table on a roar." — *Hamlet*, act. v. sc. 1.

ling peasant beside them, than in a full trot, with a hot-headed coachman behind them. In these unpolite amusements he has laugh'd like a rake and look'd about him like a farmer for many years. As his rank and station often find him in the best company, his easy humour, whenever he is called to it, can still make himself the fiddle of it.

And tho' some say he looks upon the follies of the world like too severe a philosopher, yet he rather chuses to laugh than to grieve at them; to pass his time therefore more easily in it, he often endeavours to conceal himself by assuming the air and taste of a man in fashion; so that his only uneasiness seems to be, that he cannot quite prevail with his friends to think him a worse manager than he really is; for they carry their raillery to such a height that it sometimes rises to a charge of downright avarice against him. Upon which head it is no easy matter to be more merry upon him than he will be upon himself. Thus while he sets that infirmity in a pleasant light, he so disarms your prejudice, that if he has it not, you can't find in your heart to wish he were without it. Whenever he is attack'd where he seems to lie so open, if his wit happens not to be ready for you, he receives you with an assenting laugh, till he has gain'd time enough to whet it sharp enough for a reply, which seldom turns out to his disadvantage. If you are too strong for him (which may possibly happen from his being oblig'd to defend the weak

side of the question) his last resource is to join in the laugh till he has got himself off by an ironical applause of your superiority.

If I were capable of envy, what I have observ'd of this gentleman would certainly incline me to it; for sure to get through the necessary cares of life with a train of pleasures at our heels in vain calling after us, to give a constant preference to the business of the day, and yet be able to laugh while we are about it, to make even society the subservient reward of it, is a state of happiness which the gravest precepts of moral wisdom will not easily teach us to exceed. When I speak of happiness, I go no higher than that which is contain'd in the world we now tread upon; and when I speak of laughter, I don't simply mean that which every oaf is capable of, but that which has its sensible motive and proper season, which is not more limited than recommended by that indulgent philosophy,

"Cum ratione insanire."[1]

When I look into my present self, and afterwards cast my eye round all my hopes, I don't see any one pursuit of them that should so reasonably rouze me out of a nod in my great chair, as a call to those agreeable parties I have sometimes the happiness to mix with, where I always assert the equal liberty of leaving them, when my spirits have done their best with them.

[1] Ter. "Eun." i. 1, 18.

Now, sir, as I have been making my way for above forty years through a crowd of cares (all which, by the favour of Providence, I have honestly got rid of), is it a time of day for me to leave off these fooleries, and to set up a new character? Can it be worth my while to waste my spirits, to bake my blood, with serious contemplations, and, perhaps, impair my health, in the fruitless study of advancing myself into the better opinion of those very — very few wise men that are as old as I am? No, the part I have acted in real life shall be all of a piece,

> "—— Servetur ad imum,
> Qualis ab incepto processerit."
>
> — *Hor.*[1]

I will not go out of my character by straining to be wiser than I can be, or by being more affectedly pensive than I need be; whatever I am, men of sense will know me to be, put on what disguise I will; I can no more put off my follies than my skin; I have often try'd, but they stick too close to me; nor am I sure my friends are displeased with them: for, besides that in this light I afford them frequent matter of mirth, they may possibly be less uneasy at their own foibles when they have so old a precedent to keep them in countenance. Nay, there are some frank enough to confess they envy what they laugh at; and when I have seen others, whose rank and fortune have laid a sort of

[1] "Ars Poetica," 126.

restraint upon their liberty of pleasing their company by pleasing themselves, I have said softly to myself, — Well, there is some advantage in having neither rank nor fortune! Not but there are among them a third sort, who have the particular happiness of unbending into the very wantonness of good-humour without depreciating their dignity: he that is not master of that freedom, let his condition be never so exalted, must still want something to come up to the happiness of his inferiors who enjoy it. If Socrates cou'd take pleasure in playing at even or odd with his children, or Agesilaus divert himself in riding the hobby-horse with them, am I oblig'd to be as eminent as either of them before I am as frolicsome? If the Emperor Adrian, near his death, cou'd play with his very soul, his *animula*, etc., and regret that it cou'd be no longer companionable; if greatness at the same time was not the delight he was so loth to part with, sure then these chearful amusements I am contending for must have no inconsiderable share in our happiness; he that does not chuse to live his own way, suffers others to chuse for him. Give me the joy I always took in the end of an old song,

"My Mind, my Mind is a Kingdom to me!"[1]

[1] In William Byrd's collection, entitled "Psalmes, Sonets, and songs of sadnes and pietie," 1588, 4to., is the song to which Cibber probably refers:

"My Minde to me a Kingdome is."

Mr. Bullen, in his "Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-books" (p. 78), quotes it.

If I can please myself with my own follies, have not I a plentiful provision for life? If the world thinks me a trifler, I don't desire to break in upon their wisdom; let them call me any fool but an unchearful one; I live as I write; while my way amuses me, it's as well as I wish it; when another writes better, I can like him too, tho' he shou'd not like me. Not our great imitator of Horace himself can have more pleasure in writing his verses than I have in reading them, tho' I sometimes find myself there (as Shakespear terms it) dispraisingly [1] spoken of.[2] If he is a little free with me, I am generally in good company, he is as blunt with my betters; so that even here I might laugh in my turn. My superiors, perhaps, may be mended by him; but, for my part, I own myself incorrigible: I look upon my follies as the best part of my fortune, and am more concern'd to be a good husband of them, than of that; nor do I believe I shall ever be rhim'd out of them. And, if I don't mistake, I am supported in my way of thinking by Horace himself, who, in excuse of a loose writer, says, —

"Prætulerim scriptor delirus, inersque videri,
Dum mea delectent mala me, vel denique fallant,
Quam sapere, et ringi — "[3]

[1] "And so many a time,
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,
Hath ta'en your part." — *Othello*, act iii. sc. 3.

[2] This is Cibber's first allusion to Pope's enmity. It was after the publication of the "Apology" that Pope's attacks became more bitter.

[3] Horace, Epis. ii. 2, 126.

which, to speak of myself as a loose philosopher, I have thus ventur'd to imitate:

> "Me, while my laughing follies can deceive,
> Blest in the dear delirium let me live,
> Rather than wisely know my wants and grieve."

We had once a merry monarch of our own, who thought chearfulness so valuable a blessing, that he would have quitted one of his kingdoms where he cou'd not enjoy it; where, among many other conditions they had ty'd him to, his sober subjects wou'd not suffer him to laugh on a Sunday; and tho' this might not be the avow'd cause of his elopement,[1] I am not sure, had he had no other, that this alone might not have serv'd his turn; at least, he has my hearty approbation either way; for had I been under the same restriction, tho' my staying were to have made me his successor, I shou'd rather have chosen to follow him.

How far his subjects might be in the right is not my affair to determine; perhaps they were wiser than the frogs in the fable, and rather chose to have a log than a stork for their king; yet I hope it will be no offence to say that King Log

[1] Charles II.'s flight from his Scottish Presbyterian subjects, at the end of 1650, to take refuge among his wild Highland supporters, was caused by the insolent invectives of the rigid Presbyterian clergymen, who preached long sermons at him, on his own wickedness and that of his father and mother, and made his life generally a burden.

himself must have made but a very simple figure in history.

The man who chuses never to laugh, or whose becalm'd passions know no motion, seems to me only in the quiet state of a green tree; he vegetates, 'tis true, but shall we say he lives? Now, sir, for amusement. — Reader, take heed! for I find a strong impulse to talk impertinently; if therefore you are not as fond of seeing, as I am of shewing myself in all my lights, you may turn over two leaves together, and leave what follows to those who have more curiosity, and less to do with their time, than you have. — As I was saying then, let us, for amusement, advance this, or any other prince, to the most glorious throne, mark out his empire in what clime you please, fix him on the highest pinnacle of unbounded power; and in that state let us enquire into his degree of happiness; make him at once the terror and the envy of his neighbours, send his ambition out to war, and gratify it with extended fame and victories; bring him in triumph home, with great unhappy captives behind him, through the acclamations of his people, to repossess his realms in peace. Well, when the dust has been brusht from his purple, what will he do next? Why, this envy'd monarch (who we will allow to have a more exalted mind than to be delighted with the trifling flatteries of a congratulating circle) will chuse to retire, I presume, to enjoy in private the contemplation of his glory;

an amusement, you will say, that well becomes his station! But there, in that pleasing rumination, when he has made up his new account of happiness, how much, pray, will be added to the balance more than as it stood before his last expedition? From what one article will the improvement of it appear? Will it arise from the conscious pride of having done his weaker enemy an injury? Are his eyes so dazzled with false glory that he thinks it a less crime in him to break into the palace of his princely neighbour, because he gave him time to defend it, than for a subject feloniously to plunder the house of a private man? Or is the outrage of hunger and necessity more enormous than the ravage of ambition? Let us even suppose the wicked usage of the world as to that point may keep his conscience quiet; still, what is he to do with the infinite spoil that his imperial rapine has brought home? Is he to sit down and vainly deck himself with the jewels which he has plunder'd from the crown of another, whom self-defence had compell'd to oppose him? No, let us not debase his glory into so low a weakness. What appetite, then, are these shining treasures food for? Is their vast value in seeing his vulgar subjects stare at them, wise men smile at them, or his children play with them? Or can the new extent of his dominions add a cubit to his happiness? Was not his empire wide enough before to do good in? And can it add to his delight that

now no monarch has such room to do mischief in? But farther; if even the great Augustus, to whose reign such praises are given, cou'd not enjoy his days of peace free from the terrors of repeated conspiracies, which lost him more quiet to suppress than his ambition cost him to provoke them: what human eminence is secure? In what private cabinet then must this wondrous monarch lock up his happiness that common eyes are never to behold it? Is it, like his person, a prisoner to its own superiority? Or does he at last poorly place it in the triumph of his injurious devastations? One moment's search into himself will plainly shew him that real and reasonable happiness can have no existence without innocence and liberty. What a mockery is greatness without them? How lonesome must be the life of that monarch who, while he governs only by being fear'd, is restrain'd from letting down his grandeur sometimes to forget himself and to humanise him into the benevolence and joy of society? To throw off his cumbersome robe of majesty, to be a man without disguise, to have a sensible taste of life in its simplicity, till he confess from the sweet experience that *dulce est desipere in loco*[1] was no fool's philosophy. Or if the gawdy charms of pre-eminence are so strong that they leave him no sense of a less pompous, tho' a more rational enjoyment, none sure can envy him but those

[1] Hor. Od. iv. 12, 28.

who are the dupes of an equally fantastick ambition.

My imagination is quite heated and fatigued in dressing up this phantome of felicity; but I hope it has not made me so far misunderstood, as not to have allow'd that in all the dispensations of Providence the exercise of a great and virtuous mind is the most elevated state of happiness. No, sir, I am not for setting up gaiety against wisdom; nor for preferring the man of pleasure to the philosopher; but for shewing that the wisest or greatest man is very near an unhappy man, if the unbending amusements I am contending for are not sometimes admitted to relieve him.

How far I may have over-rated these amusements let graver casuists decide; whether they affirm or reject what I have asserted hurts not my purpose; which is not to give laws to others; but to shew by what laws I govern myself: if I am misguided, 'tis Nature's fault, and I follow her from this persuasion; that as Nature has distinguish'd our species from the mute creation by our risibility, her design must have been by that faculty as evidently to raise our happiness, as by our *os sublime*[1] (our erected faces) to lift the dignity of our form above them.

Notwithstanding all I have said, I am afraid there is an absolute power in what is simply call'd our constitution that will never admit of other

[1] "Os homini sublime dedit." — *Ovid, Met.* i. 85.

rules for happiness than her own; from which (be we never so wise or weak) without divine assistance we only can receive it; so that all this my parade and grimace of philosophy has been only making a mighty merit of following my own inclination. A very natural vanity! Though it is some sort of satisfaction to know it does not impose upon me. Vanity again! However, think it what you will that has drawn me into this copious digression, 'tis now high time to drop it: I shall therefore in my next chapter return to my school, from whence I fear I have too long been truant.

Colley Cibber

Engraved in mezzotint by R. B. Parkes, after the painting by Vanloo

CHAPTER II.

He That Writes of Himself Not Easily Tir'd — Boys May Give Men Lessons — The Author's Preferment at School Attended with Misfortunes — The Danger of Merit Among Equals — Of Satirists and Backbiters — What Effect They Have Had upon the Author — Stanzas Publish'd by Himself Against Himself.

IT often makes me smile to think how contentedly I have set myself down to write my own life; nay, and with less concern for what may be said of it than I should feel were I to do the same for a deceased acquaintance. This you will easily account for when you consider that nothing gives a coxcomb more delight than when you suffer him to talk of himself; which sweet liberty I here enjoy for a whole volume together! A privilege which neither cou'd be allow'd me, nor wou'd become me to take, in the company I am generally admitted to;[1] but

[1] Cibber is pardonably vain throughout at the society he moved in. His greatest social distinction was his election as a member of White's. His admission to such society was of course the subject of lampoons, such as the following:

"THE BUFFOON, AN EPIGRAM.

"Don't boast, prithee Cibber, so much of thy state,
That like Pope you are blest with the smiles of the great;
With both they converse, but for different ends,
And 'tis easy to know their buffoons from their friends."

here, when I have all the talk to myself, and have nobody to interrupt or contradict me, sure, to say whatever I have a mind other people shou'd know of me is a pleasure which none but authors as vain as myself can conceive. — But to my history.

However little worth notice the life of a school-boy may be supposed to contain, yet, as the passions of men and children have much the same motives and differ very little in their effects, unless where the elder experience may be able to conceal them: as therefore what arises from the boy may possibly be a lesson to the man, I shall venture to relate a fact or two that happen'd while I was still at school.

In February, 1684–5, died King Charles II., who being the only king I had ever seen, I remember (young as I was) his death made a strong impression upon me, as it drew tears from the eyes of multitudes, who looked no further into him than I did: but it was, then, a sort of school-doctrine to regard our monarch as a deity; as in the former reign it was to insist he was accountable to this world as well as to that above him. But what, perhaps, gave King Charles II. this peculiar possession of so many hearts, was his affable and easy manner in conversing; which is a quality that goes farther with the greater part of mankind than many higher virtues, which, in a prince, might more immediately regard the publick prosperity. Even his indolent amusement of playing with his

dogs and feeding his ducks in St. James's Park, (which I have seen him do) made the common people adore him, and consequently overlook in him what, in a prince of a different temper, they might have been out of humour at.

I cannot help remembring one more particular in those times, tho' it be quite foreign to what will follow. I was carry'd by my father to the chapel at Whitehall; where I saw the king and his royal brother the then Duke of York, with him in the closet, and present during the whole divine service. Such dispensation, it seems, for his interest, had that unhappy prince from his real religion, to assist at another to which his heart was so utterly averse. — I now proceed to the facts I promis'd to speak of.

King Charles his death was judg'd by our schoolmaster a proper subject to lead the form I was in into a higher kind of exercise; he therefore enjoin'd us severally to make his funeral oration: this sort of task, so entirely new to us all, the boys receiv'd with astonishment as a work above their capacity; and tho' the master persisted in his command, they one and all, except myself, resolved to decline it. But I, sir, who was ever giddily forward and thoughtless of consequences, set myself roundly to work, and got through it as well as I could. I remember to this hour that single topick of his affability (which made me mention it before) was the chief motive

that warm'd me into the undertaking; and to shew how very childish a notion I had of his character at that time, I raised his humanity, and love of those who serv'd him, to such height, that I imputed his death to the shock he receiv'd from the Lord Arlington's being at the point of death about a week before him.[1] This oration, such as it was, I produc'd the next morning: all the other boys pleaded their inability, which the master taking rather as a mark of their modesty than their idleness, only seem'd to punish by setting me at the head of the form: a preferment dearly bought! Much happier had I been to have sunk my performance in the general modesty of declining it. A most uncomfortable life I led among them for many a day after! I was so jeer'd, laugh'd at, and hated as a pragmatical bastard (school-boys' language) who had betray'd the whole form, that scarce any of 'em wou'd keep me company; and tho' it so far advanc'd me into the master's favour that he wou'd often take me from the school to give me an airing with him on horseback, while they were left to their lessons; you may be sure such envy'd happiness did not encrease their goodwill to me: notwithstanding which my stupidity cou'd take no warning from their treatment. An accident of the same nature happen'd soon after, that might have frighten'd a boy of a meek spirit

[1] Arlington did not, however, die till the 28th July, 1685, surviving Charles II. by nearly six months.

from attempting any thing above the lowest capacity. On the 23d of April following, being the coronation-day of the new king, the school petition'd the master for leave to play; to which he agreed, provided any of the boys would produce an English ode upon that occasion. . . . The very word ode, I know makes you smile already; and so it does me; not only because it still makes so many poor devils turn wits upon it, but from a more agreeable motive; from a reflection of how little I then thought that half a century afterwards, I shou'd be call'd upon twice a year, by my post,[1] to make the same kind of oblations to an unexceptionable prince, the serene happiness of whose reign my halting rhimes are still so unequal to. . . . This, I own, is vanity without disguise; but *hæc olim meminisse juvat.*[2] The remembrance of the miserable prospect we had then before us, and have since escaped by a revolution, is now a pleasure which, without that remembrance, I could not so heartily have enjoy'd.[3] The ode I was speaking of fell to my lot, which in about half an hour I produc'd. I cannot say it was much above the merry style of sing! sing the day, and sing the song, in the farce: yet bad as it

[1] Cibber was appointed poet laureate on the death of Eusden. His appointment was dated 3d December, 1730.

[2] "Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit." — *Virg.* "*Æneid*," i. 207.

[3] As laureate, and as author of "The Nonjuror," Cibber is bound to be extremely loyal to the Protestant dynasty.

was it serv'd to get the school a play-day, and to make me not a little vain upon it; which last effect so disgusted my play-fellows that they left me out of the party I had most a mind to be of in that day's recreation. But their ingratitude serv'd only to increase my vanity; for I consider'd them as so many beaten tits that had just had the mortification of seeing my hack of a Pegasus come in before them. This low passion is so rooted in our nature that sometimes riper heads cannot govern it. I have met with much the same silly sort of coldness, even from my contemporaries of the theatre, from having the superfluous capacity of writing myself the characters I have acted.

Here, perhaps, I may again seem to be vain, but if all these facts are true (as true they are), how can I help it? Why am I oblig'd to conceal them? The merit of the best of them is not so extraordinary as to have warn'd me to be nice upon it; and the praise due to them is so small a fish, it was scarce worth while to throw my line into the water for it. If I confess my vanity while a boy, can it be vanity, when a man, to remember it? And if I have a tolerable feature, will not that as much belong to my picture as an imperfection? In a word, from what I have mentioned, I wou'd observe only this, — that when we are conscious of the least comparative merit in ourselves, we shou'd take as much care to conceal

the value we set upon it as if it were a real defect. To be elated or vain upon it is shewing your money before people in want; ten to one but some who may think you to have too much may borrow, or pick your pocket before you get home. He who assumes praise to himself, the world will think overpays himself. Even the suspicion of being vain ought as much to be dreaded as the guilt itself. Cæsar was of the same opinion in regard to his wife's chastity. Praise, tho' it may be our due, is not like a bank-bill, to be paid upon demand; to be valuable it must be voluntary. When we are dun'd for it, we have a right and privilege to refuse it. If compulsion insists upon it, it can only be paid, as persecution in points of faith is, in a counterfeit coin. And who ever believ'd occasional conformity to be sincere? Nero, the most vain coxcomb of a tyrant that ever breath'd, cou'd not raise an unfeigned applause of his harp by military execution; even where praise is deserved, ill-nature and self-conceit (passions that poll a majority of mankind) will with less reluctance part with their mony than their approbation. Men of the greatest merit are forced to stay 'till they die before the world will fairly make up their account. Then indeed you have a chance for your full due, because it is less grudg'd when you are incapable of enjoying it. Then perhaps even malice shall heap praises upon your memory, tho' not for your sake, but that your surviving

competitors may suffer by a comparison.[1] 'Tis from the same principle that satyr shall have a thousand readers where panegyric has one. When I therefore find my name at length in the satyrical works of our most celebrated living author, I never look upon those lines as malice meant to me (for he knows I never provok'd it), but profit to himself. One of his points must be to have many readers. He considers that my face and name are more known than those of many thousands of more consequence in the kingdom; that therefore, right or wrong, a lick at the laureat[2] will always be a sure bait, *ad captandum vulgus*, to catch him little readers; and that to gratify the unlearned, by now and then interspersing those merry sacrifices of an old acquaintance

[1] Curiously enough, Cibber's praise of his deceased companion-actors has been attributed to something of this motive.

[2] Bellchambers prints these words thus, "Lick at the Laureat," as if Cibber had referred to the title of a book, and notes: "This is the title of a pamphlet in which some of Mr. Cibber's peculiarities have been severely handled." But I doubt this, for there is nothing in Cibber's arrangement of the words to denote that they represent the title of a book; and, besides, I know no work with such a title published before 1740. Bellchambers, in a note on page 114, represents that he quotes from "Lick at the Laureat, 1730;" but I find the quotation he gives in "The Laureat," 1740 (p. 31), almost *verbatim*. As it stands in the latter, there is no hint that it is quoted from a previous work, nor, indeed, do the terms of it permit of such an interpretation. I can, therefore, only suppose that Bellchambers is wrong in attributing the sentence to a work called "A Lick at the Laureat."

to their taste, is a piece of quite right poetical craft.[1]

But as a little bad poetry is the greatest crime he lays to my charge, I am willing to subscribe to his opinion of it.[2] That this sort of wit is one of

[1] The principal allusions to Cibber, which, up to the time of the publication of the "Apology" Pope had made, were in the "Dunciad:"

"How, with less reading than makes felons 'scape,
Less human genius than God gives an ape,
Small thanks to France and none to Rome or Greece,
A past, vamp'd, future, old, reviv'd, new piece,
'Twixt Plautus, Fletcher, Congreve, and Corneille,
Can make a Cibber, Johnson, or Ozell."
— Second edition, Book i. 235–240.

"Beneath his reign, shall Eusden wear the bays,
Cibber preside, lord chancellor of plays."
— Second edition, Book iii. 319, 320.

In the "Epistle to Doctor Arbuthnot," there were one or two passing allusions to Cibber, one of them being the line:

"And has not Colley still his lord and ———?"

for which Cibber retaliated in his "Letter" of 1742.

In the "First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace" (1737) Cibber is scurvily treated. In it occur the lines:

"And idle Cibber, how he breaks the laws,
To make poor Pinkey eat with vast applause!"

[2] Cibber's odes were a fruitful subject of banter. Fielding, in "Pasquin," act ii. sc. 1, has the following passage:

"*2d Voter.* My lord, I should like a place at court, too; I don't much care what it is, provided I wear fine cloaths, and have something to do in the kitchen or the cellar; I own I should like the cellar, for I am a divilish lover of sack.

Lord Place. Sack, say you? Odso, you shall be poet-laureat.

the easiest ways, too, of pleasing the generality of readers is evident from the comfortable subsistence which our weekly retailers of politicks have been known to pick up, merely by making bold with a government that had unfortunately neglected to find their genius a better employment.

Hence, too, arises all that flat poverty of censure and invective that so often has a run in our publick papers upon the success of a new author, when, God knows, there is seldom above one writer among hundreds in being at the same time whose satyr a man of common sense ought to be mov'd at. When a master in the art is angry, then, indeed, we ought to be alarm'd! How terrible a weapon is satyr in the hand of a great genius! Yet even there, how liable is prejudice to misuse it! How far, when general, it may re-

2d Voter. Poet! No, my lord, I am no poet; I can't make verses.

Lord Place. No matter for that — you'll be able to make odes.

2d Voter. Odes, my lord! What are those?

Lord Place. Faith, sir, I can't tell well what they are; but I know you may be qualified for the place without being a poet."

Boswell ("Life of Johnson," i. 402) reports that Johnson said: "His [Cibber's] friends give out that he intended his birthday odes should be bad; but that was not the case, sir; for he kept them many months by him, and a few years before he died he shewed me one of them, with great solicitude to render it as perfect as might be."

In "The Egotist" (p. 63) Cibber is made to say: "As bad verses are the devil, and good ones I can't get up to —"

form our morals, or what cruelties it may inflict by being angrily particular,[1] is perhaps above my reach to determine. I shall, therefore, only beg leave to interpose what I feel for others whom it may personally have fallen upon. When I read those mortifying lines of our most eminent author, in his character of Atticus[2] (Atticus, whose genius in verse and whose morality in prose has been so justly admir'd), though I am charm'd with the poetry, my imagination is hurt at the severity of it; and tho' I allow the satyrist to have had personal provocation, yet, methinks, for that very reason he ought not to have troubled the publick with it, for, as it is observed in the 242d *Tatler*, "In all terms of reproof, when the sentence appears to arise from personal hatred or passion, it is not then made the cause of mankind, but a misunderstanding between two persons." But if such kind of satyr has its incontestable greatness, if its exemplary brightness may not mislead inferior wits into a barbarous imitation of its severity, then I have only admir'd the verses, and expos'd myself by bringing them under so scrupulous a reflexion. But the pain which the acrimony of those verses gave me is, in some measure, allay'd

[1] *Champion*, 29th April, 1740: "When he says (*fol.* 23) satire is angrily particular, every dunce of a reader knows that he means angry with a particular person."

[2] Cibber's allusion to Pope's treatment of Addison is a fair hit.

in finding that this inimitable writer, as he advances in years, has since had candour enough to celebrate the same person for his visible merit. Happy genius! whose verse, like the eye of beauty, can heal the deepest wounds with the least glance of favour.

Since I am got so far into this subject, you must give me leave to go thro' all I have a mind to say upon it; because I am not sure that in a more proper place my memory may be so full of it. I cannot find, therefore, from what reason satyr is allow'd more licence than comedy, or why either of them (to be admir'd) ought not to be limited by decency and justice. Let Juvenal and Aristophanes have taken what liberties they please, if the learned have nothing more than their antiquity to justify their laying about them at that enormous rate, I shall wish they had a better excuse for them! The personal ridicule and scurrility thrown upon Socrates, which Plutarch too condemns, and the boldness of Juvenal, in writing real names over guilty characters, I cannot think are to be pleaded in right of our modern liberties of the same kind. *Facit indignatio versum*[1] may be a very spirited expression, and seems to give a reader hopes of a lively entertainment; but I am afraid reproof is in unequal hands when anger is its executioner, and tho' an outrageous invective may carry some truth in it, yet it will never have that natural, easy credit with

[1] Juvenal, i. 79.

us which we give to the laughing ironies of a cool head. The satyr that can smile *circum præcordia ludit*, and seldom fails to bring the reader quite over to his side whenever ridicule and folly are at variance. But when a person satyris'd is us'd with the extreamest rigour, he may sometimes meet with compassion instead of contempt, and throw back the odium that was designed for him upon the author. When I would therefore disarm the satyrist of this indignation, I mean little more than that I would take from him all private or personal prejudice, and wou'd still leave him as much general vice to scourge as he pleases, and that with as much fire and spirit as art and nature demand to enliven his work and keep his reader awake.

Against all this it may be objected, that these are laws which none but phlegmatick writers will observe, and only men of eminence should give. I grant it, and therefore only submit them to writers of better judgment. I pretend not to restrain others from chusing what I don't like; they are welcome (if they please too) to think I offer these rules more from an incapacity to break them than from a moral humanity. Let it be so! still, that will not weaken the strength of what I have asserted, if my assertion be true, and though I allow that provocation is not apt to weigh out its resentments by drachms and scruples, I shall still think that no publick revenge can be honourable where it is not limited by justice; and if honour is insa-

tiable in its revenge it loses what it contends for and sinks itself, if not into cruelty, at least into vainglory.

This so singular concern which I have shewn for others may naturally lead you to ask me what I feel for myself when I am unfavourably treated by the elaborate authors of our daily papers.[1] Shall I be sincere? and own my frailty? Its usual effect is to make me vain! For I consider if I were quite good for nothing these pidlers in wit would not be concern'd to take me to pieces, or (not to be quite so vain) when they moderately charge me with only ignorance or dulness, I see nothing in that which an honest man need be asham'd of.[2] There is many a good soul who from those sweet slumbers of the brain are never awaken'd by the least harmful thought, and I am sometimes tempted to

[1] Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 511) says: "If we except the remarks on plays and players by the authors of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, the theatrical observations in those days were coarse and illiberal, when compared to what we read in our present daily and other periodical papers."

[2] "*Frankly.* Is it not commendable in a man of parts, to be warmly concerned for his reputation?

Author [*Cibber*]. In what regards his honesty or honour, I will make you some allowances: but for the reputation of his parts, not one tittle!" — *The Egotist: or, Colley upon Cibber*, p. 13.

Bellchambers notes here: "When Cibber was charged with moral offences of a deeper dye, he thought himself at liberty, I presume, to relinquish his indifference, and bring the libeller to account. On a future page will be found the public advertisement in which he offered a reward of ten pounds for the detection of Dennis."

think those retailers of wit may be of the same class; that what they write proceeds not from malice, but industry, and that I ought no more to reproach them than I would a lawyer that pleads against me for his fee; that their detraction, like dung thrown upon a meadow, tho' it may seem at first to deform the prospect, in a little time it will disappear of itself and leave an involuntary crop of praise behind it.

When they confine themselves to a sober criticism upon what I write, if their censure is just, what answer can I make to it? If it is unjust, why should I suppose that a sensible reader will not see it, as well as myself? Or, admit I were able to expose them by a laughing reply, will not that reply beget a rejoinder? And though they might be gainers by having the worst on't in a paper war, that is no temptation for me to come into it. Or (to make both sides less considerable) would not my bearing ill-language from a chimney-sweeper do me less harm than it would be to box with him, tho' I were sure to beat him? Nor indeed is the little reputation I have as an author worth the trouble of a defence. Then, as no criticism can possibly make me worse than I really am, so nothing I can say of myself can possibly make me better. When therefore a determin'd critick comes arm'd with wit and outrage to take from me that small pittance I have, I wou'd no more dispute with him than I wou'd resist a gen-

tleman of the road to save a little pocket-money.[1] Men that are in want themselves seldom make a conscience of taking it from others. Whoever thinks I have too much is welcome to what share of it he pleases. Nay, to make him more merciful (as I partly guess the worst he can say of what I now write), I will prevent even the imputation of his doing me injustice, and honestly say it myself; viz., that of all the assurances I was ever guilty of, this of writing my own life is the most hardy. I beg his pardon! impudent is what I should have said! That through every page there runs a vein of vanity and impertinence which no French *ensigns memoires* ever came up to; but, as this is a common error, I presume the terms of doating trifler, old fool, or conceited coxcomb will carry contempt enough for an impartial censor to bestow on me; that my style is unequal, pert, and frothy, patch'd and party-colour'd like the coat of an harlequin; low and pompous, cramm'd with epithets, strew'd with scraps of second-hand Latin from common quotations; frequently aiming at wit, without ever hitting the mark; a mere ragoust toss'd up from the offals of other authors. My subject below all pens but my own, which, when-

[1] "*Frankly*. It will be always natural for authors to defend their works.

Author [*Cibber*]. And would it not be as well, if their works defended themselves?" — *The Egotist: or, Colley upon Cibber*, p. 15.

ever I keep to, is flatly daub'd by one eternal egotism. That I want nothing but wit to be as accomplish'd a coxcomb here as ever I attempted to expose on the theatre. Nay, that this very confession is no more a sign of my modesty than it is a proof of my judgment; that, in short, you may roundly tell me, that — Cinna (or Cibber) *vult videri pauper, et est pauper.*

> "When humble Cinna cries, I'm poor and low,
> You may believe him — he is really so."

Well, Sir Critick! and what of all this? Now I have laid myself at your feet, what will you do with me? Expose me? Why, dear sir, does not every man that writes expose himself? Can you make me more ridiculous than nature has made me? You cou'd not sure suppose that I would lose the pleasure of writing because you might possibly judge me a blockhead, or perhaps might pleasantly tell other people they ought to think me so too. Will not they judge as well from what I say as what you say? If then you attack me merely to divert yourself, your excuse for writing will be no better than mine. But perhaps you may want bread: if that be the case, even go to dinner, i' God's name![1]

If our best authors, when teiz'd by these triflers,

[1] In his "Letter to Pope," 1742, p. 7, Cibber says: "After near twenty years having been libell'd by our daily-paper scriblers, I never was so hurt, as to give them one single answer."

have not been masters of this indifference, I should not wonder if it were disbeliev'd in me; but when it is consider'd that I have allow'd my never having been disturb'd into a reply has proceeded as much from vanity as from philosophy,[1] the matter then may not seem so incredible: and tho' I confess the complete revenge of making them immortal dunces in immortal verse might be glorious, yet, if you will call it insensibility in me never to have winc'd at them, even that insensibility has its happiness, and what could glory give me more?[2] For my part, I have always had the comfort to think, whenever they design'd me a disfavour, it generally flew back into their own faces, as it happens to children when they squirt at their playfellows against the wind. If a scribbler cannot be easy because he fancies I have too good an opinion of my own productions, let him write on and mortify: I owe him not the charity to be out of temper myself merely to keep him quiet or give him joy; nor, in reality, can I see why anything misrepresented, tho' believ'd of me by persons to whom

[1] "*Frankly*. I am afraid you will discover yourself; and your philosophical air will come out at last meer vanity in masquerade.

Author [*Cibber*]. O! if there be vanity in keeping one's temper, with all my heart." — *The Egotist: or, Colley upon Cibber*, p. 13.

[2] In his "Letter to Pope," 1742, p. 9, Cibber says: "I would not have even your merited fame in poetry, if it were to be attended with half the fretful solicitude you seem to have lain under to maintain it."

I am unknown, ought to give me any more concern than what may be thought of me in Lapland: 'tis with those with whom I am to live only, where my character can affect me; and I will venture to say, he must find out a new way of writing that will make me pass my time there less agreeably.

You see, sir, how hard it is for a man that is talking of himself to know when to give over; but if you are tired, lay me aside till you have a fresh appetite: if not, I'll tell you a story.

In the year 1730 there were many authors whose merit wanted nothing but interest to recommend them to the vacant laurel, and who took it ill to see it at last conferred upon a comedian; insomuch, that they were resolved at least to shew specimens of their superior pretensions, and accordingly enliven'd the publick papers with ingenious epigrams and satyrical flirts at the unworthy successor.[1] These papers my friends with a wicked

[1] The best epigram is that which Cibber ("Letter," 1742, p. 39) attributes to Pope:

"In merry old England, it once was a rule,
The king had his poet, and also his fool.
But now we're so frugal, I'd have you to know it,
That Cibber can serve both for fool and for poet."

Doctor Johnson also wrote an epigram, of which he seems to have been somewhat proud:

"Augustus still survives in Maro's strain,
And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign;

smile would often put into my hands and desire me to read them fairly in company: this was a challenge which I never declin'd, and, to do my doughty antagonists justice, I always read them with as much impartial spirit as if I had writ them myself. While I was thus beset on all sides, there happen'd to step forth a poetical knight-errant to my assistance, who was hardy enough to publish some compassionate stanzas in my favour. These, you may be sure, the raillery of my friends could do no less than say I had written to myself. To deny it I knew would but have confirmed their pretended suspicion; I therefore told them, since it gave them such joy to believe them my own, I would do my best to make the whole town think so too. As the oddness of this reply was, I knew, what would not be easily comprehended, I desired

> Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing;
> For nature form'd the poet for the king."
>
> — *Boswell*, i. 149.

In "Certain Epigrams, in Laud and Praise of the Gentlemen of the Dunciad," p. 8, is:

> "EPIGRAM XVI.
> A Question by ANONYMUS,
> Tell, if you can, which did the worse,
> Caligula, or Gr—n's [Grafton's] gr—ce?
> That made a consul of a horse,
> And this a laureate of an ass."

In "The Egotist: or, Colley upon Cibber," p. 49, Cibber is made to say: "An ode is a butt, that a whole quiver of wit is let fly at every year!"

them to have a day's patience, and I would print an explanation to it; to conclude, in two days after I sent this letter, with some doggerel rhimes at the bottom:

"*To the author of the Whitehall Evening Post.*

"SIR:—The verses to the Laureat in yours of Saturday last have occasion'd the following reply, which I hope you'll give a place in your next, to shew that we can be quick as well as smart upon a proper occasion; and, as I think it the lowest mark of a scoundrel to make bold with any man's character in print without subscribing the true name of the author, I therefore desire, if the laureat is concern'd enough to ask the question, that you will tell him my name and where I live; till then, I beg leave to be known by no other than that of, Your servant,

"FRANCIS FAIRPLAY.

"*Monday, Jan.* 11, 1730."

These were the verses:[1]

I.

"Ah, hah! Sir Coll, is that thy way,
Thy own dull praise to write?
And wou'd'st thou stand so sure a lay?
No, that's too stale a bite.

[1] "The Laureat" says: "The things he calls verses, carry the most evident marks of their parent Colley."—p. 24.

II.

"Nature and art in thee combine,
Thy talents here excel:
All shining brass thou dost outshine,
To play the cheat so well.

III.

"Who sees thee in Iago's part,
But thinks thee such a rogue?
And is not glad, with all his heart,
To hang so sad a dog?

IV.

"When Bays thou play'st, thyself thou art;
For that by nature fit,
No blockhead better suits the part,
Than such a coxcomb wit.

V.

"In Wronghead too, thy brains we see,
Who might do well at plough;
As fit for Parliament was he,
As for the laurel, thou.

VI.

"Bring thy protected verse from court,
And try it on the stage;
There it will make much better sport,
And set the town in rage.

VII.

"There beaux and wits and cits and smarts,
Where hissing's not uncivil,
Will shew their parts to thy deserts,
And send it to the devil.

VIII.

"But, ah! in vain 'gainst thee we write,
In vain thy verse we maul!
Our sharpest satyr's thy delight,
For — blood! thou'lt stand it all.[1]

IX.

"Thunder, 'tis said, the laurel spares;
Nought but thy brows could blast it:
And yet — O curst, provoking stars!
Thy comfort is, thou hast it."

This, sir, I offer as a proof that I was seven years ago[2] the same cold candidate for fame which I would still be thought; you will not easily suppose I could have much concern about it, while, to gratify the merry pique of my friends, I was capable of seeming to head the poetical cry then against me, and at the same time of never letting the publick know 'till this hour that these verses were written by myself. Nor do I give them you as an entertainment, but merely to shew you this particular cast of my temper.

When I have said this, I would not have it thought affectation in me when I grant that no man worthy the name of an author is a more faulty writer than myself; that I am not master

[1] A line in the epilogue to the "Nonjuror."

[2] This allusion to time shows that Cibber began his "Apology" about 1737.

of my own language[1] I too often feel when I am at a loss for expression. I know too that I have too bold a disregard for that correctness which others set so just a value upon. This I ought to be ashamed of, when I find that persons, perhaps of colder imaginations, are allowed to write better than myself. Whenever I speak of anything that highly delights me, I find it very difficult to keep my words within the bounds of common sense. Even when I write, too, the same failing will sometimes get the better of me; of which I cannot give you a stronger instance than in that wild expression I made use of in the first edition of my preface to the "Provok'd Husband," where, speaking of Mrs. Oldfield's excellent performance in the part of Lady Townly, my words ran thus, viz., "It is not enough to say, that here she outdid her usual outdoing."[2] A most vile

[1] Fielding has many extremely good attacks on Cibber's style and language. For instance:

"I shall here only obviate a flying report . . . that whatever language it was writ in, it certainly could not be English. . . . Now I shall prove it to be English in the following manner. Whatever book is writ in no other language is writ in English. This book is writ in no other language, *ergo*, it is writ in English."— *Champion*, 22d April, 1740.

Again ("Joseph Andrews," book iii. chap. vi.), addressing the muse or genius that presides over biography, he says: "Thou who, without the assistance of the least spice of literature, and even against his inclination, hast, in some pages of his book, forced Colley Cibber to write English."

[2] In later editions the expression was changed to "She here outdid her usual excellence."

jingle, I grant it! You may well ask me, how could I possibly commit such a wantonness to paper? And I owe myself the shame of confessing I have no excuse for it but that, like a lover in the fulness of his content, by endeavouring to be floridly grateful I talk'd nonsense. Not but it makes me smile to remember how many flat writers have made themselves brisk upon this single expression; wherever the verb, outdo, could come in, the pleasant accusative, outdoing, was sure to follow it. The provident wags knew that *decies repetita placeret:* [1] so delicious a morsel could not be serv'd up too often. After it had held them nine times told for a jest, the publick has been pester'd with a tenth skull thick enough to repeat it. Nay, the very learned in the law have at last facetiously laid hold of it. Ten years after it first came from me it served to enliven the eloquence of an eloquent pleader before a House of Parliament. What author would not envy me so frolicksome a fault that had such publick honours paid to it?

After this consciousness of my real defects, you will easily judge, sir, how little I presume that my poetical labours may outlive those of my mortal contemporaries.[2]

[1] "Decides repetita placebit." — *Horace*, "*Ars Poetica*," 365.

[2] "For instance: when you rashly think,
No rhymer can like Welsted sink,
His merits balanc'd, you shall find,
The laureat leaves him far behind."
— *Swift*, "*On Poetry: a Rhapsody*," l. 393.

At the same time that I am so humble in my pretensions to fame, I would not be thought to undervalue it; nature will not suffer us to despise it, but she may sometimes make us too fond of it. I have known more than one good writer very near ridiculous from being in too much heat about it. Whoever intrinsically deserves it will always have a proportionable right to it. It can neither be resign'd nor taken from you by violence. Truth, which is unalterable, must (however his fame may be contested) give every man his due. What a poem weighs it will be worth; nor is it in the power of human eloquence, with favour or prejudice, to increase or diminish its value. Prejudice, 'tis true, may awhile discolour it; but it will always have its appeal to the equity of good sense, which will never fail in the end to reverse all false judgment against it.

Therefore when I see an eminent author hurt, and impatient at an impotent attack upon his labours, he disturbs my inclination to admire him; I grow doubtful of the favourable judgment I have made of him, and am quite uneasy to see him so tender in a point he cannot but know he ought not himself to be judge of; his concern indeed at another's prejudice or disapprobation may be natural, but to own it seems to me a natural weakness. When a work is apparently great it will go without crutches; all your art and anxiety to heighten the fame of it then

becomes low and little.[1] He that will bear no censure must be often robb'd of his due praise. Fools have as good a right to be readers as men of sense have, and why not to give their judgments too? Methinks it would be a sort of tyranny in wit for an author to be publickly putting every argument to death that appear'd against him; so absolute a demand for approbations puts us upon our right to dispute it: praise is as much the reader's property as wit is the author's; applause is not a tax paid to him as a prince, but rather a benevolence given to him as a beggar, and we have naturally more charity for the dumb beggar than the sturdy one. The merit of a writer and a fine woman's face are never mended by their talking of them. How amiable is she that seems not to know she is handsome!

To conclude, all I have said upon this subject is much better contained in six lines of a reverend author, which will be an answer to all critical censure for ever:

"Time is the judge; time has nor friend nor foe;
False fame must wither, and the true will grow.
Arm'd with this truth all criticks I defy;
For, if I fall, by my own pen I die;
While snarlers strive with proud but fruitless pain,
To wound immortals, or to slay the slain."[2]

[1] "*Frankly.* Then for your reputation, if you won't bustle about it, and now and then give it these little helps of art, how can you hope to raise it?

Author [*Cibber*]. If it can't live upon simple nature, let it die, and be damn'd! I shall give myself no further trouble about it." — *The Egotist: or, Colley upon Cibber*, p. 9.

[2] Young's second "Epistle to Mr. Pope."

CHAPTER III.

The Author's Several Chances for the Church, the Court, and the Army — Going to the University — Met the Revolution at Nottingham — Took Arms on That Side — What He Saw of It — A Few Political Thoughts — Fortune Willing to Do for Him — His Neglect of Her — The Stage Preferr'd to All Her Favours — The Profession of an Actor Consider'd — The Misfortunes and Advantages of It.

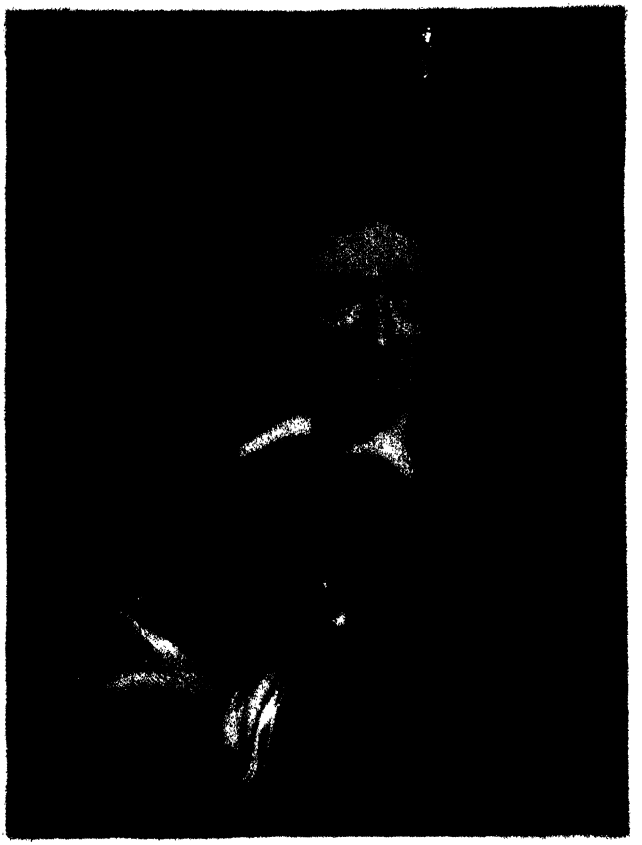
AM now come to that crisis of my life when fortune seem'd to be at a loss what she should do with me. Had she favour'd my father's first designation of me, he might then, perhaps, have had as sanguine hopes of my being a bishop as I afterwards conceived of my being a general when I first took arms at the Revolution. Nay, after that I had a third chance, too, equally as good, of becoming an under-propper of the state. How at last I came to be none of all these the sequel will inform you.

About the year 1687 I was taken from school to stand at the election of children into Winchester College; my being by my mother's side a descendant[1] of William of Wickam, the founder, my father (who knew little how the world was to be

[1] Indirectly surely, William of Wykeham being a priest.

Caius Cibber

Engraved in mezzotint by R. B. Parkes after the painting by Laroon and Christian Richter



dealt with) imagined my having that advantage would be security enough for my success, and so sent me simply down thither, without the least favourable recommendation or interest but that of my naked merit and a pompous pedigree in my pocket. Had he tack'd a direction to my back, and sent me by the carrier to the mayor of the town, to be chosen member of Parliament there, I might have had just as much chance to have succeeded in the one as the other. But I must not omit in this place to let you know that the experience which my father then bought, at my cost, taught him some years after to take a more judicious care of my younger brother, Lewis Cibber, whom, with the present of a statue of the founder, of his own making, he recommended to the same college. This statue now stands (I think) over the school door there,[1] and was so well executed that it seem'd to speak — for its kinsman. It was no sooner set up than the door of preferment was open to him.

Here one would think my brother had the advantage of me in the favour of fortune by this his first laudable step into the world. I own I was so proud of his success that I even valued myself upon

[1] I am indebted to the courtesy of the head master of Winchester College, the Reverend Doctor Fearon, for the information that this statue, a finely designed and well-executed work, still stands over the door of the big school. A Latin inscription states that it was presented by Caius Gabriel Cibber in 1697.

it; and yet it is but a melancholy reflection to observe how unequally his profession and mine were provided for, when I, who had been the outcast of fortune, could find means from my income of the theatre, before I was my own master there, to supply in his highest preferment his common necessities. I cannot part with his memory without telling you I had as sincere a concern for this brother's well-being as my own. He had lively parts and more than ordinary learning, with a good deal of natural wit and humour; but from too great a disregard to his health he died a fellow of New College, in Oxford, soon after he had been ordained by Doctor Compton, then Bishop of London. I now return to the state of my own affair at Winchester.

After the election, the moment I was inform'd that I was one of the unsuccessful candidates, I blest myself to think what a happy reprieve I had got from the confin'd life of a schoolboy, and the same day took post back to London, that I might arrive time enough to see a play (then my darling delight) before my mother might demand an account of my travelling charges. When I look back to that time, it almost makes me tremble to think what miseries, in fifty years farther in life, such an unthinking head was liable to! To ask why Providence afterward took more care of me than I did of myself might be making too bold an enquiry into its secret will and pleasure. All I can say to

that point is, that I am thankful and amazed at it.[1]

'Twas about this time I first imbib'd an inclination, which I durst not reveal, for the stage; for besides that I knew it would disoblige my father, I had no conception of any means practicable to make my way to it. I therefore suppress'd the bewitching ideas of so sublime a station, and compounded with my ambition by laying a lower scheme, of only getting the nearest way into the immediate life of a gentleman-collegiate. My father being at this time employ'd at Chattsworth, in Derbyshire, by the (then) Earl of Devonshire, who was raising that seat from a Gothick to a Grecian magnificence, I made use of the leisure I then had in London to open to him by letter my disinclination to wait another year for an uncertain prefer-

[1] Bellchambers finds in this sentence "a levity, which accords with the charges so often brought against Cibber of impiety and irreligion;" and he quotes from Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 506) two stories — one, that Cibber spat at a picture of our Saviour; and the other, that he endeavoured to enter into discussion with "honest Mr. William Whiston" with the intention of insulting him. Both anecdotes seem to me rather foolish. I do not suppose Cibber was in any sense a religious man, but his works are far from giving any offence to religion; and, as a paid supporter of a Protestant succession, I think he was too prudent to be an open scoffer. A sentence in one of Victor's "Letters" (i. 72), written from Tunbridge, would seem to show that Cibber at least preserved appearances. He says: "Every one complies with what is called the fashion, — Cibber goes constantly to prayers, — and the curate (to return the compliment) as constantly, when prayers are over, to the gaming-table!"

ment at Winchester, and to entreat him that he would send me, *per saltum*, by a shorter cut to the university. My father, who was naturally indulgent to me, seem'd to comply with my request, and wrote word that as soon as his affairs would permit he would carry me with him and settle me in some college, but rather at Cambridge, where (during his late residence at that place, in making some statues that now stand upon Trinity College New Library) he had contracted some acquaintance with the heads of houses, who might assist his intentions for me.[1] This I lik'd better than to go

[1] By the kindness of a friend at Cambridge I am enabled to give the following interesting extracts from a letter written by Mr. William White, of Trinity College Library, regarding the statues here referred to: "They occupy the four piers, subdividing the balustrade on the east side of the library, overlooking Neville's Court. The four statues represent divinity, law, physic, and mathematics. That these were executed by Mr. Gabriel Cibber our books will prove. I will give you two or three extracts from Grumbold's account book, kept in the library. He was foreman of the works when the library was built. I think Cibber cut the statues here. It is quite certain he and his men were here some time; no doubt they superintended the placing of them in their positions, at so great a height.

"'Payd for the Carridg of a Larg Block Stone given by John Manning to ye Coll. for one of ye Figures 01 : 00 : 00.'

"'May 7, 1681. Pd to Mr Gabriell Cibber for cutting four statues 80 : 00 : 00.'

"'27 June. Pd to ye Widdo Bats for Mr Gabriel Cibbers and his mens diatt 05 : 18 : 11. Pd to Mr. Martin [for the same] 12 : 03 : 03.'"

In connection with these statues an amusing practical joke was played while Byron was an undergraduate, which was attributed to him — unjustly, however, I believe.

discountenanc'd to Oxford, to which it would have been a sort of reproach to me not to have come elected. After some months were elaps'd, my father, not being willing to let me lie too long idling in London, sent for me down to Chattsworth, to be under his eye till he cou'd be at leisure to carry me to Cambridge. Before I could set out on my journey thither, the nation fell in labour of the Revolution, the news being then just brought to London that the Prince of Orange, at the head of an army, was landed in the West.[1] When I came to Nottingham I found my father in arms there, among those forces which the Earl of Devonshire had rais'd for the redress of our violated laws and liberties. My father judg'd this a proper season for a young strippling to turn himself loose into the bustle of the world, and, being himself too advanc'd in years to endure the winter fatigue which might possibly follow, entreated that noble lord that he would be pleas'd to accept of his son in his room, and that he would give him (my father) leave to return and finish his works at Chattsworth. This was so well receiv'd by his lordship that he not only admitted of my service, but promis'd my father in return that when affairs were settled he would provide for me. Upon this my father return'd to Derbyshire, while I, not a little transported, jump'd into his saddle. Thus in one day all my thoughts of the university were

[1] 5th November, 1688.

smother'd in ambition! A slight commission for a horse-officer was the least view I had before me. At this crisis you cannot but observe that the fate of King James and of the Prince of Orange, and that of so minute a being as myself, were all at once upon the anvil. In what shape they wou'd severally come out, tho' a good guess might be made, was not then demonstrable to the deepest foresight; but, as my fortune seem'd to be of small importance to the publick, Providence thought fit to postpone it 'till that of those great rulers of nations was justly perfected. Yet, had my father's business permitted him to have carried me one month sooner (as he intended) to the university, who knows but by this time that purer fountain might have wash'd my imperfections into a capacity of writing (instead of plays and annual odes) sermons and pastoral letters. But whatever care of the Church might so have fallen to my share, as I dare say it may be now in better hands, I ought not to repine at my being otherwise disposed of.[1]

You must now consider me as one among those desperate thousands, who, after a patience sorely try'd, took arms under the banner of necessity,

[1] Fielding, in "Joseph Andrews," book i. chap. 1: "How artfully does the former [Cibber], by insinuating that he escaped being promoted to the highest stations in the Church and state, teach us a contempt of worldly grandeur! how strongly does he inculcate an absolute submission to our superiors!"

the natural parent of all human laws and government. I question if in all the histories of empire there is one instance of so bloodless a revolution as that in England in 1688, wherein Whigs, Tories, princes, prelates, nobles, clergy, common people, and a standing army, were unanimous. To have seen all England of one mind is to have liv'd at a very particular juncture. Happy nation! who are never divided among themselves but when they have least to complain of! Our greatest grievance since that time seems to have been that we cannot all govern; and 'till the number of good places are equal to those who think themselves qualified for them, there must ever be a cause of contention among us. While great men want great posts, the nation will never want real or seeming patriots; and while great posts are fill'd with persons whose capacities are but human, such persons will never be allow'd to be without errors; not even the Revolution, with all its advantages, it seems, has been able to furnish us with unexceptionable statesmen! for from that time I don't remember any one set of ministers that have not been heartily rail'd at; a period long enough, one would think (if all of them have been as bad as they have been call'd), to make a people despair of ever seeing a good one: but as it is possible that envy, prejudice, or party may sometimes have a share in what is generally thrown upon 'em, it is not easy for a private man

to know who is absolutely in the right from what is said against them, or from what their friends or dependants may say in their favour: tho' I can hardly forbear thinking that they who have been longest rail'd at must from that circumstance shew in some sort a proof of capacity. — But to my history.

It were almost incredible to tell you, at the latter end of King James's time (though the rod of arbitrary power was always shaking over us), with what freedom and contempt the common people in the open streets talk'd of his wild measures to make a whole Protestant nation Papists; and yet, in the height of our secure and wanton defiance of him, we of the vulgar had no farther notion of any remedy for this evil than a satisfy'd presumption that our numbers were too great to be master'd by his mere will and pleasure; that though he might be too hard for our laws, he would never be able to get the better of our nature; and that to drive all England into Popery and slavery he would find would be teaching an old lion to dance.[1]

[1] Fielding (*Champion*, 6th May, 1740): "Not to mention our author's comparisons of himself to King James, the Prince of Orange, Alexander the Great, Charles the XIIth, and Harry IV. of France, his favourite simile is a lion, thus page 39, we have a satisfied presumption, that to drive England into slavery is like teaching an old lion to dance. 104. Our new critics are like lions' whelps that dash down the bowls of milk etc., besides a third allusion to the same animal: and this brings into my

But happy was it for the nation that it had then wiser heads in it, who knew how to lead a people so dispos'd into measures for the publick preservation.

Here I cannot help reflecting on the very different deliverances England met with at this time and in the very same year of the century before: then (in 1588) under a glorious princess, who had at heart the good and happiness of her people, we scatter'd and destroy'd the most formidable navy of invaders that ever cover'd the seas: and now (in 1688), under a prince who had alienated the hearts of his people by his absolute measures to oppress them, a foreign power is receiv'd with open arms in defence of our laws, liberties, and religion, which our native prince had invaded! How widely different were these two monarchs in their sentiments of glory! But, *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*[1]

When we consider in what height of the nation's prosperity the successor of Queen Elizabeth came to this throne, it seems amazing that such a pile of English fame and glory, which her skilful

mind a story which I once heard from Booth, that our biographer had, in one of his plays in a local simile, introduced this generous beast in some island or country where lions did not grow; of which being informed by the learned Booth, the biographer replied, 'Prithee tell me then, where there is a lion, for God's curse, if there be a lion in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, I will not lose my simile.'"

[1] Lucretius, i. 102.

administration had erected, should in every following reign, down to the Revolution, so unhappily moulder away in one continual gradation of political errors: all which must have been avoided, if the plain rule which that wise princess left behind her had been observed, viz.: That the love of her people was the surest support of her throne. This was the principle by which she so happily govern'd herself and those she had the care of. In this she found strength to combat and struggle thro' more difficulties and dangerous conspiracies than ever English monarch had to cope with. At the same time that she profess'd to desire the people's love, she took care that her actions shou'd deserve it, without the least abatement of her prerogative; the terror of which she so artfully covered that she sometimes seem'd to flatter those she was determin'd should obey. If the four following princes had exercis'd their regal authority with so visible a regard to the publick welfare, it were hard to know whether the people of England might have ever complain'd of them, or even felt the want of that liberty they now so happily enjoy. 'Tis true that before her time our ancestors had many successful contests with their sovereigns for their ancient right and claim to it; yet what did those successes amount to? little more than a declaration that there was such a right in being; but who ever saw it enjoy'd? Did not the actions of almost every succeeding reign

shew there were still so many doors of oppression left open to the prerogative that (whatever value our most eloquent legislators may have set upon those ancient liberties) I doubt it will be difficult to fix the period of their having a real being before the Revolution: or if there ever was an elder period of our unmolested enjoying them, I own my poor judgment is at a loss where to place it. I will boldly say, then, it is to the Revolution only we owe the full possession of what, 'till then, we never had more than a perpetually contested right to: and, from thence, from the Revolution it is that the Protestant successors of King William have found their paternal care and maintenance of that right has been the surest basis of their glory.[1]

These, sir, are a few of my political notions, which I have ventur'd to expose that you may see what sort of an English subject I am; how wise or weak they may have shewn me is not my concern; let the weight of these matters have drawn me never so far out of my depth, I still flatter myself that I have kept a simple, honest head above water. And it is a solid comfort to me to consider that how insignificant soever my life was at the Revolution, it had still the good for-

[1] John Dennis, in an advertisement to "The Invader of His Country," 1720, says, "'Tis as easy for Mr. Cibber at this time of day to make a Bounce with his loyalty, as 'tis for a bully at sea, who had lain hid in the hold all the time of the fight, to come up and swagger upon the deck after the danger is over."

tune to make one among the many who brought it about; and that I now, with my coævals, as well as with the millions since born, enjoy the happy effects of it.

But I must now let you see how my particular fortune went forward with this change in the government; of which I shall not pretend to give you any farther account than what my simple eyes saw of it.

We had not been many days at Nottingham before we heard that the Prince of Denmark, with some other great persons, were gone off from the king to the Prince of Orange, and that the Princess Anne, fearing the king her father's resentment might fall upon her for her consort's revolt, had withdrawn herself in the night from London and was then within half a day's journey of Nottingham; on which very morning we were suddenly alarm'd with the news that two thousand of the king's dragoons were in close pursuit to bring her back prisoner to London: but this alarm it seems was all stratagem, and was but a part of that general terror which was thrown into many other places about the kingdom at the same time, with design to animate and unite the people in their common defence; it being then given out that the Irish were everywhere at our heels to cut off all the Protestants within the reach of their fury. In this alarm our troops scrambled to arms in as much order as their consternation would admit of, when, having advanc'd some few

miles on the London road, they met the princess in a coach, attended only by the Lady Churchill (now Dutchess Dowager of Marlborough) and the Lady Fitzharding, whom they conducted into Nottingham through the acclamations of the people. The same night all the noblemen and the other persons of distinction then in arms had the honour to sup at her Royal Highness's table; which was then furnish'd (as all her necessary accommodations were) by the care and at the charge of the Lord Devonshire. At this entertainment, of which I was a spectator, something very particular surpris'd me: the noble guests at the table happening to be more in number than attendants out of liveries could be found for, I being well known in the Lord Devonshire's family, was desired by his Lordship's Maitre d' Hotel to assist at it. The post assign'd me was to observe what the Lady Churchill might call for. Being so near the table, you may naturally ask me what I might have heard to have pass'd in conversation at it? which I should certainly tell you had I attended to above two words that were utter'd there, and those were, some wine and water. These I remember came distinguish'd and observ'd to my ear, because they came from the fair guest whom I took such pleasure to wait on: except at that single sound, all my senses were collected into my eyes, which during the whole entertainment wanted no better amusement, than of stealing now and then the

delight of gazing on the fair object so near me. If so clear an emanation of beauty, such a commanding grace of aspect struck me into a regard that had something softer than the most profound respect in it, I cannot see why I may not without offence remember it; since beauty, like the sun, must sometimes lose its power to chuse, and shine into equal warmth the peasant and the courtier.[1] Now to give you, sir, a farther proof of how good a taste my first hopeful entrance into manhood set out with, I remember above twenty years after, when the same lady had given the world four of the loveliest daughters that ever were gaz'd on, even after they were all nobly married, and were become the reigning toasts of every party of pleasure, their still lovely mother had at the same time her votaries, and her health very often took the lead in those involuntary triumphs of beauty. However presumptuous or impertinent these thoughts might have appear'd at my first entertaining them, why may I not hope that my having kept them decently secret for full fifty years may be now a good round plea for their pardon? Were I now qualify'd to say more of this celebrated lady, I should conclude it thus: That she has liv'd (to

[1] *Champion*, 29th April, 1740: "When in page 42 we read, Beauty shines into equal warmth the peasant and the courtier, do we not know what he means though he hath made a verb active of shine, as in page 117, he hath of regret, Nothing could more painfully regret a judicious spectator?"

all appearance) a peculiar favourite of Providence; that few examples can parallel the profusion of blessings which have attended so long a life of felicity. A person so attractive! a husband so mémorably great! an offspring so beautiful! a fortune so immense! and a title which (when royal favour had no higher to bestow) she only could receive from the author of Nature; a great grandmother without grey hairs! These are such consummate indulgencies that we might think Heaven has center'd them all in one person, to let us see how far, with a lively understanding, the full possession of them could contribute to human happiness. — I now return to our military affairs.

From Nottingham our troops march'd to Oxford; through every town we pass'd the people came out, in some sort of order, with such rural and rusty weapons as they had, to meet us, in acclamations of welcome and good wishes. This I thought promis'd a favourable end of our Civil War, when the nation seem'd so willing to be all of a side! At Oxford the Prince and Princess of Denmark met for the first time after their late separation, and had all possible honours paid them by the university. Here we rested in quiet quarters for several weeks, till the flight of King James into France; when the nation being left to take care of itself, the only security that could be found for it was to advance the Prince and Princess of Orange to the vacant throne. The publick tran-

quillity being now settled, our forces were remanded back to Nottingham. Here all our officers who had commanded them from their first rising receiv'd commissions to confirm them in their several posts; and at the same time such private men as chose to return to their proper business or habitations were offer'd their discharges. Among the small number of those who receiv'd them, I was one; for not hearing that my name was in any of these new commissions, I thought it time for me to take my leave of ambition, as ambition had before seduc'd me from the imaginary honours of the gown, and therefore resolv'd to hunt my fortune in some other field.[1]

[1] One of the commonest imputations made against Cibber was that he was of a cowardly temper. In *Common Sense* for 11th June, 1737, a paper attributed to Lord Chesterfield, there is a dissertation on kicking as a humourous incident on the stage. The writer adds: "Of all the comedians who have appeared upon the stage within my memory, no one has taking (*sic*) a kicking with so much humour as our present most excellent laureat, and I am inform'd his son does not fall much short of him in this excellence; I am very glad of it, for as I have a kindness for the young man, I hope to see him as well kick'd as his father was before him."

I confess that I am not quite sure how far this sentence is ironically meant, but Bellchambers refers to it as conveying a serious accusation of cowardice. He also quotes from Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 487), who relates, on the authority of Victor, that Cibber, having reduced Bickerstaffe's salary by one-half, was waited upon by that actor, who "flatly told him, that as he could not subsist on the small sum to which he had reduced his salary, he must call the author of his distress to an account, for that it would be easier for him to lose his life than

From Nottingham I again return'd to my father at Chattsworth, where I staid till my lord came down, with the new honours [1] of lord steward of his Majesty's houshold and knight of the garter! a noble turn of fortune! and a deep stake he had play'd for! which calls to my memory a story we had then in the family, which though too light for our graver historians' notice, may be of weight enough for my humble memoirs. This noble lord being in the presence-chamber in King James's time, and known to be no friend to the measures of his administration, a certain person in favour there, and desirous to be more so, took occasion to tread rudely upon his lordship's foot, which was return'd with a sudden blow upon the spot: for this misdemeanour his lordship was fin'd thirty thousand pounds; but I think had some time allow'd him for the payment. [2] In the summer preceding the Revolution, when his lordship was retir'd to Chattsworth, and had been there deeply engag'd with other noblemen in the measures

to starve. The affrighted Cibber told him he should receive an answer from him on Saturday next. Bickerstaffe found, on that day, his usual income was continued." This story rests only on Victor's authority, but is, of course, not improbable. There is also a vague report that Gay, in revenge for Cibber's banter of "Three Hours After Marriage," personally chastised him, but I know no good authority for the story.

[1] Cibber (1st ed.) wrote: "new honours of Duke of Devonshire, lord steward," etc. He corrected his blunder in 2d ed.

[2] See Macaulay ("History," 1858, vol. ii. p. 251).

which soon after brought it to bear, King James sent a person down to him with offers to mitigate his fine upon conditions of ready payment, to which his lordship reply'd, that if his Majesty pleas'd to allow him a little longer time, he would rather chuse to play double or quit with him: the time of the intended rising being then so near at hand, the demand, it seems, came too late for a more serious answer.

However low my pretensions to preferment were at this time, my father thought that a little court-favour added to them might give him a chance for saving the expence of maintaining me, as he had intended, at the university: he therefore order'd me to draw up a petition to the duke, and, to give it some air of merit, to put it into Latin, the prayer of which was, that his grace would be pleas'd to do something (I really forget what) for me. . . . However, the duke, upon receiving it, was so good as to desire my father would send me to London in the winter, where he would consider of some provision for me. It might, indeed, well require time to consider it; for I believe it was then harder to know what I was really fit for, than to have got me anything I was not fit for: however, to London I came, where I enter'd into my first state of attendance and dependance for about five months, till the February following. But alas! in my intervals of leisure, by frequently seeing plays, my wise head was turn'd to higher views, I saw no joy in any

other life than that of an actor, so that (as before, when a candidate at Winchester) I was even afraid of succeeding to the preferment I sought for: 'twas on the stage alone I had form'd a happiness preferable to all that camps or courts could offer me! and there was I determin'd, let father or mother take it as they pleas'd, to fix my *non ultra.*[1] Here I think myself oblig'd, in the honour of that noble lord, to acknowledge that I believe his real intentions to do well for me were prevented by my own inconsiderate folly; so that if my life did not then take a more laudable turn, I have no one but myself to reproach for it; for I was credibly inform'd by the gentlemen of his houshold, that his Grace had, in their hearing, talk'd of recommending me to the Lord Shrewsbury, then secretary of state, for the first proper vacancy in that office. But the distant hope of a reversion was too cold a temptation for a spirit impatient as mine, that wanted immediate possession of what my heart was so differently set upon. The allurements of a theatre are still so strong in my memory, that perhaps few, except those who have felt them, can conceive: and I am yet so far willing to excuse my folly, that I am convinc'd, were it possible to take off that

[1] Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 444) says: "Cibber and Verbruggen were two dissipated young fellows, who determined, in opposition to the advice of friends, to become great actors. Much about the same time, they were constant attendants upon Downes, the prompter of Drury-Lane, in expectation of employment."

disgrace and prejudice which custom has thrown upon the profession of an actor, many a well-born younger brother and beauty of low fortune would gladly have adorn'd the theatre, who by their not being able to brook such dishonour to their birth, have pass'd away their lives decently unheeded and forgotten.

Many years ago, when I was first in the menagement of the theatre, I remember a strong instance, which will shew you what degree of ignominy the profession of an actor was then held at.—A lady, with a real title, whose female indiscretions had occasion'd her family to abandon her, being willing, in her distress, to make an honest penny of what beauty she had left, desired to be admitted as an actress; when before she could receive our answer, a gentleman (probably by her relation's permission) advis'd us not to entertain her, for reasons easy to be guess'd. You may imagine we cou'd not be so blind to our interest as to make an honourable family our unnecessary enemies by not taking his advice; which the lady, too, being sensible of, saw the affair had its difficulties, and therefore pursu'd it no farther. Now, is it not hard that it should be a doubt whether this lady's condition or ours were the more melancholy? For here you find the honest endeavour to get bread from the stage was look'd upon as an addition of new scandal to her former dishonour! so that I am afraid, according to this way of thinking, had the same lady stoop'd

to have sold patches and pomatum in a band-box from door to door, she might in that occupation have starv'd with less infamy than had she reliev'd her necessities by being famous on the theatre. Whether this prejudice may have arisen from the abuses that so often have crept in upon the stage, I am not clear in; tho' when that is grossly the case, I will allow there ought to be no limits set to the contempt of it; yet in its lowest condition in my time, methinks there could have been no pretence of preferring the band-box to the buskin. But this severe opinion, whether merited or not, is not the greatest distress that this profession is liable to.

I shall now give you another anecdote, quite the reverse of what I have instanc'd, wherein you will see an actress as hardly us'd for an act of modesty (which without being a prude, a woman, even upon the stage, may sometimes think it necessary not to throw off). This, too, I am forc'd to premise, that the truth of what I am going to tell you may not be sneer'd at before it be known. About the year 1717, a young actress of a desirable person, sitting in an upper box at the opera, a military gentleman thought this a proper opportunity to secure a little conversation with her, the particulars of which were probably no more worth repeating than it seems the damoiselle then thought them worth listening to; for, notwithstanding the fine things he said to her, she rather chose to give the musick the preference of her attention. This indifference

was so offensive to his high heart, that he began to change the tender into the terrible, and, in short, proceeded at last to treat her in a style too grosly insulting for the meanest female ear to endure unresented: upon which, being beaten too far out of her discretion, she turn'd hastily upon him with an angry look, and a reply which seem'd to set his merit in so low a regard, that he thought himself oblig'd in honour to take his time to resent it. This was the full extent of her crime, which his glory delay'd no longer to punish than 'till the next time she was to appear upon the stage. There, in one of her best parts, wherein she drew a favourable regard and approbation from the audience, he, dispensing with the respect which some people think due to a polite assembly, began to interrupt her performance with such loud and various notes of mockery, as other young men of honour in the same place have sometimes made themselves undauntedly merry with. Thus, deaf to all murmurs or entreaties of those about him, he pursued his point, even to throwing near her such trash as no person can be suppos'd to carry about him, unless to use on so particular an occasion.

A gentleman, then behind the scenes, being shock'd at his unmanly behaviour, was warm enough to say, that no man but a fool or a bully cou'd be capable of insulting an audience or a woman in so monstrous a manner. The former

valiant gentleman, to whose ear the words were soon brought by his spies, whom he had plac'd behind the scenes to observe how the action was taken there, came immediately from the pit in a heat, and demanded to know of the author of those words if he was the person that spoke them? to which he calmly reply'd that though he had never seen him before, yet, since he seem'd so earnest to be satisfy'd, he would do him the favour to own, that indeed the words were his, and that they would be the last words he should chuse to deny, whoever they might fall upon. To conclude, their dispute was ended the next morning in Hyde-Park, where the determin'd combatant who first ask'd for satisfaction was oblig'd afterwards to ask his life too; whether he mended it or not, I have not yet heard; but his antagonist in a few years after died in one of the principal posts of the government.[1]

Now, though I have sometimes known these gallant insulters of audiences draw themselves into scrapes which they have less honourably got out of, yet, alas! what has that availed? This generous, publick-spirited method of silencing a few was but repelling the disease in one part to make it break out in another. All endeavours at protection are new provocations to those who pride themselves

[1] "The Laureat" states that Miss Santlow (afterwards Mrs. Barton Booth, was the actress referred to; that Captain Montague was her assailant, and Mr. Secretary Craggs her defender.

in pushing their courage to a defiance of humanity. Even when a royal resentment has shewn itself in the behalf of an injur'd actor, it has been unable to defend him from farther insults! an instance of which happen'd in the late King James's time. Mr. Smith [1] (whose character as a gentleman could have been no way impeach'd had he not degraded it by being a celebrated actor) had the misfortune, in a dispute with a gentleman behind the scenes, to receive a blow from him. The same night an account of this action was carry'd to the king, to whom the gentleman was represented so grosly in the wrong, that the next day his Majesty sent to forbid him the court upon it. This indignity cast upon a gentleman only for having maltreated a player, was look'd upon as the concern of every gentleman; and a party was soon form'd to assert and vindicate their honour, by humbling this favour'd actor, whose slight injury had been judg'd equal to so severe a notice. Accordingly, the next time Smith acted he was receiv'd with a chorus of cat-calls, that soon convinc'd him he should not be suffer'd to proceed in his part; upon which, without the least discomposure, he order'd the curtain to be dropp'd; and, having a competent fortune of his own, thought the conditions of adding to it by his remaining upon the stage were too dear, and from that day entirely quitted it.[2] I

[1] See memoir of William Smith at end of second volume.

[2] See memoir.

shall make no observation upon the king's resentment, or on that of his good subjects; how far either was or was not right, is not the point I dispute for. Be that as it may, the unhappy condition of the actor was so far from being reliev'd by this royal interposition in his favour, that it was the worse for it.

While these sort of real distresses on the stage are so unavoidable, it is no wonder that young people of sense (though of low fortune) should be so rarely found to supply a succession of good actors. Why then, may we not, in some measure, impute the scarcity of them to the wanton inhumanity of those spectators who have made it so terribly mean to appear there? Were there no ground for this question, where could be the disgrace of entring into a society whose institution, when not abus'd, is a delightful school of morality; and where to excel requires as ample endowments of nature as any one profession (that of holy institution excepted) whatsoever? But alas! as Shakespear says:

> "Where's that palace, whereinto, sometimes
> Foul things intrude not?"[1]

Look into St. Peter's at Rome, and see what a profitable farce is made of religion there! Why then is an actor more blemish'd than a cardinal?

[1] "As where's that palace whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not?" — *Othello*, act. iii. sc. 3.

While the excellence of the one arises from his innocently seeming what he is not, and the eminence of the other from the most impious fallacies that can be impos'd upon human understanding? If the best things, therefore, are most liable to corruption, the corruption of the theatre is no disproof of its innate and primitive utility.

In this light, therefore, all the abuses of the stage, all the low, loose, or immoral supplements to wit, whether in making virtue ridiculous or vice agreeable, or in the decorated nonsense and absurdities of pantomimical trumpery, I give up to the contempt of every sensible spectator, as so much rank theatrical popery, but cannot still allow these enormities to impeach the profession, while they are so palpably owing to the deprav'd taste of the multitude. While vice and farcical folly are the most profitable commodities, why should we wonder that, time out of mind, the poor comedian, when real wit would bear no price, should deal in what would bring him most ready money? But this, you will say, is making the stage a nursery of vice and folly, or at least keeping an open shop for it. — I grant it; but who do you expect should reform it? The actors? Why so? If people are permitted to buy it without blushing, the theatrical merchant seems to have an equal right to the liberty of selling it without reproach. That this evil wants a remedy is not to be contested; nor can it be denied that the theatre is as capable

of being preserv'd by a reformation as matters of more importance; which, for the honour of our national taste, I could wish were attempted; and then, if it could not subsist under decent regulations, by not being permitted to present anything there but what were worthy to be there, it would be time enough to consider whether it were necessary to let it totally fall or effectually support it.

Notwithstanding all my best endeavours to recommend the profession of an actor to a more general favour, I doubt, while it is liable to such corruptions, and the actor himself to such unlimited insults as I have already mention'd, I doubt, I say, we must still leave him a-drift, with his intrinsick merit, to ride out the storm as well as he is able.

However, let us now turn to the other side of this account, and see what advantages stand there to balance the misfortunes I have laid before you. There we shall still find some valuable articles of credit, that sometimes overpay his incidental disgraces.

First, if he has sense, he will consider that as these indignities are seldom or never offer'd him by people that are remarkable for any one good quality, he ought not to lay them too close to his heart. He will know, too, that when malice, envy, or a brutal nature can securely hide or fence themselves in a multitude, virtue, merit, innocence, and even sovereign superiority, have been, and

must be equally liable to their insults ; that, therefore, when they fall upon him in the same manner, his intrinsick value cannot be diminish'd by them. On the contrary, if, with a decent and unruffled temper, he lets them pass, the disgrace will return upon his aggressor, and perhaps warm the generous spectator into a partiality in his favour.

That while he is conscious, that, as an actor, he must be always in the hands of injustice, it does him at least this involuntary good, — that it keeps him in a settled resolution to avoid all occasions of provoking it, or of even offending the lowest enemy, who, at the expence of a shilling, may publickly revenge it.

That, if he excells on the stage and is irreproachable in his personal morals and behaviour, his profession is so far from being an impediment that it will be oftner a just reason for his being receiv'd among people of condition with favour; and sometimes with a more social distinction than the best, though more profitable, trade he might have follow'd, could have recommended him to.

That this is a happiness to which several actors within my memory, as Betterton, Smith, Montfort, Captain Griffin,[1] and Mrs. Bracegirdle (yet living)

[1] Captain Griffin was, no doubt, the Griffin who is mentioned by Downes as entering the King's Company "after they had begun at Drury Lane." This is, of course, very indefinite as regards time. Drury Lane was opened in 1663, but the first character for which we can find Griffin's name mentioned is that of Varnish in "The Plain-Dealer," which was produced in 1674.

have arriv'd at; to which I may add the late celebrated Mrs. Oldfield. Now let us suppose these persons, the men, for example, to have been all eminent mercers, and the women as famous milliners, can we imagine that merely as such, though endow'd with the same natural understanding, they could have been call'd into the same honourable parties of conversation? People of sense and condition could not but know it was impossible they could have had such various excellencies on the stage, without having something naturally valuable in them. And I will take upon me to affirm, who knew them all living, that there was not one of the number who were not capable of supporting a variety of spirited conversation, tho' the stage were never to have been the subject of it.

At the union in 1682, Griffin took a good position in the amalgamated company, and continued on the stage till about 1688, when his name disappears from the bills. During this time he is not called captain, but in 1701 the name of Captain Griffin appears among the Drury Lane actors. Genest says it is more probable that this should be Griffin returned to the stage after thirteen years spent in the army than that Captain Griffin should have gone on the stage without having previously been connected with it. In this Genest is quite correct, for the anecdote of Goodman and Griffin, which Cibber tells in Vol. II. Chap. III., shows conclusively that Captain Griffin was an actor during Goodman's stage-career, which ended certainly before 1690. He appears to have finally retired about the beginning of 1708. Downes says, "Mr. Griffin so excell'd in Surly. Sir Edward Belfond, the Plain Dealer, none succeeding in the 2 former have equall'd him [nor any] except his predecessor Mr. Hart in the latter" (p. 40). I have ventured to supply the two words "nor any" to make clear what Downes must have meant.

That to have trod the stage has not always been thought a disqualification from more honourable employments; several have had military commissions; Carlisle[1] and Wiltshire[2] were both kill'd captains, one in King William's reduction of Ireland, and the other in his first war in Flanders; and the famous Ben. Johnson, tho' an unsuccessful actor, was afterwards made poet-laureat.[3]

To these laudable distinctions let me add one more, that of publick applause, which, when truly merited, is perhaps one of the most agreeable gratifications that venial vanity can feel. A happiness almost peculiar to the actor, insomuch that the best tragick writer, however numerous his separate admirers may be, yet, to unite them into one general act of praise, to receive at once those thundring peals of approbation which a crouded theatre throws out, he must still call in the assist-

[1] The "Biographia Dramatica" (i. 87) gives an account of James Carlile. He was a native of Lancashire, and in his youth was an actor; but he left the stage for the army, and was killed at the battle of Aughrin, 11th July, 1691. Nothing practically is known of his stage career. Downes (p. 39) notes that at the union of the patents in 1682, "Mr. Monfort and Mr. Carlile were grown to the maturity of good actors." I cannot trace Carlile's name in the bills any later than 1685.

[2] Wiltshire seems to have been a very useful actor of the second rank. In 1685 he also appears for the last time.

[3] That Ben Jonson was an unsuccessful actor is gravely doubted by Gifford and by his latest editor, Lieutenant-Colonel Cunningham, who give excellent reasons in support of their view. See memoir prefixed to edition of Jonson, 1870, i. xi.

ance of the skilful actor to raise and partake of them.

In a word, 'twas in this flattering light only, though not perhaps so thoroughly consider'd, I look'd upon the life of an actor when but eighteen years of age, nor can you wonder if the temptations were too strong for so warm a vanity as mine to resist; but whether excusable or not, to the stage at length I came, and it is from thence, chiefly, your curiosity, if you have any left, is to expect a farther account of me.

CHAPTER IV.

A Short View of the Stage, from the Year 1660 to the Revolution — The King's and Duke's Company United, Composed the Best Set of English Actors Yet Known — Their Several Theatrical Characters.

THO' I have only promis'd you an account of all the material occurrences of the theatre during my own time, yet there was one which happen'd not above seven years before my admission to it, which may be as well worth notice as the first great revolution of it, in which, among numbers, I was involv'd. And as the one will lead you into a clearer view of the other, it may therefore be previously necessary to let you know that —

King Charles II. at his Restoration granted two patents, one to Sir William Davenant,[1] and the

[1] Sir William Davenant was the son of a vintner and innkeeper at Oxford. It was said that Shakespeare used frequently to stay at the inn, and a story accordingly was manufactured that William Davenant was in fact the son of the poet through an amour with Mrs. Davenant. But of this there is no shadow of proof. Davenant went to Oxford, but made no special figure as a scholar, winning fame, however, as a poet and dramatist. On the death of Ben Jonson in 1637, he was appointed poet-laureate, and in 1636 received a licence from Charles I. to get together a company of players. In the Civil War he greatly distinguished himself, and was knighted by the king for his

other to Thomas Killigrew, Esq.,[1] and their several heirs and assigns for ever, for the forming of two distinct companies of comedians. The first were call'd the King's Servants, and acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane;[2] and the other

bravery. Before the Restoration Davenant was permitted by Cromwell to perform some sort of theatrical pieces at Rutland House, in Charter House Yard, where "The Siege of Rhodes" was played about 1656. At the Restoration a patent was granted to him in August, 1660, and he engaged Rhodes's company of players, including Betterton, Kynaston, Underhill, and Nokes. Another patent was granted to him, dated 15th January, 1663 (see copy of patent given *ante*), under which he managed the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields till his death in 1668. Davenant's company were called the Duke's Players. The changes which were made in the conduct of the stage during Davenant's career, such as the introduction of elaborate scenery and the first appearance of women in plays, make it one of the first interest and importance. (See Mr. Joseph Knight's preface to his recent edition of the "Roscius Anglicanus.")

[1] Thomas Killigrew (not "Henry" Killigrew, as Cibber erroneously writes) was a very noted and daring humourist. He was a faithful adherent of King Charles I., and at the Restoration was made a groom of the bedchamber. He also received a patent, dated 25th April, 1662, to raise a company of actors to be called the King's Players. These acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. Killigrew survived the union of the two companies in 1682, dying on the 19th of March, 1683. He cannot be said to have made much mark in theatrical history. The best anecdote of Killigrew is that related by Granger, how he waited on Charles II. one day dressed like a pilgrim bound on a long journey. When the king asked him whither he was going, he replied: "To hell, to fetch back Oliver Cromwell to take care of England, for his successor takes none at all."

[2] It is curious to note that this theatre, which occupied the same site as the present Drury Lane, was sometimes described as Drury Lane, sometimes as Covent Garden.

the Duke's Company, who acted at the Duke's Theatre in Dorset Garden.[1] About ten of the King's Company were on the royal household establishment, having each ten yards of scarlet cloth, with a proper quantity of lace allow'd them for liveries, and in their warrants from the lord chamberlain were stiled gentlemen of the great chamber.[2] Whether the like appointments were extended to the Duke's Company, I am not certain; but they were both in high estimation with the publick, and so much the delight and concern of the court, that they were not only supported by its being frequently present at their public presentations, but by its taking cognisance even of their private government, insomuch that their particular differences, pretentions, or complaints were generally ended by the king or duke's personal command or decision. Besides their being thorough

[1] Should be Lincoln's Inn Fields. Dorset Garden, which was situated in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, was not opened till 1671.

[2] Genest (ii. 302) remarks on this: "How long this lasted does not appear; it appears, however, that it lasted to Queen Anne's time, as the alteration of 'Wit without Money' is dedicated to Thomas Newman, servant to her Majesty, one of the gentlemen of the great chamber, and bookkeeper and prompter to her Majesty's company of comedians in the Haymarket." Doctor Doran, in his "Their Majesties' Servants" (1888 edition, iii. 419), says that he was informed by Benjamin Webster that Baddeley was the last actor who wore the uniform of scarlet and gold prescribed for the gentlemen of the household, who were patented actors.

masters of their art, these actors set forwards with two critical advantages, which perhaps may never happen again in many ages. The one was their immediate opening after the so long interdiction of plays during the Civil War and the anarchy that followed it. What eager appetites from so long a fast must the guests of those times have had to that high and fresh variety of entertainments which Shakespear had left prepared for them! Never was a stage so provided! A hundred years are wasted, and another silent century well advanced, and yet what unborn age shall say Shakespear has his equal? How many shining actors have the warm scenes of his genius given to posterity, without being himself in his action equal to his writing! A strong proof that actors, like poets, must be born such. Eloquence and elocution are quite different talents. Shakespear could write "Hamlet," but tradition tells us that the Ghost, in the same play, was one of his best performances as an actor. Nor is it within the reach of rule or precept to complete either of them. Instruction, 'tis true, may guard them equally against faults or absurdities, but there it stops. Nature must do the rest. To excel in either art is a self-born happiness which something more than good sense must be the mother of.

The other advantage I was speaking of is, that before the Restoration no actresses had ever

been seen upon the English stage.[1] The characters of women on former theatres were perform'd by boys, or young men of the most effeminate aspect. And what grace or master-strokes of action can we conceive such ungain hoydens to have been capable of? This defect was so well considered by Shakespear that in few of his plays he has any greater dependance upon the ladies than in the innocence and simplicity of a Desdemona, an Ophelia, or in the short specimen of a fond and virtuous Portia. The additional objects then of real, beautiful women could not but draw a proportion of new admirers to the theatre. We may imagine, too, that these actresses were not ill chosen, when it is well known that more than one of them had charms sufficient at their leisure

[1] The question of the identity of the first English actress is a very intricate one. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, in his "New History of the English Stage," seems to incline to favour Anne Marshall, while Mr. Joseph Knight, in his edition of the "Roscius Anglicanus," pronounces for Mrs. Coleman. Davies says positively that "the first woman actress was the mother of Norris, commonly called Jubilee Dicky." Thomas Jordan wrote a prologue "to introduce the first woman that came to act on the stage," but, as the lady's name is not given, this does not help us. The distinction is also claimed for Mrs. Saunderson (afterwards Mrs. Betterton) and Margaret Hughes. But since Mr. Knight has shown that the performances in 1656 at Rutland House, where Mrs. Coleman appeared, were for money, I do not see that we can escape from the conclusion that this lady was the first English professional actress. Who the first actress after the Restoration was is as yet unsettled.

hours to calm and mollify the cares of empire.[1] Besides these peculiar advantages they had a private rule or agreement, which both houses were happily ty'd down to, which was that no play acted at one house should ever be attempted at the other. All the capital plays, therefore, of Shakespear, Fletcher, and Ben. Johnson were divided between them by the approbation of the court and their own alternate choice.[2] So that when Hart[3] was famous for Othello, Betterton had no less a reputation for Hamlet. By this order the stage was supply'd with a greater variety of plays than could possibly have been shewn had both companies been employ'd at the same time upon the same play; which liberty, too, must have occasion'd such frequent repetitions of 'em by their opposite endeavours to forestall and anticipate one another, that the best actors in the world must have grown tedious and tasteless to the spectator. For what pleasure is not languid to satiety?[4] It

[1] Meaning, no doubt, Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis.

[2] Genest points out (i. 404) that Cibber is not quite accurate here. Shakespeare's and Fletcher's plays may have been shared; Jonson's certainly were not.

[3] See memoir of Hart at end of second volume.

[4] Genest says that this regulation "might be very proper at the first restoration of the stage, but as a perpetual rule it was absurd. Cibber approves of it, not considering that Betterton could never have acted Othello, Brutus, or Hotspur [the very parts for which Cibber praises him so much] if there had not been a junction of the companies." Bellchambers, in a long note, also contests Cibber's opinion.

was, therefore, one of our greatest happinesses (during my time of being in the menagement of the stage) that we had a certain number of select plays which no other company had the good fortune to make a tolerable figure in, and, consequently, could find little or no account by acting them against us. These plays, therefore, for many years, by not being too often seen, never fail'd to bring us crowded audiences; and it was to this conduct we ow'd no little share of our prosperity. But when four houses [1] are at once (as very lately they were) all permitted to act the same pieces, let three of them perform never so ill, when plays come to be so harrass'd and hackney'd but to the common people (half of which too, perhaps, would as lieve see them at one house as another) the best actors will soon feel that the town has enough of them.

I know it is the common opinion that the more play-houses the more emulation; I grant it; but what has this emulation ended in? Why, a daily contention which shall soonest surfeit you with the best plays; so that when what ought to please

[1] In the season 1735–36, in addition to the two patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, Giffard was playing at Goodman's Fields Theatre, and Fielding, with his Great Mogul's company of comedians, occupied the Haymarket. In 1736–37 Giffard played at the Lincoln's-Inn-Fields Theatre, and Goodman's Fields was unused. The Licensing Act of 1737 closed the two irregular houses, leaving only Drury Lane and Covent Garden open.

can no longer please, your appetite is again to be raised by such monstrous presentations as dishonour the taste of a civilis'd people.[1] If, indeed, to our several theatres we could raise a proportionable number of good authors to give them all different employment, then perhaps the publick might profit from their emulation. But while good writers are so scarce, and undaunted criticks so plenty, I am afraid a good play and a blazing star will be equal rarities. This voluptuous expedient, therefore, of indulging the taste with several theatres will amount to much the same variety as that of a certain oeconomist who, to enlarge his hospitality, would have two puddings and two legs of mutton for the same dinner.[2] But to resume the thread of my history.

These two excellent companies were both prosperous for some few years, 'till their variety of plays began to be exhausted. Then, of course, the better actors (which the king's seem to have been allowed) could not fail of drawing the greater audiences. Sir William Davenant, therefore, mas-

[1] Cibber here refers to the pantomimes, which he deals with at some length in Vol. II. Chap. VI.

[2] Fielding (*Champion*, 6th May, 1740): "Another observation which I have made on our author's similies is, that they generally have an eye towards the kitchen. Thus, page 56, two play-houses are like two puddings or two legs of mutton. 224. To plant young actors is not so easy as to plant cabbages. To which let me add a metaphor in page 57, where unprofitable praise can hardly give truth a soup maigre."

ter of the Duke's Company, to make head against their success, was forced to add spectacle and musick to action, and to introduce a new species of plays, since call'd dramatick operas, of which kind were the "Tempest," "Psyche," "Circe," and others, all set off with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers.[1]

This sensual supply of sight and sound coming in to the assistance of the weaker party, it was no wonder they should grow too hard for sense and simple nature, when it is consider'd how many more people there are that can see and hear, than think and judge. So wanton a change of the publick taste, therefore, began to fall as heavy upon the King's Company as their greater excellence in action had before fallen upon their competitors: of which encroachment upon wit several good prologues in those days frequently complain'd.[2]

[1] "Dramatic operas" seem to have been first produced about 1672. In 1673 "The Tempest," made into an opera by Shadwell, was played at Dorset Garden; "Pysche" followed in the next year, and "Circe" in 1677. "Macbeth," as altered by Davenant, was produced in 1672, "in the nature of an opera," as Downes phrases it.

[2] Dryden, in his "Prologue on the Opening of the New House," in 1674, writes:

> "'Twere folly now a stately pile to raise,
> To build a playhouse while you throw down plays;
> While scenes, machines, and empty operas reign —"

and the prologue concludes with the lines:

But alas! what can truth avail, when its dependance is much more upon the ignorant than the sensible auditor? a poor satisfaction, that the due praise given to it must at last sink into the cold comfort of — *laudatur et alget.*[1] Unprofitable praise can hardly give it a *soup maigre.* Taste and fashion with us have always had wings, and fly from one publick spectacle to another so wantonly, that I have been inform'd by those who remember it, that a famous puppet-shew[2] in Salisbury Change (then standing where Cecil Street now is) so far distresst these two celebrated companies, that they were reduced to petition the king for relief against it: nor ought we, perhaps, to think this strange, when, if I mistake not, Terence himself reproaches the Roman auditors of his time with the like fondness for the *funambuli*, the rope-dancers.[3] Not to dwell too long, therefore, upon that part of my history which I have

"'Tis to be feared —
That, as a fire the former house o'erthrew,
Machines and tempests will destroy the new."

The allusion in the last line is to the opera of "The Tempest," which I have mentioned in the previous note.

[1] "Probitas laudatur et alget."
— *Juvenal*, i. 74.

[2] In the prologue to "The Emperor of the Moon," 1687, the line occurred: "There's nothing lasting but the puppet show."

[3] "Ita populus studio stupidus in funambulo
Animum occuparat."
— *Terence, Prol. to* "*Hecyra*," line 4.

only collected from oral tradition, I shall content myself with telling you that Mohun[1] and Hart, now growing old (for, above thirty years before this time, they had severally born the king's commission of major and captain in the civil wars), and the younger actors, as Goodman,[2] Clark,[3] and others, being impatient to get into their parts, and growing intractable,[4] the audiences, too, of both houses then falling off, the patentees of each, by the king's advice, which perhaps amounted to a command, united their interests and both companies into one, exclusive of all others, in the year 1682.[5] This union was, however, so much in favour of the Duke's Company, that Hart left the stage upon it, and Mohun survived not long after.

One only theatre being now in possession of the

[1] See memoir of Michael Mohun at end of second volume.

[2] See memoir of Cardell Goodman at end of second volume.

[3] Of Clark very little is known. The earliest play in which his name is given by Downes is "The Plain-Dealer," which was produced at the Theatre Royal in 1674, Clark playing Novel, a part of secondary importance. His name appears to Massina in "Sophonisba," Hephestion in "Alexander the Great," Dolabella in "All for Love," Aquitius in "Mythridates," and (his last recorded part) the Earl of Essex, the principal character in "The Unhappy Favourite," Theatre Royal, 1682. After the union of the companies in 1682 his name does not occur. Bellchambers has several trifling errors in the memoir he gives of this actor.

[4] Curll ("History of the English Stage," p. 9) says: "The feuds and animosities of the King's Company were so well improved, as to produce an union betwixt the two patents."

[5] Cibber gives the year as 1684, but this is so obviously a slip that I venture to correct the text.

whole town, the united patentees imposed their own terms upon the actors; for the profits of acting were then divided into twenty shares, ten of which went to the proprietors, and the other moiety to the principal actors, in such sub-divisions as their different merit might pretend to. These shares of the patentees were promiscuously sold out to money-making persons, call'd adventurers,[1] who, tho' utterly ignorant of theatrical affairs, were still admitted to a proportionate vote in the menagement of them; all particular encouragements to actors were by them, of consequence, look'd upon as so many sums deducted from their private dividends. While therefore the theatrical hive had so many drones in it, the labouring actors, sure, were under the highest discouragement, if not a direct state of oppression. Their hardship will at least appear in a much stronger light when compar'd to our later situation, who with scarce half their merit succeeded to be sharers under a patent upon five times easier conditions: for as they had but half the profits divided among ten or more of them; we had three-fourths of the whole profits divided only among three of us: and as they might be said to have ten taskmasters over

[1] Genest (ii. 62) remarks: "The theatre in Dorset Garden had been built by subscription — the subscribers were called adventurers — of this Cibber seems totally ignorant — that there were any new adventurers, added to the original number, rests solely on his authority, and in all probability he is not correct."

them, we never had but one assistant menager (not an actor) join'd with us;[1] who, by the Crown's indulgence, was sometimes too of our own chusing. Under this heavy establishment, then, groan'd this united company when I was first admitted into the lowest rank of it. How they came to be relieved by King William's licence in 1695, how they were again dispersed early in Queen Anne's reign, and from what accidents fortune took better care of us, their unequal successors, will be told in its place: but to prepare you for the opening so large a scene of their history, methinks I ought (in justice to their memory too) to give you such particular characters of their theatrical merit as in my plain judgment they seem'd to deserve. Presuming then that this attempt may not be disagreeable to the curious or the true lovers of the theatre, take it without farther preface.

In the year 1690, when I first came into this company, the principal actors then at the head of it were:

OF MEN.	OF WOMEN.
Mr. Betterton,	Mrs. Betterton,
Mr. Monfort,	Mrs. Barry,
Mr. Kynaston,	Mrs. Leigh,
Mr. Sandford,	Mrs. Butler,
Mr. Nokes,	Mrs. Monfort, and
Mr. Underhil, and	Mrs. Bracegirdle.
Mr. Leigh.	

[1] Cibber afterwards relates the connection of Owen Swiney, William Collier, M. P., and Sir Richard Steele, with himself and his actor-partners.

These actors whom I have selected from their contemporaries were all original masters in their different stile, not meer auricular imitators of one another, which commonly is the highest merit of the middle rank, but self-judges of nature, from whose various lights they only took their true instruction. If in the following account of them I may be obliged to hint at the faults of others, I never mean such observations should extend to those who are now in possession of the stage; for as I design not my memoirs shall come down to their time, I would not lie under the imputation of speaking in their disfavour to the publick, whose approbation they must depend upon for support.[1] But to my purpose.

Betterton was an actor, as Shakespear was an author, both without competitors; form'd for the mutual assistance and illustration of each other's genius. How Shakespear wrote, all men who have a taste for nature may read and know — but with what higher rapture would he still be read could they conceive how Betterton play'd him. Then might they know the one was born alone to speak what the other only knew to write. Pity it is that the momentary beauties flowing from an

[1] The only one of Cibber's contemporaries of any note who was alive when the "Apology" was published, was Benjamin Johnson. This admirable comedian died in August, 1742, in his seventy-seventh year, having played as late as the end of May of that year.

harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record. That the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them, or at best can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators. Could how Betterton spoke be as easily known as what he spoke, then might you see the Muse of Shakespear in her triumph, with all her beauties in their best array rising into real life, and charming her beholders. But alas! since all this is so far out of the reach of description, how shall I shew you Betterton? Should I therefore tell you that all the Othellos, Hamlets, Hotspurs, Macbeths, and Brutus's whom you may have seen since his time, have fallen far short of him; this still would give you no idea of his particular excellence. Let us see then what a particular comparison may do; whether that may yet draw him nearer to you?

You have seen a Hamlet perhaps, who, on the first appearance of his father's spirit, has thrown himself into all the straining vociferation requisite to express rage and fury, and the house has thunder'd with applause; tho' the mis-guided actor was all the while (as Shakespear terms it) tearing a passion into rags[1] — I am the more bold to

[1] The actor pointed at is, no doubt, Wilks. In the last chapter of this work, Cibber, in giving the theatrical character of Wilks, says of his Hamlet: "I own the half of what he spoke

offer you this particular instance, because the late Mr. Addison, while I sate by him to see this scene acted, made the same observation, asking me, with some surprize, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a passion with the ghost, which, tho' it might have astonish'd, it had not provok'd him? For you may observe that in this beautiful speech the passion never rises beyond an almost breathless astonishment, or an impatience, limited by filial reverence, to enquire into the suspected wrongs that may have rais'd him from his peaceful tomb, and a desire to know what a spirit so seemingly distrest might wish or enjoin a sorrowful son to execute towards his future quiet in the grave. This was the light into which Betterton threw this scene, which he open'd with a pause of mute amazement; then rising slowly to a solemn, trembling voice, he made the ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself,[1] and in the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave him, the boldness of his expostulation was still govern'd by decency, manly, but not braving; his voice never rising into that seeming outrage or wild defiance of what

was as painful to my ear, as every line that came from Betterton was charming."

[1] Barton Booth, who was probably as great in the part of the ghost as Betterton was in Hamlet, said, "When I acted the ghost with Betterton, instead of my awing him, he terrified me. But divinity hung round that man." — *Dram. Misc.*, iii. 32.

he naturally rever'd.[1] But alas! to preserve this medium, between mouthing and meaning too little, to keep the attention more pleasingly awake by a temper'd spirit than by meer vehemence of voice, is of all the master-strokes of an actor the most difficult to reach. In this none yet have equall'd Betterton. But I am unwilling to shew his superiority only by recounting the errors of those who now cannot answer to them, let their farther failings therefore be forgotten; or rather, shall I in some measure excuse them? For I am not yet sure that they might not be as much owing to the false judgment of the spectator as the actor. While the million are so apt to be transported when the drum of their ear is so roundly rattled; while they take the life of elocution to lie in the strength of the lungs, it is no wonder the actor, whose end is applause, should be also tempted at this easy rate to excite it. Shall I go a little farther and allow that this extreme is more pardonable than its opposite error? I mean that dangerous affectation of the monotone, or solemn sameness of pronounciation, which, to my ear, is insupportable; for of all faults that so frequently pass upon the vulgar, that of flatness will have the fewest admirers. That this is an

[1] "The Laureat" repeats the eulogium of a gentleman who had seen Betterton play Hamlet, and adds: "And yet, the same gentleman assured me, he has seen Mr. Betterton, more than once, play this character to an audience of twenty pounds, or under" (p. 32).

error of ancient standing seems evident by what Hamlet says, in his instructions to the players, viz., —

"Be not too tame, neither," etc.

The actor, doubtless, is as strongly ty'd down to the rules of Horace as the writer.

"Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi —"[1]

He that feels not himself the passion he would raise, will talk to a sleeping audience: but this never was the fault of Betterton; and it has often amaz'd me to see those who soon came after him throw out, in some parts of a character, a just and graceful spirit which Betterton himself could not but have applauded. And yet in the equally shining passages of the same character have heavily dragg'd the sentiment along like a dead weight, with a long-ton'd voice and absent eye, as if they had fairly forgot what they were about: if you have never made this observation, I am contented you should not know where to apply it.[2]

A farther excellence in Betterton was, that he could vary his spirit to the different characters he

[1] "Ars Poetica," 102. This is the much discussed question of Diderot's "Paradoxe sur le Comédien," which has recently been revived by Mr. Henry Irving and M. Coquelin, and has formed the subject of some interesting studies by Mr. William Archer.

[2] This is doubtless directed at Booth, who was naturally of an indolent disposition, and seems to have been, on occasions, apt to drag through a part.

acted. Those wild impatient starts, that fierce and flashing fire, which he threw into Hotspur, never came from the unruffled temper of his Brutus (for I have more than once seen a Brutus as warm as Hotspur). When the Betterton Brutus was provok'd in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye; his steady look alone supply'd that terror which he disdain'd an intemperance in his voice should rise to. Thus, with a settled dignity of contempt, like an unheeding rock he repelled upon himself the foam of Cassius. Perhaps the very words of Shakespear will better let you into my meaning:

> "Must I give way and room to your rash choler?
> Shall I be frighted when a madman stares?"

And a little after,

> "There is no terror, Cassius, in your looks!" etc.

Not but in some part of this scene, where he reproaches Cassius, his temper is not under this suppression, but opens into that warmth which becomes a man of virtue; yet this is that hasty spark of anger which Brutus himself endeavours to excuse.

But with whatever strength of nature we see the poet shew at once the philosopher and the heroe, yet the image of the actor's excellence will be still imperfect to you unless language could put colours in our words to paint the voice with.

Et, si vis similem pingere, pinge sonum,[1] is enjoyning an impossibility. The most that a Vandyke can arrive at, is to make his portraits of great persons seem to think; a Shakespear goes farther yet, and tells you what his pictures thought; a Betterton steps beyond 'em both, and calls them from the grave to breathe and be themselves again in feature, speech, and motion. When the skilful actor shews you all these powers at once united, and gratifies at once your eye, your ear, your understanding: to conceive the pleasure rising from such harmony, you must have been present at it! 'tis not to be told you!

There cannot be a stronger proof of the charms of harmonious elocution than the many even unnatural scenes and flights of the false sublime it has lifted into applause. In what raptures have I seen an audience at the furious fustian and turgid rants in Nat. Lee's "Alexander the Great!" For though I can allow this play a few great beauties, yet it is not without its extravagant blemishes. Every play of the same author has more or less of them. Let me give you a sample from this. Alexander, in a full crowd of courtiers, without being occasionally call'd or provok'd to it, falls into this rhapsody of vainglory.

"Can none remember? Yes, I know all must!"

And therefore they shall know it agen.

[1] Ausonius, II, 8 (Epigram xi.).

"When glory, like the dazzling eagle, stood
Perch'd on my beaver, in the granic flood,
When Fortune's self my standard trembling bore,
And the pale Fates stood frighted on the shore,
When the Immortals on the billows rode,
And I myself appear'd the leading god."[1]

When these flowing numbers came from the mouth of a Betterton the multitude no more desired sense to them than our musical connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrate airs of an Italian opera. Does not this prove that there is very near as much enchantment in the well-govern'd voice of an actor as in the sweet pipe of an eunuch? If I tell you there was no one tragedy, for many years, more in favour with the town than Alexander, to what must we impute this its command of publick admiration? Not to its intrinsick merit, surely, if it swarms with passages like this I have shewn you! If this passage has merit, let us see what figure it would make upon canvas, what sort of picture would rise from it. If Le Brun, who was famous for painting the battles of this heroe, had seen this lofty description, what one image could he have possibly taken from it? In what colours would he have shewn us glory perch'd upon a beaver? How would he have drawn Fortune trembling? Or, indeed, what use could he have made of pale Fates or Immortals riding upon billows, with this blustering god of his own

[1] "Alexander the Great; or, the Rival Queens," act ii. sc. 1.

making at the head of them?[1] Where, then, must have lain the charm that once made the publick so partial to this tragedy? Why plainly, in the grace and harmony of the actor's utterance. For the actor himself is not accountable for the false poetry of his author; that the hearer is to judge of. If it passes upon him, the actor can have no quarrel to it; who, if the periods given him are round, smooth, spirited, and high-sounding, even in a false passion, must throw out the same fire and grace as may be required in one justly rising from nature; where those his excellencies will then be only more pleasing in proportion to the taste of his hearer. And I am of opinion that to the extraordinary success of this very play we may impute the corruption of so many actors and tragick writers, as were immediately misled by it. The unskilful actor, who imagin'd all the merit of delivering those blazing rants lay only in the strength and strain'd exertion

[1] Bellchambers notes on this passage: "The criticisms of Cibber upon a literary subject are hardly worth the trouble of confuting, and yet it may be mentioned that Bishop Warburton adduced these lines as containing not only the most sublime, but the most judicious imagery that poetry can conceive. If Le Brun, or any other artist, could not succeed in pourtraying the terrors of fortune, it conveys, perhaps, the highest possible compliment to the powers of Lee, to admit that he has mastered a difficulty beyond the most daring aspirations of an accomplished painter." With all respect to Warburton and Bellchambers, I cannot help remarking that this last sentence seems to me perilously like nonsense.

of the voice, began to tear his lungs upon every false or slight occasion to arrive at the same applause. And it is from hence I date our having seen the same reason prevalent for above fifty years. Thus equally misguided, too, many a barren-brain'd author has stream'd into a frothy flowing style, pompously rolling into sounding periods signifying — roundly nothing; of which number, in some of my former labours, I am something more than suspicious that I may myself have made one. But to keep a little closer to Betterton.

When this favourite play I am speaking of, from its being too frequently acted, was worn out, and came to be deserted by the town, upon the sudden death of Monfort, who had play'd Alexander with success for several years, the part was given to Betterton, which, under this great disadvantage of the satiety it had given, he immediately reviv'd with so new a lustre that for three days together it fill'd the house;[1] and had his then declining strength been equal to the fatigue the action gave him, it probably might have doubled its success; an uncommon instance of the power and intrinsick merit of an actor. This I mention not only to prove what irresistable pleasure may arise from a judicious elocution, with scarce sense to assist it; but to shew you, too,

[1] I can find no record of this revival, nor am I aware that any other authority than Cibber mentions it. I am unable therefore even to guess at a date.

that tho' Betterton never wanted fire and force when his character demanded it; yet, where it was not demanded, he never prostituted his power to the low ambition of a false applause. And further, that when, from a too advanced age, he resigned that toilsome part of Alexander, the play for many years after never was able to impose upon the publick;[1] and I look upon his so particularly supporting the false fire and extravagancies of that character to be a more surprising proof of his skill than his being eminent in those of Shakespear; because there, truth and nature coming to his assistance, he had not the same difficulties to combat, and consequently we must be less amaz'd at his success where we are more able to account for it.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary power he shew'd in blowing Alexander once more into a blaze of admiration, Betterton had so just a sense of what was true or false applause, that I have heard him say he never thought any kind of it equal to an attentive silence; that there were many ways of deceiving an audience into a loud one; but to keep them husht and quiet was an applause which only truth and merit could arrive at: of which art there never was an equal master to himself. From these various excellencies he had

[1] In 1706, in Betterton's own company at the Haymarket, Verbruggen played Alexander. At Drury Lane, in 1704, Wilks had played the part.

so full a possession of the esteem and regard of his auditors, that upon his entrance into every scene he seem'd to seize upon the eyes and ears of the giddy and inadvertent. To have talk'd or look'd another way would then have been thought insensibility or ignorance.[1] In all his soliloquies of moment, the strong intelligence of his attitude and aspect drew you into such an impatient gaze and eager expectation, that you almost imbib'd the sentiment with your eye before the ear could reach it.

As Betterton is the centre to which all my observations upon action tend, you will give me leave, under his character, to enlarge upon that head. In the just delivery of poetical numbers, particularly where the sentiments are pathetick, it is scarce credible upon how minute an article of sound depends their greatest beauty or inaffection. The voice of a singer is not more strictly ty'd to time and tune than that of an actor in theatrical elocution.[2] The least syllable too long or too slightly

[1] Anthony Aston says that his voice "enforced universal attention even from the fops and orange girls."

[2] Anthony Aston says of Mrs. Barry: "Neither she, nor any of the actors of those times, had any tone in their speaking (too much lately in use)." But the line of criticism which Cibber takes up here would lead to the conclusion that Aston is not strictly accurate; and, moreover, I can scarcely imagine how, if these older actors used no "tone," the employment of it should have been so general as it certainly was a few years after Betterton's death. Victor ("History," ii. 164) writes of "the good old manner of singing and quavering out their tragic notes," and on

dwelt upon in a period depreciates it to nothing; which very syllable if rightly touch'd shall, like the heightening stroke of light from a master's pencil, give life and spirit to the whole. I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination were not fully satisfy'd; which, since his time, I cannot equally say of any one actor whatsoever. Not but it is possible to be much his inferior with great excellencies, which I shall observe in another place. Had it been practicable to have ty'd down the clattering hands of all the ill judges who were commonly the majority of an audience, to what

the same page mentions Cibber's "quavering tragedy tones." My view, also, is confirmed by the facts that in the preface to "The Fairy Queen," 1692, it is said: "he must be a very ignorant player who knows not there is a musical cadence in speaking; and that a man may as well speak out of tune, as sing out of tune;" and that Aaron Hill, in his dedication of "The Fatal Vision," 1716, reprobates the "affected, vicious, and unnatural tone of voice, so common on the stage at that time." See Genest, iv. 16–17. An admirable description of this method of reciting is given by Cumberland ("Memoirs," 2d edition, i. 80): "Mrs. Cibber in a key, high-pitched but sweet withal, sung, or rather recitatived Rowe's harmonious strain, something in the manner of the improvisatories: it was so extremely wanting in contrast, that, though it did not wound the ear, it wearied it." Cumberland is writing of Mrs. Cibber in the earlier part of her career (1746) when the teaching of her husband's father, Colley Cibber, influenced her acting: no doubt Garrick, who exploded the old way of speaking, made her ultimately modify her style. Yet, as she was, even in 1746, a very distinguished pathetic actress, we are forced to the conclusion that the old style must have been more effective than we are disposed to believe.

amazing perfection might the English theatre have arrived with so just an actor as Betterton at the head of it! If what was truth only could have been applauded, how many noisy actors had shook their plumes with shame, who, from the injudicious approbation of the multitude, have bawl'd and strutted in the place of merit? If, therefore, the bare speaking voice has such allurements in it, how much less ought we to wonder, however we may lament, that the sweeter notes of vocal musick should so have captivated even the politer world into an apostacy from sense to an idolatry of sound. Let us enquire from whence this enchantment rises. I am afraid it may be too naturally accounted for, for when we complain that the finest musick, purchas'd at such vast expence, is so often thrown away upon the most miserable poetry, we seem not to consider that when the movement of the air and tone of the voice are exquisitely harmonious, tho' we regard not one word of what we hear, yet the power of the melody is so busy in the heart, that we naturally annex ideas to it of our own creation, and, in some sort, become ourselves the poet to the composer; and what poet is so dull as not to be charm'd with the child of his own fancy? So that there is even a kind of language in agreeable sounds, which, like the aspect of beauty, without words speaks and plays with the imagination. While this taste, therefore, is so naturally prevalent, I doubt to propose remedies for it were but

giving laws to the winds or advice to inamoratos; and however gravely we may assert that profit ought always to be inseparable from the delight of the theatre, nay, admitting that the pleasure would be heighten'd by the uniting them; yet, while instruction is so little the concern of the auditor, how can we hope that so choice a commodity will come to a market where there is so seldom a demand for it?

It is not to the actor, therefore, but to the vitiated and low taste of the spectator, that the corruptions of the stage (of what kind soever) have been owing. If the publick, by whom they must live, had spirit enough to discountenance and declare against all the trash and fopperies they have been so frequently fond of, both the actors and the authors, to the best of their power, must naturally have serv'd their daily table with sound and wholesome diet.[1] But I have not yet done with my article of elocution.

As we have sometimes great composers of musick who cannot sing, we have as frequently great writers that cannot read; and though without the nicest ear no man can be master of poetical numbers, yet the best ear in the world will not always

[1] As Doctor Johnson puts it in his famous prologue (1747):

"Ah! let no censure term our fate our choice,
The stage but echoes back the public voice;
The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
For we, that live to please, must please to live."

enable him to pronounce them. Of this truth Dryden, our first great master of verse and harmony, was a strong instance. When he brought his play of "Amphytrion" to the stage,[1] I heard him give it his first reading to the actors, in which, though it is true he deliver'd the plain sense of every period, yet the whole was in so cold, so flat and unaffecting a manner, that I am afraid of not being believ'd when I affirm it.

On the contrary Lee, far his inferior in poetry, was so pathetick a reader of his own scenes, that I have been inform'd by an actor who was present that while Lee was reading to Major Mohun at a rehearsal, Mohun, in the warmth of his admiration, threw down his part and said, Unless I were able to play it as well as you read it, to what purpose should I undertake it? And yet this very author, whose elocution rais'd such admiration in so capital an actor, when he attempted to be an actor himself soon quitted the stage in an honest despair of ever making any profitable figure there.[2] From all this I would infer that, let our conception of what we are to speak be ever so

[1] "Amphytrion" was played in 1690. The dedication is dated 24th October, 1690.

[2] Downes ("Roscius Anglicanus," p. 34) relates Lee's misadventure, which he attributes to stage fright. He says of Otway, the poet, that on his first appearance "the full house put him to such a sweat and tremendous agony, being dash't, spoilt him for an actor. Mr. Nat. Lee had the same fate in acting Duncan in 'Macbeth,' ruin'd him for an actor too."

just and the ear ever so true, yet, when we are to deliver it to an audience (I will leave fear out of the question), there must go along with the whole a natural freedom and becoming grace which is easier to conceive than to describe; for without this inexpressible somewhat the performance will come out oddly disguis'd, or somewhere defectively unsurprising to the hearer. Of this defect, too, I will give you yet a stranger instance, which you will allow fear could not be the occasion of. If you remember Estcourt,[1] you must have known that he was long enough upon the stage not to be under the least restraint from fear in his performance. This man was so amazing and extraordinary a mimick, that no man or woman, from the coquette to the privy counsellor, ever moved or spoke before him, but he could carry their voice, look, mien, and motion instantly into another company. I have heard him make long harangues and form various arguments even in the manner of thinking of an eminent pleader at the bar,[2] with every the least article and singularity of his utterance so perfectly imitated, that he was the very *alter ipse* scarce to be distinguish'd from his original. Yet more; I have seen upon the margin of the written part of Falstaff, which he acted, his own notes and

[1] See memoir of Estcourt at end of second volume.

[2] It will be remembered that the elder Mathews, the most extraordinary mimic of modern times, had this same power in great perfection. See his "Memoirs," iii. 153–156.

observations upon almost every speech of it, describing the true spirit of the humour, and with what tone of voice, look, and gesture each of them ought to be delivered. Yet in his execution upon the stage he seem'd to have lost all those just ideas he had form'd of it, and almost thro' the character labour'd under a heavy load of flatness. In a word, with all his skill in mimickry and knowledge of what ought to be done, he never upon the stage could bring it truly into practice, but was, upon the whole, a languid, unaffecting actor.[1] After I have shewn you so many necessary qualifications, not one of which can be spar'd in true theatrical elocution, and have at the same time prov'd that, with the assistance of them all united, the whole may still come forth defective; what talents shall we say will infallibly form an actor? This I confess is one of nature's secrets, too deep for me to dive into; let us content ourselves, therefore, with affirming that genius, which nature only gives, only can complete him. This genius, then, was so strong in Betterton, that it shone out in every speech and motion of him. Yet voice and person are such necessary supports to it, that by the multitude they have been preferr'd to genius itself, or at least often

[1] Cibber has been charged with gross unfairness to Estcourt, and his unfavourable estimate of him has been attributed to envy; but Estcourt's ability seems to have been at least questionable. This matter will be found treated at some length in the memoir of Estcourt in the appendix to this work.

mistaken for it. Betterton had a voice of that kind which gave more spirit to terror than to the softer passions; of more strength than melody.[1] The rage and jealousy of Othello became him better than the sighs and tenderness of Castalio.[2] For though in Castalio he only excell'd others, in Othello he excell'd himself; which you will easily believe when you consider that, in spite of his complexion, Othello has more natural beauties than the best actor can find in all the magazine of poetry to animate his power and delight his judgment with.

The person of this excellent actor was suitable to his voice, more manly than sweet, not exceeding the middle stature, inclining to the corpulent; of a serious and penetrating aspect; his limbs nearer the athletick than the delicate proportion; yet, however form'd, there arose from the harmony of the whole a commanding mien of majesty which the fairer-fac'd or (as Shakespear calls 'em) the curled darlings of his time ever wanted something to be equal masters of. There was, some years ago, to be had almost in every print-shop a metzotinto from Kneller extremely like him.[3]

In all I have said of Betterton, I confine myself to the time of his strength and highest power in action,

[1] "His voice was low and grumbling." — *Anthony Aston.*

[2] In Otway's tragedy of "The Orphan," produced at Dorset Garden in 1680, Betterton was the original Castalio.

[3] See memoir of Betterton at end of second volume.

that you may make allowances from what he was able to execute at fifty, to what you might have seen of him at past seventy; for tho' to the last he was without his equal, he might not then be equal to his former self; yet so far was he from being ever overtaken, that for many years after his decease I seldom saw any of his parts in Shakespear supply'd by others, but it drew from me the lamentation of Ophelia upon Hamlet's being unlike what she had seen him.

"— Ah! woe is me!
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!"

The last part this great master of his profession acted was Melantius in the "Maid's Tragedy," for his own benefit;[1] when being suddenly seiz'd by the gout, he submitted, by extraordinary applications, to have his foot so far reliev'd that he might be able to walk on the stage in a slipper, rather than wholly disappoint his auditors. He was observ'd that day to have exerted a more than ordinary spirit, and met with suitable applause; but the unhappy consequence of tampering with his distemper was, that it flew into his head, and kill'd him in three days, (I think) in the seventy-fourth year of his age.[2]

I once thought to have fill'd up my work with

[1] 13th April, 1710.

[2] In the *Tatler*, No. 167, in which the famous criticism of Betterton's excellencies is given, his funeral is stated to have taken place on 2d May, 1710.

a select dissertation upon theatrical action,[1] but I find, by the digressions I have been tempted to make in this account of Betterton, that all I can say upon that head will naturally fall in, and possibly be less tedious if dispers'd among the various characters of the particular actors I have promis'd to treat of; I shall therefore make use of those several vehicles, which you will find waiting in the next chapter, to carry you thro' the rest of the journey at your leisure.

[1] I'do not know whether Cibber in making this remark had in view Gildon's "Life of Betterton," in which there are twenty pages of memoir to one hundred and fifty of dissertation on acting.

CHAPTER V.

The Theatrical Characters of the Principal Actors in the Year 1690, Continu'd — A Few Words to Critical Auditors.

HO', as I have before observ'd, women were not admitted to the stage 'till the return of King Charles, yet it could not be so suddenly supply'd with them but that there was still a necessity, for some time, to put the handsomest young men into petticoats;[1] which

[1] This seems to have been done to a very limited extent. The first unquestionable date on which, after 1660, women appeared is 3d January, 1661, when Pepys saw "The Beggar's Bush" at the theatre, that is, Killigrew's house, and notes, "and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." At the same theatre he had seen the same play on 20th November, 1660, the female parts being then played by men. Thomas Jordan wrote "a prologue, to introduce the first woman that came to act on the stage, in the tragedy called 'The Moor of Venice'" (quoted by Malone, "Shakespeare," 1821, iii. 128), and Malone supposes, justly as I think, that this was on 8th December, 1660; on which date, in all probability, the first woman appeared on the stage after the Restoration. Who she was we do not know. See *ante*, p. 148. On 7th January, 1661, Kynaston played Epicœne in "The Silent Woman," and on 12th January, 1661, Pepys saw "The Scornful Lady," "now done by a woman." On the 4th of the same month Pepys had seen the latter play with a man in the chief part, so that it is almost certain that the "boy-actresses" disappeared about the beginning of 1661.

Kynaston was then said to have worn with success; particularly in the part of Evadne in the "Maid's Tragedy," which I have heard him speak of, and which calls to my mind a ridiculous distress that arose from these sort of shifts which the stage was then put to. — The king coming a little before his usual time to a tragedy, found the actors not ready to begin, when his Majesty, not chusing to have as much patience as his good subjects, sent to them to know the meaning of it; upon which the master of the company came to the box, and rightly judging that the best excuse for their default would be the true one, fairly told his Majesty that the queen was not shav'd yet. The king, whose good humour lov'd to laugh at a jest as well as to make one, accepted the excuse, which serv'd to divert him till the male queen cou'd be effeminated. In a word, Kynaston at that time was so beautiful a youth that the ladies of quality prided themselves in taking him with them in their coaches to Hyde Park in his theatrical habit, after the play, which in those days they might have sufficient time to do, because plays then were us'd to begin at four a-clock; the hour that people of the same rank are now going to dinner. — Of this truth I had the curiosity to enquire, and had it confirm'd from his own mouth in his advanc'd age. And indeed, to the last of him, his handsomeness was very little abated; even at past sixty his teeth were all sound, white,

and even, as one would wish to see in a reigning toast of twenty. He had something of a formal gravity in his mien, which was attributed to the stately step he had been so early confin'd to, in a female decency. But even that in characters of superiority had its proper graces; it misbecame him not in the part of Leon, in Fletcher's "Rule a Wife," etc., which he executed with a determin'd manliness and honest authority well worth the best actor's imitation. He had a piercing eye, and in characters of heroick life a quick imperious vivacity in his tone of voice that painted the tyrant truly terrible. There were two plays of Dryden in which he shone with uncommon lustre; in "Aurenge-Zebe" he play'd Morat, and in "Don Sebastian," Muley Moloch; in both these parts he had a fierce, lion-like majesty in his port and utterance that gave the spectator a kind of trembling admiration!

Here I cannot help observing upon a modest mistake which I thought the late Mr. Booth committed in his acting the part of Morat. There are in this fierce character so many sentiments of avow'd barbarity, insolence, and vainglory, that they blaze even to a ludicrous lustre, and doubtless the poet intended those to make his spectators laugh while they admir'd them; but Booth thought it depreciated the dignity of tragedy to raise a smile in any part of it, and therefore cover'd these kind of sentiments with a scrupulous coldness and unmov'd delivery, as if he had fear'd the audience

might take too familiar a notice of them.[1] In Mr. Addison's "Cato," Syphax[2] has some sentiments of near the same nature, which I ventur'd to speak as I imagin'd Kynaston would have done had he been then living to have stood in the same character. Mr. Addison, who had something of Mr. Booth's diffidence at the rehearsal of his play, after it was acted came into my opinion, and own'd that even tragedy on such particular occasions might admit of a laugh of approbation.[3]

[1] "The Laureat" (p. 33): "I am of opinion, Booth was not wrong in this. There are many of the sentiments in this character, where nature and common sense are outraged; and an actor who shou'd give the full comic utterance to them in his delivery, would raise what they call a horse-laugh, and turn it into burlesque."

On the other hand, Theophilus Cibber, in his "Life of Booth," p. 72, supports his father's opinion, saying:

"The remark is just — Mr. Booth would sometimes slur over such bold sentiments, so flightily delivered by the poet. As he was good-natured — and would 'hear each man's censure, yet reserve his judgment,' — I once took the liberty of observing that he had neglected (as I thought) giving that kind of spirited turn in the afore-mentioned character. He told me I was mistaken; it was not negligence, but design made him so slightly pass them over: — for though, added he, in these places one might raise a laugh of approbation in a few, yet there is nothing more unsafe than exciting the laugh of simpletons, who never know when or where to stop; and, as the majority are not always the wisest part of an audience, I don't chuse to run the hazard."

[2] A long account of the production of "Cato" is given by Cibber in Vol. II. Chap. V. From the cast quoted in a note, it will be seen that Cibber himself was the original Syphax.

[3] "The Laureat" (p. 33): "I have seen the original Syphax in 'Cato' use many ridiculous distortions, crack in his voice,

In Shakespear instances of them are frequent, as in Mackbeth, Hotspur, Richard the Third, and Harry the Eighth,[1] all which characters, tho' of a tragical cast, have sometimes familiar strokes in them so highly natural to each particular disposition that it is impossible not to be transported into an honest laughter at them. And these are those happy liberties which, tho' few

and wreathe his muscles and his limbs, which created not a smile of approbation, but a loud laugh of contempt and ridicule on the actor." On p. 34: "In my opinion, the part of Syphax, as it was originally play'd, was the only part in 'Cato' not tolerably executed."

[1] Bellchambers on this passage has one of those aggravating notes, in which he seems to try to blacken Cibber as much as possible. I confess that I can see nothing of the "venom" he resents so vigorously. He says:

"Theophilus Cibber, in the tract already quoted, expressly states that Booth 'was not so scrupulously nice or timorous' in this character, as in that to which our author has invidiously referred. I shall give the passage, for its powerful antidote to Colley's venom:

"'Mr. Booth, in this part, though he gave full scope to the humour, never dropped the dignity of the character. You laughed at Henry, but lost not your respect for him. When he appeared most familiar, he was by no means vulgar. The people most about him felt the ease they enjoyed was owing to his condescension. He maintained the monarch. Hans Holbein never gave a higher picture of him than did the actor (Booth) in his representation. When angry, his eye spoke majestic terror; the noblest and the bravest of his courtiers were awestruck. He gave you the full idea of that arbitrary prince, who thought himself born to be obeyed; — the boldest dared not to dispute his commands. He appeared to claim a right divine to exert the power he imperiously assumed' (p. 75)."

authors are qualify'd to take, yet, when justly taken, may challenge a place among their greatest beauties. Now, whether Dryden, in his Morat, *feliciter audet*,[1] . . . or may be allow'd the happiness of having hit this mark, seems not necessary to be determin'd by the actor, whose business, sure, is to make the best of his author's intention, as in this part Kynaston did, doubtless not without Dryden's approbation. For these reasons then, I thought my good friend, Mr. Booth (who certainly had many excellencies) carry'd his reverence for the buskin too far, in not following the bold flights of the author with that wantonness of spirit which the nature of those sentiments demanded. For example, Morat having a criminal passion for Indamora, promises, at her request, for one day to spare the life of her lover, Aurenge-Zebe. But not chusing to make known the real motive of his mercy, when Nourmahal says to him

"'Twill not be safe to let him live an hour!"

Morat silences her with this heroical rhodomontade,

"I'll do't, to shew my arbitrary power."[2]

Risum teneatis? It was impossible not to laugh and reasonably, too, when this line came out of

[1] "Spirat tragicum satis et feliciter audet."
— *Hor. Epis.* ii. 1, 166.

[2] "Aurenge-Zebe; or, the Great Mogul," act iv.

the mouth of Kynaston,[1] with the stern and haughty look that attended it. But above this tyrannical, tumid superiority of character, there is a grave and rational majesty in Shakespear's Harry the Fourth, which, tho' not so glaring to the vulgar eye, requires thrice the skill and grace to become and support. Of this real majesty Kynaston was entirely master. Here every sentiment came from him as if it had been his own, as if he had himself that instant conceiv'd it, as if he had lost the player and were the real king he personated, a perfection so rarely found that very often, in actors of good repute, a certain vacancy of look, inanity of voice, or superfluous gesture shall unmask the man to the judicious spectator, who, from the least of those errors, plainly sees the whole but a lesson given him to be got by heart from some great author, whose sense is deeper than the repeater's understanding. This true majesty Kynaston had so entire a command of that when he whisper'd the following plain line to Hotspur,

"Send us your prisoners, or you'll hear of it!"[2]

he convey'd a more terrible menace in it than the loudest intemperance of voice could swell to. But let the bold imitator beware, for without the look

[1] Kynaston was the original Morat at the Theatre Royal in 1675; Hart the Aurenge-Zebe.

[2] "King Henry IV.," first part, act i. sc. 3.

and just elocution that waited on it an attempt of the same nature may fall to nothing.

But the dignity of this character appear'd in Kynaston still more shining in the private scene between the king and prince, his son. There you saw majesty in that sort of grief which only majesty could feel! There the paternal concern for the errors of the son made the monarch more rever'd and dreaded: his reproaches so just, yet so unmix'd with anger (and therefore the more piercing) opening as it were the arms of nature with a secret wish that filial duty and penitence awak'd, might fall into them with grace and honour. In this affecting scene I thought Kynaston shew'd his most masterly strokes of nature, expressing all the various motions of the heart with the same force, dignity, and feeling they are written, adding to the whole that peculiar and becoming grace which the best writer cannot inspire into any actor that is not born with it. What made the merit of this actor and that of Betterton more surprising was, that though they both observ'd the rules of truth and nature, they were each as different in their manner of acting as in their personal form and features. But Kynaston staid too long upon the stage, till his memory and spirit began to fail him. I shall not therefore say anything of his imperfections, which, at that time, were visibly not his own, but the effects of decaying nature.[1]

[1] See memoir of Kynaston at end of second volume.

Monfort,[1] a younger man by twenty years, and at this time in his highest reputation, was an actor of a very different style. Of person he was tall, well made, fair, and of an agreeable aspect; his voice clear, full, and melodious. In tragedy he was the most affecting lover within my memory. His addresses had a resistless recommendation from the very tone of his voice, which gave his words such softness that, as Dryden says, —

> . . . "Like flakes of feather'd snow,
> They melted as they fell!"[2]

All this he particularly verify'd in that scene of "Alexander," where the heroe throws himself at the feet of Statira for pardon of his past infidelities. There we saw the great, the tender, the penitent, the despairing, the transported, and the amiable, in the highest perfection. In comedy he gave the truest life to what we call the fine gentleman; his spirit shone the brighter for being polish'd with decency. In scenes of gaiety he never broke into the regard that was due to the presence of equal or superior characters, tho' inferior actors play'd them; he fill'd the stage, not by elbowing and crossing it before others, or disconcerting their action, but by surpassing them in true masterly touches of nature. He never laugh'd at his own jest, unless the point of his raillery upon another required it.

[1] Downes spells Mountfort's name Monfort and Mounfort.

[2] "Spanish Friar," act ii. sc. 1.

He had a particular talent in giving life to bons mots and repartees: the wit of the poet seem'd always to come from him extempore, and sharpen'd into more wit from his brilliant manner of delivering it; he had himself a good share of it, or what is equal to it, so lively a pleasantness of humour, that when either of these fell into his hands upon the stage, he wantoned with them to the highest delight of his auditors. The agreeable was so natural to him, that even in that dissolute character of the Rover [1] he seem'd to wash off the guilt from vice, and gave it charms and merit. For tho' it may be a reproach to the poet to draw such characters not only unpunish'd but rewarded, the actor may still be allow'd his due praise in his excellent performance. And this is a distinction which, when this comedy was acted at Whitehall, King William's Queen Mary was pleas'd to make in favour of Monfort, notwithstanding her disapprobation of the play.

He had, besides all this, a variety in his genius which few capital actors have shewn, or perhaps have thought it any addition to their merit to arrive at: he could entirely change himself; could at once throw off the man of sense for the brisk, vain, rude, and lively coxcomb, the false, flashy pretender to wit, and the dupe of his own sufficiency; of this he gave a delightful instance in the character of

[1] Willmore, in Mrs. Behn's "Rover," of which Smith was the original representative.

Sparkish in Wycherly's "Country Wife." In that of Sir Courtly Nice [1] his excellence was still greater: there his whole man, voice, mien, and gesture was no longer Monfort, but another person. There, the insipid, soft civility, the elegant and formal mien, the drawling delicacy of voice, the stately flatness of his address, and the empty eminence of his attitudes were so nicely observ'd and guarded by him, that he had not been an entire master of nature had he not kept his judgment, as it were, a centinel upon himself, not to admit the least likeness of what he us'd to be to enter into any part of his performance; he could not possibly have so completely finish'd it. If, some years after the death of Monfort, I myself had any success in either of these characters, I must pay the debt I owe to his memory, in confessing the advantages I receiv'd from the just idea and strong impression he had given me from his acting them. Had he been remember'd when I first attempted them my defects would have been more easily discover'd, and consequently my favourable reception in them must have been very much and justly abated. If it could be remembred how much he had the advantage of me in voice and person, I could not here be suspected of an affected modesty or of overvaluing his excellence: for he sung a clear counter-tenour, and had a melodious, warbling throat, which could not but

[1] In Crowne's "Sir Courtly Nice," produced at the Theatre Royal in 1685.

set off the last scene of Sir Courtly with an uncommon happiness; which I, alas! could only struggle thro' with the faint excuses and real confidence of a fine singer under the imperfection of a feign'd and screaming trebble, which at best could only shew you what I would have done had nature been more favourable to me.

This excellent actor was cut off by a tragical death in the 33d year of his age, generally lamented by his friends and all lovers of the theatre. The particular accidents that attended his fall are to be found at large in the "Trial of the Lord Mohun," printed among those of the state, in folio.[1]

Sandford might properly be term'd the Spagnolet of the theatre, an excellent actor in disagreeable characters; for as the chief pieces of that

[1] William Mountfort was born in 1659 or 1660. He became a member of the Duke's Company as a boy, and Downes says that in 1682 he had grown to the maturity of a good actor. In the "Counterfeits," licensed 29th August, 1678, the boy is played by young Mumford, and in "The Revenge," produced in 1680, the same name stands to the part of Jack, the barber's boy. After the union in 1682 he made rapid progress, for he played his great character of Sir Courtly Nice as early as 1685. In this Cibber gives him the highest praise; and Downes says, "Sir Courtly was so nicely perform'd, that not any succeeding, but Mr. Cyber has equall'd him." Mountfort was killed by one Captain Hill, aided, it is supposed, by the Lord Mohun who died in that terrible duel with the Duke of Hamilton, in 1712, in which they hacked each other to death. Whether Hill murdered Mountfort or killed him in fair fight is a doubtful point. (See Doran's "Their Majesties' Servants," 1888 edition, i. 169–172; see also memoir at end of second volume.)

famous painter were of human nature in pain and agony, so Sandford upon the stage was generally as flagitious as a Creon, a Maligni, an Iago, or a Machiavil[1] could make him. The painter, 'tis true, from the fire of his genius might think the quiet objects of nature too tame for his pencil, and therefore chose to indulge it in its full power upon those of violence and horror. But poor Sandford was not the stage villain by choice, but from necessity; for having a low and crooked person, such bodily defects were too strong to be admitted into great or amiable characters, so that whenever in any new or revived play there was a hateful or mischievous person, Sandford was sure to have no competitor for it. Nor indeed (as we are not to suppose a villain or traitor can be shewn for our imitation, or not for our abhorrence) can it be doubted but the less comely the actor's person the fitter he may be to perform them. The spectator, too, by not being misled by a tempting form, may be less inclin'd to excuse the wicked or immoral views or sentiments of them, and though the hard fate of an Œdipus might naturally give the humanity of an audience thrice the pleasure that could arise from the wilful wickedness of the best acted Creon, yet who could say that Sandford in such a part was not master of as true and just action as the best tragedian could be whose happier person

[1] Creon (Dryden and Lee's "Œdipus"); Malignii (Porter's "Villain"); Machiavil (Lee's "Cæsar Borgia").

had recommended him to the virtuous heroe, or any other more pleasing favourite of the imagination? In this disadvantageous light, then, stood Sandford as an actor, admir'd by the judicious, while the crowd only prais'd him by their prejudice.[1] And so unusual had it been to see Sandford an innocent man in a play, that whenever he was so, the spectators would hardly give him credit in so gross an improbability. Let me give you an odd instance of it, which I heard Monfort say was a real fact. A new play (the name of it I have forgot) was brought upon the stage, wherein Sandford happen'd to perform the part of an honest statesman. The pit, after they had sate three or four acts in a quiet expectation that the well-dissembled honesty of Sandford (for such of course they concluded it) would soon be discover'd, or at least from its security involve the actors in the play in some surprising distress or confusion, which might raise and animate the scenes to come, when, at last, finding no such matter, but that the catastrophe had taken quite another turn, and that Sand-

[1] The *Tatler*, No. 134: "I must own, there is something very horrid in the publick executions of an English tragedy. Stabbing and poisoning, which are performed behind the scenes in other nations must be done openly among us to gratify the audience.

"When poor Sandford was upon the stage, I have seen him groaning upon a wheel, stuck with daggers, impaled alive, calling his executioners, with a dying voice, cruel dogs and villains! And all this to please his judicious spectators, who were wonderfully delighted with seeing a man in torment so well acted."

ford was really an honest man to the end of the play, they fairly damn'd it, as if the author had impos'd upon them the most frontless or incredible absurdity.[1]

It is not improbable but that from Sandford's so masterly personating characters of guilt, the inferior actors might think his success chiefly owing to the defects of his person, and from thence might take occasion, whenever they appear'd as bravos or murtherers, to make themselves as frightful and as inhuman figures as possible. In King Charles's time this low skill was carry'd to such an extravagance, that the king himself, who was black-brow'd and of a swarthy complexion, pass'd a pleasant remark upon his observing the grim looks of the murtherers in "Mackbeth," when, turning to his people in the box about him, "Pray what is the meaning," said he, "that we never see a rogue in a play, but, Godsfish! they always clap him on a black perriwig when it is well known one of the greatest rogues in England always wears a fair one?" Now, whether or no Doctor Oates at that

[1] Bellchambers notes: "This anecdote has more vivacity than truth, for the audience were too much accustomed to see Sandford in parts of even a comic nature, to testify the impatience or disappointment which Mr. Cibber has described." I may add that I have been unable to discover any play to which the circumstances mentioned by Cibber would apply. But it must not be forgotten that, if the play were damned as completely as Cibber says, it would probably not be printed, and we should thus in all probability have no record of it.

time wore his own hair I cannot be positive ; or if his Majesty pointed at some greater man then out of power, I leave those to guess at him who may yet remember the changing complexion of his ministers.[1] This story I had from Betterton, who was a man of veracity, and I confess I should have thought the king's observation a very just one, though he himself had been fair as Adonis. Nor can I in this question help voting with the court ; for were it not too gross a weakness to employ in wicked purposes men whose very suspected looks might be enough to betray them ? Or are we to suppose it unnatural that a murther should be thoroughly committed out of an old red coat and a black perriwig ?

For my own part, I profess myself to have been an admirer of Sandford, and have often lamented that his masterly performance could not be rewarded with that applause which I saw much inferior actors met with, merely because they stood in more laudable characters. For, tho' it may be a merit in an audience to applaud sentiments of virtue and honour, yet there seems to be an equal justice that no distinction should be made as to the excellence of an actor, whether in a good or evil character, since neither the vice nor the virtue of it is his own, but given him by the poet. Therefore, why is not the actor who shines in either equally commendable ? No, sir, this may be

[1] Probably the Earl of Shaftesbury.

reason, but that is not always a rule with us; the spectator will tell you, that when virtue is applauded he gives part of it to himself, because his applause at the same time lets others about him see that he himself admires it. But when a wicked action is going forward, when an Iago is meditating revenge and mischief, tho' art and nature may be equally strong in the actor, the spectator is shy of his applause, lest he should in some sort be look'd upon as an aider or an abettor of the wickedness in view, and, therefore, rather chuses to rob the actor of the praise he may merit, than give it him in a character which he would have you see his silence modestly discourages. From the same fond principle many actors have made it a point to be seen in parts sometimes even flatly written, only because they stood in the favourable light of honour and virtue.[1]

I have formerly known an actress carry this theatrical prudery to such a height, that she was very near keeping herself chaste by it: her fondness for virtue on the stage she began to think might perswade the world that it had made an impression on her private life; and the appearances of it actually went so far that, in an

[1] Macready seems to have held something like this view regarding "villains." At the present time we have no such prejudices, for one of the most popular of English actors, Mr. E. S. Willard, owes his reputation chiefly to his wonderfully vivid presentation of villainy.

epilogue to an obscure play, the profits of which were given to her, and wherein she acted a part of impregnable chastity, she bespoke the favour of the ladies by a protestation that in honour of their goodness and virtue she would dedicate her unblemish'd life to their example. Part of this vestal vow, I remember, was contain'd in the following verse:

"Study to live the character I play."[1]

But alas, how weak are the strongest works of art when nature besieges it! For though this good creature so far held out her distaste to mankind that they could never reduce her to marry any one of 'em; yet we must own she grew, like Cæsar, greater by her fall! Her first heroick motive to a surrender was to save the life of a lover who in his despair had vow'd to destroy himself, with which act of mercy (in a jealous dispute once in my hearing) she was provoked to reproach him in these very words: "Villain! did not I save your life?" The generous lover, in return to that first tender obligation, gave life to her first-born,[2] and

[1] The play in question is "The Triumphs of Virtue," produced at Drury Lane in 1697, and the actress is Mrs. Rogers, who afterwards lived with Wilks. The lines in the epilogue are:

"I'll pay this duteous gratitude; I'll do
That which the play has done — I'll copy you.
At your own virtue's shrine my vows I'll pay,
Study to live the character I play."

[2] Chetwood gives a short memoir of this "first-born," who became the wife of Christopher Bullock, and died in 1739. Mrs.

that pious offspring has since raised to her memory several innocent grandchildren.

So that, as we see, it is not the hood that makes the monk, nor the veil the vestal; I am apt to think that if the personal morals of an actor were to be weighed by his appearance on the stage, the advantage and favour (if any were due to either side) might rather incline to the traitor than the heroe, to the Sempronius than the Cato, or to the Syphax than the Juba: because no man can naturally desire to cover his honesty with a wicked appearance; but an ill man might possibly incline to cover his guilt with the appearance of virtue, which was the case of the frail fair one now mentioned. But be this question decided as it may, Sandford always appear'd to me the honester man in proportion to the spirit wherewith he exposed the wicked and immoral characters he acted: for had his heart been unsound, or tainted with the least guilt of them, his conscience must, in spite of him, in any too near a resemblance of himself, have been a check upon the vivacity of his action. Sandford therefore might be said to have contributed his equal share with the foremost actors to the true and laudable use of the stage; and in this light too, of being so frequently the object of common distaste, we may honestly stile him a theatrical martyr to poetical justice.

Dyer was the only child of Mrs. Bullock's mentioned by Chetwood.

For in making vice odious or virtue amiable, where does the merit differ? To hate the one or love the other are but leading steps to the same temple of fame, tho' at different portals.[1]

This actor, in his manner of speaking, varied very much from those I have already mentioned. His voice had an acute and piercing tone, which struck every syllable of his words distinctly upon the ear. He had likewise a peculiar skill in his look of marking out to an audience whatever he judg'd worth their more than ordinary notice. When he deliver'd a command, he would sometimes give it more force by seeming to slight the ornament of harmony. In Dryden's plays of rhime, he as little as possible glutted the ear with the jingle of it, rather chusing, when the sense would permit him, to lose it, than to value it.

Had Sandford liv'd in Shakespear's time, I am confident his judgment must have chose him above all other actors to have play'd his Richard the Third: I leave his person out of the question, which, tho' naturally made for it, yet that would have been the least part of his recommendation. Sandford had stronger claims to it: he had sometimes an uncouth stateliness in his motion, a harsh and sullen pride of speech, a meditating brow, a stern aspect, occasionally changing into an almost ludicrous triumph over all goodness and virtue: from thence falling into the most asswa-

[1] See memoir of Sandford at end of second volume.

sive gentleness and soothing candour of a designing heart. These, I say, must have preferr'd him to it; these would have been colours so essentially shining in that character, that it will be no dispraise to that great author to say, Sandford must have shewn as many masterly strokes in it (had he ever acted it) as are visible in the writing it.[1]

When I first brought "Richard the Third"[2] (with such alterations as I thought not improper) to the stage, Sandford was engaged in the company then acting under King William's licence in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields; otherwise you cannot but suppose my interest must have offer'd him that part. What encouraged me, therefore, to attempt it myself at the Theatre Royal, was that I imagined I knew how Sandford would have spoken every line of it. If, therefore, in any part of it I succeeded, let the merit be given to him: and how

[1] It is a very common mistake to state that Cibber founded his playing of Richard III. on that of Sandford. He merely says that he tried to act the part as he knew Sandford would have played it.

[2] Cibber's adaptation, which has held the stage ever since its production, was first played at Drury Lane in 1700. Genest (ii. 195–219) gives an exhaustive account of Cibber's mutilation. His opinion of it may be gathered from these sentences: "One has no wish to disturb Cibber's own tragedies in their tranquil graves, but while our indignation continues to be excited by the frequent representation of 'Richard the Third' in so disgraceful a state, there can be no peace between the friends of unsophisticated Shakspeare and Cibber." "To the advocates for Cibber's Richard I only wish to make one request — that they would never say a syllable in favour of Shakspeare."

far I succeeded in that light, those only can be judges who remember him. In order, therefore, to give you a nearer idea of Sandford, you must give me leave (compell'd as I am to be vain) to tell you that the late Sir John Vanbrugh, who was an admirer of Sandford, after he had seen me act it, assur'd me that he never knew any one actor so particularly profit by another as I had done by Sandford in "Richard the Third:" You have, said he, his very look, gesture, gait, speech, and every motion of him, and have borrow'd them all only to serve you in that character. If, therefore, Sir John Vanbrugh's observation was just, they who remember me in "Richard the Third" may have a nearer conception of Sandford than from all the critical account I can give of him.[1]

I come now to those other men actors, who at this time were equally famous in the lower life of

[1] "The Laureat" (p. 35): "This same mender of Shakespear chose the principal part, viz. the king, for himself; and accordingly being invested with the purple robe, he screamed thro' four acts without dignity or decency. The audience, ill-pleas'd with the farce, accompany'd him with a smile of contempt, but in the fifth act, he degenerated all at once into Sir Novelty; and when in the heat of the battle at Bosworth Field, the king is dismounted, our comic-tragedian came on the stage, really breathless, and in a seeming panick, screaming out this line thus — A harse, a harse, my kingdom for a harse. This highly delighted some, and disgusted others of his auditors; and when he was kill'd by Richmond, one might plainly perceive that the good people were not better pleas'd that so execrable a tyrant was destroy'd, than that so execrable an actor was silent."

comedy. But I find myself more at a loss to give you them in their true and proper light, than those I have already set before you. Why the tragedian warms us into joy or admiration, or sets our eyes on flow with pity, we can easily explain to another's apprehension: but it may sometimes puzzle the gravest spectator to account for that familiar violence of laughter that shall seize him at some particular strokes of a true comedian. How then shall I describe what a better judge might not be able to express? The rules to please the fancy cannot so easily be laid down as those that ought to govern the judgment. The decency, too, that must be observed in tragedy, reduces, by the manner of speaking it, one actor to be much more like another than they can or need be supposed to be in comedy: there the laws of action give them such free and almost unlimited liberties to play and wanton with nature, that the voice, look, and gesture of a comedian may be as various as the manners and faces of the whole mankind are different from one another. These are the difficulties I lie under. Where I want words, therefore, to describe what I may commend, I can only hope you will give credit to my opinion: and this credit I shall most stand in need of, when I tell you that

Nokes[1] was an actor of a quite different genius

[1] James Noke, or Nokes — not Robert, as Bellchambers states. Of Robert Nokes little is known. Downes mentions

from any I have ever read, heard of, or seen, since or before his time; and yet his general excellence may be comprehended in one article, viz. a plain and palpable simplicity of nature, which was so utterly his own, that he was often as unaccountably diverting in his common speech as on the stage. I saw him once giving an account of some table-talk to another actor behind the scenes, which a man of quality accidentally listening to, was so deceived by his manner, that he ask'd him if that was a new play he was rehearsing? It seems almost amazing that this simplicity, so easy to Nokes, should never be caught by any one of his successors. Leigh and Underhil have been well copied, tho' not equall'd by others. But not all the mimical skill of Estcourt (fam'd as he was for it) tho' he had often seen Nokes, could scarce give us an idea of him. After this perhaps it will be saying less of him, when I own, that though I have still the sound of every line he spoke in my ear (which us'd not to be thought a bad one), yet I have often try'd by myself, but in vain, to reach the least distant likeness of the *vis comica* of Nokes. Though this may seem little to his praise, it may be negatively saying a good deal to

both actors among Rhodes's original company, Robert playing male characters, and James being one of the "boy actresses." Downes does not distinguish between them at all, simply mentioning "Mr. Nokes" as playing particular parts. Robert Nokes died about 1673, so that we are certain that the famous brother was James.

it, because I have never seen any one actor, except himself, whom I could not at least so far imitate as to give you a more than tolerable notion of his manner. But Nokes was so singular a species, and was so form'd by nature for the stage, that I question if (beyond the trouble of getting words by heart) it ever cost him an hour's labour to arrive at that high reputation he had, and deserved.

The characters he particularly shone in, were Sir Martin Marr-all, Gomez in the "Spanish Friar," Sir Nicolas Cully in "Love in a Tub," [1] Barnaby Brittle in the "Wanton Wife," Sir Davy Dunce in the "Soldier's Fortune," Sosia in "Amphytrion," [2] etc. To tell you how he acted them is beyond the reach of criticism: but to tell you what effect his action had upon the spectator is not impossible: this then is all you will expect from me, and from hence I must leave you to guess at him.

He scarce ever made his first entrance in a play but he was received with an involuntary applause, not of hands only, for those may be, and have often been, partially prostituted and bespoken, but by a general laughter which the very sight of him provoked and nature cou'd not resist;

[1] "The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub."

[2] Of these plays, "The Spanish Friar," "The Soldier's Fortune," and "Amphytrion" were produced after Robert Nokes's death.

yet the louder the laugh the graver was his look upon it; and sure, the ridiculous solemnity of his features were enough to have set a whole bench of bishops into a titter, cou'd he have been honour'd (may it be no offence to suppose it) with such grave and right reverend auditors. In the ludicrous distresses which, by the laws of comedy, folly is often involv'd in, he sunk into such a mixture of piteous pusillanimity and a consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolable, that when he had shook you to a fatigue of laughter, it became a moot point whether you ought not to have pity'd him. When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his mouth with a dumb studious powt, and roll his full eye into such a vacant amazement, such a palpable ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several minutes) gave your imagination as full content as the most absurd thing he could say upon it. In the character of Sir Martin Marr-all, who is always committing blunders to the prejudice of his own interest, when he had brought himself to a dilemma in his affairs by vainly proceeding upon his own head, and was afterwards afraid to look his governing servant and counsellor in the face, what a copious and distressful harangue have I seen him make with his looks (while the house has been in one continued roar for several minutes) before he could prevail with his courage to speak a word to

him! Then might you have at once read in his face vexation — that his own measures, which he had piqued himself upon, had fail'd. Envy — of his servant's superior wit — distress — to retrieve the occasion he had lost. Shame — to confess his folly, and yet a sullen desire to be reconciled and better advised for the future! What tragedy ever shew'd us such a tumult of passions rising at once in one bosom! or what buskin'd heroe standing under the load of them could have more effectually mov'd his spectators by the most pathetick speech than poor miserable Nokes did by this silent eloquence and piteous plight of his features?

His person was of the middle size, his voice clear and audible; his natural countenance grave and sober; but the moment he spoke the settled seriousness of his features was utterly discharg'd, and a dry, drolling, or laughing levity took such full possession of him that I can only refer the idea of him to your imagination. In some of his low characters, that became it, he had a shuffling shamble in his gait, with so contented an ignorance in his aspect and an aukward absurdity in his gesture, that had you not known him, you could not have believ'd that naturally he could have had a grain of common sense. In a word, I am tempted to sum up the character of Nokes, as a comedian, in a parodie of what Shakespear's Mark Antony says of Brutus as a hero.

His life was laughter, and the ludicrous
So mixt in him, that nature might stand up
And say to all the world — This was an actor.[1]

Leigh was of the mercurial kind, and though not so strict an observer of nature, yet never so wanton in his performance as to be wholly out of her sight. In humour he lov'd to take a full career, but was careful enough to stop short when just upon the precipice: he had great variety in his manner, and was famous in very different characters. In the canting, grave hypocrisy of the "Spanish Friar" he stretcht the veil of piety so thinly over him, that in every look, word, and motion you saw a palpable, wicked slyness shine through it — here he kept his vivacity demurely confin'd till the pretended duty of his function demanded it, and then he exerted it with a cholerick sacèrdotal insolence. But the Friar is a character of such glaring vice and so strongly drawn, that a very indifferent actor cannot but hit upon the broad jests that are remarkable in every scene of it. Though I have never yet seen any one that has fill'd them with half the truth and spirit of Leigh — Leigh rais'd the character as much above the poet's imagination as the character has sometimes rais'd other actors above themselves! and I do not doubt but the poet's knowledge of Leigh's genius help'd him to many a pleasant stroke of nature, which without that knowledge never might

[1] See memoir of James Nokes at end of second volume.

have enter'd into his conception. Leigh was so eminent in this character that the late Earl of Dorset (who was equally an admirer and a judge of theatrical merit) had a whole length of him in the Friar's habit, drawn by Kneller: the whole portrait is highly painted, and extremely like him. But no wonder Leigh arriv'd to such fame in what was so compleatly written for him, when characters that would make the reader yawn in the closet, have, by the strength of his action, been lifted into the lowdest laughter on the stage. Of this kind was the scrivener's great boobily son in the "Villain;" [1] Ralph, a stupid, staring under-ser-

[1] "Coligni, the character alluded to, at the original representation of this play, was sustained, says Downs, 'by that inimitable sprightly actor, Mr. Price,—especially in this part.' Joseph Price joined D'Avenant's company on Rhodes's resignation, being one of 'the new actors,' according to the 'Roscius Anglicanus,' who were 'taken in to complete' it. He is first mentioned for Guildenstern in 'Hamlet;' and, in succession, for Leonel, in D'Avenant's 'Love and Honour,' on which occasion the Earl of Oxford gave him his coronation-suit; for Paris, in 'Romeo and Juliet;' the Corregidor, in Tuke's 'Adventures of Five Hours;' and Coligni, as already recorded. In the year 1663, by speaking a 'short comical prologue' to the 'Rivals,' introducing some 'very diverting dances,' Mr. Price 'gained him an universal applause of the town.' The versatility of this actor must have been great, or the necessities of the company imperious, as we next find him set down for Lord Sands, in 'King Henry the Eighth.' He then performed Will, in the 'Cutter of Coleman street,' and is mentioned by Downs as being dead, in the year 1673."

The above is Bellchambers's note. He is wrong in stating that Price played the Corregidor in Tuke's "Adventures of Five Hours;" his part was Silvio. He omits, too, to mention one of

vant in "Sir Solomon Single." [1] Quite opposite to those were Sir Jolly Jumble in the "Soldier's Fortune," [2] and his old Belfond in the "Squire of Alsatia." [3] In Sir Jolly he was all life and laughing humour, and when Nokes acted with him in the same play, they returned the ball so dexterously upon one another, that every scene between them seem'd but one continued rest [4] of excellence

Price's best parts, Dufoy, in "Love in a Tub," in which Downes specially commends him in this queer couplet:

> "Sir Nich'las, Sir Fred'rick; Widow and Dufoy,
> Were not by any so well done, Mafoy."

Price does not seem to have acted after May, 1665, when the theatres closed for the Plague, for his name is never mentioned by Downes after the theatres reopened in November, 1666, after the Plague and Fire.

[1] "Sir Solomon; or, the Cautious Coxcomb," by John Caryll.

[2] By Otway. [3] By Shadwell.

[4] "Rest" is a term used in tennis, and seems to have meant a quick and continued returning of the ball from one player to the other — what is in lawn tennis called a "rally."

Cibber uses the word in his "Careless Husband," act iv. sc. 1.

"*Lady Betty* (to Lord Morelove). Nay, my lord, there's no standing against two of you.

Lord Foppington. No, faith, that's odds at tennis, my lord: not but if your ladyship pleases, I'll endeavour to keep your back-hand a little; though upon my soul you may safely set me up at the line: for, knock me down, if ever I saw a rest of wit better played, than that last, in my life."

In the only dictionary in which I have found this word "rest," it is given as "A match, a game;" but, as I think I have shown, this is a defective explanation. I may add that, since writing the above, I have been favoured with the opinion of Mr. Julian Marshall, the distinguished authority on tennis, who confirms my view.

—but alas! when those actors were gone, that comedy and many others, for the same reason, were rarely known to stand upon their own legs; by seeing no more of Leigh or Nokes in them, the characters were quite sunk and alter'd. In his Sir William Belfond, Leigh shew'd a more spirited variety than ever I saw any actor, in any one character, come up to: the poet, 'tis true, had here exactly chalked for him the out-lines of nature; but the high colouring, the strong lights and shades of humour that enliven'd the whole and struck our admiration with surprize and delight, were wholly owing to the actor. The easy reader might, perhaps, have been pleased with the author without discomposing a feature, but the spectator must have heartily held his sides, or the actor would have heartily made them ach for it.

Now, though I observ'd before that Nokes never was tolerably touch'd by any of his successors, yet in this character I must own I have seen Leigh extremely well imitated by my late facetious friend Penkethman, who, tho' far short of what was inimitable in the original, yet, as to the general resemblance, was a very valuable copy of him: and, as I know Penkethman cannot yet be out of your memory, I have chosen to mention him here, to give you the nearest idea I can of the excellence of Leigh in that particular light: for Leigh had many masterly variations which the other cou'd not, nor ever pretended to reach, particularly in the dotage

and follies of extreme old age, in the characters of Fumble in the "Fond Husband,"[1] and the toothless lawyer[2] in the "City Politicks," both which plays liv'd only by the extraordinary performance of Nokes and Leigh.

There were two other characters of the farcical kind, Geta in the "Prophetess," and Crack in "Sir Courtly Nice," which, as they are less confin'd to nature, the imitation of them was less difficult to Penkethman,[3] who, to say the truth, delighted more in the whimsical than the natural; therefore, when I say he sometimes resembled Leigh, I reserve this distinction on his master's side, that the pleasant extravagancies of Leigh were all the flowers of his own fancy, while the less fertile brain of my friend was contented to make use of the stock his predecessor had left him. What I have said, therefore, is not to detract from honest Pinky's merit, but to do justice to his predecessor. . . . And though, 'tis true, we as seldom see a good actor as a great poet arise from the bare imitation of another's genius, yet if this be a general rule, Penkethman was the nearest to an exception from it; for with those who never knew Leigh he might very well have pass'd for a more than common original. Yet again, as my partiality for Penkethman ought

[1] By Durfey.

[2] Bartoline. Genest suggests that this character was intended for the Whig lawyer, Serjeant Maynard. The play was written by Crowne.

[3] See memoir of Pinkethman at end of second volume.

not to lead me from truth, I must beg leave (though out of its place) to tell you fairly what was the best of him, that the superiority of Leigh may stand in its due light. . . . Penkethman had certainly from nature a great deal of comic power about him, but his judgment was by no means equal to it; for he would make frequent deviations into the whimsies of an harlequin. By the way (let me digress a little farther), whatever allowances are made for the licence of that character, I mean of an harlequin, whatever pretences may be urged, from the practice of the ancient comedy, for its being play'd in a mask, resembling no part of the human species, I am apt to think the best excuse a modern actor can plead for his continuing it, is that the low, senseless, and monstrous things he says and does in it no theatrical assurance could get through with a bare face. Let me give you an instance of even Penkethman's being out of countenance for want of it: when he first played harlequin in the "Emperor of the Moon,"[1] several gentlemen (who inadvertently judg'd by the rules of nature) fancied

[1] In this farce, written by Mrs. Behn, and produced in 1687, Jevon was the original harlequin. Pinkethman played the part in 1702, and played it without the mask on 18th September, 1702. The *Daily Courant* of that date contains an advertisement in which it is stated that "At the desire of some persons of quality . . . will be presented a comedy, call'd, 'The Emperor of the Moon,' where in Mr. Penkethman acts the part of harlequin with out a masque, for the entertainment of an African prince lately arrived here."

that a great deal of the drollery and spirit of his grimace was lost by his wearing that useless, unmeaning masque of a black cat, and therefore insisted that the next time of his acting that part he should play without it. Their desire was accordingly comply'd with — but, alas! in vain — Penkethman could not take to himself the shame of the character without being concealed — he was no more harlequin — his humour was quite disconcerted. His conscience could not with the same effronterie declare against nature without the cover of that unchanging face, which he was sure would never blush for it. No, it was quite another case; without that armour his courage could not come up to the bold strokes that were necessary to get the better of common sense. Now if this circumstance will justify the modesty of Penkethman, it cannot but throw a wholesome contempt on the low merit of an harlequin. But how farther necessary the masque is to that fool's coat, we have lately had a stronger proof in the favour that the "Harlequin Sauvage" met with at Paris, and the ill fate that followed the same sauvage when he pull'd off his masque in London.[1] So that it seems what

[1] This refers to "Art and Nature," a comedy by James Miller, produced at Drury Lane 16th February, 1738. The principal character in "Harlequin Sauvage" was introduced into it and played by Theophilus Cibber. The piece was damned the first night, but it must not be forgotten that the Templars damned everything of Miller's on account of his supposed insult to them in his farce of "The Coffee House." Bellchambers says the piece

was wit from an harlequin was something too extravagant from a human creature. If, therefore, Penkethman in characters drawn from nature might sometimes launch out into a few gamesome liberties which would not have been excused from a more correct comedian, yet, in his manner of taking them, he always seem'd to me in a kind of consciousness of the hazard he was running, as if he fairly confess'd that what he did was only as well as he could do. . . . That he was willing to take his chance for success, but if he did not meet with it a rebuke should break no squares; he would mend it another time, and would take whatever pleas'd his judges to think of him in good part; and I have often thought that a good deal of the favour he met with was owing to this seeming humble way of waving all pretences to merit but what the town would please to allow him. What confirms me in this opinion is, that when it has been his ill fortune to meet with a *disgraccia*, I have known him say apart to himself, yet loud enough to be heard, "Odso! I believe I am a little wrong here!" which once was so well receiv'd by the audience that they turn'd their reproof into applause.[1]

referred to by Cibber was "The Savage," 8vo, 1736; but this does not seem ever to have been acted.

[1] This probably refers to the incident related by Davies in his "Dramatic Miscellanies:" "In the play of the 'Recruiting Officer,' Wilks was the Captain Plume, and Pinkethman one of the recruits. The captain, when he enlisted him, asked his name: instead of answering as he ought, Pinky replied, 'Why! don't

Now, the judgment of Leigh always guarded the happier sallies of his fancy from the least hazard of disapprobation: he seem'd not to court, but to attack your applause, and always came off victorious; nor did his highest assurance amount to any more than that just confidence without which the commendable spirit of every good actor must be abated; and of this spirit Leigh was a most perfect master. He was much admir'd by King Charles, who us'd to distinguish him when spoke of by the title of his actor: which, however, makes me imagine that in his exile that prince might have receiv'd his first impression of good actors from the French stage; for Leigh had more of that farcical vivacity than Nokes; but Nokes was never languid by his more strict adherence to nature, and as far as my judgment is worth taking, if their intrinsick merit could be justly weigh'd, Nokes must have had the better in the balance. Upon the unfortunate death of Mon-

you know my name, Bob? I thought every fool had known that!' Wilks, in rage, whispered to him the name of the recruit, Thomas Appletree. The other retorted aloud, 'Thomas Appletree? Thomas Devil! my name is Will Pinkethman:' and, immediately addressing an inhabitant of the upper regions, he said, 'Hark you, friend; don't you know my name?'—'Yes, Master Pinkey,' said a respondent, 'we know it very well.' The play-house was now in an uproar: the audience, at first, enjoyed the petulant folly of Pinkethman, and the distress of Wilks; but, in the progress of the joke, it grew tiresome, and Pinkey met with his deserts, a very severe reprimand in a hiss; and this mark of displeasure he changed into applause, by crying out, with a countenance as melancholy as he could make it, in a loud and nasal twang, 'Odso! I fear I am wrong'" (iii. 89).

fort, Leigh fell ill of a fever, and dy'd in a week after him, in December 1692.[1]

Underhil was a correct and natural comedian, his particular excellence was in characters that may be called still-life, I mean the stiff, the heavy, and the stupid; to these he gave the exactest and most expressive colours, and in some of them look'd as if it were not in the power of human passions to alter a feature of him. In the solemn formality of Obadiah in the "Committee," and in the boobily heaviness of Lolpoop in the "Squire of Alsatia," he seem'd the immoveable log he stood for! a countenance of wood could not be more fixt than his, when the blockhead of a character required it; his face was full and long; from his crown to the end of his nose was the shorter half of it, so that the disproportion of his lower features, when soberly compos'd, with an unwandering eye hanging over them, threw him into the most lumpish, moping mortal that ever made beholders merry! not but at other times he could be wakened into spirit equally ridiculous. In the course, rustick humour of Justice Clodpate, in "Epsome Wells,"[2] he was a delightful brute! and in the blunt vivacity of Sir Sampson, in "Love for Love," he shew'd all that true perverse spirit that is commonly seen in much wit and ill-nature. This character is one of those few so well written, with so much wit and humour, that an actor must be the grossest dunce

[1] See memoir of Leigh at end of second volume. [2] By Shadwell.

that does not appear with an unusual life in it: but it will still shew as great a proportion of skill to come near Underhil in the acting it, which (not to undervalue those who soon came after him) I have not yet seen. He was particularly admir'd too for the Grave-digger in "Hamlet." The author of the *Tatler* recommends him to the favour of the town upon that play's being acted for his benefit, wherein, after his age had some years oblig'd him to leave the stage, he came on again, for that day, to perform his old part;[1] but, alas! so worn and disabled, as if himself was to have lain in the grave he was digging; when he could no more excite laughter, his infirmities were dismiss'd with pity.

[1] Underhill seems to have partially retired about the beginning of 1707. He played Sir Joslin Jolley on 5th December, 1706, but Bullock played it on 9th January, 1707, and, two days after, Johnson played Underhill's part of the First Grave-digger. Underhill, however, played in "The Rover" on 20th January, 1707. The benefit Cibber refers to took place on 3d June, 1709. Underhill played the Grave-digger again on 23d February, 1710, and on 12th May, 1710, for his benefit, he played Trinculo in "The Tempest." Genest says he acted at Greenwich on 26th August, 1710. The advertisement in the *Tatler* (26th May, 1709) runs: "Mr. Cave Underhill, the famous comedian in the reigns of K. Charles ii. K. James ii. K. William and Q. Mary, and her present Majesty Q. Anne; but now not able to perform so often as heretofore in the play-house, and having had losses to the value of near £2,500, is to have the tragedy of 'Hamlet' acted for his benefit, on Friday the third of June next, at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, in which he is to perform his original part, the grave-maker. Tickets may be had at the Mitre-Tavern in Fleet Street" See also memoir of Underhill at end of second volume.

He dy'd soon after, a superannuated pensioner in the list of those who were supported by the joint sharers under the first patent granted to Sir Richard Steele.

The deep impressions of these excellent actors which I receiv'd in my youth, I am afraid may have drawn me into the common foible of us old fellows; which is a fondness, and perhaps a tedious partiality, for the pleasures we have formerly tasted, and think are now fallen off because we can no longer enjoy them. If, therefore, I lie under that suspicion, tho' I have related nothing incredible or out of the reach of a good judge's conception, I must appeal to those few who are about my own age for the truth and likeness of these theatrical portraicts.

There were at this time several others in some degree of favour with the publick, Powel,[1] Williams,[2] Verbruggen,[3] etc. But as I cannot think their

[1] See memoir of Powel at end of second volume.

[2] See memoir of Williams at end of second volume.

[3] John Verbruggen, whose name Downes spells "Vanbruggen," "Vantbrugg," and "Verbruggen," is first recorded as having played Termagant in "The Squire of Alsatia," at the Theatre Royal, in 1688. His name last appears in August, 1707, and he must have died not long after. On 26th April, 1708, a benefit was announced for "a young orphan child of the late Mr. and Mrs. Verbruggen." He seems to have been an actor of great natural power, but inartistic in method. See what Anthony Aston says of him. Cibber unfairly, as we must think, seems carefully to avoid mentioning him as of any importance. "The Laureat," p. 58, says: "I wonder, considering our author's par-

best inprovements made them in any wise equal to those I have spoke of, I ought not to range them in the same class. Neither were Wilks or Dogget yet come to the stage; nor was Booth initiated till about six years after them; or Mrs. Oldfield known till the year 1700. I must therefore reserve the four last for their proper period, and proceed to the actresses that were famous with Betterton at the latter end of the last century.

Mrs. Barry was then in possession of almost all the chief parts in tragedy: with what skill she gave life to them you will judge from the words of Dryden in his preface to "Cleomenes,"[1] where he says:

"Mrs. Barry, always excellent, has in this tragedy excell'd herself, and gain'd a reputation beyond any woman I have ever seen on the theatre."

I very perfectly remember her acting that part; and however unnecessary it may seem to give my judgment after Dryden's, I cannot help saying I do not only close with his opinion, but will venture to add that (tho' Dryden has been dead these thirty-eight years) the same compliment to this hour may be due to her excellence. And tho' she was then not a little past her youth, she was not till

ticularity of memory, that he hardly ever mentions Mr. Verbruggen, who was in many characters an excellent actor. . . . I cannot conceive why Verbruggen is left out of the number of his excellent actors; whether some latent grudge, *alta Mente repostum*, has robb'd him of his immortality in this work." See also memoir of Verbruggen at end of second volume.

[1] Produced at the Theatre Royal in 1692.

that time fully arriv'd to her maturity of power and judgment: from whence I would observe, that the short life of beauty is not long enough to form a complete actress. In men the delicacy of person is not so absolutely necessary, nor the decline of it so soon taken notice of. The fame Mrs. Barry arriv'd to is a particular proof of the difficulty there is in judging with certainty, from their first trials, whether young people will ever make any great figure on a theatre. There was, it seems, so little hope of Mrs. Barry at her first setting out, that she was at the end of the first year discharg'd the company, among others that were thought to be a useless expence to it. I take it for granted that the objection to Mrs. Barry at that time must have been a defective ear, or some unskilful dissonance in her manner of pronouncing. But where there is a proper voice and person, with the addition of a good understanding, experience tells us that such defect is not always invincible; of which not only Mrs. Barry, but the late Mrs. Oldfield are eminent instances Mrs. Oldfield had been a year in the Theatre-Royal before she was observ'd to give any tolerable hope of her being an actress; so unlike to all manner of propriety was her speaking![1] How unaccountably, then, does a genius for

[1] In Chapter IX. of this work Cibber gives an elaborate account of Mrs. Oldfield. He remarks there that, after her joining the company, "she remain'd about a twelvemonth almost a mute, and unheeded."

the stage make its way towards perfection? For, notwithstanding these equal disadvantages, both these actresses, tho' of different excellence, made themselves complete mistresses of their art by the prevalence of their understanding. If this observation may be of any use to the masters of future theatres, I shall not then have made it to no purpose.[1]

Mrs. Barry, in characters of greatness, had a presence of elevated dignity, her mien and motion superb and gracefully majestick; her voice full, clear, and strong, so that no violence of passion could be too much for her: and when distress or tenderness possess'd her, she subsided into the most affecting melody and softness. In the art of exciting pity she had a power beyond all the actresses I have yet seen, or what your imagination can conceive. Of the former of these two great excellencies she gave the most delightful proofs in almost all the heroic plays of Dryden and Lee; and of the latter, in the softer passions of Otway's Monimia and Belvidera[2] in scenes of anger, defiance, or resentment, while she was impetuous and terrible, she pour'd out her sentiment with an enchanting harmony; and it was this particular excellence for which Dryden made her the above-recited compliment upon her acting Cassandra in his "Cleo-

[1] See memoir of Mrs. Barry at end of second volume.

[2] In "The Orphan," produced at Dorset Garden in 1680, and in "Venice Preserved," produced at the same theatre in 1682.

menes." But here I am apt to think his partiality for that character may have tempted his judgment to let it pass for her master-piece, when he could not but know there were several other characters in which her action might have given her a fairer pretence to the praise he has bestow'd on her for Cassandra; for in no part of that is there the least ground for compassion, as in Monimia, nor equal cause for admiration, as in the nobler love of Cleopatra, or the tempestuous jealousy of Roxana.[1] 'Twas in these lights I thought Mrs. Barry shone with a much brighter excellence than in Cassandra. She was the first person whose merit was distinguish'd by the indulgence of having an annual benefit-play, which was granted to her alone, if I mistake not, first in King James's time,[2] and which became not common to others 'till the division of this com-

[1] In "The Rival Queens." Mrs. Marshall was the original Roxana, at the Theatre Royal, in 1677. So far as we know, Mrs. Barry had not played Cleopatra (Dryden's "All for Love") when Dryden wrote the eulogy Cibber quotes. Mrs. Boutell originally acted the part, Theatre Royal, 1678.

[2] Bellchambers contradicts Cibber, saying that the agreement of 14th October, 1681 [see memoir of Hart], shows that benefits existed then. The words referred to are, "the day the young men or young women play for their own profit only." But this day set aside for the young people playing was, I think, quite a different matter from a benefit to a particular performer. Pepys (21st March, 1667) says, "The young men and women of the house . . . having liberty to act for their own profit on Wednesdays and Fridays this Lent." These were evidently "scratch" performances on "off" nights; and it is to these, I think, that the agreement quoted refers.

pany after the death of King William's Queen Mary. This great actress dy'd of a fever towards the latter end of Queen Anne; the year I have forgot; but perhaps you will recollect it by an expression that fell from her in blank verse, in her last hours, when she was delirious, viz., —

"Ha, ha! and so they make us lords, by dozens!"[1]

Mrs. Betterton, tho' far advanc'd in years, was so great a mistress of nature that even Mrs. Barry, who acted the Lady Macbeth after her, could not, in that part, with all her superior strength and melody of voice, throw out those quick and careless strokes of terror from the disorder of a guilty mind, which the other gave us with a facility in her manner that render'd them at once tremendous and delightful. Time could not impair her skill, tho' he had brought her person to decay. She was, to the last, the admiration of all true judges of nature and lovers of Shakespear, in whose plays she chiefly excell'd, and without a rival. When she quitted the stage, several good actresses were the better for her instruction. She was a woman of an unblemish'd and sober life, and had the honour to teach Queen Anne, when princess, the part of Semandra in "Mithridates," which she acted at

[1] As Doctor Doran points out ("Their Majesties' Servants," 1888 edition, i. 160), this does not settle the question so easily as Cibber supposes. Twelve Tory peers were created by Queen Anne in the last few days of 1711, and Mrs. Barry did not die till the end of 1713.

court in King Charles's time. After the death of Mr. Betterton, her husband, that princess, when queen, order'd her a pension for life, but she liv'd not to receive more than the first half year of it.[1]

Mrs. Leigh, the wife of Leigh already mention'd, had a very droll way of dressing the pretty foibles of superannuated beauties. She had in herself a good deal of humour, and knew how to infuse it into the affected mothers, aunts, and modest stale maids that had miss'd their market; of this sort were the modish mother in the "Chances," affecting to be politely commode for her own daughter; the coquette prude of an aunt in "Sir Courtly Nice," who prides herself in being chaste and cruel at fifty; and the languishing Lady Wishfort in "The Way of the World." In all these, with many others, she was extremely entertaining, and painted in a lively manner the blind side of nature.[2]

[1] See memoir of Mrs. Betterton at end of second volume.

[2] Downes includes Mrs. Leigh among the recruits to the Duke's Company about 1670. He does not give her maiden name, but Genest supposes she may have been the daughter of Dixon, one of Rhodes's company. As there are two actresses of the name of Mrs. Leigh, and one Mrs. Lee, and as no reliance can be placed on the spelling of names in the casts of plays, it is practically impossible to decide accurately the parts each played. This Mrs. Leigh seems to have been Elizabeth, and her name does not appear after 1707, the Eli. Leigh who signed the petition to Queen Anne in 1709 being probably a younger woman. Bellchambers has a most inaccurate note regarding Mrs. Leigh, stating that she "is probably not a distinct person from Mrs. Mary Lee."

Mrs. Butler, who had her Christian name of Charlotte given her by King Charles, was the daughter of a decay'd knight, and had the honour of that prince's recommendation to the theatre; a provident restitution, giving to the stage in kind what he had sometimes taken from it. The publick at least was oblig'd by it; for she prov'd not only a good actress, but was allow'd in those days to sing and dance to great perfection. In the dramatick operas of "Dioclesian" and that of "King Arthur," she was a capital and admired performer. In speaking, too, she had a sweet-ton'd voice, which, with her naturally genteel air and sensible pronunciation, render'd her wholly mistress of the amiable in many serious characters. In parts of humour, too, she had a manner of blending her assuasive softness even with the gay, the lively, and the alluring. Of this she gave an agreeable instance in her action of the (Villiers) Duke of Buckingham's second Constantia in the "Chances." In which, if I should say I have never seen her exceeded, I might still do no wrong to the late Mrs. Oldfield's lively performance of the same character. Mrs. Oldfield's fame may spare Mrs. Butler's action this compliment, without the least diminution or dispute of her superiority in characters of more moment.[1]

[1] Mrs. Charlotte Butler is mentioned by Downes as entering the Duke's Company about the year 1673. By 1691 she occupied an important position as an actress, and in 1692 her name ap-

Here I cannot help observing, when there was but one theatre in London, at what unequal sallaries, compar'd to those of later days, the hired actors were then held by the absolute authority of their frugal masters the patentees; for Mrs. Butler had then but forty shillings a week, and could she have obtain'd an addition of ten shillings more (which was refus'd her) would never have left their service; but being offered her own conditions to go with Mr. Ashbury[1] to Dublin (who was then raising a company of actors for that theatre, where there had been none since the Revolution) her discontent here prevail'd with her to accept of his offer, and he found his account in her value. Were not those patentees most sagacious oecono-

pears to the part of La Pupsey in Durfey's "Marriage-Hater Matched." This piece must have been produced early in the year, for Ashbury, by whom, as Cibber relates, she was engaged for Dublin, opened his season on 23d March, 1692. Hitchcock, in his "View of the Irish Stage," describes her as "an actress of great repute, and a prodigious favourite with King Charles the Second" (i. 21).

[1] Chetwood gives a long account of Joseph Ashbury. He was born in 1638, and served for some years in the army. By the favour of the Duke of Ormond, then lord lieutenant, Ashbury was appointed successively deputy-master and master of the revels in Ireland. The latter appointment he seems to have received in 1682, though Hitchcock says "1672." Ashbury managed the Dublin Theatre with propriety and success, and was considered not only the principal actor in his time there, but the best teacher of acting in the three kingdoms. Chetwood, who saw him in his extreme old age, pronounced him admirable both in tragedy and comedy. He died in 1720, at the great age of eighty-two.

mists that could lay hold on so notable an expedient to lessen their charge? How gladly, in my time of being a sharer, would we have given four times her income to an actress of equal merit?

Mrs. Monfort, whose second marriage gave her the name of Verbruggen, was mistress of more variety of humour than I ever knew in any one woman actress. This variety, too, was attended with an equal vivacity, which made her excellent in characters extremely different. As she was naturally a pleasant mimick, she had the skill to make that talent useful on the stage, a talent which may be surprising in a conversation and yet be lost when brought to the theatre, which was the case of Estcourt already mention'd. But where the elocution is round, distinct, voluble, and various, as Mrs. Monfort's was, the mimick there is a great assistant to the actor. Nothing, tho' ever so barren, if within the bounds of nature, could be flat in her hands. She gave many heightening touches to characters but coldly written, and often made an author vain of his work that in itself had but little merit. She was so fond of humour, in what low part soever to be found, that she would make no scruple of defacing her fair form to come heartily into it;[1] for

[1] This artistic sense was shown also by Margaret Woffington. Davies ("Life of Garrick," 4th edition, i. 315) writes: "In Mrs. Day, in the 'Committee,' she made no scruple to disguise her beautiful countenance, by drawing on it the lines of deformity

when she was eminent in several desirable characters of wit and humour in higher life, she would be in as much fancy when descending into the antiquated Abigail [1] of Fletcher, as triumphing in all the airs and vain graces of a fine lady; a merit that few actresses care for. In a play of D'urfey's, now forgotten, call'd "The Western Lass," [2] which part she acted, she transform'd her whole being, body, shape, voice, language, look, and features, into almost another animal, with a strong Devonshire dialect, a broad laughing voice, a poking head, round shoulders, an unconceiving eye, and the most bediz'ning dowdy dress that ever cover'd the untrain'd limbs of a Joan Trot. To have seen her here you would have thought it impossible the same creature could ever have been recover'd to what was as easy to her, the gay, the lively, and the desirable. Nor was her humour limited to her sex; for, while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty fellow than is usually seen upon the stage: her easy air, action, mien, and gesture quite chang'd from the quoif to the cock'd hat and cavalier in fashion.[3] People were so fond of seeing her a man, that when the part of Bays in the "Rehearsal"

and the wrinkles of old age, and to put on the tawdry habiliments and vulgar manners of an old hypocritical city vixen."

[1] In "The Scornful Lady."

[2] "The Bath; or, the Western Lass," produced at Drury Lane in 1701.

[3] It is curious to compare with this Anthony Aston's outspoken criticism on Mrs. Mountfort's personal appearance.

had for some time lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true coxcombly spirit and humour that the sufficiency of the character required.

But what found most employment for her whole various excellence at once, was the part of Melantha in "Marriage-Alamode."[1] Melantha is as finish'd an impertinent as ever flutter'd in a drawing-room, and seems to contain the most compleat system of female foppery that could possibly be crowded into the tortured form of a fine lady. Her language, dress, motion, manners, soul, and body, are in a continual hurry to be something more than is necessary or commendable. And though I doubt it will be a vain labour to offer you a just likeness of Mrs. Monfort's action, yet the fantastick impression is still so strong in my memory that I cannot help saying something, tho' fantastically, about it. The first ridiculous airs that break from her are upon a gallant never seen before, who delivers her a letter from her father recommending him to her good graces as an honourable lover.[2] Here now, one would think, she might naturally shew a little of the sexe's decent reserve, tho' never so slightly cover'd! No, sir; not a tittle of it; modesty is the virtue

[1] Anthony Aston says "Melantha was her masterpiece." Dryden's comedy was produced at the Theatre Royal in 1672, when Mrs. Boutell played Melantha.

[2] Act ii. sc. 1.

of a poor-soul'd country gentlewoman; she is too much a court lady to be under so vulgar a confusion; she reads the letter, therefore, with a careless dropping lip and an erected brow, humming it hastily over as if she were impatient to outgo her father's commands by making a compleat conquest of him at once; and that the letter might not embarrass her attack, crack! she crumbles it at once into her palm and pours upon him her whole artillery of airs, eyes, and motion; down goes her dainty, diving body to the ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious load of her own attractions; then launches into a flood of fine language and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water; and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit that she will not give her lover leave to praise it: silent assenting bows and vain endeavours to speak are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which at last he is relieved from by her engagement to half a score visits, which she swims from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling.

If this sketch has colour enough to give you any near conception of her, I then need only tell you that throughout the whole character her variety of humour was every way proportionable; as, indeed, in most parts that she thought worth her care or that had the least matter for her

fancy to work upon, I may justly say, that no actress, from her own conception, could have heighten'd them with more lively strokes of nature.[1]

I come now to the last, and only living person, of all those whose theatrical characters I have promised you, Mrs. Bracegirdle; who, I know, would rather pass her remaining days forgotten as an actress, than to have her youth recollected in the most favourable light I am able to place it. Yet, as she is essentially necessary to my theatrical history, and as I only bring her back to the company of those with whom she pass'd the spring and summer of her life, I hope it will excuse the liberty I take in commemorating the delight which

[1] Mrs. Mountfort, originally Mrs. (that is Miss) Percival, and afterward Mrs. Verbruggen, is first mentioned as the representative of Winifrid, a young Welsh jilt, in "Sir Barnaby Whigg," a comedy produced at the Theatre Royal in 1681. As Diana, in "The Lucky Chance" (1687), Genest gives her name as Mrs. Mountfort, late Mrs. Percival; so that her marriage with Mountfort must have taken place about the end of 1686 or beginning of 1687. Mountfort was killed in 1692, and in 1694 the part of Mary the Buxom, in "Don Quixote," part first, is recorded by Genest as played by Mrs. Verbruggen, late Mrs. Mountfort. In 1702, in the "Comparison between the Two Stages," Gildon pronounces her "a miracle." In 1703 she died. She was the original representative of, among other characters, Nell, in "Devil of a Wife;" Belinda, in "The Old Bachelor;" Lady Froth, in "The Double Dealer;" Charlott Welldon, in "Oroonoko;" Berinthia, in "Relapse;" Lady Lurewell; Lady Brumpton, in "The Funeral;" Hypolita, in "She Would and She Would Not;" and Hillaria, in "Tunbridge Walks."

the publick received from her appearance while she was an ornament to the theatre.

Mrs Bracegirdle was now but just blooming to her maturity; her reputation as an actress gradually rising with that of her person; never any woman was in such general favour of her spectators, which, to the last scene of her dramatick life, she maintain'd by not being unguarded in her private character.[1] This discretion contributed

[1] Bellchambers has here a most uncharitable note, which I quote as curious, though I must add that there is not a shadow of proof of the truth of it.

"Mrs. Bracegirdle was decidedly not 'unguarded' in her conduct, for though the object of general suspicion, no proof of positive unchastity was ever brought against her. Her intrigue with Mountfort, who lost his life in consequence of it,[1] is hardly to be disputed, and there is pretty ample evidence that Congreve was honoured with a gratification of his amorous desires.[2]

[1] "'We had not parted with him as many minutes as a man may beget his likeness in, but who should we meet but Mountfort the player, looking as pale as a ghost, sailing forward as gently as a caterpillar 'cross a sycamore leaf, gaping for a little air, like a sinner just come out of the powdering-tub, crying out as he crept toward us, "O my back! Confound 'em for a pack of brimstones: O my back!" — "How now, Sir Courtly," said I, "what the devil makes thee in this pickle?" — "O, gentlemen," says he, "I am glad to see you; but I am troubled with such a weakness in my back, that it makes me bend like a superannuated fornicator." — "Some strain," said I, "got in the other world, with overheaving yourself." — "What matters it how 'twas got," says he; "can you tell me anything that's good for it?" — "Yes," said I, "get a warm girdle and tie round you; 'tis an excellent corroborative to strengthen the loins." — "Pox on you," says he, "for a bantering dog! how can a single girdle do me good, when a Brace was my destruction?"' — Brown's "*Letters from the Dead to the Living*" [1744, ii. 186].

[2] "In one of those infamous collections known by the name of 'Poems on State Affairs' [iv. 49], there are several obvious, though coarse and detestable, hints of this connection. Collier's severity against the stage is thus sarcastically deprecated, in a short piece called the 'Benefits of a theatre:'

> "'Shall a place be put down, when we see it affords
> *Fit wives for great poets*, and ——— for great lords?

Mrs. Bracegirdle as "The Indian Queen"

Engraved in mezzotint by R. B. Parkes after the painting by J. Smith and W. Vincent

not a little to make her the *cara*, the darling of the theatre. For it will be no extravagant thing to say, scarce an audience saw her that were less than half of them lovers, without a suspected favourite among them. And tho' she might be said to have been the universal passion, and under the highest temptations, her constancy in resisting them served but to increase the numbers of her admirers. And this perhaps you will more easily believe when I extend not my encomiums on her person beyond a sincerity that can be suspected; for she had no greater claim to beauty than what the most desirable brunette might pretend to. But her youth and lively aspect threw out such a glow of health and chearfulness, that on the stage few spectators that were not past it could behold her without desire. It was even a fashion among the gay and young to have a taste or *tendre* for

> Since Angelica, bless'd with a singular grace,
> Had, by her fine acting, preserv'd all his plays,
> In an amourous rapture, young Valentine said,
> One so fit for his plays might be fit for his bed.'

"The allusion to Congreve and Mrs. Bracegirdle wants, of course, no corroboration; but the hint at their marriage, broached in the half line I have italicised, is a curious though unauthorised fact. From the verses I shall continue to quote, it will appear that this marriage between the parties, though thought to be private, was currently believed; it is an expedient that has often been used, in similar cases, to cover the nakedness of outrageous lust.

> "' He warmly pursues her, she yielded her charms
> And bless'd the kind youngster in her kinder arms;
> But at length the poor nymph did for justice implore,
> And *he's married her now*, though he'd —— her before.'

"On a subsequent page of the same precious miscellany, there is a most offensive statement of the cause which detached our great comic writer from the object of his passion. The thing is too filthy to be even described."

Mrs. Bracegirdle. She inspired the best authors to write for her, and two of them,[1] when they gave her a lover in a play, seem'd palpably to plead their own passions, and make their private court to her in fictitious characters. In all the chief parts she acted, the desirable was so predominant, that no judge could be cold enough to consider from what other particular excellence she became delightful. To speak critically of an actress that was extremely good were as hazardous as to be positive in one's opinion of the best opera singer. People often judge by comparison where there is no similitude in the performance. So, that, in this case, we have only taste to appeal to, and of taste there can be no disputing. I shall therefore only say of Mrs. Bracegirdle, that the most eminent authors always chose her for their favourite character, and shall leave that uncontestable proof of her merit to its own value. Yet let me say, there were two very different characters in which she acquitted herself with uncommon applause. If anything could excuse that desperate extravagance of love, that almost frantick passion of Lee's "Alexander the Great," it must have been when Mrs. Bracegirdle was his Statira. As when she acted Millamant[2] all the faults, follies and affectations of that agreeable tyrant were venially melted down into so many charms and attractions of a conscious beauty. In

[1] Rowe and Congreve. [2] In Congreve's "Way of the World."

other characters, where singing was a necessary part of them, her voice and action gave a pleasure which good sense, in those days, was not asham'd to give praise to.

She retir'd from the stage in the height of her favour from the publick, when most of her co-temporaries whom she had been bred up with were declining, in the year 1710,[1] nor could she be persuaded to return to it under new masters upon the most advantageous terms that were offered her; excepting one day, about a year after, to assist her good friend Mr. Betterton, when she play'd Angelica in "Love for Love" for his benefit. She has still the happiness to retain her usual chearfulness, and to be, without the transitory charm of youth, agreeable.[2]

[1] Cibber's chronology is a little shaky here. Mrs. Bracegirdle's name appeared for the last time in the bill of 20th February, 1707. Betterton's benefit, for which she returned to the stage for one night, took place on 7th April, 1709.

[2] Mrs. Anne Bracegirdle made her first appearance on the stage as a very young child. In the cast of Otway's "Orphan," 1680, the part of Cordelio, Polydore's page, is said to be played by "the little girl," who, Curll ("History," p. 26) informs us, was Anne Bracegirdle, then less than six years of age. In 1688 her name appears to the part of Lucia in "The Squire of Alsatia;" but it is not till 1691 that she can be said to have regularly entered upon her career as an actress. She was the original representative of some of the most famous heroines in comedy: Araminta, in "The Old Bachelor;" Cynthia, in "The Double Dealer;" Angelica, in "Love for Love;" Belinda, in "The Provoked Wife;" Millamant; Flippanta, in "The Confederacy," and many others. Mrs. Bracegirdle appears to have been a

If, in my account of these memorable actors, I have not deviated from truth, which, in the least article, I am not conscious of, may we not venture to say, they had not their equals, at any one time, upon any theatre in Europe? Or, if we confine the comparison to that of France alone, I believe no other stage can be much disparag'd by being left out of the question; which cannot properly be decided by the single merit of any one actor. Whether their Baron or our Betterton might be

good and excellent woman, as well as a great actress. All the scandal about her seems to have had no further foundation than, to quote Genest, "the extreme difficulty with which an actress at this period of the stage must have preserved her chastity." Genest goes on to remark, with delicious *naïveté*, "Mrs. Bracegirdle was perhaps a woman of a cold constitution." Her retirement from the stage when not much over thirty is accounted for by Curll, by a story of a competition between her and Mrs. Oldfield in the part of Mrs. Brittle in "The Amorous Widow," in which the latter was the more applauded. He says that they played the part on two successive nights; but I have carefully examined Doctor Burney's MSS. in the British Museum for the season 1706–07, and "The Amorous Widow" was certainly not played twice successively. I doubt the story altogether. That Mrs. Bracegirdle retired because Mrs. Oldfield was excelling her in popular estimation is most likely, but I can find no confirmation whatever for Curll's story. "The Laureat," p. 36, attributes her retirement to Mrs. Oldfield's being "preferr'd to some parts before her by our very apologist;" but though the reason thus given is probably accurate, the person blamed is as probably guiltless; for I do not think Cibber could have sufficient authority to distribute parts in 1706–07. Mrs. Bracegirdle died September, 1748, but was dead to the stage from 1709. Cibber's remark on p. 158 had therefore no reference to her.

the superior (take which side you please), that point reaches either way, but to a thirteenth part of what I contend for, viz: That no stage, at any one period, could shew thirteen actors, standing all in equal lights of excellence in their profession: and I am the bolder, in this challenge to any other nation, because no theatre having so extended a variety of natural characters as the English, can have a demand for actors of such various capacities; why then, where they could not be equally wanted, should we suppose them, at any one time, to have existed?

How imperfect soever this copious account of them may be, I am not without hope, at least, it may in some degree shew what talents are requisite to make actors valuable: and if that may any ways inform or assist the judgment of future spectators, it may as often be of service to their publick entertainments; for as their hearers are, so will actors be; worse, or better, as the false or true taste applauds or discommends them. Hence only can our theatres improve or must degenerate.

There is another point, relating to the hard condition of those who write for the stage, which I would recommend to the consideration of their hearers; which is, that the extreme severity with which they damn a bad play seems too terrible a warning to those whose untried genius might hereafter give them a good one: whereas it might be

a temptation to a latent author to make the experiment, could he be sure that, though not approved, his muse might at least be dismiss'd with decency. But the vivacity of our modern criticks is of late grown so riotous, that an unsuccessful author has no more mercy shewn him than a notorious cheat in a pillory; every fool, the lowest member of the mob, becomes a wit, and will have a fling at him. They come now to a new play like hounds to a carcase, and are all in a full cry, sometimes for an hour together, before the curtain rises to throw it amongst them. Sure those gentlemen cannot but allow that a play condemned after a fair hearing falls with thrice the ignominy as when it is refused that common justice.

But when their critical interruptions grow so loud, and of so long a continuance, that the attention of quiet people (though not so complete criticks) is terrify'd, and the skill of the actors quite disconcerted by the tumult, the play then seems rather to fall by assassins than by a lawful sentence.[1] Is it possible that such auditors can receive delight, or think it any praise to them to prosecute so injurious, so unmanly a treatment? And tho' perhaps the compassionate, on the other

[1] Cibber writes here with feeling; for, after his "Nonjuror" abused the Jacobites and Nonjurors, that party took every opportunity of revenging themselves on him by maltreating his plays.

side (who know they have as good a right to clap and support, as others have to catcall, damn, and destroy), may oppose this oppression; their good-nature, alas! contributes little to the redress; for in this sort of civil war the unhappy author, like a good prince, while his subjects are at mortal variance, is sure to be a loser by a victory on either side; for still the commonwealth, his play, is, during the conflict, torn to pieces. While this is the case, while the theatre is so turbulent a sea and so infested with pirates, what poetical merchant of any substance will venture to trade in it? If these valiant gentlemen pretend to be lovers of plays, why will they deter gentlemen from giving them such as are fit for gentlemen to see? In a word, this new race of criticks seem to me like the lion-whelps in the Tower, who are so boisterously gamesome at their meals that they dash down the bowls of milk brought for their own breakfast.[1]

As a good play is certainly the most rational and the highest entertainment that human invention can produce, let that be my apology (if I need any) for having thus freely deliver'd my mind in behalf of those gentlemen who, under such calamitous hazards, may hereafter be reduced to write for the stage, whose case I shall compassionate from the same motive that

[1] See *ante*, p. 120, for an allusion to this passage by Fielding in "The Champion."

prevail'd on Dido to assist the Trojans in distress.

"Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco." —*Virgil.*[1]

Or, as Dryden has it:

"I learn to pity woes so like my own."

If those particular gentlemen have sometimes made me the humbled object of their wit and humour, their triumph at least has done me this involuntary service, that it has driven me a year or two sooner into a quiet life than otherwise my own want of judgment might have led me to.[2] I left the stage before my strength left me, and tho' I came to it again for some few days a year or two

[1] Æneid, i. 630.

[2] This is a curious statement, and has never, so far as I know, been commented on; tne cause of Cibber's retirement having always been considered mysterious. I suppose this reference to ill-treatment must be held as confirming Davies's statement that the public lost patience at Cibber's continually playing tragic parts, and fairly hissed him off the stage. Davies ("Dram. Misc," iii. 471) relates the following incident: "When Thomson's Sophonisba was read to the actors, Cibber laid his hand upon Scipio, a character, which, though it appears only in the last act, is of great dignity and importance. For two nights successively, Cibber was as much exploded as any bad actor could be. Williams, by desire of Wilks, made himself master of the part; but he, marching slowly, in great military distinction, from the upper part of the stage, and wearing the same dress as Cibber, was mistaken for him, and met with repeated hisses, joined to the music of cat-calls; but, as soon as the audience were undeceived, they converted their groans and hisses to loud and long continued applause."

after, my reception there not only turn'd to my account, but seem'd a fair invitation that I would make my visits more frequent. But to give over a winner can be no very imprudent resolution.[1]

[1] Cibber retired in May, 1733. The reappearance he refers to was not that he made in 1738, as Bellchambers states. He no doubt alludes to his performances in 1734–35, when he played Bayes, Lord Foppington, Sir John Brute, and other comedy parts. On the nights he played, the compliment was paid him of putting no name in the bill but his own.

CHAPTER VI.

The Author's First Step upon the Stage — His Discouragements — The Best Actors in Europe Ill Us'd — A Revolution in Their Favour — King William Grants Them a License to Act in Lincoln's Inn Fields — The Author's Distress in Being Thought a Worse Actor Than a Poet — Reduc'd to Write a Part for Himself — His Success — More Remarks upon Theatrical Action — Some upon Himself.

HAVING given you the state of the theatre at my first admission to it, I am now drawing toward the several revolutions it suffer'd in my own time. But (as you find by the setting out of my history) that I always intended myself the heroe of it, it may be necessary to let you know me in my obscurity, as well as in my higher light, when I became one of the theatrical triumvirat.

The patentees,[1] who were now masters of this united and only company of comedians, seem'd to

[1] The original holders of the patents, Sir William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, were dead in 1690; and their successors, Alexander Davenant, to whom Charles Davenant had assigned his interest, and Charles Killigrew, seem to have taken little active interest in the management; for Christopher Rich, who acquired Davenant's share in 1691, seems at once to have become managing proprietor.

make it a rule that no young persons desirous to be actors should be admitted into pay under at least half a year's probation, wisely knowing that how early soever they might be appro'v'd of, there could be no great fear of losing them while they had then no other market to go to. But, alas! Pay was the least of my concern; the joy and privilege of every day seeing plays for nothing I thought was a sufficient consideration for the best of my services. So that it was no pain to my patience that I waited full three quarters of a year before I was taken into a salary of ten shillings per week;[1] which, with the assistance of food and raiment at my father's house, I then thought a most plentiful accession, and myself the happiest of mortals.

The first thing that enters into the head of a young actor is that of being a heroe: in this ambition I was soon snubb'd by the insufficiency of my

[1] Davies ("Dramatic Miscellanies," iii. 444) gives the following account of Cibber's first salary: "But Mr. Richard Cross, late prompter of Drury Lane Theatre, gave me the following history of Colley Cibber's first establishment as a hired actor. He was known only, for some years, by the name of Master Colley. After waiting impatiently a long time for the prompter's notice, by good fortune he obtained the honour of carrying a message on the stage, in some play, to Betterton. Whatever was the cause, Master Colley was so terrified, that the scene was disconcerted by him. Betterton asked, in some anger, who the young fellow was that had committed the blunder. Downes replied, 'Master Colley.' 'Master Colley! then forfeit him.' 'Why, sir,' said the prompter, 'he has no salary.' 'No!' said the old man, 'why then put him down ten shillings a week, and forfeit him 5 *s.*'"

voice; to which might be added an uninform'd meagre person (tho' then not ill made), with a dismal pale complexion.[1] Under these disadvantages,[2] I had but a melancholy prospect of ever playing a lover with Mrs. Bracegirdle, which I had flatter'd my hopes that my youth might one day have recommended me to. What was most promising in me, then, was the aptness of my ear; for I was soon allow'd to speak justly, tho' what was grave and serious did not equally become me. The first part, therefore, in which I appear'd with any glimpse of success, was the chaplain[3] in the "Or-

[1] Complexion is a point of no importance now, and this allusion suggests a theory to me which I give with all diffidence. We know that actresses painted in Pepys's time ("1667, Oct. 5. But, Lord! To see how they [Nell Gwynne and Mrs. Knipp] were both painted would make a man mad, and did make me loathe them"), and we also know that Dogget was famous for the painting of his face to represent old age. If, then, complexion was a point of importance for a lover, as Cibber states, it suggests that young actors playing juvenile parts did not use any "make-up" or paint, but went on the stage in their natural complexion. The lighting of the stage was of course much less brilliant than it afterward became, so that "make-up" was not so necessary.

[2] "The Laureat" (p. 103) describes Cibber's person thus: "He was in stature of the middle size, his complexion fair, inclinable to the sandy, his legs somewhat of the thickest, his shape a little clumsy, not irregular, and his voice rather shrill than loud or articulate, and crack'd extremely, when he endeavour'd to raise it. He was in his younger days so lean, as to be known by the name of Hatchet Face."

[3] Bellchambers notes that this part was originally played by Percival, who came into the Duke's Company about 1673.

phan" of Otway. There is in this character (of one scene only) a decent pleasantry, and sense enough to shew an audience whether the actor has any himself. Here was the first applause I ever receiv'd, which, you may be sure, made my heart leap with a higher joy than may be necessary to describe; and yet my transport was not then half so high as at what Goodman (who had now left the stage) said of me the next day in my hearing. Goodman often came to a rehearsal for amusement, and having sate out the "Orphan" the day before, in a conversation with some of the principal actors enquir'd what new young fellow that was whom he had seen in the chaplain? Upon which Monfort reply'd, "That's he, behind you." Goodman then turning about, look'd earnestly at me, and, after some pause, clapping me on the shoulder, rejoin'd, "If he does not make a good actor, I'll be d—d!" The surprize of being commended by one who had been himself so eminent on the stage, and in so positive a manner, was more than I could support; in a word, it almost took away my breath, and (laugh, if you please) fairly drew tears from my eyes! And, tho' it may be as ridiculous as incredible to tell you what a full vanity and content at that time possess'd me, I will still make it a question whether Alexander himself, or Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, when at the head of their first victorious armies, could feel a greater transport in their bosoms than I did then in mine, when but in

the rear of this troop of comedians. You see to what low particulars I am forc'd to descend to give you a true resemblance of the early and lively follies of my mind. Let me give you another instance of my discretion, more desperate than that of preferring the stage to any other views of life. One might think that the madness of breaking from the advice and care of parents to turn player could not easily be exceeded: but what think you, sir, of — matrimony? which, before I was two and twenty, I actually committed,[1] when I had but twenty pounds a year, which my father had assur'd to me, and twenty shillings a week from my theatrical labours, to maintain, as I then thought, the happiest young couple that ever took a leap in the dark! If after this, to complete my fortune, I turn'd poet too, this last folly indeed had something a better excuse — necessity: had it never been my lot to have come on the stage, 'tis probable I might never have been inclin'd or reduc'd to have wrote for it: but having once expos'd my person there, I thought it could be no additional

[1] Of Cibber's wife there is little record. In 1695 the name of "Mrs. Cibbars" appears to the part of Galatea in "Philaster," and she was the original Hillaria in Cibber's "Love's Last Shift" in 1696; but she never made any great name or played any famous part. She was a Miss Shore, sister of John Shore, "Sergeant-trumpet" of England. The "Biographia Dramatica" (i. 117) says that Miss Shore's father was extremely angry at her marriage, and spent that portion of his fortune which he had intended for her in building a retreat on the Thames which was called Shore's Folly.

dishonour to let my parts, whatever they were, take their fortune along with it. But to return to the progress I made as an actor.

Queen Mary having commanded the "Double Dealer" to be acted, Kynaston happen'd to be so ill that he could not hope to be able next day to perform his part of the Lord Touchwood. In this exigence, the author, Mr. Congreve, advis'd that it might be given to me, if at so short a warning I would undertake it.[1] The flattery of being thus distinguish'd by so celebrated an author, and the honour to act before a queen, you may be sure made me blind to whatever difficulties might attend it. I accepted the part, and was ready in it before I slept; next day the queen was present at the play, and was receiv'd with a new prologue from the author, spoken by Mrs. Barry, humbly acknowledging the great honour done to the stage, and to his play in particular: two lines of it, which tho' I have not since read, I still remember:

> "But never were in Rome nor Athens seen,
> So fair a circle, or so bright a queen."

After the play, Mr. Congreve made me the compliment of saying, that I had not only answer'd,

[1] "The Double Dealer," 1693, was not very successful, and when played at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 18th October, 1718, was announced as not having been acted for fifteen years; so that this incident no doubt occurred in the course of the first few nights of the play, which, Malone says, was produced in November, 1693.

but had exceeded his expectations, and that he would shew me he was sincere by his saying more of me to the masters. — He was as good as his word, and the next pay-day I found my sallary of fifteen was then advanc'd to twenty shillings a week. But alas! this favourable opinion of Mr. Congreve made no farther impression upon the judgment of my good masters; it only serv'd to heighten my own vanity, but could not recommend me to any new trials of my capacity; not a step farther could I get 'till the company was again divided, when the desertion of the best actors left a clear stage for younger champions to mount and shew their best pretensions to favour. But it is now time to enter upon those facts that immediately preceded this remarkable revolution of the theatre.

You have seen how complete a set of actors were under the government of the united patents in 1690; if their gains were not extraordinary, what shall we impute it to but some extraordinary ill menagement? I was then too young to be in their secrets, and therefore can only observe upon what I saw and have since thought visibly wrong.

Though the success of the "Prophetess"[1] and

[1] "The Prophetess," now supposed to be mostly Fletcher's work (see Ward's "English Dramatic Literature," ii. 218), was made into an opera by Betterton, the music by Purcell. It was produced in 1690, with a prologue written by Dryden, which, for political reasons, was forbidden by the lord chamberlain after the first night.

"King Arthur",[1] (two dramatic operas, in which the patentees had embark'd all their hopes) was in appearance very great, yet their whole receipts did not so far balance their expence as to keep them out of a large debt, which it was publickly known was about this time contracted, and which found work for the Court of Chancery for about twenty years following, till one side of the cause grew weary. But this was not all that was wrong; every branch of the theatrical trade had been sacrific'd to the necessary fitting out those tall ships of burthen that were to bring home the Indies. Plays of course were neglected, actors held cheap, and slightly dress'd, while singers and dancers were better paid, and embroider'd. These measures, of course, created murmurings on one side, and ill-humour and contempt on the other. When it became necessary therefore to lessen the charge, a resolution was taken to begin with the sallaries of the actors; and what seem'd to make this resolution more necessary at this time was the loss of Nokes, Monfort, and Leigh, who all dy'd about the same year:[2] no wonder then, if when

[1] "King Arthur; or, the British Worthy," a dramatic opera, as Dryden entitles it, was produced in 1691. In his dedication to the Marquis of Halifax, Dryden says; "This poem was the last piece of service which I had the honour to do for my gracious master, King Charles the Second." Downes says "'twas very gainful to the company," but Cibber declares it was not so successful as it appeared to be.

[2] End of 1692.

these great pillars were at once remov'd, the building grew weaker and the audiences very much abated. Now in this distress, what more natural remedy could be found than to incite and encourage (tho' with some hazard) the industry of the surviving actors? But the patentees, it seems, thought the surer way was to bring down their pay in proportion to the fall of their audiences. To make this project more feasible they propos'd to begin at the head of 'em, rightly judging that if the principals acquiesc'd, their inferiors would murmur in vain. To bring this about with a better grace, they, under pretence of bringing younger actors forward, order'd several of Betterton's and Mrs. Barry's chief parts to be given to young Powel and Mrs. Bracegirdle. In this they committed two palpable errors; for while the best actors are in health, and still on the stage, the publick is always apt to be out of humour when those of a lower class pretend to stand in their places; or admitting at this time they might have been accepted, this project might very probably have lessen'd, but could not possibly mend an audience, and was a sure loss of that time, in studying, which might have been better employ'd in giving the auditor variety, the only temptation to a pall'd appetite; and variety is only to be given by industry: but industry will always be lame when the actor has reason to be discontented. This the patentees did not consider, or pretended not to

value, while they thought their power secure and uncontroulable: but farther their first project did not succeed; for tho' the giddy head of Powel accepted the parts of Betterton, Mrs. Bracegirdle had a different way of thinking, and desir'd to be excus'd from those of Mrs. Barry; her good sense was not to be misled by the insidious favour of the patentees; she knew the stage was wide enough for her success, without entring into any such rash and invidious competition with Mrs. Barry, and therefore wholly refus'd acting any part that properly belong'd to her. But this proceeding, however, was warning enough to make Betterton be upon his guard, and to alarm others with apprehensions of their own safety, from the design that was laid against him: Betterton upon this drew into his party most of the valuable actors, who, to secure their unity, enter'd with him into a sort of association to stand or fall together.[1] All this the patentees for some time slighted; but when matters drew toward a crisis, they found it adviseable to take the same measures, and accordingly open'd an association on their part; both which were severally sign'd, as the interest or inclination of either side led them.

During these contentions which the impolitick

[1] Betterton seems to have been a very politic person. In the "Comparison Between the Two Stages" (p. 41) he is called, though not in reference to this particular matter, "a cunning old fox."

patentees had rais'd against themselves (not only by this I have mentioned, but by many other grievances which my memory retains not) the actors offer'd a treaty of peace; but their masters imagining no consequence could shake the right of their authority, refus'd all terms of accommodation. In the meantime this dissention was so prejudicial to their daily affairs, that I remember it was allow'd by both parties that before Christmas the patent had lost the getting of at least a thousand pounds by it.

My having been a witness of this unnecessary rupture was of great use to me when, many years after, I came to be a menager myself. I laid it down as a settled maxim, that no company could flourish while the chief actors and the undertakers were at variance. I therefore made it a point, while it was possible upon tolerable terms, to keep the valuable actors in humour with their station; and tho' I was as jealous of their encroachments as any of my co-partners could be, I always guarded against the least warmth in my expostulations with them; not but at the same time they might see I was perhaps more determin'd in the question than those that gave a loose to their resentment, and when they were cool were as apt to recede.[1] I do not remember that ever I made a promise to any that I did not keep, and therefore

[1] This is no doubt a hit at Wilks, whose temper was extremely impetuous.

was cautious how I made them. This coldness, tho' it might not please, at least left them nothing to reproach me with; and if temper and fair words could prevent a disobligation, I was sure never to give offence or receive it.[1] But as I was but one of three, I could not oblige others to observe the same conduct. However, by this means I kept many an unreasonable discontent from breaking out, and both sides found their account in it.

How a contemptuous and overbearing manner of treating actors had like to have ruin'd us in our early prosperity shall be shewn in its place.[2] If future menagers should chance to think my way right, I suppose they will follow it; if not, when they find what happen'd to the patentees (who chose to disagree with their people) perhaps they may think better of it.

The patentees then, who by their united powers had made a monopoly of the stage, and consequently presum'd they might impose what conditions they pleased upon their people, did not consider that they were all this while endeavouring to enslave a set of actors whom the publick

[1] "The Laureat," p. 39: "He (Cibber) was always against raising, or rewarding, or by any means encouraging merit of any kind." He had "many disputes with Wilks on this account, who was impatient, when justice required it, to reward the meritorious."

[2] This is a reference to the secession of seven or eight actors in 1714, caused, according to Cibber, by Wilks's overbearing temper. See Vol. II. Chap. VI.

(more arbitrary than themselves) were inclined to support; nor did they reflect that the spectator naturally wish'd that the actor who gave him delight might enjoy the profits arising from his labour, without regard of what pretended damage or injustice might fall upon his owners, whose personal merit the publick was not so well acquainted with. From this consideration, then, several persons of the highest distinction espous'd their cause, and sometimes in the circle entertain'd the king with the state of the theatre. At length their grievances were laid before the Earl of Dorset, then lord chamberlain, who took the most effectual method for their relief.[1] The

[1] Downes and Davies give the following accounts of the transaction:

"Some time after, a difference happening between the united patentees and the chief actors: as Mr. Betterton, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, the latter complaining of oppression from the former, they, for redress, appeal'd to my Lord of Dorset, then lord chamberlain, for justice; who, espousing the cause of the actors, with the assistance of Sir Robert Howard, finding their complaints just, procur'd from King William a separate license for Mr. Congreve, Mr. Betterton, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mrs. Barry, and others, to set up a new company, calling it the New Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields." — *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 43.

"The nobility, and all persons of eminence, favoured the cause of the comedians; the generous Dorset introduced Betterton, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and others, to the king, who granted them an audience. . . . William, who had freed all the subjects of England from slavery, except the inhabitants of the mimical world, rescued them also from the insolence and tyranny of their oppressors." — *Dram. Miscellanies*, iii. 419.

learned of the law were advised with, and they gave their opinion that no patent for acting plays, etc., could tie up the hands of a succeeding prince from granting the like authority where it might be thought proper to trust it. But while this affair was in agitation, Queen Mary dy'd,[1] which of course occasion'd a cessation of all publick diversions. In this melancholy interim, Betterton and his adherents had more leisure to sollicit their redress; and the patentees now finding that the party against them was gathering strength, were reduced to make sure of as good a company as the leavings of Betterton's interest could form; and these, you may be sure, would not lose this occasion of setting a price upon their merit equal to their own opinion of it, which was but just double to what they had before. Powel and Verbruggen, who had then but forty shillings a week, were now raised each of them to four pounds, and others in proportion. As for myself, I was then too insignificant to be taken into their councils, and consequently stood among those of little importance, like cattle in a market, to be sold to the first bidder. But the patentees seeming in the greater distress for actors, condescended to purchase me. Thus, without any farther merit than that of being a scarce commodity, I was advanc'd to thirty shillings a week: yet our company was so far from being full, that our commanders

[1] 28th December, 1694.

were forced to beat up for volunteers in several distant counties;[1] it was this occasion that first brought Johnson[2] and Bullock[3] to the service of the Theatre Royal.

Forces being thus raised, and the war declared on both sides, Betterton and his chiefs had the honour of an audience of the king, who consider'd them as the only subjects whom he had not yet deliver'd from arbitrary power, and graciously dismiss'd them with an assurance of relief and support. Accordingly a select number of them were impower'd by his royal license[4] to act in a separate theatre for themselves. This great point being obtain'd, many people of quality came into a voluntary subscription of twenty, and some of forty guineas a-piece, for erecting a theatre within the walls of the tennis-court in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.[5] But as it required time to fit it up, it gave the patentees more leisure to muster their forces, who

[1] The "Comparison Between the Two Stages" says (p. 7): "'Twas almost impossible in Drury Lane to muster up a sufficient number to take in all the parts of any play."

[2] See memoir of Johnson at end of second volume.

[3] See memoir of Bullock at end of second volume.

[4] I do not think that the date of this license has ever been stated. It was 25th March, 1695.

[5] "Comparison Between the Two Stages," p. 12: "We know what importuning and dunning the noblemen there was, what flattering, and what promising there was, till at length, the encouragement they received by liberal contributions set 'em in a condition to go on." This theatre was the theatre in Little Lincoln's Inn Fields. See further details in Vol. II. Chap. IV.

notwithstanding were not able to take the field till the Easter-Monday in April following. Their first attempt was a reviv'd play call'd "Abdelazar," or the "Moor's Revenge," poorly written, by Mrs. Behn. The house was very full, but whether it was the play or the actors that were not approved, the next day's audience sunk to nothing. However, we were assured that let the audiences be never so low, our masters would make good all deficiencies, and so indeed, they did, 'till towards the end of the season, when dues to ballance came too thick upon 'em. But that I may go gradually on with my own fortune, I must take this occasion to let you know, by the following circumstance, how very low my capacity as an actor was then rated. It was thought necessary at our opening that the town should be address'd in a new prologue; but to our great distress, among several that were offer'd, not one was judg'd fit to be spoken. This I thought a favourable occasion to do myself some remarkable service, if I should have the good fortune to produce one that might be accepted. The next (memorable) day my Muse brought forth her first fruit that was ever made publick; how good or bad imports not; my prologue was accepted, and resolv'd on to be spoken. This point being gain'd, I began to stand upon terms, you will say, not unreasonable; which were, that if I might speak it myself I would expect no farther reward for my labour; this was

judg'd as bad as having no prologue at all! You may imagine how hard I thought it, that they durst not trust my poor poetical brat to my own care. But since I found it was to be given into other hands, I insisted that two guineas should be the price of my parting with it; which with a sigh I received, and Powel spoke the prologue; but every line that was applauded went sorely to my heart when I reflected that the same praise might have been given to my own speaking; nor could the success of the author compensate the distress of the actor. However, in the end, it serv'd in some sort to mend our people's opinion of me; and whatever the criticks might think of it, one of the patentees [1] (who, it is true, knew no difference between Dryden and D'urfey), said, upon the success of it, that in sooth! I was an ingenious young man. This sober compliment (tho' I could have no reason to be vain upon it) I thought was a fair promise to my being in favour. But to matters of more moment; now let us reconnoitre the enemy.

After we had stolen some few days' march upon them, the forces of Betterton came up with us in terrible order; in about three weeks following, the new theatre was open'd against us with a veteran company and a new train of artillery; or in plainer English, the old actors in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields began with a new comedy of Mr. Congreve's, call'd

[1] No doubt, Rich.

"Love for Love;" [1] which ran on with such extraordinary success that they had seldom occasion to act any other play 'till the end of the season. This valuable play had a narrow escape from falling into the hands of the patentees; for before the division of the company it had been read and accepted of at the Theatre-Royal; but while the articles of agreement for it were preparing, the rupture in the theatrical state was so far advanced that the author took time to pause before he sign'd them; when finding that all hopes of accommodation were impracticable, he thought it advisable to let it take its fortune with those actors for whom he had first intended the parts.

Mr. Congreve was then in such high reputation as an author, that besides his profits from this play, they offered him a whole share with them, which he accepted; [2] in consideration of which he oblig'd himself, if his health permitted, to give them one new play every year.[3] Dryden, in King Charles's

[1] Downes says (p. 43): "The house being fitted up from a tennis-court, they open'd it the last day of April, 1695."

[2] It will be noticed that Downes in the passage quoted by me (p. 252, note 1) mentions Congreve as if he had been an original sharer in the license; but the statement is probably loosely made.

[3] Bellchambers has here the following notes, the entire substance of which will be found in Malone ("Shakespeare," 1821, iii. 170, *et seq.*): "In Shakespeare's time the nightly expenses for lights, supernumeraries, etc., was but forty-five shillings, and having deducted this charge, the clear emoluments were divided into shares (supposed to be forty in number), between the proprietors, and principal actors. In the year 1666, the whole profit

time, had the same share with the King's Company, but he bound himself to give them two plays every season. This you may imagine he could not hold long, and I am apt to think he might have serv'd them better with one in a year, not so hastily

arising from acting plays, masques, etc., at the king's theatre, was divided into twelve shares and three quarters, of which Mr. Killegrew, the manager, had two shares and three quarters, each share computed to produce about £250 *net*, per annum. In Sir William D'Avenant's company, from the time their new theatre was opened in Portugal-row, the total receipt, after deducting the nightly expenses, was divided into fifteen shares, of which it was agreed that ten should belong to D'Avenant, for various purposes, and the remainder be divided among the male members of his troops according to their rank and merit. I cannot relate the arrangement adopted by Betterton in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, but the share accepted by Congreve was, doubtless, presumed to be of considerable value.

"Dryden had a share and a quarter in the King's Company, for which he bound himself to furnish not two, but three plays every season. The following paper, which, after remaining long in the Killegrew family, came into the hands of the late Mr. Reed, and was published by Mr. Malone in his 'Historical Account of the English Stage,' incontestably proves the practice alluded to. The superscription is lost, but it was probably addressed to the lord chamberlain, or the king, about the year 1678, 'Œdipus,' the ground of complaint, being printed in 1679:

"'Whereas upon Mr. Dryden's binding himself to write three playes a yeere, hee the said Mr. Dryden was admitted and continued as a sharer in the king's playhouse for diverse years, and received for his share and a quarter three or four hundred pounds, communibus annis; but though he received the moneys, we received not the playes, not one in a yeare. After which, the house being burnt, the company in building another, contracted great debts, so that shares fell much short of what they were formerly. Thereupon Mr. Dryden complaining to the company of his want of proffit, the company was so kind to him that they

written. Mr. Congreve, whatever impediment he met with, was three years before, in pursuance to his agreement, he produced the "Mourning Bride;"[1] and if I mistake not, the interval had been

not only did not presse him for the playes which he so engaged to write for them, and for which he was paid beforehand, but they did also at his earnest request give him a third day for his last new play called "All for Love;" and at the receipt of the money of the said third day, he acknowledged it as a guift, and a particular kindnesse of the company. Yet notwithstanding this kind proceeding, Mr. Dryden has now, jointly with Mr. Lee (who was in pension with us to the last day of our playing, and shall continue), written a play called "Oedipus," and given it to the Duke's Company, contrary to his said agreement, his promise, and all gratitude, to the great prejudice and almost undoing of the company, they being the only poets remaining to us. Mr. Crowne, being under the like agreement with the duke's house, writt a play called "The Destruction of Jerusalem," and being forced by their refusall of it, to bring it to us, the said company compelled us, after the studying of it, and a vast expence in scenes and cloaths, to buy off their clayme, by paying all the pension he had received from them, amounting to one hundred and twelve pounds paid by the King's Company, besides near forty pounds he the said Mr. Crowne paid out of his owne pocket.

"'These things considered, if notwithstanding Mr. Dryden's said agreement, promise, and moneys freely giving him for his said last new play, and the many titles we have to his writings, this play be judged away from us, we must submit.

(Signed) "'Charles Killigrew.
"'Charles Hart.
"'Rich. Burt.
"'Cardell Goodman.
"'Mic. Mohun.'"

[1] The interval between the two plays cannot have been quite three years. The first was produced in April, 1695, the second some time in 1697.

much the same when he gave them the "Way of the World."[1] But it came out the stronger for the time it cost him, and to their better support when they sorely wanted it; for though they went on with success for a year or two, and even when their affairs were declining stood in much higher estimation of the publick than their opponents; yet in the end both sides were great sufferers by their separation; the natural consequence of two houses, which I have already mention'd in a former chapter.

The first error this new colony of actors fell into was their inconsiderately parting with Williams and Mrs. Monfort[2] upon a too nice (not to say severe) punctilio; in not allowing them to be equal sharers with the rest; which before they had acted one play occasioned their return to the service of the patentees. As I have called this an error, I ought to give my reasons for it. Though the industry of Williams was not equal to his capacity; for he lov'd his bottle better than his business; and though Mrs. Monfort was only excellent in comedy, yet their merit was too great almost on any scruples to be added to the enemy; and at worst, they were certainly much more above those they would have ranked them with than they could possibly be under those they were not admitted to be equal to. Of this fact there is a

[1] Produced early in 1700.

[2] Mrs. Mountfort was now Mrs. Verbruggen.

poetical record in the prologue to "Love for Love," where the author, speaking of the then happy state of the stage, observes that if, in Paradise, when two only were there, they both fell; the surprize was less, if from so numerous a body as theirs, there had been any deserters.

> "Abate the wonder, and the fault forgive,
> If, in our larger family, we grieve
> One falling Adam, and one tempted Eve."[1]

These lines alluded to the revolt of the persons above mention'd.

Notwithstanding the acquisition of these two actors, who were of more importance than any of those to whose assistance they came, the affairs of the patentees were still in a very creeping condition;[2] they were now, too late, convinced of their error in having provok'd their people to this civil war of the theatre. Quite changed and dismal now

[1] The passage is:

> "The freedom man was born to, you've restor'd,
> And to our world such plenty you afford,
> It seems, like Eden, fruitful of its own accord.
> But since, in Paradise, frail flesh gave way,
> And when but two were made, both went astray;
> Forbear your wonder, and the fault forgive,
> If, in our larger family, we grieve
> One falling Adam, and one tempted Eve."

[2] In his preface to "Woman's Wit," Cibber says, "But however a fort is in a very poor condition, that (in a time of general war) has but a handful of raw young fellows to maintain it." He also talks of himself and his companions as "an uncertain company."

was the prospect before them, — their houses thin, and the town crowding into a new one; actors at double sallaries, and not half the usual audiences to pay them; and all this brought upon them by those whom their full security had contemn'd, and who were now in a fair way of making their fortunes upon the ruined interest of their oppressors.

Here, tho' at this time my fortune depended on the success of the patentees, I cannot help in regard to truth remembring the rude and riotous havock we made of all the late dramatic honours of the theatre. All became at once the spoil of ignorance and self-conceit! Shakespear was defac'd and tortured in every signal character — Hamlet and Othello lost in one hour all their good sense, their dignity and fame. Brutus and Cassius became noisy blusterers, with bold unmeaning eyes, mistaken sentiments, and turgid elocution! Nothing, sure, could more painfully regret [1] a judicious spectator than to see at our first setting out, with what rude confidence those habits which actors of real merit had left behind them were worn by giddy pretenders that so vulgarly disgraced them! Not young lawyers in hir'd robes and plumes at a masquerade could be less what they would seem, or

[1] Bellchambers has here this note: "Mr. Cibber's usage of the verb regret here, may be said to confirm the censure of Fielding, who urged, in reviewing some other of his inadvertencies, that it was 'needless for a great writer to understand his grammar.'" See note 1 on page 126.

more aukwardly personate the characters they belong'd to. If, in all these acts of wanton waste, these insults upon injur'd nature, you observe I have not yet charged one of them upon myself, it is not from an imaginary vanity that I could have avoided them; but that I was rather safe, by being too low at that time to be admitted even to my chance of falling into the same eminent errors: so that as none of those great parts ever fell to my share, I could not be accountable for the execution of them. Nor indeed could I get one good part of any kind 'till many months after; unless it were of that sort which nobody else car'd for, or would venture to expose themselves in.[1] The first unintended favour, therefore, of a part of any value, necessity threw upon me on the following occasion.

As it has been always judg'd their natural interest, where there are two theatres, to do one another as much mischief as they can, you may imagine

[1] Genest (ii. 65) has the following criticism of Cibber's statement: "There can be no doubt but that the acting at the Theatre Royal was miserably inferiour to what it had been — but perhaps Cibber's account is a little exaggerated — he had evidently a personal dislike to Powell — everything therefore that he says, directly or indirectly, against him must be received with some grains of allowance — Powell seems to have been eager to exhibit himself in some of Betterton's best parts, whereas a more diffident actor would have wished to avoid comparisons — we know from the *Spectator* that Powell was too apt to tear a passion to tatters, but still he must have been an actor of considerable reputation at this time, or he would not have been cast for several good parts before the division of the company."

it could not be long before this hostile policy shew'd itself in action. It happen'd, upon our having information on a Saturday morning that the Tuesday after "Hamlet" was intended to be acted at the other house, where it had not yet been seen, our merry menaging actors (for they were now in a manner left to govern themselves) resolv'd at any rate to steal a march upon the enemy, and take possession of the same play the day before them. Accordingly, "Hamlet" was given out that night to be acted with us on Monday. The notice of this sudden enterprize soon reach'd the other house, who in my opinion too much regarded it; for they shorten'd their first orders, and resolv'd that "Hamlet" should to "Hamlet" be opposed on the same day; whereas, had they given notice in their bills that the same play would have been acted by them the day after, the town would have been in no doubt which house they should have reserved themselves for; ours must certainly have been empty, and theirs, with more honour, have been crowded. Experience, many years after, in like cases, has convinced me that this would have been the more laudable conduct. But be that as it may; when in their Monday's bills it was seen that "Hamlet" was up against us, our consternation was terrible, to find that so hopeful a project was frustrated. In this distress, Powel, who was our commanding officer, and whose enterprising head wanted nothing but skill to carry him through the most desperate

attempts; for, like others of his cast, he had murder'd many a hero only to get into his cloaths. This Powel, I say, immediately called a council of war, where the question was, whether he should fairly face the enemy, or make a retreat to some other play of more probable safety? It was soon resolved that to act "Hamlet" against "Hamlet" would be certainly throwing away the play, and disgracing themselves to little or no audience. To conclude, Powel, who was vain enough to envy Betterton as his rival, proposed to change plays with them, and that as they had given out the "Old Batchelor," and had chang'd it for "Hamlet" against us, we should give up our "Hamlet" and turn the "Old Batchelor" upon them. This motion was agreed to, *nemine contradicente;* but upon enquiry, it was found that there were not two persons among them who had ever acted in that play: but that objection, it seems (though all the parts were to be study'd in six hours), was soon got over; Powel had an equivalent, *in petto*, that would balance any deficiency on that score, which was, that he would play the "Old Batchelor" himself, and mimick Betterton throughout the whole part. This happy thought was approv'd with delight and applause, as whatever can be suppos'd to ridicule merit generally gives joy to those that want it. Accordingly the bills were chang'd, and at the bottom inserted:

"The part of the Old Batchelor to be perform'd
in imitation of the original."

Printed books of the play were sent for in haste, and every actor had one to pick out of it the part he had chosen: thus, while they were each of them chewing the morsel they had most mind to, some one happening to cast his eye over the Dramatis Personæ, found that the main matter was still forgot, that nobody had yet been thought of for the part of Alderman Fondlewife. Here we were all aground agen, nor was it to be conceiv'd who could make the least tolerable shift with it. This character had been so admirably acted by Dogget, that though it is only seen in the fourth act, it may be no dispraise to the play to say it probably ow'd the greatest part of its success to his performance. But, as the case was now desperate, any resource was better than none. Somebody must swallow the bitter pill, or the play must die.

At last it was recollected that I had been heard to say in my wild way of talking, what a vast mind I had to play Nykin, by which name the character was more frequently call'd.[1] Notwithstanding they were thus distress'd about the disposal of this part, most of them shook their

[1] "Old Bachelor," act iv. sc. 4:

"*Fondlewife.* Come, kiss Nykin once more, and then get you in — So — Get you in, get you in. By, by.

Lætitia. By, Nykin.

Fondlewife. By, Cocky.

Lætitia. By, Nykin.

Fondlewife. By, Cocky, by, by."

heads at my being mention'd for it; yet Powel, who was resolv'd at all hazards to fall upon Betterton, and having no concern for what might become of any one that serv'd his ends or purpose, order'd me to be sent for; and, as he naturally lov'd to set other people wrong, honestly said before I came, "If the fool has a mind to blow himself up at once, let us ev'n give him a clear stage for it." Accordingly the part was put into my hands between eleven and twelve that morning, which I durst not refuse, because others were as much straitned in time for study as myself. But I had this casual advantage of most of them; that having so constantly observ'd Dogget's performance, I wanted but little trouble to make me perfect in the words; so that when it came to my turn to rehearse, while others read their parts from their books, I had put mine in my pocket, and went thro' the first scene without it; and though I was more abash'd to rehearse so remarkable a part before the actors (which is natural to most young people) than to act before an audience, yet some of the better-natur'd encouraged me so far as to say they did not think I should make an ill figure in it. To conclude, the curiosity to see Betterton mimick'd drew us a pretty good audience, and Powel (as far as applause is a proof of it) was allow'd to have burlesqu'd him very well.[1] As I

[1] Regarding Powell's playing in imitation of Betterton, Chetwood ("History of the Stage," p. 155) says: "Mr. George

have question'd the certain value of applause, I hope I may venture with less vanity to say how particular a share I had of it in the same play. At my first appearance one might have imagin'd by the various murmurs of the audience, that they were in doubt whether Dogget himself were not return'd, or that they could not conceive what strange face it could be that so nearly resembled him; for I had laid the tint of forty years more than my real age upon my features, and, to the most minute placing of an hair, was dressed exactly like him: when I spoke, the surprize was still greater, as if I had not only borrow'd his cloaths, but his voice, too. But tho' that was the least difficult part of him to be imitated, they seem'd to allow I had so much of him in every other requisite, that my applause was, perhaps, more than proportionable: for, whether I had done so much where so little was expected, or that the generosity of my hearers were more than usually zealous upon so unexpected an occasion, or from what other motive such favour might be pour'd upon me, I cannot say; but in plain and honest truth, upon my going off from the first

Powel, a reputable actor, with many excellencies, gave out, that he would perform the part of Sir John Falstaff in the manner of that very excellent English Roscius, Mr. Betterton. He certainly hit his manner, and tone of voice, yet to make the picture more like, he mimic'd the infirmities of distemper, old age, and the afflicting pains of the gout, which that great man was often seiz'd with."

scene, a much better actor might have been proud of the applause that followed me; after one loud plaudit was ended and sunk into a general whisper that seem'd still to continue their private approbation, it reviv'd to a second, and again to a third, still louder than the former. If to all this I add, that Dogget himself was in the pit at the same time, it would be too rank affectation if I should not confess that to see him there a witness of my reception, was to me as consummate a triumph as the heart of vanity could be indulg'd with. But whatever vanity I might set upon myself from this unexpected success, I found that was no rule to other people's judgment of me. There were few or no parts of the same kind to be had; nor could they conceive, from what I had done in this, what other sort of characters I could be fit for. If I sollicited for anything of a different nature, I was answered, that was not in my way. And what was in my way it seems was not as yet resolv'd upon. And though I reply'd, that I thought anything naturally written ought to be in every one's way that pretended to be an actor, this was looked upon as a vain, impracticable conceit of my own. Yet it is a conceit that, in forty years' farther experience, I have not yet given up; I still think that a painter who can draw but one sort of object, or an actor that shines but in one light, can neither of them boast of that ample genius which is necessary to

form a thorough master of his art: for tho' genius may have a particular inclination, yet a good history painter, or a good actor, will, without being at a loss, give you upon demand a proper likeness of whatever nature produces. If he cannot do this, he is only an actor as the shoemaker was allow'd a limited judge of Apelles's painting, but not beyond his last. Now, tho' to do any one thing well may have more merit than we often meet with, and may be enough to procure a man the name of a good actor from the publick, yet, in my opinion, it is but still the name without the substance. If his talent is in such narrow bounds that he dares not step out of them to look upon the singularities of mankind, and cannot catch them in whatever form they present themselves; if he is not master of the *quicquid agunt homines*,[1] etc., in any shape human nature is fit to be seen in; if he cannot change himself into several distinct persons, so as to vary his whole tone of voice, his motion, his look and gesture, whether in high or lower life, and, at the same time, keep close to those variations without leaving the character they singly belong to; if his best skill falls short of this capacity, what pretence have we to call him a complete master of his art? And tho' I do not insist that he ought always to shew him-

[1] "Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli."
—*Juvenal*, i. 85.

self in these various lights, yet, before we compliment him with that title, he ought at least, by some few proofs, to let us see that he has them all in his power. If I am ask'd, who ever arriv'd at this imaginary excellence, I confess the instances are very few; but I will venture to name Monfort as one of them, whose theatrical character I have given in my last chapter: for in his youth he had acted low humour with great success, even down to Tallboy in the "Jovial Crew;" and when he was in great esteem as a tragedian, he was, in comedy, the most complete gentleman that I ever saw upon the stage. Let me add, too, that Betterton, in his declining age, was as eminent in Sir John Falstaff, as in the vigour of it, in his Othello.

While I thus measure the value of an actor by the variety of shapes he is able to throw himself into, you may naturally suspect that I am all this while leading my own theatrical character into your favour. Why really, to speak as an honest man, I cannot wholly deny it: but in this I shall endeavour to be no farther partial to myself than known facts will make me; from the good or bad evidence of which, your better judgment will condemn or acquit me. And to shew you that I will conceal no truth that is against me, I frankly own that had I been always left to my own choice of characters, I am doubtful whether I might ever have deserv'd an equal share of that estimation

which the publick seem'd to have held me in: nor am I sure that it was not vanity in me often to have suspected that I was kept out of the parts I had most mind to by the jealousy or prejudice of my cotemporaries; some instances of which I could give you, were they not too slight to be remember'd. In the meantime, be pleas'd to observe how slowly, in my younger days, my good-fortune came forward.

My early success in the "Old Batchelor," of which I have given so full an account, having open'd no farther way to my advancement, was enough, perhaps, to have made a young fellow of more modesty despair; but being of a temper not easily dishearten'd, I resolv'd to leave nothing unattempted that might shew me in some new rank of distinction. Having then no other resource, I was at last reduc'd to write a character for myself; but as that was not finish'd till about a year after, I could not, in the interim, procure any one part that gave me the least inclination to act it; and consequently such as I got I perform'd with a proportionable negligence. But this misfortune, if it were one, you are not to wonder at; for the same fate attended me, more or less, to the last days of my remaining on the stage. What defect in me this may have been owing to, I have not yet had sense enough to find out; but I soon found out as good a thing, which was, never to be mortify'd at it: though I am afraid this seeming

philosophy was rather owing to my inclination to pleasure than business. But to my point. The next year I produc'd the comedy of "Love's Last Shift;" yet the difficulty of getting it to the stage was not easily surmounted; for, at that time, as little was expected from me, as an author, as had been from my pretensions to be an actor. However, Mr. Southern, the author of "Oroonoko," having had the patience to hear me read it to him, happened to like it so well that he immediately recommended it to the patentees, and it was accordingly acted in January 1695.[1] In this play I gave myself the part of Sir Novelty, which was thought a good portrait of the foppery then in fashion. Here, too, Mr. Southern, though he had approv'd my play, came into the common diffidence of me as an actor: for, when on the first day of it I was standing, my-

[1] That is, January, 1696. The cast was:—

"Love's last Shift; or, the Fool in Fashion."

Sir William Wisewoud	Mr. Johnson.
Loveless	Mr. Verbruggen.
Sir Novelty Fashion	Mr. Cibber.
Elder Worthy	Mr. Williams.
Young Worthy	Mr. Horden.
Snap	Mr. Penkethman.
Sly	Mr. Bullock.
Lawyer	Mr. Mills.
Amanda	Mrs. Rogers.
Narcissa	Mrs. Verbruggen.
Hillaria	Mrs. Cibber.
Mrs. Flareit	Mrs. Kent.
Amanda's Woman	Mrs. Lucas.

self, to prompt the prologue, he took me by the hand and said, "Young man! I pronounce thy play a good one; I will answer for its success,[1] if thou dost not spoil it by thy own action." Though this might be a fair salvo for his favourable judgment of the play, yet, if it were his real opinion of me as an actor, I had the good fortune to deceive him: I succeeded so well in both, that people seem'd at a loss which they should give the preference to.[2] But (now let me shew a little more vanity, and my apology for it shall come after) the compliment which my Lord Dorset (then lord chamberlain) made me upon it is, I own, what I had rather not suppress, viz. that it was the best first play that any author in his memory had produc'd; and that for a young fellow to shew himself such an actor and such a writer in one day, was something extraordinary. But as this noble lord has been celebrated for his good-nature, I am contented that as much of this compliment should

[1] In the dedication to this play Cibber says that "Mr. Southern's good-nature (whose own works best recommend his judgment) engaged his reputation for the success."

[2] Gildon praises this play highly in the "Comparison Between the Two Stages," p. 25:—

"*Ramble.* Ay, marry, that play was the philosopher's stone; I think it did wonders.

Sullen. It did so, and very deservedly; there being few comedies that came up to't for purity of plot, manners and moral. It's often acted now a daies, and by the help of the author's own good action, it pleases to this day."

be suppos'd to exceed my deserts as may be imagin'd to have been heighten'd by his generous inclination to encourage a young beginner. If this excuse cannot soften the vanity of telling a truth so much in my own favour, I must lie at the mercy of my reader. But there was a still higher compliment pass'd upon me which I may publish without vanity, because it was not a design'd one and apparently came from my enemies, viz.: That, to their certain knowledge, it was not my own: this report is taken notice of in my dedication to the play.[1] If they spoke truth, if they knew what other person it really belong'd to, I will at least allow them true to their trust; for above forty years have since past, and they have not yet reveal'd the secret.[2]

[1] Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 437) says: "So little was hoped from the genius of Cibber, that the critics reproached him with stealing his play. To his censurers he makes a serious defence of himself, in his dedication to Richard Norton, Esq., of Southwick, a gentleman who was so fond of stage-plays and players, that he has been accused of turning his chapel into a theatre. The furious John Dennis, who hated Cibber for obstructing, as he imagined, the progress of his tragedy called the 'Invader of His Country,' in very passionate terms denies his claim to this comedy: 'When the "Fool in Fashion" was first acted (says the critic) Cibber was hardly twenty years of age — how could he, at the age of twenty, write a comedy with a just design, distinguished characters, and a proper dialogue, who now, at forty, treats us with Hibernian sense and Hibernian English?'"

[2] This same accusation was made against Cibber on other occasions. Dr. Johnson, referring to one of these, said: "There was no reason to believe that the 'Careless Husband' was not written by himself." — *Boswell's Johnson*, ii. 340.

The new light in which the character of Sir Novelty had shewn me, one might have thought were enough to have dissipated the doubts of what I might now be possibly good for. But to whatever chance my ill-fortune was due, whether I had still but little merit, or that the menagers, if I had any, were not competent judges of it; or whether I was not generally elbow'd by other actors (which I am most inclin'd to think the true cause) when any fresh parts were to be dispos'd of, not one part of any consequence was I preferr'd to 'till the year following. Then, indeed, from Sir John Vanbrugh's favourable opinion of me, I began, with others, to have a better of myself. For he not only did me honour as an author by writing his "Relapse" as a sequel or second part to "Love's Last Shift," but as an actor too, by preferring me to the chief character in his own play (which from Sir Novelty) he had ennobled by the style of Baron of Foppington. This play (the "Relapse") from its new and easy turn of wit, had great success, and gave me, as a comedian, a second flight of reputation along with it.[1]

As the matter I write must be very flat or impertinent to those who have no taste or concern

[1] "The Relapse; or, Virtue in Danger," was produced at Drury Lane in 1697. Cibber's part in it, Lord Foppington, became one of his most famous characters. The "Comparison Between the Two Stages," p. 32, says: "'Oronoko,' 'Æsop,' and 'Relapse' are masterpieces, and subsisted Drury Lane house, the first two or three years."

for the stage, and may to those who delight in it, too, be equally tedious when I talk of nobody but myself, I shall endeavour to relieve your patience by a word or two more of this gentleman, so far as he lent his pen to the support of the theatre.

Though the "Relapse" was the first play this agreeable author produc'd, yet it was not, it seems, the first he had written; for he had at that time by him (more than) all the scenes that were acted of the "Provok'd Wife;" but being then doubtful whether he should ever trust them to the stage, he thought no more of it. But after the success of the "Relapse" he was more strongly importun'd than able to refuse it to the publick. Why the last-written play was first acted, and for what reason they were given to different stages, what follows will explain.

In his first step into publick life, when he was but an ensign and had a heart above his income, he happen'd somewhere at his winter quarters, upon a very slender acquaintance with Sir Thomas Skipwith, to receive a particular obligation from him which he had not forgot at the time I am speaking of. When Sir Thomas's interest in the theatrical patent (for he had a large share in it, though he little concern'd himself in the conduct of it) was rising but very slowly, he thought that to give it a lift by a new comedy, if it succeeded, might be the handsomest return he could make to those his former favours; and having observ'd that

in "Love's Last Shift" most of the actors had acquitted themselves beyond what was expected of them, he took a sudden hint from what he lik'd in that play, and in less than three months, in the beginning of April following, brought us the "Relapse" finish'd; but the season being then too far advanc'd, it was not acted 'till the succeeding winter. Upon the success of the "Relapse" the late Lord Hallifax, who was a great favourer of Betterton's company, having formerly, by way of family-amusement, heard the "Provok'd Wife" read to him in its looser sheets, engag'd Sir John Vanbrugh to revise it and gave it to the theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. This was a request not to be refus'd to so eminent a patron of the Muses as the Lord Hallifax, who was equally a friend and admirer of Sir John himself.[1] Nor was Sir Thomas Skipwith in the least disobliged by so reasonable a compliance. After which, Sir John was agen at liberty to repeat his civilities to his friend Sir Thomas, and about the same time, or not long after, gave us the comedy of "Æsop," for his inclination always led him to serve Sir Thomas. Besides, our company about this time began to be look'd upon in another

[1] "The Provoked Wife" was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1697; and, as Cibber states, "Æsop" was played at Drury Lane in the same year. It seems (see prologue to "The Confederacy") that Vanbrugh gave his first three plays as presents to the companies.

light; the late contempt we had lain under was now wearing off, and from the success of two or three new plays, our actors, by being originals in a few good parts where they had not the disadvantage of comparison against them, sometimes found new favour in those old plays where others had exceeded them.[1]

Of this good-fortune perhaps I had more than my share from the two very different chief characters I had succeeded in; for I was equally approv'd in "Æsop" as the Lord Foppington, allowing the difference to be no less than as wisdom in a person deform'd may be less entertaining to the general taste than folly and foppery finely drest. For the character that delivers precepts of wisdom is, in some sort, severe upon the auditor by shewing him one wiser than himself. But when folly is his object he applauds himself for being wiser than the coxcomb he laughs at. And who is not more pleas'd with an occasion to commend than accuse himself?

Though to write much in a little time is no excuse for writing ill; yet Sir John Vanbrugh's pen is not to be a little admir'd for its spirit, ease, and readiness in producing plays so fast upon the neck of one another; for, notwithstanding this

[1] "Comparison Between the Two Stages," p. 12: "In the meantime, the mushrooms in Drury Lane shoot up from such a desolate fortune into a considerable name; and not only grappled with their rivals, but almost eclipst 'em."

quick dispatch, there is a clear and lively simplicity in his wit that neither wants the ornament of learning nor has the least smell of the lamp in it. As the face of a fine woman, with only her locks loose about her, may be then in its greatest beauty; such were his productions, only adorn'd by nature. There is something so catching to the ear, so easy to the memory, in all he writ, that it has been observ'd by all the actors of my time, that the style of no author whatsoever gave their memory less trouble than that of Sir John Vanbrugh; which I myself, who have been charg'd with several of his strongest characters, can confirm by a pleasing experience. And indeed his wit and humour was so little laboured, that his most entertaining scenes seem'd to be no more than his common conversation committed to paper. Here I confess my judgment at a loss, whether in this I give him more or less than his due praise? For may it not be more laudable to raise an estate (whether in wealth or fame) by pains and honest industry than to be born to it? Yet if his scenes really were, as to me they always seem'd, delightful, are they not, thus expeditiously written, the more surprising? Let the wit and merit of them then be weigh'd by wiser criticks than I pretend to be. But no wonder, while his conceptions were so full of life and humour, his Muse should be sometimes too warm to wait the slow pace of judgment, or to endure the drudgery

of forming a regular fable to them. Yet we see the "Relapse," however imperfect in the conduct, by the mere force of its agreeable wit, ran away with the hearts of its hearers; while "Love's Last Shift," which (as Mr. Congreve justly said of it) had only in it a great many things that were like wit, that in reality were not wit. And what is still less pardonable (as I say of it myself) has a great deal of puerility and frothy stage-language in it, yet by the mere moral delight receiv'd from its fable, it has been, with the other, in a continued and equal possession of the stage for more than forty years.[1]

As I have already promis'd you to refer your judgment of me as an actor rather to known facts than my own opinion (which I could not be sure would keep clear of self-partiality) I must a little farther risque my being tedious to be as good as my word. I have elsewhere allow'd that my want of a strong and full voice soon cut short my hopes of making any valuable figure in tragedy; and I have been many years since convinced, that whatever opinion I might have of my own judgment or capacity to amend the papable errors that I saw our tragedians most in favour commit; yet the auditors who would have been sensible of any such amendments (could I have made them) were so very few that my best endeavour would have

[1] The last performance of this comedy which Genest indexes was at Covent Garden, 14th February, 1763.

been but an unavailing labour, or, what is yet worse, might have appeared both to our actors and to many auditors the vain mistake of my own self-conceit. For so strong, so very near indispensible, is that one article of voice in the forming a good tragedian, that an actor may want any other qualification whatsoever, and yet have a better chance for applause than he will ever have, with all the skill in the world, if his voice is not equal to it. Mistake me not; I say, for applause only — but applause does not always stay for, nor always follow intrinsick merit; applause will frequently open, like a young hound, upon a wrong scent; and the majority of auditors, you know, are generally compos'd of babblers that are profuse of their voices before there is anything on foot that calls for them. Not but, I grant, to lead or mislead the many will always stand in some rank of a necessary merit; yet when I say a good tragedian, I mean one in opinion of whose real merit the best judges would agree.

Having so far given up my pretensions to the buskin, I ought now to account for my having been, notwithstanding, so often seen in some particular characters in tragedy, as Jago,[1] Wolsey,

[1] Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 469) says: "The truth is, Cibber was endured, in this, and other tragic parts, on account of his general merit in comedy;" and the author of "The Laureat," p. 41, remarks: "I have often heard him blamed as a trifler in that part; he was rarely perfect, and, abating for the badness of his

Syphax, Richard the Third, etc. If in any of this kind I have succeeded, perhaps it has been a merit dearly purchas'd; for, from the delight I seem'd to take in my performing them, half my auditors have been persuaded that a great share of the wickedness of them must have been in my own nature. If this is true, as true I fear (I had almost said hope) it is, I look upon it rather as a praise than censure of my performance. Aversion there is an involuntary commendation, where we are only hated for being like the thing we ought to be like; a sort of praise, however, which few actors besides myself could endure. Had it been equal to the usual praise given to virtue, my cotemporaries would have thought themselves injur'd if I had pretended to any share of it. So that you see it has been as much the dislike others had to them, as choice that has thrown me sometimes into these characters. But it may be farther observ'd that in the characters I have nam'd, where there is so much close meditated mischief, deceit, pride, insolence, or cruelty, they cannot have the least cast or profer of the amiable in them; consequently, there can be no great demand for that harmonious sound, or pleasing round melody of voice, which in the softer sentiments of love, the wailings of distressful virtue, or in the

voice and the insignificancy and meanness of his action, he did not seem to understand either what he said or what he was about."

throws and swellings of honour and ambition, may be needful to recommend them to our pity or admiration; so that, again, my want of that requisite voice might less disqualify me for the vicious than the virtuous character. This too may have been a more favourable reason for my having been chosen for them — a yet farther consideration that inclin'd me to them was that they are generally better written, thicker sown with sensible reflections, and come by so much nearer to common life and nature than characters of admiration, as vice is more the practice of mankind than virtue: nor could I sometimes help smiling at those dainty actors that were too squeamish to swallow them! as if they were one jot the better men for acting a good man well, or another man the worse for doing equal justice to a bad one! 'Tis not, sure, what we act, but how we act what is allotted us, that speaks our intrinsick value! as in real life, the wise man or the fool, be he prince or peasant, will in either state be equally the fool or the wise man — but alas! in personated life this is no rule to the vulgar! they are apt to think all before them real, and rate the actor according to his borrow'd vice or virtue.

If then I had always too careless a concern for false or vulgar applause, I ought not to complain if I have had less of it than others of my time, or not less of it than I desired: yet I will venture to say, that from the common weak appetite of false

applause, many actors have run into more errors and absurdities than their greatest ignorance could otherwise have committed:[1] if this charge is true, it will lie chiefly upon the better judgment of the spectator to reform it.

But not to make too great a merit of my avoiding this common road to applause, perhaps I was vain enough to think I had more ways than one to come at it. That, in the variety of characters I acted, the chances to win it were the stronger on my side — that, if the multitude were not in a roar to see me in Cardinal Wolsey, I could be sure of them in Alderman Fondlewife. If they hated me in Jago, in Sir Fopling they took me for a fine gentleman; if they were silent at Syphax, no Italian eunuch was more applauded than when I sung in Sir Courtly. If the morals of Æsop were too grave for them, Justice Shallow was as simple and as merry an old rake as the wisest of our young ones could wish me.[2] And though

[1] "The Laureat," p. 44: "Whatever the actors appear'd upon the stage, they were most of them barbarians off on't, few of them having had the education, or whose fortunes could admit them to the conversation of gentlemen."

[2] Davies praises Cibber in Fondlewife, saying that he "was much and justly admired and applauded" ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 391); and in the same work (i. 306) he gives an admirable sketch of Cibber as Justice Shallow:

"Whether he was a copy or an original in Shallow, it is certain no audience was ever more fixed in deep attention, at his first appearance, or more shaken with laughter in the progress of the scene, than at Colley Cibber's exhibition of this ridiculous

the terror and detestation raised by King Richard might be too severe a delight for them, yet the more gentle and modern vanities of a Poet Bays, or the well-bred vices of a Lord Foppington, were not at all more than their merry hearts or nicer morals could bear.

These few instances out of fifty more I could give you, may serve to explain what sort of merit I at most pretended to; which was, that I supplied with variety whatever I might want of that particular skill wherein others went before me. How this variety was executed (for by that only is its value to be rated) you who have so often been my spectator are the proper judge: if you pronounce

justice of peace. Some years after he had left the stage, he acted Shallow for his son's benefit. I believe in 1737, when Quin was the Falstaff, and Milward the King. Whether it was owing to the pleasure the spectators felt on seeing their old friend return to them again, though for that night only, after an absence of some years, I know not; but, surely, no actor or audience were better pleased with each other. His manner was so perfectly simple, his look so vacant, when he questioned his cousin Silence about the price of ewes, and lamented, in the same breath, with silly surprise, the death of Old Double, that it will be impossible for any surviving spectator not to smile at the remembrance of it. The want of ideas occasions Shallow to repeat almost everything he says. Cibber's transition, from asking the price of bullocks, to trite, but grave reflections on mortality, was so natural, and attended with such an unmeaning roll of his small pigs-eyes, accompanied with an important utterance of tick! tick! tick! not much louder than the balance of a watch, that I question if any actor was ever superior in the conception or expression of such solemn insignificancy."

my performance to have been defective, I am condemn'd by my own evidence; if you acquit me, these outlines may serve for a sketch of my theatrical character.

CHAPTER VII.

The State of the Stage Continued — The Occasion of Wilks's Commencing Actor — His Success — Facts Relating to His Theatrical Talent — Actors More or Less Esteem'd from Their Private Characters.

THE Lincoln's Inn Fields Company were now, in 1693,[1] a commonwealth, like that of Holland, divided from the tyranny of Spain: but the similitude goes very little farther; short was the duration of the theatrical power! for tho' success pour'd in so fast upon them at their first opening that everything seem'd to support itself, yet experience in a year or two shew'd them that they had never been worse govern'd than when they govern'd themselves! Many of them began to make their particular interest more their point than that of the general; and tho' some deference might be had to the measures and advice of Betterton, several of them wanted to govern in their turn, and were often out of humour that their opinion was not equally re-

[1] I presume Cibber means 1695. The company was self-governed from its commencement in 1695, and the disintegration seems to have begun in the next season. See what Cibber says of Dogget's defection a few pages on.

garded — but have we not seen the same infirmity in senates? The tragedians seem'd to think their rank as much above the comedians as in the characters they severally acted; when the first were in their finery, the latter were impatient at the expence, and look'd upon it as rather laid out upon the real than the fictitious person of the actor; nay, I have known in our own company this ridiculous sort of regret carried so far, that the tragedian has thought himself injured when the comedian pretended to wear a fine coat! I remember Powel, upon surveying my first dress in the "Relapse," was out of all temper, and reproach'd our master in very rude terms that he had not so good a suit to play Cæsar Borgia[1] in! tho' he knew, at the same time, my Lord Foppington fill'd the house, when his bouncing Borgia would do little more than pay fiddles and candles to it; and though a character of vanity might be supposed more expensive in dress than possibly one of ambition, yet the high heart of this heroical actor could not bear that a comedian should ever pretend to be as well dress'd as himself. Thus again, on the contrary, when Betterton proposed to set off a tragedy, the comedians were sure to murmur at the charge of it; and the late reputation which Dogget had acquired from acting his

[1] In Lee's tragedy of "Cæsar Borgia," originally played at Dorset Garden in 1680. Borgia was Betterton's part, and was evidently one of those which Powell laid violent hands on.

Ben in "Love for Love," made him a more declared male-content on such occasions: he overvalued comedy for its being nearer to nature than tragedy, which is allow'd to say many fine things that nature never spoke in the same words; and supposing his opinion were just, yet he should have consider'd that the publick had a taste as well as himself, which in policy he ought to have complied with. Dogget, however, could not with patience look upon the costly trains and plumes of tragedy, in which knowing himself to be useless, he thought were all a vain extravagance; and when he found his singularity could no longer oppose that expence, he so obstinately adhered to his own opinion, that he left the society of his old friends, and came over to us at the Theatre Royal: and yet this actor always set up for a theatrical patriot. This happened in the winter following the first division of the (only) company.[1] He came time enough to the Theatre Royal to act the part of Lory in the "Relapse," an arch valet, quite after the French cast, pert and familiar. But it suited so ill with Dogget's dry and closely natural manner of acting, that upon the second day he desired it might be disposed of to another; which the author complying with, gave it to Penkethman,

[1] Among the lord chamberlain's papers is a curious decision, dated 26th Oct. 1696, regarding this desertion. By it, Dogget, who is stated to have been seduced from Lincoln's Inn Fields, is permitted to act where he likes.

who, tho' in other lights much his inferior, yet this part he seem'd better to become. Dogget was so immovable in his opinion of whatever he thought was right or wrong, that he could never be easy under any kind of theatrical government, and was generally so warm in pursuit of his interest that he often outran it; I remember him three times, for some years, unemploy'd in any theatre, from his not being able to bear, in common with others, the disagreeable accidents that in such societies are unavoidable.[1] But whatever pretences he had form'd for this first deserting from Lincoln's Inn Fields, I always thought his best reason for it was, that he look'd upon it as a sinking ship; not only from the melancholy abatement of their profits, but likewise from the neglect and disorder in their government: he plainly saw that their extraordinary success at first had made them too confident of its duration, and from thence had slacken'd their industry — by which he observ'd, at the same time, the old house, where there was scarce any other merit than industry, began to flourish. And indeed they seem'd not enough to consider that the appetite of the publick, like that of a fine gentleman, could only be kept warm by variety; that let their merit be never so high, yet the taste

[1] Genest's list of Dogget's characters shows that he was apparently not engaged 1698 to 1700, both inclusive; for the seasons 1706–07 and 1707–08; and for the season 1708–09. This would make the three occasions mentioned by Cibber.

of a town was not always constant, nor infallible; that it was dangerous to hold their rivals in too much contempt:[1] for they found that a young industrious company were soon a match for the best actors when too securely negligent; and negligent they certainly were, and fondly fancied that, had each of their different schemes been follow'd, their audiences would not so suddenly have fallen off.[2]

But alas! the vanity of applauded actors, when they are not crowded to as they may have been, makes them naturally impute the change to any cause rather than the true one, satiety. They are mighty loath to think a town, once so fond of them, could ever be tired; and yet, at one time or other, more or less thin houses have been the certain fate of the most prosperous actors ever since I remember the stage! But against this evil the provident patentees had found out a relief which

[1] Dryden, in his address to Granville on his tragedy of "Heroic Love" in 1698, says of the Lincoln's Inn Fields Company:

> "Their setting sun still shoots a glimmering ray,
> Like ancient Rome, majestic in decay;
> And better gleanings their worn soil can boast,
> Than the crab-vintage of the neighbouring coast."

[2] "Comparison between the Two Stages," p. 13: "But this [the success of 'Love for Love'], like other things of that kind, being only nine days' wonder, and the audiences, being in a little time sated with the novelty of the new house, return in shoals to the old."

the new house were not yet masters of, viz., never to pay their people when the money did not come in; nor then neither, but in such proportions as suited their conveniency. I myself was one of many who for acting six weeks together never received one day's pay; and for some years after seldom had above half our nominal sallaries: but to the best of my memory, the finances of the other house held it not above one season more, before they were reduced to the same expedient of making the like scanty payments.[1]

Such was the distress and fortune of both these companies since their division from the Theatre Royal; either working at half wages, or by alternate successes intercepting the bread from one another's mouths;[2] irreconcilable enemies, yet without hope of relief from a victory on either side; sometimes both parties reduced, and yet

[1] Cibber says nothing of his having been a member of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company. But he was, for he writes in his preface to "Woman's Wit:" "During the time of my writing the two first acts I was entertain'd at the new theatre. . . . In the middle of my writing the third act, not liking my station there, I return'd again to the Theatre Royal." Cibber must have joined Betterton, I should think, about the end of 1696. It is curious that he should in his "Apology" have entirely suppressed this incident. It almost suggests that there was something in it of which he was in later years somewhat ashamed.

[2] "Comparison between the Two Stages," p. 14: "The town . . . chang'd their inclinations for the two houses, as they found 'emselves inclin'd to comedy or tragedy. If they desir'd a tragedy, they went to Lincoln's-Inn-Fields; if to comedy, they flockt to Drury-lane."

each supporting their spirits by seeing the other under the same calamity.

During this state of the stage it was that the lowest expedient was made use of to ingratiate our company in the publick favour. Our master, who had sometimes practised the law,[1] and therefore loved a storm better than fair weather (for it was his own conduct chiefly that had brought the patent into these dangers), took nothing so much to heart as that partiality wherewith he imagined the people of quality had preferr'd the actors of the other house to those of his own. To ballance this misfortune, he was resolv'd, at least, to be well with their domesticks, and therefore cunningly open'd the upper gallery to them gratis; for before this time no footman was ever admitted, or had presum'd to come into it, till after the fourth act was ended. This additional privilege (the greatest plague that ever play-house had to complain of) he conceived would not only incline them to give us a good word in the respective families they belong'd to, but would naturally incite them to come all hands aloft in the crack of our applauses. And indeed it so far succeeded, that it often thunder'd from the full gallery above, while our thin pit and

[1] Christopher Rich, of whom the "Comparison between the Two Stages" says (p. 15): "*Critick.* In the other house there's an old snarling lawyer master and sovereign; a waspish, ignorant pettifogger in law and poetry; one who understands poetry no more than algebra; he wou'd sooner have the grace of God than do everybody justice."

boxes below were in the utmost serenity. This riotous privilege, so craftily given, and which from custom was at last ripen'd into right, became the most disgraceful nusance that ever depreciated the theatre.[1] How often have the most polite audiences, in the most affecting scenes of the best plays, been disturb'd and insulted by the noise and clamour of these savage spectators? From the same narrow way of thinking, too, were so many ordinary people and unlick'd cubs of condition admitted behind our scenes for money, and sometimes without it. The plagues and inconveniences of which custom we found so intolerable, when we afterwards had the stage in our hands, that at the hazard of our lives we were forced to get rid of them; and our only expedient was by refusing money from all persons without distinction at the stage-door; by this means we preserved to ourselves the right and liberty of chusing our own company there, and by a strict observance of this order we brought what had been before debas'd into all the licenses of a lobby into the decencies of a drawing-room.[2]

[1] This privilege seems to have been granted about 1697 or 1698. It was not abolished till 1737. On 5th May, 1737, footmen having been deprived of their privilege, 300 of them broke into Drury Lane and did great damage. Many were, however, arrested, and no attempt was made to renew hostilities.

[2] Queen Anne issued several edicts forbidding persons to be admitted behind the scenes, and in the advertisements of both theatres there appeared the announcement, "By her Majesty's

About the distressful time I was speaking of, in the year 1696,[1] Wilks, who now had been five years in great esteem on the Dublin theatre, return'd to that of Drury Lane; in which last he had first set out, and had continued to act some small parts for one winter only. The considerable figure which he so lately made upon the stage in London, makes me imagine that a particular account of his first commencing actor may not be unacceptable to the curious; I shall, therefore, give it them as I had it from his own mouth.

In King James's reign he had been sometime employ'd in the secretary's office in Ireland (his native country), and remain'd in it till after the battle of the Boyn, which completed the revolution. Upon that happy and unexpected deliverance, the people of Dublin, among the various expressions of their joy, had a mind to have a play; but the actors being dispersed during the war, some private persons agreed in the best manner they were able to give one to the publick gratis at the theatre. The play was "Othello," in which Wilks acted the Moor; and the applause he received in it warm'd him to so strong an inclination for the stage, that he immediately

command no persons are to be admitted behind the scenes." Cibber here, no doubt, refers to the Sign Manual of 13 Nov. 1711, a copy of which is among the chamberlain's papers.

[1] Cibber is probably incorrect here. It seems certain from the bills that Wilks did not reappear in London before 1698.

prefer'd it to all his other views in life: for he quitted his post, and with the first fair occasion came over to try his fortune in the (then only) company of actors in London. The person who supply'd his post in Dublin, he told me, raised to himself from thence a fortune of fifty thousand pounds. Here you have a much stronger instance of an extravagant passion for the stage than that which I have elsewhere shewn in myself; I only quitted my hopes of being preferr'd to the like post for it, but Wilks quitted his actual possession for the imaginary happiness which the life of an actor presented to him. And, though possibly we might both have better'd our fortunes in a more honourable station, yet whether better fortunes might have equally gratify'd our vanity (the universal passion of mankind) may admit of a question.

Upon his being formerly received into the Theatre Royal (which was in the winter after I had been initiated) his station there was much upon the same class with my own; our parts were generally of an equal insignificancy, not of consequence enough to give either a preference: but Wilks being more impatient of his low condition than I was (and, indeed, the company was then so well stock'd with good actors that there was very little hope of getting forward), laid hold of a more expeditious way for his advancement, and returned agen to Dublin with Mr. Ashbury, the patentee of that theatre, to act in his new company

there. There went with him at the same time Mrs. Butler, whose character I have already given, and Estcourt, who had not appeared on any stage, and was yet only known as an excellent mimick. Wilks having no competitor in Dublin, was immediately preferr'd to whatever parts his inclination led him, and his early reputation on that stage as soon raised in him an ambition to shew himself on a better. And I have heard him say (in raillery of the vanity which young actors are liable to) that when the news of Monfort's death came to Ireland, he from that time thought his fortune was made, and took a resolution to return a second time to England with the first opportunity; but as his engagements to the stage where he was were too strong to be suddenly broke from, he return'd not to the Theatre Royal 'till the year 1696.[1]

Upon his first arrival, Powel, who was now in possession of all the chief parts of Monfort, and the only actor that stood in Wilks's way, in seeming civility offer'd him his choice of whatever he thought fit to make his first appearance in; though, in reality, the favour was intended to hurt him. But Wilks rightly judg'd it more modest to accept only of a part of Powel's, and which Monfort had never acted, that of Palamede in Dryden's "Marriage Alamode." Here, too, he had the advantage of having the ball play'd into his hand by the inimitable Mrs. Monfort, who was then his Melantha in

[1] See note on page 296.

the same play. Whatever fame Wilks had brought with him from Ireland, he as yet appear'd but a very raw actor to what he was afterwards allow'd to be; his faults, however, I shall rather leave to the judgments of those who then may remember him, than to take upon me the disagreeable office of being particular upon them, farther than by saying that in this part of Palamede he was short of Powel, and miss'd a good deal of the loose humour of the character, which the other more happily hit.[1] But, however, he was young, erect, of a pleasing aspect, and, in the whole, gave the town and the stage sufficient hopes of him. I ought to make some allowances, too, for the restraint he must naturally have been under from his first appearance upon a new stage. But from that he soon recovered, and grew daily more in favour, not only of the town, but likewise of the patentee, whom Powel, before Wilks's arrival, had treated in almost what manner he pleas'd.

Upon this visible success of Wilks, the pretended contempt which Powel had held him in began to sour into an open jealousy; he now plainly saw he was a formidable rival, and (which more hurt him) saw, too, that other people saw it; and therefore

[1] "The Laureat," p. 44: "Wilks, in this part of Palamede, behav'd with a modest diffidence, and yet maintain'd the spirit of his part." The author says, on the same page, that Powel never could appear a gentleman. "His conversation, his manners, his dress, neither on nor off the stage, bore any similitude to that character."

found it high time to oppose and be troublesome to him. But Wilks happening to be as jealous of his fame as the other, you may imagine such clashing candidates could not be long without a rupture. In short, a challenge, I very well remember, came from Powel, when he was hot-headed; but the next morning he was cool enough to let it end in favour of Wilks. Yet however the magnanimity on either part might subside, the animosity was as deep in the heart as ever, tho' it was not afterwards so openly avow'd: for when Powel found that intimidating would not carry his point, but that Wilks, when provok'd, would really give battle,[1] he (Powel) grew so out of humour that he cock'd his hat, and in his passion walk'd off to the service of the company in Lincoln's Inn Fields. But there finding more competitors, and that he made a worse figure among them than in the company he came from, he stay'd but one winter with them[2] before he return'd to his old quarters in Drury Lane; where, after these unsuccessful pushes of his ambition, he at last became a martyr to negli-

[1] "The Laureat," p. 44: "I believe he (Wilks) was obliged to fight the heroic George Powel, as well as one or two others, who were piqued at his being so highly encouraged by the town, and their rival, before he cou'd be quiet."

[2] Powell seems to have been at Lincoln's Inn Fields for two seasons, those of 1702 and 1703, and for a part of a third, 1703–04. He returned to Drury Lane about June, 1704. For the arbitrary conduct of the lord chamberlain, in allowing him to desert to Lincoln's Inn Fields (or the Haymarket), but arresting him when he deserted back again to Drury Lane, see Vol. II. Chap. I.

gence, and quietly submitted to the advantages and superiority which (during his late desertion) Wilks had more easily got over him.

However trifling these theatrical anecdotes may seem to a sensible reader, yet, as the different conduct of these rival actors may be of use to others of the same profession, and from thence may contribute to the pleasure of the publick, let that be my excuse for pursuing them. I must therefore let it be known that, though in voice and ear nature had been more kind to Powel, yet he so often lost the value of them by an unheedful confidence, that the constant wakeful care and decency of Wilks left the other far behind in the publick esteem and approbation. Nor was his memory less tenacious than that of Wilks; but Powel put too much trust in it, and idly deferr'd the studying of his parts, as schoolboys do their exercise, to the last day, which commonly brings them out proportionably defective. But Wilks never lost an hour of precious time, and was, in all his parts, perfect to such an exactitude, that I question if in forty years he ever five times chang'd or misplac'd an article in any one of them. To be master of this uncommon diligence is adding to the gift of nature all that is in an actor's power; and this duty of studying perfect whatever actor is remiss in, he will proportionably find that nature may have been kind to him in vain, for though Powell had an assurance that cover'd this neglect much

better than a man of more modesty might have done, yet, with all his intrepidity, very often the diffidence and concern for what he was to say made him lose the look of what he was to be. While, therefore, Powel presided, his idle example made this fault so common to others, that I cannot but confess, in the general infection, I had my share of it; nor was my too critical excuse for it a good one, viz., that scarce one part in five that fell to my lot was worth the labour. But to shew respect to an audience is worth the best actor's labour, and, his business consider'd, he must be a very impudent one that comes before them with a conscious negligence of what he is about.[1] But Wilks was never known to make any of these

[1] Cibber is here somewhat in the position of Satan reproving sin, if Davies's statements ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 480) are accurate. He says:

"This attention to the gaming-table would not, we may be assured, render him [Cibber] fitter for his business of the stage. After many an unlucky run at Tom's Coffee-house [in Russell Street], he has arrived at the playhouse in great tranquillity; and then, humming over an opera-tune, he has walked on the stage not well prepared in the part he was to act. Cibber should not have reprehended Powell so severely for neglect and imperfect representation. I have seen him at fault where it was least expected; in parts which he had acted a hundred times, and particularly in Sir Courtly Nice; but Colley dexterously supplied the deficiency of his memory by prolonging his ceremonious bow to the lady, and drawling out 'Your humble servant, madam,' to an extraordinary length; then taking a pinch of snuff, and strutting deliberately across the stage, he has gravely asked the prompter, what is next?"

venial distinctions, nor, however barren his part might be, could bear even the self-reproach of favouring his memory. And I have been astonished to see him swallow a volume of froth and insipidity in a new play that we were sure could not live above three days, tho' favour'd and recommended to the stage by some good person of quality. Upon such occasions, in compassion to his fruitless toil and labour, I have sometimes cry'd out with Cato, "Painful præeminence!" So insupportable, in my sense, was the task, when the bare praise of not having been negligent was sure to be the only reward of it. But so indefatigable was the diligence of Wilks, that he seem'd to love it, as a good man does virtue, for its own sake; of which the following instance will give you an extraordinary proof.

In some new comedy he happen'd to complain of a crabbed speech in his part, which, he said, gave him more trouble to study than all the rest of it had done; upon which he apply'd to the author either to soften or shorten it. The author, that he might make the matter quite easy to him, fairly cut it all out. But when he got home from the rehearsal, Wilks thought it such an indignity to his memory that anything should be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himself perfect in that speech, though he knew it was never to be made use of. From this singular act of supererogation you may judge how indefatigable the labour

of his memory must have been when his profit and honour were more concern'd to make use of it.[1]

But besides this indispensable quality of diligence, Wilks had the advantage of a sober character in private life, which Powel, not having the least regard to, labour'd under the unhappy disfavour, not to say contempt, of the publick, to whom his licentious courses were no secret. Even when he did well that natural prejudice pursu'd him; neither the heroe nor the gentleman, the young Ammon[2] nor the Dorimant,[3] could conceal from the conscious spectator the true George Powel. And this sort of disesteem or favour every actor will feel, and, more or less, have his share of, as he has, or has not, a due regard to his private life and reputation. Nay, even false reports shall affect him, and become the cause, or pretence at least, of undervaluing or treating him injuriously. Let me give a known instance of it, and at the same time a justification of myself from an imputation that was laid upon me not many years before I quitted the theatre, of which you will see the consequence.

[1] "The Laureat," p. 45: "I have known him (Wilks) lay a wager and win it, that he wou'd repeat the part of Truewitt in the 'Silent Woman,' which consists of thirty lengths of paper, as they call 'em (that is, one quarter of a sheet on both sides to a length), without misplacing a single word, or missing an (and) or an (or)."

[2] Alexander, in "The Rival Queens."

[3] In "The Man of the Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter."

After the vast success of that new species of dramatick poetry, the "Beggar's Opera," [1] the year following I was so stupid as to attempt something of the same kind, upon a quite different foundation, that of recommending virtue and innocence; which I ignorantly thought might not have a less pretence to favour than setting greatness and authority in a contemptible, and the most vulgar vice and wickedness in an amiable light. But behold how fondly I was mistaken! "Love in a Riddle" [2] (for so my new-fangled performance was

[1] Produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 29th January, 1728.

[2] "Love in a Riddle." A Pastoral. Produced at Drury Lane, 7th January, 1729.

ARCAS	Mr. Mills.
ÆGON	Mr. Harper.
AMYNTAS	Mr. Williams.
IPHIS	Mrs. Thurmond.
PHILAUTUS, a conceited Corinthian courtier,	Mr. Cibber.
CORYDON	Mr. Griffin.
CIMON	Mr. Miller.
MOPSUS	Mr. Oates.
DAMON	Mr. Ray.
IANTHE, daughter to Arcas . . .	Mrs. Cibber.
PASTORA, daughter to Ægon . . .	Mrs. Lindar.
PHILLIDA, daughter to Corydon . .	Mrs. Raftor.

Mrs. Raftor (at this time Miss was not generally used) was afterwards the famous Mrs. Clive. Chetwood, in his "History of the Stage," 1749 (p. 128), says: "I remember the first night of 'Love in a Riddle' (which was murder'd in the same year), a pastoral opera wrote by the laureat, which the hydra-headed multitude resolv'd to worry without hearing, a custom with authors of merit, when Miss Raftor came on in the part of Phillida, the monstrous roar subsided. A person in the stage-

called) was as vilely damn'd and hooted at as so vain a presumption in the idle cause of virtue could deserve. Yet this is not what I complain of; I will allow my poetry to be as much below the other as taste or criticism can sink it; I will grant likewise that the applauded author of the "Beggar's Opera" (whom I knew to be an honest good-natur'd man, and who, when he had descended to write more like one, in the cause of virtue, had been as unfortunate as others of that class); I will grant, I say, that in his "Beggar's Opera" he had more skilfully gratify'd the publick taste than all the brightest authors that ever writ before him; and I have sometimes thought, from the modesty of his motto, *Nos hæc novimus esse nihil*,[1] that he gave them that performance as a satyr upon the depravity of their judgment (as Ben. Johnson of old was said to give his "Bartholomew Fair" in ridicule of the vulgar taste which had disliked his "Sejanus"[2]) and that, by artfully seducing them to be the champions of the immoralities he himself detested, he should be amply reveng'd on their former severity and ignorance. This were indeed a triumph! which even the author of "Cato" might have envy'd. "Cato," 'tis true,

box, next to my post, called out to his companion in the following elegant style: 'Zounds! Tom! Take care! or this charming little devil will save all.'" Chetwood's "post" was that of prompter.

[1] Martial, xiii. 2, 8.

[2] Cibber should have written "Catiline."

succeeded, but reach'd not, by full forty days, the progress and applauses of the "Beggar's Opera." Will it, however, admit of a question, which of the two compositions a good writer would rather wish to have been the author of? Yet, on the other side, must we not allow that to have taken a whole nation, high and low, into a general applause, has shown a power in poetry which, though often attempted in the same kind, none but this one author could ever yet arrive at? By what rule, then, are we to judge of our true national taste? But to keep a little closer to my point.

The same author the next year had, according to the laws of the land, transported his heroe to the West Indies in a second part to the "Beggar's Opera;"[1] but so it happen'd, to the surprize of the publick, this second part was forbid to come upon the stage! Various were the speculations upon this act of power: some thought that the author, others that the town, was hardly dealt with; a third sort, who perhaps had envy'd him the success of his first part, affirm'd, when it was printed, that whatever the intention might be, the

[1] This second part was called "Polly." In his preface Gay gives an account of its being vetoed. The prohibition undoubtedly was in revenge for the political satire in "The Beggar's Opera." "Polly" was published by subscription, and probably brought the author more in that way than its production would have done. It was played for the first time at the Haymarket, 19th June, 1777. It is, as Genest says, miserably inferior to the first part.

fact was in his favour, that he had been a greater gainer by subscriptions to his copy than he could have been by a bare theatrical presentation. Whether any part of these opinions were true I am not concerned to determine or consider. But how they affected me I am going to tell you. Soon after this prohibition[1] my performance was to come upon the stage, at a time when many people were out of humour at the late disappointment, and seem'd willing to lay hold of any pretence of making a reprizal. Great umbrage was taken that I was permitted to have the whole town to myself, by this absolute forbiddance of what they had more mind to have been entertain'd with. And, some few days before my bawble was acted, I was inform'd that a strong party would be made against it. This report I slighted, as not conceiving why it should be true; and when I was afterwards told what was the pretended provocation of this party, I slighted it still more, as having less reason to suppose any persons could believe me capable (had I had the power) of giving such a provocation. The report, it seems, that had run against me was this: that, to make way for the success of my own play, I had privately found means, or made interest, that the second part of the "Beggar's Opera" might be suppressed. What an involuntary compliment did the reporters of this falsehood make me, to suppose

[1] "Polly" was officially prohibited on 12th December, 1728.

me of consideration enough to influence a great officer of state to gratify the spleen or envy of a comedian so far as to rob the publick of an innocent diversion (if it were such) that none but that cunning comedian might be suffered to give it them.[1] This is so very gross a supposition that it needs only its own senseless face to confound it; let that alone, then, be my defence against it. But against blind malice and staring inhumanity whatever is upon the stage has no defence! There they knew I stood helpless and expos'd to whatever they might please to load or asperse me with. I had not considered, poor devil! that from the security of a full pit dunces might be criticks, cowards valiant, and 'prentices gentlemen! Whether any such were concern'd in the murder of my play I am not certain, for I never endeavour'd to discover any one of its assassins; I cannot afford them a milder name, from their unmanly manner of destroying it. Had it been heard, they might have left me nothing to say to them. 'Tis true it faintly held up its wounded head a second day, and would have spoke for mercy, but was not suffer'd. Not even the presence of a royal heir apparent could protect it. But then I was reduced

[1] I know only one case in which a new piece is said to have been prohibited because the other house was going to play one on the same subject. This is Swiney's "Quacks; or, Love's the Physician," produced at Drury Lane on 18th March, 1705, after being twice vetoed. Swiney in his preface gives the above as the reason for the prohibition.

to be serious with them; their clamour then became an insolence, which I thought it my duty by the sacrifice of any interest of my own to put an end to. I therefore quitted the actor for the author, and, stepping forward to the pit, told them that since I found they were not inclin'd that this play should go forward, I gave them my word that after this night it should never be acted agen; but that, in the meantime, I hop'd they would consider in whose presence they were, and for that reason at least would suspend what farther marks of their displeasure they might imagine I had deserved. At this there was a dead silence; and after some little pause, a few civilis'd hands signify'd their approbation. When the play went on, I observ'd about a dozen persons of no extraordinary appearance sullenly walk'd out of the pit. After which, every scene of it, while uninterrupted, met with more applause than my best hopes had expected. But it came too late. Peace to its manes! I had given my word it should fall, and I kept it by giving out another play for the next day, though I knew the boxes were all lett for the same again. Such, then, was the treatment I met with. How much of it the errors of the play might deserve I refer to the judgment of those who may have curiosity and idle time enough to read it.[1] But if I had no occasion to complain of

[1] Cibber afterwards formed the best scenes of "Love in a Riddle" into a ballad opera, called "Damon and Phillida."

the reception it met with from its quieted audience, sure it can be no great vanity to impute its disgraces chiefly to that severe resentment which a groundless report of me had inflam'd. Yet those disgraces have left me something to boast of, an honour preferable even to the applause of my enemies. A noble lord came behind the scenes, and told me, from the box, where he was in waiting, that what I said to quiet the audience was extremely well taken there; and that I had been commended for it in a very obliging manner. Now, though this was the only tumult that I have known to have been so effectually appeas'd these fifty years by anything that could be said to an audience in the same humour, I will not take any great merit to myself upon it; because when, like me, you will but humbly submit to their doing you all the mischief they can, they will, at any time, be satisfy'd.

I have mention'd this particular fact to inforce what I before observ'd, that the private character of an actor will always more or less affect his publick performance. And if I suffer'd so much from the bare suspicion of my having been guilty of a base action, what should not an actor expect that is hardy enough to think his whole private character of no consequence? I could offer many more, tho' less severe instances of the same nature. I have seen the most tender sentiment of love in tragedy create laughter, instead of compassion,

when it has been applicable to the real engagements of the person that utter'd it. I have known good parts thrown up, from an humble consciousness that something in them might put an audience in mind of — what was rather wish'd might be forgotten: those remarkable words of Evadne, in the "Maid's Tragedy" — "A maidenhead, Amintor, at my years?" — have sometimes been a much stronger jest for being a true one. But these are reproaches which in all nations the theatre must have been us'd to, unless we could suppose actors something more than human creatures, void of faults or frailties. 'Tis a misfortune at least not limited to the English stage. I have seen the better-bred audience in Paris made merry even with a modest expression, when it has come from the mouth of an actress whose private character it seem'd not to belong to. The apprehension of these kind of fleers from the witlings of a pit has been carry'd so far in our own country, that a late valuable actress [1] (who was conscious her beauty was not her greatest merit) desired the warmth of some lines might be abated when they have made her too remarkably handsome. But in

[1] Bellchambers notes that this was probably Mrs. Oldfield. But I think this more than doubtful, for this lady not only was fair, but also, as Touchstone says, "had the gift to know it." It is, of course, impossible to say decidedly to whom Cibber referred; but I fancy that Mrs. Barry is the actress who best fulfils the conditions, though, of course, I must admit that her having been dead for a quarter of a century weakens my case.

this discretion she was alone; few others were afraid of undeserving the finest things that could be said to them. But to consider this matter seriously, I cannot but think, at a play, a sensible auditor would contribute all he could to his being well deceiv'd, and not suffer his imagination so far to wander from the well-acted character before him, as to gratify a frivolous spleen by mocks or personal sneers on the performer, at the expence of his better entertainment. But I must now take up Wilks and Powel again where I left them.

Though the contention for superiority between them seem'd about this time to end in favour of the former, yet the distress of the patentee (in having his servant his master, as Powel had lately been) was not much reliev'd by the victory; he had only chang'd the man, but not the malady. For Wilks, by being in possession of so many good parts, fell into the common error of most actors, that of overrating their merit, or never thinking it is so thoroughly consider'd as it ought to be, which generally makes them proportionably troublesome to the master, who they might consider only pays them to profit by them. The patentee therefore found it as difficult to satisfy the continual demands of Wilks as it was dangerous to refuse them; very few were made that were not granted, and as few were granted as were not grudg'd him. Not but our good master was as sly a tyrant as ever was at the head of a

theatre; for he gave the actors more liberty, and fewer day's pay, than any of his predecessors. He would laugh with them over a bottle, and bite[1] them in their bargains. He kept them poor, that they might not be able to rebel; and sometimes merry, that they might not think of it. All their articles of agreement had a clause in them that he was sure to creep out at, viz., their respective sallaries were to be paid in such manner and proportion as others of the same company were paid; which in effect made them all, when he pleas'd, but limited sharers of loss, and himself sole proprietor of profits; and this loss or profit they only had such verbal accounts of as he thought proper to give them. 'Tis true, he would sometimes advance them money (but not more than he knew at most could be due them) upon their bonds; upon which, whenever they were mutinous, he would threaten to sue them. This was the net we danc'd in for several years. But no wonder we were dupes, while our master was a lawyer. This grievance, however, Wilks was resolv'd, for himself at least, to remedy at any rate; and grew daily more intractable, for every day his redress was delay'd. Here our master found himself under a difficulty he knew not well how to get

[1] A "bite" is what we now term a "sell." In *The Spectator*, Nos. 47 and 504, some account of "Biters" is given: "a race of men that are perpetually employed in laughing at those mistakes which are of their own production."

out of. For as he was a close subtle man, he seldom made use of a confident in his schemes of government.[1] But here the old expedient of delay would stand him in no longer stead; Wilks must instantly be comply'd with, or Powel come again into power! In a word, he was push'd so home, that he was reduc'd even to take my opinion into his assistance. For he knew I was a rival to neither of them; perhaps, too, he had fancy'd that, from the success of my first play, I might know as much of the stage, and what made an actor valuable, as either of them. He saw, too, that tho' they had each of them five good parts to my one, yet the applause which in my few I had met with, was given me by better judges than as yet had approv'd of the best they had done. They generally measured the goodness of a part by the quantity or length of it. I thought none bad for being short that were closely natural; nor any the better for being long, without that valuable quality. But in this, I doubt, as to their interest, they judg'd better than myself; for I have generally observ'd that those who do a great deal not ill, have been preferr'd to those who do but little, though never so masterly. And therefore I allow that, while there were so few good parts, and as few good judges of them, it ought to have been no wonder to me, that as an actor I was less valued by the master or the com-

[1] This is a capital sketch of Christopher Rich.

mon people than either of them. All the advantage I had of them was, that by not being troublesome I had more of our master's personal inclination than any actor of the male sex;[1] and so much of it, that I was almost the only one whom at that time he us'd to take into his parties of pleasure; very often *tête-à-tête*, and sometimes in a *partie quarrèe*. These then were the qualifications, however good or bad, to which may be imputed our master's having made choice of me to assist him in the difficulty under which he now labour'd. He was himself sometimes inclin'd to set up Powel again as a check upon the overbearing temper of Wilks, tho' to say truth, he lik'd neither of them, but was still under a necessity that one of them should preside, tho' he scarce knew which of the two evils to chuse. This question, when I happen'd to be alone with him, was often debated in our evening conversation; nor, indeed, did I find it an easy matter to know which party I ought to recommend to his election. I knew they were neither of them well-wishers to me, as in common they were enemies to most actors in proportion to the merit that seem'd to be rising in them. But as I had the prosperity of the stage more at heart

[1] Cibber's hint of Rich's weakness for the fair sex is corroborated by the "Comparison Between the Two Stages," p. 16: "*Critick.* He is monarch of the stage, tho' he knows not how to govern one province in his dominion, but that of signing, sealing, and something else, that shall be nameless."

than any other consideration, I could not be long undetermined in my opinion, and therefore gave it to our master at once in favour of Wilks. I, with all the force I could muster, insisted, "That if Powel were preferr'd, the ill example of his negligence and abandon'd character (whatever his merit on the stage might be) would reduce our company to contempt and beggary; observing, at the same time, in how much better order our affairs went forward since Wilks came among us, of which I recounted several instances that are not so necessary to tire my reader with. All this, though he allow'd to be true, yet Powel, he said, was a better actor than Wilks when he minded his business (that is to say, when he was, what he seldom was, sober). But Powel, it seems, had a still greater merit to him, which was (as he observ'd), that when affairs were in his hands, he had kept the actors quiet, without one day's pay, for six weeks together, and it was not everybody could do that; for you see, said he, Wilks will never be easy unless I give him his whole pay, when others have it not, and what an injustice would that be to the rest if I were to comply with him? How do I know but then they may be all in a mutiny, and mayhap (that was his expression) with Powel at the head of 'em?" By this specimen of our debate, it may be judg'd under how particular and merry a government the theatre then labour'd. To conclude,

this matter ended in a resolution to sign a new agreement with Wilks, which entitled him to his full pay of four pounds a week without any conditional deductions. How far soever my advice might have contributed to our master's settling his affairs upon this foot, I never durst make the least merit of it to Wilks, well knowing that his great heart would have taken it as a mortal affront had I (tho' never so distantly) hinted that his demands had needed any assistance but the justice of them. From this time, then, Wilks became first minister, or bustle-master-general of the company.[1] He now seem'd to take new delight in keeping the actors close to their business, and got every play reviv'd with care in which he had acted the chief part in Dublin. 'Tis true, this might be done with a particular view of setting off himself to advantage; but if at the same time it served the company, he ought not to want our commendation. Now, tho' my own conduct neither had the appearance of his merit, nor the reward that follow'd his industry, I cannot help observing that it shew'd me, to the best of my power, a more cordial commonwealth's man. His first views in serving himself made his service to the whole but an incidental merit; whereas, by my prosecuting the

[1] "The Laureat," p. 48: "If Minister Wilks was now alive to hear thee prate thus, Mr. Bayes, I would not give one half-penny for thy ears; but if he were alive, thou durst not for thy ears rattle on in this affected Matchiavilian stile."

means to make him easy in his pay, unknown to him, or without asking any favour for myself at the same time, I gave a more unquestionable proof of my preferring the publick to my private interest. From the same principle I never murmur'd at whatever little parts fell to my share, and though I knew it would not recommend me to the favour of the common people, I often submitted to play wicked characters rather than they should be worse done by weaker actors than myself. But perhaps, in all this patience under my situation, I supported my spirits by a conscious vanity; for I fancied I had more reason to value myself upon being sometimes the confident and companion of our master, than Wilks had in all the more publick favours he had extorted from him. I imagined, too, there was sometimes as much skill to be shewn in a short part, as in the most voluminous, which he generally made choice of; that even the coxcombly follies of a Sir John Daw might as well distinguish the capacity of an actor, as all the dry enterprizes and busy conduct of a Truewit.[1] Nor could I have any reason to repine at the superiority he enjoy'd, when I consider'd at how dear a rate it was purchased, at the continual expence of a restless jealousy and fretful impatience — these were the passions that, in the height of his successes, kept him lean to his last hour, while what I wanted in rank or glory was amply made

[1] Characters in Ben Jonson's "Silent Woman."

up to me in ease and chearfulness. But let not this observation either lessen his merit or lift up my own ; since our different tempers were not in our choice, but equally natural to both of us. To be employ'd on the stage was the delight of his life ; to be justly excused from it was the joy of mine. I lov'd ease, and he preëminence. In that, he might be more commendable. Tho' he often disturb'd me, he seldom could do it without more disordering himself.[1] In our disputes, his warmth could less bear truth than I could support manifest injuries. He would hazard our undoing to gratify his passions, tho' otherwise an honest man ; and I rather chose to give up my reason, or not see my wrong, than ruin our community by an equal rashness. By this opposite conduct our accounts at the end of our labours stood thus. While he lived he was the elder man ; when he died he was not so old as I am. He never left the stage till he left the world ; I never so well enjoy'd the world as when I left the stage. He died in possession of his wishes ; and I, by having had a less cholerick ambition, am still tasting mine in health and liberty. But as he in a great measure wore out the organs of life in his incessant labours to gratify

[1] "The Laureat," p. 49 : "Did you not, by your general misbehaviour towards authors and actors, bring an odium on your brother managers, as well as yourself ; and were not these, with many others, the reasons that sometimes gave occasion to Wilks to chastise you, with his tongue only ? "

the publick, the many whom he gave pleasure to will always owe his memory a favourable report — some facts that will vouch for the truth of this account will be found in the sequel of these memoirs. If I have spoke with more freedom of his quondam competitor Powel, let my good intentions to future actors in shewing what will so much concern them to avoid, be my excuse for it; for though Powel had from nature much more than Wilks, in voice and ear, in elocution in tragedy, and humour in comedy, greatly the advantage of him, yet, as I have observ'd, from the neglect and abuse of those valuable gifts, he suffer'd Wilks to be of thrice the service to our society. Let me give another instance of the reward and favour which, in a theatre, diligence and sobriety seldom fail of. Mills the elder [1] grew into the friendship of Wilks with not a great deal more than those useful qualities to recommend him. He was an honest, quiet, careful man, of as few faults as excellencies, and Wilks rather chose him for his second in many plays, than an actor of perhaps greater skill that was not so laboriously diligent. And from this constant assiduity, Mills, with making to himself a friend in Wilks, was advanced to a larger sallary than any man-actor had enjoy'd during my time on the stage.[2] I have yet to offer a more

[1] See memoir of John Mills at end of second volume.

[2] John Mills, in the advertisement issued by Rich, in 1709, in the course of a dispute with his actors, is stated to have a salary

happy recommendation of temperance, which a late celebrated actor was warn'd into by the misconduct of Powel. About the year that Wilks return'd from Dublin, Booth, who had commenced actor upon that theatre, came over to the company in Lincolns Inn Fields.[1] He was then but an under-graduate of the buskin, and, as he told me himself, had been for some time tòo frank a lover of the bottle; but having had the happiness to observe into what contempt and distresses Powel had plung'd himself by the same vice, he was so struck with the terror of his example, that he fix'd a resolution (which from that time to the end of his days he strictly observ'd) of utterly reforming it; an uncommon act of philosophy in a young man! of which in his fame and fortune he afterwards enjoy'd the reward and benefit. These observations I have not merely thrown together as a moralist, but to prove that the briskest loose liver or intemperate man (though morality were out of the question) can never arrive at the necessary excellencies of a good or useful actor.

of "£4 a week for himself, and £1 a week for his wife, for little or nothing." This advertisement is quoted by me in Vol. II. Chap. III. Mills's salary was the same as Betterton's. No doubt, Cibber, Wilks, Dogget, and Booth had ultimately larger salaries, but they, of course, were managers as well as actors.

[1] Booth seems to have joined the Lincoln's Inn Fields company in 1700.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Patentee of Drury Lane Wiser than His Actors — His Particular Management — The Author Continues to Write Plays — Why — The Best Dramatic Poets Censured by J. Collier, in His "Short View of the Stage" — It Has a Good Effect — The Master of the Revels, from That Time, Cautious in His Licensing New Plays — A Complaint against Him — His Authority Founded upon Custom Only — The Late Law for Fixing That Authority in a Proper Person, Considered.

HOUGH the master of our theatre had no conception himself of theatrical merit either in authors or actors, yet his judgment was govern'd by a saving rule in both: he look'd into his receipts for the value of a play, and from common fame he judg'd of his actors. But by whatever rule he was govern'd, while he had prudently reserv'd to himself a power of not paying them more than their merit could get, he could not be much deceived by their being over or undervalued. In a word, he had with great skill inverted the constitution of the stage, and quite changed the channel of profits arising from it; formerly (when there was but one company) the proprietors punctually paid the actors their appointed sallaries, and took to themselves only the clear profits: but our wiser proprietor took first

out of every day's receipts two shillings in the pound to himself; and left their sallaries to be paid only as the less or greater deficiencies of acting (according to his own accounts) would permit. What seem'd most extraordinary in these measures was, that at the same time he had persuaded us to be contented with our condition, upon his assuring us that as fast as money would come in we should all be paid our arrears; and that we might not have it always in our power to say he had never intended to keep his word, I remember in a few years after this time he once paid us nine days in one week: this happen'd when the "Funeral; or, Grief à la Mode," [1] was first acted, with more than expected success. Whether this well-tim'd bounty was only allow'd us to save appearances I will not say, but if that was his real motive for it, it was too costly a frolick to be repeated, and was at least the only grimace of its kind he vouchsafed us, we never having received one day more of those arrears in above fifteen years' service.

While the actors were in this condition, I think I may very well be excused in my presuming to write plays: which I was forced to do for the support of my encreasing family, my precarious income as an actor being then too scanty to supply it with even the necessaries of life.

[1] Steele's comedy was produced at Drury Lane in 1702. Cibber played Lord Hardy.

It may be observable, too, that my muse and my spouse were equally prolifick; that the one was seldom the mother of a child, but in the same year the other made me the father of a play: I think we had a dozen of each sort between us; of both which kinds some died in their infancy, and near an equal number of each were alive when I quitted the theatre — but it is no wonder, when a muse is only call'd upon by family duty, she should not always rejoice in the fruit of her labour. To this necessity of writing, then, I attribute the defects of my second play, which, coming out too hastily the year after my first, turn'd to very little account. But having got as much by my first as I ought to have expected from the success of them both, I had no great reason to complain: not but, I confess, so bad was my second, that I do not chuse to tell you the name of it; and that it might be peaceably forgotten, I have not given it a place in the two volumes of those I publish'd in quarto in the year 1721.[1]

[1] The play was called "Woman's Wit; or, the Lady in Fashion." It was produced at Drury Lane in 1697. It must have been in the early months of that year, for in his preface Cibber says, to excuse its failure, that it was hurriedly written, and that "rather than lose a winter" he forced himself to invent a fable. "The Laureat," p. 50, stupidly says that the name of the play was "Perolla and Isadora." The cast was:

LORD LOVEMORE	Mr. Harland.
LONGVILLE	Mr. Cibber.
MAJOR RAKISH	Mr. Penkethman.
JACK RAKISH	Mr. Powel.

And whenever I took upon me to make some dormant play of an old author to the best of my judgment fitter for the stage, it was honestly not to be idle that set me to work, as a good housewife will mend old linnen when she has not better employment. But when I was more warmly engag'd by a subject entirely new, I only thought it a good subject when it seem'd worthy of an abler pen than my own, and might prove as useful to the hearer as profitable to myself. Therefore, whatever any of my productions might want of skill, learning, wit, or humour, or however unqualify'd I might be to instruct others who so ill govern'd myself, yet such plays (entirely my own) were not wanting, at least, in what our most admired writers seem'd to neglect, and without which I cannot allow the most taking play to be intrinsically good, or to be a work upon which a man of sense and probity should value himself: I mean when they do not, as well *prodesse* as *delectare*,[1] give profit with delight! The *utile*

MASS JOHNNY, Lady Manlove's Son, a schoolboy	Mr. Dogget.
FATHER BENEDIC	Mr. Smeaton.
LADY MANLOVE	Mrs. Powel.
LEONORA	Mrs. Knight.
EMILIA	Mrs. Rogers.
OLIVIA	Mrs. Cibber.
LETTICE	Mrs. Kent.

[1] "Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetæ."
—*Hor.* "*Ars Poetica*," 333.

dulci[1] was, of old, equally the point; and has always been my aim, however wide of the mark I may have shot my arrow. It has often given me amazement that our best authors of that time could think the wit and spirit of their scenes could be an excuse for making the looseness of them publick. The many instances of their talents so abused are too glaring to need a closer comment, and are sometimes too gross to be recited. If then to have avoided this imputation, or rather to have had the interest and honour of virtue always in view, can give merit to a play, I am contented that my readers should think such merit the all that mine have to boast of — libertines of meer wit and pleasure may laugh at these grave laws that would limit a lively genius: but every sensible honest man, conscious of their truth and use, will give these ralliers smile for smile, and shew a due contempt for their merriment.

But while our authors took these extraordinary liberties with their wit, I remember the ladies were then observ'd to be decently afraid of venturing bare-fac'd to a new comedy 'till they had been assur'd they might do it without the risque of an insult to their modesty — or, if their curiosity were too strong for their patience, they took care at least to save appearances, and rarely came upon the first days of acting but in masks (then daily

[1] "Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci."
— *Hor.* "*Ars Poetica*," 343.

worn and admitted in the pit, the side boxes, and gallery [1]), which custom, however, had so many ill consequences attending it, that it has been abolish'd these many years.

These immoralities of the stage had by an avow'd indulgence been creeping into it ever since King Charles his time; nothing that was loose could then be too low for it. The "London Cuckolds," the most rank play that ever succeeded,[2] was then in the highest court favour. In this almost general corruption, Dryden, whose plays were more fam'd for their wit than their chastity, led the way, which he fairly confesses, and endeavours to excuse in his epilogue to the "Pilgrim," revived in 1700 for his benefit,[3] in his declining age

[1] Pepys (12th June, 1663) records that the Lady Mary Cromwell at the theatre, "when the house began to fill, put on her vizard, and so kept it on all the play; which of late is become a great fashion among the ladies, which hides their whole face." Very soon, however, ladies gave up the use of the mask, and "vizard-mask" became a synonym for "prostitute." In this sense it is frequently used in Dryden's prologues and epilogues.

[2] Compare with Cibber's condemnation Genest's opinion of this play. He says (i. 365): "If it be the province of comedy, not to retail morality to a yawning pit, but to make the audience laugh, and to keep them in good humour, this play must be allowed to be one of the best comedies in the English language."

[3] To "The Pilgrim," revived in 1700, as Cibber states, Dryden's "Secular Masque" was attached. Whether the revival took place before or after Dryden's death (1st May, 1700) is a moot point. See Genest, ii. 179, for an admirable account of the matter. He thinks it probable that the date of production was 25th March, 1700. Cibber is scarcely accurate in stating that "The Pilgrim" was revived for Dryden's benefit. It seems,

and fortune. The following lines of it will make good my observation :

" Perhaps the parson [1] stretch'd a point too far,
When with our theatres he wag'd a war.
He tells you that this very moral age
Receiv'd the first infection from the stage.
But sure, a banish'd court, with lewdness fraught,
The seeds of open vice returning brought.
Thus lodg'd (as vice by great example thrives)
It first debauch'd the daughters, and the wives.
London, a fruitful soil, yet never bore
So plentiful a crop of horns before.
The poets, who must live by courts or starve,
Were proud so good a government to serve.
And mixing with buffoons and pimps profane,
Tainted the stage for some small snip of gain.
For they, like harlots under bawds profest,
Took all th' ungodly pains, and got the least.
Thus did the thriving malady prevail,
The court it's head, the poets but the tail.
The sin was of our native growth, 'tis true,
The scandal of the sin was wholly new.
Misses there were, but modestly conceal'd;
White-hall the naked Venus first reveal'd;
Who standing, as at Cyprus, in her shrine,
The strumpet was ador'd with rites divine," etc.

This epilogue, and the prologue to the same play, written by Dryden, I spoke myself, which

rather, that Vanbrugh, who revised the play, stipulated that, in consideration of Dryden's writing "The Secular Masque," and also the prologue and epilogue, he should have the usual author's third night. The B. M. copy of "The Pilgrim" is dated, in an old handwriting, "Monday, the 5th of May."

[1] Jeremy Collier.

not being usually done by the same person, I have a mind, while I think of it, to let you know on what occasion they both fell to my share, and how other actors were affected by it.

Sir John Vanbrugh, who had given some light touches of his pen to the "Pilgrim" to assist the benefit day of Dryden, had the disposal of the parts, and I being then as an actor in some favour with him, he read the play first with me alone, and was pleased to offer me my choice of what I might like best for myself in it. But as the chief characters were not (according to my taste) the most shining, it was no great self-denial in me that I desir'd he would first take care of those who were more difficult to be pleased; I therefore only chose for myself two short incidental parts, that of the stuttering cook [1] and the mad Englishman. In which homely characters I saw more matter for delight than those that might have a better pretence to the amiable. And when the play came to be acted I was not deceiv'd in my choice. Sir John, upon my being contented with so little a share in the entertainment, gave me the epilogue to make up my mess; which being written so much above the strain of common authors, I confess I was not a little pleased with. And Dryden, upon his hearing me repeat it to him, made me a farther compliment of trusting me with the pro-

[1] Genest notes (ii. 181) that in the original play the servant in the second act did not stutter.

logue. This so particular distinction was looked upon by the actors as something too extraordinary. But no one was so impatiently ruffled at it as Wilks, who seldom chose soft words when he spoke of anything he did not like. The most gentle thing he said of it was, that he did not understand such treatment; that for his part he look'd upon it as an affront to all the rest of the company, that there shou'd be but one out of the whole judg'd fit to speak either a prologue or an epilogue. To quiet him I offer'd to decline either in his favour, or both, if it were equally easy to the author. But he was too much concern'd to accept of an offer that had been made to another in preference to himself, and which he seem'd to think his best way of resenting was to contemn. But from that time, however, he was resolved, to the best of his power, never to let the first offer of a prologue escape him. Which little ambition sometimes made him pay too dear for his success. The flatness of the many miserable prologues that by this means fell to his lot, seem'd wofully unequal to the few good ones he might have reason to triumph in.

I have given you this fact only as a sample of those frequent rubs and impediments I met with when any step was made to my being distinguish'd as an actor; and from this incident, too, you may partly see what occasion'd so many prologues, after the death of Betterton, to fall into the hands of

one speaker: but it is not every successor to a vacant post that brings into it the talents equal to those of a predecessor. To speak a good prologue well is, in my opinion, one of the hardest parts and strongest proofs of sound elocution, of which, I confess, I never thought that any of the several who attempted it shew'd themselves, by far, equal masters to Betterton. Betterton, in the delivery of a good prologue, had a natural gravity that gave strength to good sense, a temper'd spirit that gave life to wit, and a dry reserve in his smile that threw ridicule into its brightest colours. Of these qualities, in the speaking of a prologue, Booth only had the first, but attain'd not to the other two. Wilks had spirit, but gave too loose a rein to it, and it was seldom he could speak a grave and weighty verse harmoniously; his accents were frequently too sharp and violent, which sometimes occasion'd his eagerly cutting off half the sound of syllables that ought to have been gently melted into the melody of metre; in verses of humour, too, he would sometimes carry the mimickry farther than the hint would bear, even to a trifling light, as if himself were pleased to see it so glittery. In the truth of this criticism I have been confirm'd by those whose judgment I dare more confidently rely on than my own. Wilks had many excellencies, but if we leave prologue-speaking out of the number he will still have enough to have made him a valuable actor. And I only make this ex-

ception from them to caution others from imitating what, in his time, they might have too implicitly admired. But I have a word or two more to say concerning the immoralities of the stage. Our theatrical writers were not only accus'd of immorality, but prophaneness; many flagrant instances of which were collected and published by a nonjuring clergyman, Jeremy Collier, in his "View of the Stage," etc., about the year 1697.[1] However just his charge against the authors that then wrote for it might be, I cannot but think his sentence against the stage itself is unequal; reformation he thinks too mild a treatment for it, and is therefore for laying his ax to the root of it: if this were to be a rule of judgment for offences of the same nature, what might become of the pulpit, where many a seditious and corrupted teacher has been known to cover the most pernicious doctrine with the masque of religion? This puts me in mind of what the noted Jo. Hains,[2] the comedian, a fellow

[1] Collier's famous work, which was entitled "A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage: together with the sense of Antiquity upon this Argument," was published in 1698. Collier was a nonjuring clergyman. He was born on 23d September, 1650, and died in 1726. The circumstance to which Cibber alludes in the second paragraph from the present, was Collier's attending to the scaffold Sir John Friend and Sir William Perkins, who were executed for complicity in plots against King William in 1696.

[2] The facetious Joe Haines was an actor of great popularity, and seems to have excelled in the delivery of prologues and epilogues, especially of those written by himself. He was on the

of a wicked wit, said upon this occasion; who being ask'd what could transport Mr. Collier into so blind a zeal for a general suppression of the stage, when only some particular authors had abus'd it, whereas the stage, he could not but know, was generally allow'd, when rightly conducted, to be a delightful method of mending our morals, "For that reason," reply'd Hains: "Collier is by profession a moral-mender himself, and two of trade, you know, can never agree.[1]

The authors of the "Old Batchelor" and of the "Relapse" were those whom Collier most labour'd

stage from about 1672 to 1700 or 1701, in which latter year (on the 4th of April) he died. He was the original Sparkish in Wycherley's "Country Wife," Lord Plausible in the same author's "Plain Dealer," and Tom Errand in Farquhar's "Constant Couple." Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 284) tells, on Quin's authority, an anecdote of Haines's pretended conversion to Romanism during James the Second's reign. He declared that the Virgin Mary appeared to him in a vision. "Lord Sunderland sent for Joe, and asked him about the truth of his conversion, and whether he had really seen the Virgin? Yes, my lord, I assure you it is a fact. How was it, pray? Why, as I was lying in my bed, the Virgin appeared to me, and said, Arise, Joe! You lie, you rogue, said the earl; for, if it had really been the Virgin herself, she would have said Joseph, if it had been only out of respect to her husband." For an account of Haines, see also Anthony Aston.

[1] "The Laureat" (p. 53) states that soon after the publication of Collier's book, informers were placed in different parts of the theatres, on whose information several players were charged with uttering immoral words. Queen Anne, however, satisfied that the informers were not actuated by zeal for morality, stopped the inquisition. These informers were paid by the Society for the Reformation of Manners.

to convict of immorality; to which they severally publish'd their reply; the first seem'd too much hurt to be able to defend himself, and the other felt him so little that his wit only laugh'd at his lashes.[1]

My first play of the "Fool in Fashion," too, being then in a course of success, perhaps for that reason only, this severe author thought himself oblig'd to attack it; in which I hope he has shewn more zeal than justice. His greatest charge against it is, that it sometimes uses the word faith! as an oath, in the dialogue; but if faith may as well signify our given word or credit as our religious belief, why might not his charity have taken it in the less criminal sense? Nevertheless, Mr. Collier's book was upon the whole thought so laudable a work, that King William, soon after it was publish'd, granted him a *nolo prosequi* when he stood answerable to the law for his having absolved two criminals just before they were executed for high

[1] Congreve's answer to Collier was entitled "Amendments of Mr. Collier's false and imperfect Citations, etc., from the 'Old Batchelour,' 'Double Dealer,' 'Love for Love,' 'Mourning Bride.' By the author of those plays." Vanbrugh called his reply, "A Short Vindication of the 'Relapse' and the 'Provok'd Wife,' from Immorality and Prophaneness. By the author." Davies says, regarding Congreve ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 401): "Congreve's pride was hurt by Collier's attack on plays which all the world had admired and commended; and no hypocrite showed more rancour and resentment, when unmasked, than this author, so greatly celebrated for sweetness of temper and elegance of manners."

treason. And it must be farther granted that his calling our dramatick writers to this strict account had a very wholesome effect upon those who writ after this time. They were now a great deal more upon their guard; indecencies were no longer wit; and by degrees the fair sex came again to fill the boxes on the first day of a new comedy, without fear or censure. But the master of the revels,[1] who then licens'd all plays for the stage, assisted this reformation with a more zealous severity than ever. He would strike out whole scenes of a vicious or immoral character, tho' it were visibly shewn to be reform'd or punish'd; a severe instance of this kind falling upon myself may be an excuse for my relating it. When Richard the Third (as I alter'd it from Shakespear)[2] came from his hands to the stage, he expung'd the whole first act without sparing a line of it. This extraordinary stroke of a *sic volo* occasion'd my applying to him for the small indulgence of a speech or two, that the other four acts might limp on with a little less absurdity! No! he had not leisure to consider what might be separately inoffensive. He had an objection to the whole act, and the reason he gave for it was, that the distresses of King Henry the Sixth, who is kill'd by Richard in the first act, would put

[1] Charles Killigrew, who died in 1725, having held the office of master of the revels for over forty years.

[2] Produced at Drury Lane in 1700. For some account of Cibber's playing of Richard, see *ante*, pp. 198, 199.

weak people too much in mind of King James, then living in France; a notable proof of his zeal for the government![1] Those who have read either the play or the history, I dare say will think he strain'd hard for the parallel. In a word, we were forc'd, for some few years, to let the play take its fate with only four acts, divided into five; by the loss of so considerable a limb, may one not modestly suppose it was robbed of at least a fifth part of that favour it afterward met with? For tho' this first act was at last recovered, and made the play whole again, yet the relief came too late to repay me for the pains I had taken in it. Nor did I ever hear that this zealous severity of the master of the revels was afterward thought justifiable. But my good fortune, in process of time, gave me an opportunity to talk with my oppressor in my turn.

The patent granted by his Majesty King George the First to Sir Richard Steele and his assigns,[2] of which I was one, made us sole judges of what plays might be proper for the stage, without submitting them to the approbation or license of any other particular person. Notwithstanding which,

[1] Chalmers ("Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare Papers," page 535) comments unfavourably on Cibber's method of stating this fact, saying, "Well might Pope cry out, modest Cibber!" But Chalmers is unjust to Colley, who is not expressing his own opinion of his play's importance, but merely reporting the opinion of Killigrew.

[2] Steele's name first appears in a license granted 18th October, 1714. His patent was dated 19th January, 1715.

the master of the revels demanded his fee of forty shillings upon our acting a new one, tho' we had spared him the trouble of perusing it. This occasion'd my being deputed to him to enquire into the right of his demand, and to make an amicable end of our dispute.[1] I confess I did not dislike the office; and told him, according to my instructions, that I came not to defend even our own right in prejudice to his; that if our patent had inadvertently superseded the grant of any former power or warrant whereon he might ground his pretensions, we would not insist upon our broad seal, but would readily answer his demands upon sight of such his warrant, anything in our patent to the contrary notwithstanding. This I had reason to think he could not do; and when I found he made no direct reply to my question, I repeated it with greater civilities and offers of compliance, 'till I was forc'd in the end to con-

[1] Chalmers ("Apology for the Believers," p. 536) says: "The patentees sent Colley Cibber, as envoy-extraordinary, to negotiate an amicable settlement with the sovereign of the revels. It is amusing to hear how this flippant negotiator explained his own pretensions, and attempted to invalidate the right of his opponent; as if a subsequent charter, under the great seal, could supersede a preceding grant under the same authority. Charles Killigrew, who was now sixty-five years of age, seems to have been oppressed by the insolent civility of Colley Cibber." But this is an undeserved hit at Cibber, who had suffered the grossest injustice at Killigrew's hands regarding the licensing of "Richard III." See *ante*, p. 336. The dispute regarding fees must have occurred about 1715.

clude with telling him, that as his pretensions were not back'd with any visible instrument of right, and as his strongest plea was custom, we could not so far extend our complaisance as to continue his fees upon so slender a claim to them. And from that time neither our plays or his fees gave either of us any farther trouble. In this negotiation I am the bolder to think justice was on our side, because the law lately pass'd [1] by

[1] The Licensing Act of 1737. This act was passed by Sir Robert Walpole's government, and gave to the lord chamberlain the power to prohibit a piece from being acted at all, by making it necessary to have every play licensed. This power, however, had practically been exercised by the chamberlain before, as in the case of Gay's "Polly," which Cibber has already mentioned. The immediate cause of this act of 1737 was a piece called "The Golden Rump," which was so full of scurrility against the powers that were, that Giffard, the manager to whom it was submitted, carried it to Walpole. In spite of the opposition of Lord Chesterfield, who delivered a famous speech against it, the bill was passed, 21st June, 1737. The "Biographia Dramatica" hints plainly that "The Golden Rump" was written at Walpole's instigation to afford an excuse for the act. Bellchambers has the following note on this passage:

"The Abbé Le Blanc,[1] who was in England at the time this law passed, has the following remarks upon it in his correspondence: —

"'This act occasioned an universal murmur in the nation, and was openly complained of in the public papers: in all the coffee-houses of London it was treated as an unjust law, and manifestly contrary to the liberties of the people of England. When winter came, and the play-houses were opened, that of Covent-garden began with three new pieces, which had been approved

[1] Mr. Garrick, when in Paris, refused to meet this writer, on account of the irreverence with which he had treated Shakespeare.

which the power of licensing plays, etc. is given to a proper person, is a strong presumption that no law had ever given that power to any such person before.

of by the lord chamberlain. There was a crowd of spectators present at the first, and among the number myself. The best play in the world would not have succeeded the first night.[1] There was a resolution to damn whatever might appear, the word hiss not being sufficiently expressive for the English. They always say, to damn a piece, to damn an author, etc., and, in reality, the word is not too strong to express the manner in which they receive a play which does not please them. The farce in question was damned indeed, without the least compassion: nor was that all, for the actors were driven off the stage, and happy was it for the author that he did not fall into the hands of this furious assembly.

"'As you are unacquainted with the customs of this country, you cannot easily devise who were the authors of all this disturbance. Perhaps you may think they were schoolboys, apprentices, clerks, or mechanics. No, sir, they were men of a very grave and genteel profession; they were lawyers, and, please you, a body of gentlemen perhaps less honoured, but certainly more feared here than they are in France. Most of them live in colleges,[2] where, conversing always with one another, they mutually preserve a spirit of independency through the body, and with great ease form cabals. These gentlemen, in the stage entertainments of London, behave much like our footboys, in those at a fair. With us, your party-coloured gentry are the most noisy; but here, men of the law have all the sway, if I may be permitted to call so those pretended professors of it, who are rather the organs of chicanery, than the interpreters of justice. At Paris the cabals of the pit are only

[1] The action was interrupted almost as soon as begun, in presence of a numerous assembly, by a cabal who had resolved to overthrow the first effect of this act of Parliament, though it had been thought necessary for the regulation of the stage.

[2] Called here Inns of Court, as the two temples, Lincoln's Inn, Gray's Inn, Doctor's Commons, etc.

My having mentioned this law, which so immediately affected the stage, inclines me to throw out a few observations upon it. But I must first lead you gradually thro' the facts and natural causes that made such a law necessary.

among young fellows, whose years may excuse their folly, or persons of the meanest education and stamp; here they are the fruit of deliberations in a very grave body of people, who are not less formidable to the minister in place, than to the theatrical writers.

"'The players were not dismayed, but soon after stuck up bills for another new piece: there was the same crowding at Covent-garden, to which I again contributed. I was sure, at least, that if the piece advertised was not performed, I should have the pleasure of beholding some very extraordinary scene acted in the pit.

"'Half an hour before the play was to begin, the spectators gave notice of their dispositions by frightful hisses and outcries, equal, perhaps, to what were ever heard at a Roman amphitheatre. I could not have known, but by my eyes only, that I was among an assembly of beings who thought themselves to be reasonable. The author, who had foreseen this fury of the pit, took care to be armed against it. He knew what people he had to deal with, and, to make them easy, put in his prologue double the usual dose of incense that is offered to their vanity; for there is an established tax of this kind, from which no author is suffered to dispense himself. This author's wise precaution succeeded, and the men that were before so redoubtable grew calm; the charms of flattery, more strong than those of music, deprived them of all their fierceness.

"'You see, sir, that the pit is the same in all countries: it loves to be flattered, under the more genteel name of being complimented. If a man has tolerable address at panegyric, they swallow it greedily, and are easily quelled and intoxicated by the draught. Every one in particular thinks he merits the praise that is given to the whole in general; the illusion operates, and

Although it had been taken for granted, from time immemorial, that no company of comedians could act plays, etc. without the royal license or protection of some legal authority, a theatre was, notwithstanding, erected in Goodman's Fields

the prologue is good, only because it is artfully directed. Every one saves his own blush by the authority of the multitude he makes a part of, which is, perhaps, the only circumstance in which a man can think himself not obliged to be modest.

"'The author having, by flattery, begun to tame this wild audience, proceeded entirely to reconcile it by the first scene of his performance. Two actors came in, one dressed in the English manner very decently, and the other with black eyebrows, a ribbon of an ell long under his chin, a bag-peruke immoderately powdered, and his nose all bedaubed with snuff. What Englishman could not know a Frenchman by this ridiculous picture! The common people of London think we are indeed such sort of folks, and, of their own accord, add to our real follies all that their authors are pleased to give us. But when it was found that the man thus equipped, being also laced down every seam of his coat, was nothing but a cook, the spectators were equally charmed and surprised. The author had taken care to make him speak all the impertinences he could devise, and for that reason, all the impertinences of his farce were excused, and the merit of it immediately decided. There was a long criticism upon our manners, our customs, and, above all, upon our cookery. The excellence and virtues of English beef were cried up, and the author maintained that it was owing to the qualities of its juice that the English were so courageous, and had such a solidity of understanding, which raised them above all the nations in Europe: he preferred the noble old English pudding beyond all the finest ragouts that were ever invented by the greatest geniuses that France has produced; and all these ingenious strokes were loudly clapped by the audience.

"'The pit, biassed by the abuse that was thrown on the French, forgot that they came to damn the play and maintain

about seven years ago,[1] where plays, without any such license, were acted for some time unmolested and with impunity. After a year or two, this playhouse was thought a nusance too near the city. Upon which the lord mayor and aldermen petition'd the Crown to suppress it. What steps were taken in favour of that petition I know not, but common fame seem'd to allow, from what had or had not been done in it, that acting plays in the said theatre was not evidently unlawful.[2]

the ancient liberty of the stage. They were friends with the players, and even with the court itself, and contented themselves with the privilege left them, of lashing our nation as much as they pleased, in the room of laughing at the expense of the minister. The license of authors did not seem to be too much restrained, since the court did not hinder them from saying all the ill they could of the French.

"'Intractable as the populace appear in this country, those who know how to take hold of their foibles may easily carry their point. Thus is the liberty of the stage reduced to just bounds, and yet the English pit makes no farther attempt to oppose the new regulation. The law is executed without the least trouble, all the plays since having been quietly heard, and either succeeded or not, according to their merit.'"

See article in Mr. Archer's "About the Theatre," p. 101, and Parliamentary Reports, 1832 and 1866.

[1] The theatre in Goodman's Fields was opened in October, 1729, by Thomas Odell, who was afterward deputy licenser under the 1737 act. Odell, having no theatrical experience, entrusted the management to Henry Giffard. Odell's theatre seems to have been in Leman Street.

[2] I can find no hint that plays were ever stopped at Odell's theatre. There is a pamphlet, published in 1730, with the following title: "A Letter to the Right Honourable Sir Richard Brocas, Lord Mayor of London. By a Citizen," which demands

However, this question of acting without a license a little time after came to a nearer decision in Westminster Hall; the occasion of bringing it thither was this. It happened that the purchasers of the patent, to whom Mr. Booth and myself had sold our shares,[1] were at variance with the comedians that were then left to their government, and the variance ended in the chief of those comedians deserting and setting up for themselves in the little house in the Hay-Market, in 1733, by which desertion the patentees were very much distressed and considerable losers. Their affairs being in this desperate condition, they were advis'd to put the act of the twelfth of Queen Anne against vagabonds in force against these deserters, then acting in the Hay-Market without license. Accordingly, one of their chief performers[2] was taken from the stage by a justice of peace his warrant, and committed to Bridewell as

the closing of the theatre, but I do not suppose any practical result followed. In 1733 an attempt by the patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden to silence Giffard's company, then playing at his new theatre in Goodman's Fields, was unsuccessful. This theatre was in Ayliffe Street.

[1] Half of Booth's share of the patent was purchased by Highmore, who also bought the whole of Cibber's share. Giffard was the purchaser of the remainder of Booth's share.

[2] This was John Harper. Davies ("Life of Garrick," i. 40) says that "the reason of the patentees fixing on Harper was in consequence of his natural timidity." His trial was on the 20th November, 1733. Harper was a low comedian of some ability, but of no great note.

one within the penalty of the said act. When the legality of this commitment was disputed in Westminster-Hall, by all I could observe from the learned pleadings on both sides (for I had the curiosity to hear them), it did not appear to me that the comedian so committed was within the description of the said act, he being a housekeeper and having a vote for the Westminster members of Parliament. He was discharged accordingly, and conducted through the hall with the congratulations of the crowds that attended and wish'd well to his cause.

The issue of this trial threw me at that time into a very odd reflexion, viz: That if acting plays without license did not make the performers vagabonds unless they wandered from their habitations so to do, how particular was the case of us three late menaging actors at the Theatre-Royal, who in twenty years before had paid upon an averidge at least twenty thousand pounds to be protected (as actors) from a law that has not since appeared to be against us. Now, whether we might certainly have acted without any license at all, I shall not pretend to determine; but this I have of my own knowledge to say, that in Queen Anne's reign the stage was in such confusion, and its affairs in such distress, that Sir John Vanbrugh and Mr. Congreve, after they had held it about one year, threw up the menagement of it as an unprofitable post, after which a license for acting

was not thought worth any gentleman's asking for, and almost seem'd to go a-begging, 'till some time after, by the care, application, and industry of three actors, it became so prosperous, and the profits so considerable, that it created a new place, and a sine-cure of a thousand pounds a year,[1] which the labour of those actors constantly paid to such persons as had from time to time merit or interest enough to get their names inserted as fourth menagers in a license with them for acting plays, etc. a preferment that many a Sir Francis Wronghead would have jump'd at.[2] But to go on with my story. This endeavour of the patentees to suppress the comedians acting in the Hay-Market proving ineffectual, and no hopes of a reunion then appearing, the remains of the company left in Drury-Lane were reduced to a very low condition. At this time a third purchaser, Charles Fleetwood, Esq., stept in; who judging the best time to buy was when the stock was at the lowest price, struck up a bargain at once for

[1] Cibber again alludes to this in Vol. II. Chap. IV.

[2] Sir Francis Wronghead is a character in "The Provoked Husband," a country squire who comes to London to seek a place at court. In Act iv. Sir Francis relates his interview with a certain great man: "Sir Francis, says my lord, pray what sort of a place may you ha' turned your thoughts upon? My lord, says I, beggars must not be chusers; but ony place, says I, about a thousand a-year, will be well enough to be doing with, till something better falls in — for I thowght it would not look well to stond haggling with him at first."

five parts in six of the patent;[1] and, at the same time, gave the revolted comedians their own terms to return and come under his government in Drury-Lane, where they now continue to act at very ample sallaries, as I am informed, in 1738.[2] But (as I have observ'd) the late cause of the prosecuted comedian having gone so strongly in his favour, and the house in Goodman's Fields, too, continuing to act with as little authority unmolested; these so tolerated companies gave encouragement to a broken wit to collect a fourth company, who for some time acted plays in the Hay-Market, which house the united Drury-Lane comedians had lately quitted. This enterprising person, I say (whom I do not chuse to name,[3]

[1] Giffard seems to have retained his sixth part.

[2] Some account of the entire dispute between Highmore and his actors will be found in my supplement to this book.

[3] This "broken wit" was Henry Fielding, between whom and Cibber there was war to the knife, Fielding taking every opportunity of mocking at Colley and attacking his works.

Mr. Austin Dobson, in his "Fielding," page 66, writes: "When the *Champion* was rather more than a year old, Colley Cibber published his famous 'Apology.' To the attacks made upon him by Fielding at different times he had hitherto printed no reply — perhaps he had no opportunity of doing so. But in his eighth chapter, when speaking of the causes which led to the licensing act, he takes occasion to refer to his assailant in terms which Fielding must have found exceedingly galling. He carefully abstained from mentioning his name, on the ground that it could do him no good, and was of no importance; but he described him as 'a broken wit,'" etc.

Mr. Dobson, on page 69, gives his approval to the theory that

unless it could be to his advantage, or that it were of importance) had sense enough to know that the best plays with bad actors would turn but to a very poor account; and therefore found it necessary to give the publick some pieces of an extraordinary kind, the poetry of which he conceiv'd ought to be so strong that the greatest dunce of an actor could not spoil it. He knew, too, that as he was in haste to get money, it would take up less time to be intrepidly abusive than decently entertaining; that to draw the mob after him he must rake the channel[1] and pelt their superiors; that to shew himself somebody he must come up to Juvenal's advice and stand the consequence:

"Aude aliquid brevibus Gyaris, et carcere dignum
Si vis esse aliquis —"

—*Juv. Sat.* I.[2]

Such, then, was the mettlesome modesty he set out with; upon this principle he produc'd several

"Fielding had openly expressed resentment at being described by Cibber as 'a broken wit,' without being mentioned by name."

[1] The use of "channel," meaning "gutter," is obsolete in England; but I am sure that I have heard it used in that sense in Scotland. Shakespeare in "King Henry the Sixth," third part, act ii. sc. 2, has,

"As if a channel should be called the sea."

And in Marlowe's "Edward the Second," act i. sc. 1, occur the lines:

"Throw off his golden mitre, rend his stole,
And in the channel christen him anew."

[2] Juvenal, i. 73.

frank and free farces that seem'd to knock all distinctions of mankind on the head. Religion, laws, government, priests, judges, and ministers, were all laid flat at the feet of this Herculean satyrist! This Drawcansir in wit,[1] that spared neither friend nor foe! who to make his poetical fame immortal, like another Erostratus, set fire to his stage by writing up to an act of Parliament to demolish it.[2] I shall not give the particular strokes of his ingenuity a chance to be remembred by reciting them; it may be enough to say, in general terms, they were so openly flagrant, that the wisdom of the legislature thought it high time to take a proper notice of them.[3]

[1] Mr. Dobson ("Fielding," page 67) says: "He [Cibber] called him, either in allusion to his stature, or his pseudonym in the *Champion*, a 'Herculean satyrist,' a 'Drawcansir in wit.'"

[2] Fielding's political satires, in such pieces as "Pasquin" and "The Historical Register for 1736," contributed largely to the passing of the act of 1737, although "The Golden Rump" was the ostensible cause.

[3] Fielding, in the *Champion* for Tuesday, April 22d, 1740, says of Cibber's refusal to quote from "Pasquin" — "the good parent seems to imagine that he hath produced, as well as my Lord Clarendon, a Κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί; for he refuses to quote anything out of 'Pasquin,' lest he should give it a chance of being remembered."

Mr. Dobson ("Fielding," page 69) says Fielding "never seems to have wholly forgotten his animosity to the actor, to whom there are frequent references in 'Joseph Andrews;' and, as late as 1749, he is still found harping on 'the withered laurel' in a letter to Lyttelton. Even in his last work, the 'Voyage to Lisbon,' Cibber's name is mentioned. The origin of this protracted feud is obscure; but, apart from want of sympathy, it must prob-

Having now shewn by what means there came to be four theatres, besides a fifth for operas, in London, all open at the same time, and that while they were so numerous it was evident some of them must have starv'd unless they fed upon the trash and filth of buffoonry and licentiousness; I now come, as I promis'd, to speak of that necessary law which has reduced their number and prevents the repetition of such abuses in those that remain open for the publick recreation.

While this law was in debate a lively spirit and uncommon eloquence was employ'd against it.[1] It was urg'd that one of the greatest goods we can enjoy is liberty. (This we may grant to be an incontestable truth, without its being the least objection to this law.) It was said, too, that to bring the stage under the restraint of a licenser was leading the way to an attack upon the liberty of the press. This amounts but to a jealousy at best, which I hope and believe all honest Englishmen have as much reason to think a groundless, as to fear it is a just jealousy. For the stage and the press, I shall endeavour to shew, are very different weapons to wound with. If a great man could be no more injured by being personally ridicul'd or made contemptible in a play, than by the same matter, only printed and read against him in a

ably be sought for in some early misunderstanding between the two in their capacities of manager and author."

[1] By Lord Chesterfield.

pamphlet or the strongest verse; then, indeed, the stage and the press might pretend to be upon an equal foot of liberty. But when the wide difference between these two liberties comes to be explain'd and consider'd, I dare say we shall find the injuries from one capable of being ten times more severe and formidable than from the other. Let us see, at least, if the case will not be vastly alter'd. Read what Mr. Collier in his "Defence" of his "Short View of the Stage," etc., page 25, says to this point; he sets this difference in a clear light. These are his words:

"The satyr of a comedian and another poet have a different effect upon reputation. A character of disadvantages upon the stage, makes a stronger impression than elsewhere. Reading is but hearing at the second hand; now hearing, at the best, is a more languid conveyance than sight. For as Horace observes:

> "'Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
> Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.'[1]

The eye is much more affecting, and strikes deeper into the memory than the ear. Besides, upon the stage both the senses are in conjunction. The life of the action fortifies the object, and awakens the mind to take hold of it. Thus a dramatick abuse is rivetted in the audience, a jest is improv'd into an argument, and rallying grows up into rea-

[1] Horace, "*Ars Poetica*," 180.

son. Thus a character of scandal becomes almost indelible, a man goes for a blockhead upon content; and he that's made a fool in a play is often made one for his life-time. 'Tis true he passes for such only among the prejudiced and unthinking; but these are no inconsiderable division of mankind. For these reasons, I humbly conceive the stage stands in need of a great deal of discipline and restraint. To give them an unlimited range, is in effect to make them masters of all moral distinctions, and to lay honour and religion at their mercy. To shew greatness ridiculous, is the way to lose the use, and abate the value, of the quality. Things made little in jest will soon be so in earnest; for laughing and esteem are seldom bestow'd on the same object."

If this was truth and reason (as sure it was) forty years ago, will it not carry the same conviction with it to these days, when there came to be a much stronger call for a reformation of the stage, than when this author wrote against it, or perhaps than was ever known since the English stage had a being? And now let us ask another question. Does not the general opinion of mankind suppose that the honour and reputation of a minister is, or ought to be, as dear to him as his life? Yet when the law, in Queen Anne's time, had made even an unsuccessful attempt upon the life of a minister capital, could any reason be found that the fame and honour of his character should not be under

equal protection? Was the wound that Guiscard gave to the late Lord Oxford, when a minister,[1] a greater injury than the theatrical insult which was offer'd to a later minister, in a more valuable part, his character? Was it not as high time, then, to take this dangerous weapon of mimical insolence and defamation out of the hands of a mad poet, as to wrest the knife from the lifted hand of the murderer? And is not that law of a milder nature which prevents a crime, than that which punishes it after it is committed? May not one think it amazing that the liberty of defaming lawful power and dignity should have been so eloquently contended for, or especially that this liberty ought to triumph in a theatre, where the most able, the most innocent, and most upright person must himself be, while the wound is given, defenceless? How long must a man so injur'd lie bleeding, before the pain and anguish of his fame (if it suffers wrongfully) can be dispell'd? Or say he had deserv'd reproof and publick accusation, yet the weight and greatness of his office never can deserve it from a publick stage, where the lowest malice by sawcy parallels and abusive inuendoes may do everything but name him. But alas! Liberty is so tender, so chaste a virgin, that it seems not to suffer her to do irreparable injuries with impunity is a violation of her! It cannot sure be a principle of liberty that would turn the stage

[1] Guiscard's attack on Harley occurred in 1711.

into a court of enquiry, that would let the partial applauses of a vulgar audience give sentence upon the conduct of authority, and put impeachments into the mouth of a harlequin? Will not every impartial man think that malice, envy, faction, and misrule might have too much advantage over lawful power, if the range of such a stage-liberty were unlimited and insisted on to be enroll'd among the glorious rights of an English subject?

I remember much such another ancient liberty, which many of the good people of England were once extremely fond of; I mean that of throwing squibs and crackers at all spectators without distinction upon a Lord Mayor's Day; but about forty years ago a certain nobleman happening to have one of his eyes burnt out by this mischievous merriment, it occasion'd a penal law to prevent those sorts of jests from being laugh'd at for the future: yet I have never heard that the most zealous patriot ever thought such a law was the least restraint upon our liberty.

If I am ask'd why I am so voluntary a champion for the honour of this law that has limited the number of play-houses, and which now can no longer concern me as a professor of the stage, I reply, that it being a law so nearly relating to the theatre, it seems not at all foreign to my history to have taken notice of it; and as I have farther promised to give the publick a true portrait of my mind, I ought fairly to let them see how far I am,

or am not, a blockhead, when I pretend to talk of serious matters that may be judg'd so far above my capacity. Nor will it in the least discompose me, whether my observations are contemn'd or applauded. A blockhead is not always an unhappy fellow, and if the world will not flatter us, we can flatter ourselves; perhaps, too, it will be as difficult to convince us we are in the wrong, as that you wiser gentlemen are one tittle the better for your knowledge. It is yet a question with me whether we weak heads have not as much pleasure, too, in giving our shallow reason a little exercise, as those clearer brains have that are allow'd to dive into the deepest doubts and mysteries; to reflect or form a judgment upon remarkable things past is as delightful to me as it is to the gravest politician to penetrate into what is present, or to enter into speculations upon what is, or is not, likely to come. Why are histories written, if all men are not to judge of them? Therefore, if my reader has no more to do than I have, I have a chance for his being as willing to have a little more upon the same subject as I am to give it him.

When direct arguments against this bill were found too weak, recourse was had to dissuasive ones. It was said that this restraint upon the stage would not remedy the evil complain'd of: that a play refus'd to be licensed would still be printed, with double advantage, when it should

be insinuated that it was refused for some strokes of wit, etc., and would be more likely then to have its effect among the people. However natural this consequence may seem, I doubt it will be very difficult to give a printed satyr or libel half the force or credit of an acted one. The most artful or notorious lye or strain'd allusion that ever slander'd a great man, may be read by some people with a smile of contempt, or, at worst, it can impose but on one person at once; but when the words of the same plausible stuff shall be repeated on a theatre, the wit of it among a crowd of hearers is liable to be overvalued, and may unite and warm a whole body of the malicious or ignorant into a plaudit; nay, the partial claps of only twenty ill-minded persons among several hundreds of silent hearers shall, and often have been, mistaken for a general approbation, and frequently draw into their party the indifferent or inapprehensive, who, rather than be thought not to understand the conceit, will laugh with the laughers and join in the triumph! But alas! the quiet reader of the same ingenious matter can only like for himself; and the poison has a much slower operation upon the body of a people when it is so retail'd out, than when sold to a full audience by wholesale. The single reader, too, may happen to be a sensible or unprejudiced person; and then the merry dose, meeting with the antidote of a sound judgment, perhaps may have no operation

at all. With such a one the wit of the most ingenious satyr will only by its intrinsick truth or value gain upon his approbation; or if it be worth an answer, a printed falsehood may possibly be confounded by printed proofs against it. But against contempt and scandal, heighten'd and colour'd by the skill of an actor ludicrously infusing it into a multitude, there is no immediate defence to be made or equal reparation to be had for it; for it would be but a poor satisfaction at last, after lying long patient under the injury, that time only is to shew (which would probably be the case) that the author of it was a desperate indigent that did it for bread. How much less dangerous or offensive, then, is the written than the acted scandal! The impression the comedian gives to it is a kind of double stamp upon the poet's paper, that raises it to ten times the intrinsick value. Might we not strengthen this argument, too, even by the eloquence that seem'd to have opposed this law? I will say for myself, at least, that when I came to read the printed arguments against it, I could scarce believe they were the same that had amaz'd and raised such admiration in me when they had the advantage of a lively elocution, and of that grace and spirit which gave strength and lustre to them in the delivery!

Upon the whole, if the stage ought ever to have been reform'd, if to place a power somewhere of restraining its immoralities was not in-

consistent with the liberties of a civilis'd people (neither of which, sure, any moral man of sense can dispute), might it not have shewn a spirit too poorly prejudiced, to have rejected so rational a law only because the honour and office of a minister might happen, in some small measure, to be protected by it?[1]

But however little weight there may be in the observations I have made upon it, I shall, for my own part, always think them just; unless I should live to see (which I do not expect) some future set of upright ministers use their utmost endeavours to repeal it.

And now we have seen the consequence of what many people are apt to contend for, variety of play-houses. How was it possible so many could honestly subsist on what was fit to be seen? Their extraordinary number, of course, reduc'd them to live upon the gratification of such hearers as they knew would be best pleased with publick offence; and publick offence, of what kind soever, will always be a good reason for making laws to restrain it.

To conclude, let us now consider this law in a quite different light; let us leave the political

[1] Genest (iii. 521) remarks, "If the power of the licenser had been laid under proper regulations, all would have been right." The whole objection to the licenser is simply that he is under no regulations whatever. He is a perfectly irresponsible authority, and one from whose decisions there is no appeal.

part of it quite out of the question; what advantage could either the spectators of plays or the masters of play-houses have gain'd by its having never been made? How could the same stock of plays supply four theatres, which (without such additional entertainments as a nation of common sense ought to be ashamed of) could not well support two? Satiety must have been the natural consequence of the same plays being twice as often repeated as now they need be; and satiety puts an end to all tastes that the mind of man can delight in. Had therefore this law been made seven years ago, I should not have parted with my share in the patent under a thousand pounds more than I received for it [1] — so that, as far as I am able to judge, both the publick as spectators, and the patentees as undertakers, are, or might be, in a way of being better entertain'd and more considerable gainers by it.

I now return to the state of the stage, where I left it, about the year 1697, from whence this pursuit of its immoralities has led me farther than I first design'd to have follow'd it.

[1] Cibber received three thousand guineas from Highmore for his share in the patent. (See Victor's "History," i. 8.)

CHAPTER IX.

A Small Apology for Writing On — The Different State of the Two Companies — Wilks Invited Over from Dublin — Estcourt, from the Same Stage, the Winter Following — Mrs. Oldfield's First Admission to the Theatre Royal — Her Character — The Great Theatre in the Hay-Market Built for Betterton's Company — It Answers Not Their Expectation — Some Observations upon It — A Theatrical State Secret.

NOW begin to doubt that the *gayeté du cœur* in which I first undertook this work may have drawn me into a more laborious amusement than I shall know how to away with. For though I cannot say I have yet jaded my vanity, it is not impossible but by this time the most candid of my readers may want a little breath; especially when they consider that all this load I have heap'd upon their patience contains but seven years of the forty-three I pass'd upon the stage, the history of which period I have enjoyn'd myself to transmit to the judgment (or oblivion) of posterity.[1] However, even my dul-

[1] "The Laureat," page 72: "Indeed, laureat, notwithstanding what thou may'st dream of the immortality of this work of thine, and bestowing the same on thy favourites by recording them here, thou mayst, old as thou art, live to see thy precious labours become the vile wrappers of pastry-grocers and chand-

ness will find somebody to do it right: if my reader is an ill-natur'd one, he will be as much pleased to find me a dunce in my old age as possibly he may have been to prove me a brisk blockhead in my youth; but if he has no gall to gratify, and would (for his simple amusement) as well know how the play-houses went on forty years ago as how they do now, I will honestly tell him the rest of my story as well as I can. Lest therefore the frequent digressions that have broke in upon it may have entangled his memory, I must beg leave just to throw together the heads of what I have already given him, that he may again recover the clue of my discourse.

Let him then remember, from the year 1660 to 1682,[1] the various fortune of the (then) king's and duke's two famous companies; their being reduced to one united; the distinct characters I have given of thirteen actors, which in the year 1690 were the most famous then remaining of them; the cause of their being again divided in 1695, and the consequences of that division 'till 1697; from whence I shall lead them to our second union in — hold, let me see — ay, it was in that memorable year when the two kingdoms of England and Scot-

lery wares." The issue of the present edition of Cibber's "Apology" is sufficient commentary on "The Laureat's" ill-natured prophecy.

[1] Cibber prints 1684, repeating his former blunder. (See p. 154.)

land were made one. And I remember a particular that confirms me I am right in my chronology; for the play of "Hamlet" being acted soon after, Estcourt, who then took upon him to say anything, added a fourth line to Shakespear's prologue to the play, in that play which originally consisted but of three, but Estcourt made it run thus:

> "For us, and for our tragedy,
> Here stooping to your clemency,
> [This being a year of unity,]
> We beg your hearing patiently." [1]

This new chronological line coming unexpectedly upon the audience, was received with applause, tho' several grave faces look'd a little out of humour at it. However, by this fact, it is plain our theatrical union happen'd in 1707.[2] But to speak of it in its place I must go a little back again.

From 1697 to this union both companies went on without any memorable change in their affairs,

[1] The first play acted by the united company was "Hamlet." In this Estcourt is cast for the gravedigger, so that if Cibber's anecdote is accurate, as no doubt it is, Estcourt must have "doubled" the gravedigger and the speaker of the prologue.

[2] The first edition reads "1708," and in the next chapter Cibber says 1708. In point of fact, the first performance by the united company took place 15th January, 1708. This does not make Estcourt's "gag" incorrect, for though we now should not consider May, 1707, and the following January in the same year, yet up to 1752, when the style was changed in England, they were so.

unless it were that Betterton's people (however good in their kind) were most of them too far advanc'd in years to mend; and tho' we in Drury Lane were too young to be excellent, we were not too old to be better. But what will not satiety depreciate? For though I must own and avow that in our highest prosperity I always thought we were greatly their inferiors, yet, by our good fortune of being seen in quite new lights, which several new-written plays had shewn us in, we now began to make a considerable stand against them. One good new play to a rising company is of inconceivable value. In "Oroonoko"[1] (and why may I not name another, tho' it be my own?), in "Love's Last Shift," and in the sequel of it, the "Relapse," several of our people shew'd themselves in a new style of acting, in which nature had not as yet been seen. I cannot here forget a misfortune that befel our society about this time, by the loss of a young actor, Hildebrand Horden,[2]

[1] Southerne's "Oroonoko" was produced at Drury Lane in 1696.

[2] Of Horden we know little more than Cibber tells us. He seems to have been on the stage only for a year or two; and during 1696 only, at Drury Lane, does his name appear to important parts. Davies ("Dram. Misc.," iii. 443) says Horden "was bred a scholar: he complimented George Powell, in a Latin encomium on his treacherous brothers."

The *London News-Letter*, 20th May, 1696, says: "On Monday Capt. Burges who kill'd Mr. Fane, and was found guilty of manslaughter at the Old Baily, kill'd Mr. Harding a comedian

who was kill'd at the bar of the Rose Tavern,[1] in a frivolous, rash, accidental quarrel; for which a late resident at Venice, Colonel Burgess, and several

in a quarrel at the Rose Tavern in Hatton [should be Covent] Garden, and is taken into custody."

In "Luttrell's Diary," on Tuesday, 19th May, 1696, is noted: "Captain Burgesse, convicted last sessions of manslaughter for killing Mr. Fane, is committed to the Gatehouse for killing Mr. Horden, of the playhouse, last night in Covent Garden."

And on Tuesday, 30th November, 1697, "Captain Burgesse, who killed Mr. Horden the player, has obtained his Majesties pardon."

[1] This tavern seems to have been very near Drury Lane Theatre, and to have been a favourite place of resort after the play. In the epilogue to the "Constant Couple" the Rose Tavern is mentioned:

> "Now all depart, each his respective way,
> To spend an evening's chat upon the play;
> Some to Hippolito's; one homeward goes,
> And one with loving she, retires to th' Rose."

In the "Comparison Between the Two Stages" one scene is laid in the Rose Tavern, and from it we gather that the house was of a very bad character:

"*Ramb.* Defend us! what a hurry of sin is in this house!

Sull. Drunkenness, which is the proper iniquity of a tavern, is here the most excusable sin; so many other sins overrun it, 'tis hardly seen in the crowd. . . .

Sull. This house is the very camp of sin; the devil sets up his black standard in the faces of these hungry harlots, and to enter into their trenches is going down to the bottomless pit according to the letter." — *Comp.*, p. 140.

Pepys mentions the Rose more than once. On 18th May, 1668, the first day of Sedley's play, "The Mulberry Garden," the diarist, having secured his place in the pit, and feeling hungry, "did slip out, getting a boy to keep my place; and to the Rose

other persons of distinction, took their tryals, and were acquitted. This young man had almost every natural gift that could promise an excellent actor; he had besides a good deal of table-wit and humour, with a handsome person, and was every day rising into publick favour. Before he was bury'd, it was observable that two or three days together several of the fair sex, well dress'd, came in masks (then frequently worn), and some in their own coaches, to visit this theatrical heroe in his shrowd. He was the elder son of Doctor Horden, minister of Twickenham, in Middlesex. But this misfortune was soon repair'd by the return of Wilks from Dublin (who upon this young man's death was sent for over) and liv'd long enough among us to enjoy that approbation from which the other was so unhappily cut off. The winter following,[1] Estcourt, the famous mimick, of whom I have already spoken, had the same invitation from Ireland, where he had commenc'd actor. His first part here, at the Theatre Royal, was the Spanish Friar, in which, tho' he had remembred every look and motion of the late Tony Leigh so far as to put the spectator very

Tavern, and there got half a breast of mutton, off the spit, and dined all alone. And so to the play again."

[1] Cibber's chronology cannot be reconciled with what we believe to be facts. Horden was killed in 1696; Wilks seems to have come to England not earlier than the end of 1698, while it is, I should say, certain that Estcourt did not appear before 1704. I can only suppose that Cibber, who is very reckless in his dates, is here particularly confused.

much in mind of him, yet it was visible through the whole, notwithstanding his exactness in the outlines, the true spirit that was to fill up the figure was not the same, but unskilfully dawb'd on, like a child's painting upon the face of a metzotinto: it was too plain to the judicious that the conception was not his own, but imprinted in his memory by another, of whom he only presented a dead likeness.[1] But these were defects not so obvious to common spectators; no wonder, therefore, if by his being much sought after in private companies, he met with a sort of indulgence, not to say partiality, for what he sometimes did upon the stage.

In the year 1699, Mrs. Oldfield was first taken into the house, where she remain'd about a twelvemonth almost a mute[2] and unheeded, 'till Sir John Vanbrugh, who first recommended her, gave her the part of Alinda in the "Pilgrim" revis'd. This gentle character happily became that want of confidence which is inseparable from young beginners, who, without it, seldom arrive to any excellence. Notwithstanding, I own I was then so far deceiv'd in my opinion of her, that I thought she had little more than her person that appear'd necessary to the forming a good actress; for she set out with

[1] For Leigh's playing of this character, see *ante*, p. 205.

[2] Curll, in his "Life of Mrs. Oldfield," says that the only part she played, previous to appearing as Alinda, was Candiope in "Secret Love." She played Alinda in 1700.

so extraordinary a diffidence, that it kept her too despondingly down to a formal, plain, (not to say) flat manner of speaking. Nor could the silver tone of her voice 'till after some time incline my ear to any hope in her favour. But publick approbation is the warm weather of a theatrical plant, which will soon bring it forward to whatever perfection nature has design'd it. However, Mrs. Oldfield (perhaps for want of fresh parts) seem'd to come but slowly forward 'till the year 1703.[1] Our company that summer acted at the Bath during the residence of Queen Anne at that place. At that time it happen'd that Mrs. Verbruggen, by reason of her last sickness (of which she some few months after dy'd), was left in London; and though most of her parts were, of course, to be dispos'd of, yet so earnest was the female scramble for them that only one of them fell to the share of Mrs. Oldfield, that of Leonora in "Sir Courtly Nice," a character of good plain sense, but not over elegantly written. It was in this part Mrs. Oldfield surpris'd me into an opinion of her having all the innate powers of a good actress, though they were yet but in the bloom of what they promis'd. Before she had acted this part I had so cold an expectation from her abilities, that she

[1] In 1702 Gildon, in the "Comparison Between the Two Stages" (p. 200), includes Mrs. Oldfield among the "meer rubbish that ought to be swept off the stage with the filth and dust."

could scarce prevail with me to rehearse with her the scenes she was chiefly concern'd in with Sir Courtly, which I then acted. However, we ran them over with a mutual inadvertency of one another. I seem'd careless, as concluding that any assistance I could give her would be to little or no purpose; and she mutter'd out her words in a sort of mifty[1] manner at my low opinion of her. But when the play came to be acted, she had a just occasion to triumph over the error of my judgment, by the (almost) amazement that her unexpected performance awak'd me to; so forward and sudden a step into nature I had never seen; and what made her performance more valuable was, that I knew it all proceeded from her own understanding, untaught and unassisted by any one more experienc'd actor.[2] Perhaps it may not be unacceptable, if I enlarge a little more upon the theatrical character of so memorable an actress.[3]

[1] "Miff," a colloquial expression signifying "a slight degree of resentment."

[2] Cibber is pleasantly candid in allowing that he had no share in Mrs. Oldfield's success. The temptation to assume some credit for teaching her something must have been great.

[3] Mrs. Anne Oldfield, born about 1683, was introduced to Vanbrugh by Farquhar, who accidentally heard her reading aloud, and was struck by her dramatic style. Cibber gives so full an account of her that it is only necessary to add that she made her last appearance on 28th April, 1730, at Drury Lane, and that she died on the 23d October in the same year. It was of Mrs. Oldfield that Pope wrote the often-quoted lines ("Moral Essays," Epistle I., part iii.):—

Though this part of Leonora in itself was of so little value, that when she got more into esteem it was one of the several she gave away to inferior actresses, yet it was the first (as I have observ'd) that corrected my judgment of her, and confirm'd me in a strong belief that she could not fail in very little time of being what she was afterwards allow'd to be, the foremost ornament of our theatre. Upon this unexpected sally, then, of the power and disposition of so unforeseen an actress, it was that I again took up the two first acts of the "Careless Husband," which I had written the summer before, and had thrown aside in despair of having justice done to the character of Lady Betty Modish by any one woman then among us; Mrs. Verbruggen being now in a very declining state of health, and Mrs. Bracegirdle out of my reach and engag'd in another company. But, as I have said, Mrs. Oldfield having thrown out such new proffers of a genius, I was no longer at a loss for support; my doubts were dispell'd, and I had now a new call to finish it. Accordingly, the "Care-

"Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke
(Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke),
No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
Wrap my cold limbs, and shade my lifeless face:
One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead —
And — Betty — give this cheek a little red."

I may note that, though Cibber enlarges chiefly on her comedy acting, she acted many parts in tragedy with the greatest success.

less Husband"[1] took its fate upon the stage the winter following, in 1704. Whatever favourable reception this comedy has met with from the publick, it would be unjust in me not to place a large share of it to the account of Mrs. Oldfield; not only from the uncommon excellence of her action, but even from her personal manner of conversing. There are many sentiments in the character of Lady Betty Modish that I may almost say were originally her own, or only dress'd with a little more care than when they negligently fell from her lively humour. Had her birth plac'd her in a higher rank of life, she had certainly appear'd in reality what in this play she only excellently acted, — an agreeable, gay woman of quality a little too conscious of her natural attractions. I have often seen her in private societies, where women of the best rank might have borrow'd some part of her behaviour without the least diminution of their sense or dignity. And this very morning, where I am now writing at the Bath, November 11, 1738,

[1] Produced 7th December, 1704, at Drury Lane.

"The Careless Husband."

Lord Morelove	Mr. Powel.
Lord Foppington	Mr. Cibber.
Sir Charles Easy	Mr. Wilks.
Lady Betty Modish . . .	Mrs. Oldfield.
Lady Easy	Mrs. Knight.
Lady Graveairs	Mrs. Moore.
Mrs. Edging	Mrs. Lucas.

the same words were said of her by a lady of condition, whose better judgment of her personal merit in that light has embolden'd me to repeat them. After her success in this character of higher life, all that nature had given her of the actress seem'd to have risen to its full perfection. But the variety of her power could not be known 'till she was seen in variety of characters; which, as fast as they fell to her, she equally excell'd in. Authors had much more from her performance than they had reason to hope for from what they had written for her; and none had less than another, but as their genius in the parts they allotted her was more or less elevated.

In the wearing of her person she was particularly fortunate; her figure was always improving to her thirty-sixth year; but her excellence in acting was never at a stand. And the last new character she shone in (Lady Townly) was a proof that she was still able to do more, if more could have been done for her.[1] She had one mark of good sense, rarely known in any actor of either sex but herself. I have observ'd several, with promising dispositions, very desirous of instruction at their first setting out; but no sooner had they found their

[1] Mrs. Oldfield played Lady Townly in the "Provoked Husband," 10th January, 1728. I presume that Cibber means that this was her last important original part, for she was the original representative of Sophonisba (by James Thomson) and other characters after January, 1728.

least account in it, than they were as desirous of being left to their own capacity, which they then thought would be disgrac'd by their seeming to want any farther assistance. But this was not Mrs. Oldfield's way of thinking; for, to the last year of her life, she never undertook any part she lik'd without being importunately desirous of having all the helps in it that another could possibly give her. By knowing so much herself, she found how much more there was of nature yet needful to be known. Yet it was a hard matter to give her any hint that she was not able to take or improve. With all this merit she was tractable and less presuming in her station than several that had not half her pretensions to be troublesome. But she lost nothing by her easy conduct; she had everything she ask'd, which she took care should be always reasonable, because she hated as much to be grudg'd as deny'd a civility. Upon her extraordinary action in the "Provoked Husband," [1] the menagers made her a present of fifty

[1] "The Provoked Husband."

Lord Townly	Mr. Wilks.
Lady Townly	Mrs. Oldfield.
Lady Grace	Mrs. Porter.
Mr. Manley	Mr. Mills, Sen.
Sir Francis Wronghead .	Mr. Cibber, Sen.
Lady Wronghead . . .	Mrs. Thurmond.
Squire Richard . . .	Young Wetherelt.
Miss Jenny	Mrs. Cibber.
John Moody	Mr. Miller.

guineas more than her agreement, which never was more than a verbal one; for they knew she was above deserting them to engage upon any other stage, and she was conscious they would never think it their interest to give her cause of complaint. In the last two months of her illness, when she was no longer able to assist them, she declin'd receiving her sallary, tho' by her agreement she was entitled to it. Upon the whole she was, to the last scene she acted, the delight of her spectators. Why then may we not close her character with the same indulgence with which Horace speaks of a commendable poem:

> "Ubi plura nitent — non ego paucis
> Offendar maculis —[1]
> "Where in the whole such various beauties shine,
> 'Twere idle upon errors to refine."[2]

COUNT BASSET	Mr. Bridgewater.
MRS. MOTHERLY . . .	Mrs. Moore.
MYRTILLA	Mrs. Grace.
MRS. TRUSTY	Mrs. Mills.

Vanbrugh left behind him nearly four acts of a play entitled "A Journey to London," which Cibber completed, calling the finished work "The Provoked Husband." It was produced at Drury Lane on 10th January, 1728.

[1] "Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis." — *Horace*, "*Ars Poetica*," 351.

[2] "The Laureat," p. 57: "But I can see no occasion you have to mention any errors. She had fewer as an actress than any; and neither you, nor I, have any right to enquire into her conduct anywhere else."

What more might be said of her as an actress may be found in the preface to the "Provok'd Husband," to which I refer the reader.[1]

[1] The following is the passage referred to:

"But there is no doing right to Mrs. Oldfield, without putting people in mind of what others, of great merit, have wanted to come near her — 'tis not enough to say, she here outdid her usual excellence. I might therefore justly leave her to the constant admiration of those spectators who have the pleasure of living while she is an actress. But as this is not the only time she has been the life of what I have given the public, so, perhaps, my saying a little more of so memorable an actress may give this play a chance to be read when the people of this age shall be ancestors. May it therefore give emulation to our successors of the stage, to know, that to the ending of the year 1727, a cotemporary comedian relates, that Mrs. Oldfield was then in her highest excellence of action, happy in all the rarely found requisites that meet in one person to complete them for the stage. She was in stature just rising to that height where the graceful can only begin to show itself; of a lively aspect, and a command in her mien, that like the principal figure in the finest painting, first seizes, and longest delights the eye of the spectators. Her voice was sweet, strong, piercing, and melodious; her pronunciation voluble, distinct, and musical; and her emphasis always placed, where the spirit of the sense, in her periods, only demanded it. If she delighted more in the higher comic, than in the tragic strain, 'twas because the last is too often written in a lofty disregard of nature. But in characters of modern practised life, she found occasion to add the particular air and manner which distinguished the different humours she presented; whereas, in tragedy, the manner of speaking varies as little as the blank verse it is written in. She had one peculiar happiness from nature; she looked and maintained the agreeable, at a time when other fine women only raise admirers by their understanding. The spectator was always as much informed by her eyes as her elocution; for the look is the only proof that an actor rightly conceives what he utters, there being scarce an instance, where

With the acquisition, then, of so advanc'd a comedian as Mrs. Oldfield, and the addition of one so much in favour as Wilks, and by the visible improvement of our other actors, as Penkethman, Johnson, Bullock, and I think I may venture to name myself in the number (but in what rank I leave to the judgment of those who have been my spectators), the reputation of our company began to get ground. Mrs. Oldfield and Mr. Wilks, by their frequently playing against one another in our best comedies, very happily supported that humour and vivacity which is so peculiar to our English stage. The French, our only modern competitors, seldom give us their lovers in such various lights. In their comedies (however lively a people they are by nature) their lovers are generally constant, simple sighers, both of a mind, and equally distress'd about the difficulties of their coming together; which naturally makes their conversation so serious that they are seldom good company to their auditors. And tho' I allow them many other

the eyes do their part, that the elocution is known to be faulty. The qualities she had acquired, were the genteel and the elegant; the one in her air, and the other in her dress, never had her equal on the stage; and the ornaments she herself provided (particularly in this play) seemed in all respects the paraphernalia of a woman of quality. And of that sort were the characters she chiefly excelled in; but her natural good sense, and lively turn of conversation, made her way so easy to ladies of the highest rank, that it is a less wonder if, on the stage, she sometimes was, what might have become the finest woman in real life to have supported." [Bell's edition.]

beauties of which we are too negligent, yet our variety of humour has excellencies that all their valuable observance of rules have never yet attain'd to. By these advantages, then, we began to have an equal share of the politer sort of spectators, who, for several years, could not allow our company to stand in any comparison with the other. But theatrical favour, like publick commerce, will sometimes deceive the best judgments by an unaccountable change of its channel; the best commodities are not always known to meet with the best markets. To this decline of the old company many accidents might contribute; as the too distant situation of their theatre, or their want of a better, for it was not then in the condition it now is, but small, and poorly fitted up within the walls of a tennis quaree court, which is of the lesser sort.[1] Booth, who was then a young actor among them, has often told me of the difficulties Betterton then labour'd under and complain'd of: how impracticable he found it to keep their body to that common order which was necessary for their support;[2] of their relying too much upon their

[1] Mr. Julian Marshall, in his "Annals of Tennis," p. 34, describes the two different sorts of tennis courts — "that which was called *le quarré*, or the square; and the other with the *dedans*, which is almost the same as that of the present day." Cibber is thus correct in mentioning that the court was one of the lesser sort.

[2] Interesting confirmation of Cibber's statement is furnished by an edict of the lord chamberlain, dated 11th November, 1700,

intrinsick merit; and though but few of them were young even when they first became their own masters, yet they were all now ten years older, and consequently more liable to fall into an inactive negligence, or were only separately diligent for themselves in the sole regard of their benefit-plays, which several of their principals knew, at worst, would raise them contributions that would more than tolerably subsist them for the current year. But as these were too precarious expedients to be always depended upon, and brought in nothing to the general support of the numbers who were at sallaries under them, they were reduc'd to have recourse to foreign novelties; L'Abbeè, Balon, and Mademoiselle Subligny,[1]

by which Betterton is ordered "to take upon him ye sole management" of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company, there having been great disorders, "for want of sufficient authority to keep them to their duty." See David Craufurd's preface to "Courtship à la Mode" (1700), for an account of the disorganised state of the Lincoln's Inn Fields company. He says that though Betterton did his best, some of the actors neither learned their parts nor attended rehearsals; and he therefore withdrew his comedy and took it to Drury Lane, where it was promptly produced.

[1] Mons. Castil-Blaze, in his "La Danse et les Ballets," 1832, p. 153, writes: "Ballon danse avec énergie et vivacité; Mademoiselle de Subligny se fait généralement admirer pour sa danse noble et gracieuse." Mlle. Subligny was one of the first women who were dancers by profession. "La demoiselle Subligny parut peu de temps après la demoiselle Fontaine [1681], et fut aussi fort applaudie pour sa danse; mais elle quitta le théâtre, en 1705, et mourut après l'année 1736." — *Histoire de l'Opéra.* Of Mons. L'Abbé I have been unable to discover any critical notice.

three of the then most famous dancers of the French Opera, were, at several times, brought over at extraordinary rates, to revive that sickly appetite which plain sense and nature had satiated.[1] But alas! there was no recovering to a sound constitution by those mere costly cordials; the novelty of a dance was but of a short duration, and perhaps hurtful in its consequence, for it made a play without a dance less endur'd than it had been before, when such dancing was not to be had. But perhaps their exhibiting these novelties might be owing to the success we had met with in our more barbarous introducing of French mimicks and tumblers the year before; of which Mr. Rowe thus complains in his prologue to one of his first plays:

[1] Downes ("Roscius Anglicanus," p. 46) says: "In the space of ten years past, Mr. Betterton to gratify the desires and fancies of the nobility and gentry, procur'd from abroad the best dances and singers, as Monsieur L'Abbe, Madam Sublini, Monsieur Balon, Margarita Delpine, Maria Gallia and divers others; who being exhorbitantly expensive, produc'd small profit to him and his company, but vast gain to themselves."

Gildon, in the "Comparison Between the Two Stages," alludes to some of these dancers:

"*Sull.* The town ran mad to see him [Balon], and the prizes were rais'd to an extravagant degree to bear the extravagant rate they allow'd him" (p. 49).

"*Crit.* There's another toy now [Madame Subligny] — Gad, there's not a year but some surprising monster lands: I wonder they don't first show her at Fleet-bridge with an old drum and a crackt trumpet" (p. 67).

"Must Shakespear, Fletcher, and laborious Ben,
Be left for Scaramouch and Harlequin?"[1]

While the crowd, therefore, so fluctuated from one house to another as their eyes were more or less regaled than their ears, it could not be a question much in debate which had the better actors; the merit of either seem'd to be of little moment. And the complaint in the foregoing lines, tho' it might be just for a time, could not be a just one for ever, because the best play that ever was writ may tire by being too often repeated, a misfortune naturally attending the obligation to play every day; not that whenever such satiety commences it will be any proof of the play's being a bad one, or of its being ill acted. In a word, satiety is seldom enough consider'd by either criticks, spectators, or actors, as the true, not to say just cause of declining audiences to the most rational entertainments. And tho' I cannot say I ever saw a good new play not attended with due encouragement, yet to

[1] In the prologue to "The Ambitious Stepmother," produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1701 (probably), Rowe writes:

"The stage would need no farce, nor song, nor dance,
Nor capering monsieur brought from active France."

And in the epilogue (not prologue, as Cibber says):

"Show but a mimick ape, or French buffoon,
You to the other house in shoals are gone,
And leave us here to tune our crowds alone.
Must Shakespear, Fletcher, and laborious Ben,
Be left for Scaramouch and Harlaquin?"

keep a theatre daily open without sometimes giving the publick a bad old one, is more than I doubt the wit of human writers or excellence of actors will ever be able to accomplish. And as both authors and comedians may have often succeeded where a sound judgment would have condemn'd them, it might puzzle the nicest critick living to prove in what sort of excellence the true value of either consisted: for if their merit were to be measur'd by the full houses they may have brought; if the judgment of the crowd were infallible; I am afraid we shall be reduc'd to allow that the "Beggar's Opera" was the best written play, and Sir Harry Wildair[1] (as Wilks play'd it) was the best acted part, that ever our English theatre had to boast of. That critick, indeed, must be rigid to a folly that would deny either of them their due praise, when they severally drew such numbers after them; all their hearers could not be mistaken; and yet, if they were all in the right, what sort of fame will remain to those celebrated authors and actors that had so long and deservedly been admired before these were in being? The only distinction I shall make between them is, that to write or act like the authors or actors of the latter end of the last century, I am of the opinion will be found a far better pretence to success than to imitate these who have been so

[1] In "The Constant Couple," and its sequel, "Sir Harry Wildair."

crowded to in the beginning of this. All I would infer from this explanation is, that tho' we had then the better audiences, and might have more of the young world on our side, yet this was no sure proof that the other company were not, in the truth of action, greatly our superiors. These elder actors, then, besides the disadvantages I have mention'd, having only the fewer true judges to admire them, naturally wanted the support of the crowd whose taste was to be pleased at a cheaper rate and with coarser fare. To recover them, therefore, to their due estimation, a new project was form'd of building them a stately theatre in the Hay-Market,[1] by Sir John Vanbrugh, for which he raised a subscription of thirty persons of quality, at one hundred pounds each, in consideration whereof every subscriber, for his own life, was to be admitted to whatever entertainments should be publickly perform'd there, without farther payment for his entrance. Of this theatre I saw the first stone laid, on which was inscrib'd "The little Whig," in honour to a lady of extraordinary beauty, then the celebrated toast and pride of that party.[2]

[1] This theatre, opened 9th April, 1705, was burnt down 17th June, 1788; rebuilt 1791; again burnt in 1867. During its existence it has borne the name of Queen's Theatre, Opera House, King's Theatre, and its present title of Her Majesty's Theatre.

[2] The beautiful Lady Sunderland. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald ("New History," i. 238) states that it was said that workmen, on 19th March, 1825, found a stone with the inscription: "April

In the year 1706,[1] when this house was finish'd, Betterton and his co-partners dissolved their own agreement, and threw themselves under the direction of Sir John Vanbrugh and Mr. Congreve, imagining, perhaps, that the conduct of two such eminent authors might give a more prosperous turn to their condition; that the plays it would now be their interest to write for them would soon recover the town to a true taste, and be an advantage that no other company could hope for; that in the interim, till such plays could be written, the grandeur of their house, as it was a new spectacle, might allure the crowd to support them. But if these were their views, we shall see that their dependence upon them was too sanguine. As to their prospect of new plays, I doubt it was not enough consider'd that good ones were plants of a slow growth; and tho' Sir John Vanbrugh had a very quick pen, yet Mr. Congreve was too judicious a writer to let anything come hastily out of his hands. As to their other dependence, the house, they had not yet discover'd that almost every proper quality and convenience of a good theatre had been sacrificed or neglected to shew the spectator a vast triumphal piece of architecture!

18th, 1704. This corner-stone of the Queen's Theatre was laid by his Grace Charles Duke of Somerset."

[1] Should be 1705. Downes (p. 47) says: "About the end of 1704, Mr. Betterton assign'd his license, and his whole company over to Captain Vantbrugg to act under his, at the theatre in the Hay Market." Vanbrugh opened his theatre on 9th April, 1705.

And that the best play, for the reasons I am going to offer, could not but be under great disadvantages, and be less capable of delighting the auditor here than it could have been in the plain theatre they came from. For what could their vast columns, their gilded cornices, their immoderate high roofs avail, when scarce one word in ten could be distinctly heard in it? Nor had it then the form it now stands in, which necessity, two or three years after, reduced it to. At the first opening it, the flat ceiling that is now over the orchestre was then a semi-oval arch that sprung fifteen feet higher from above the cornice; the ceiling over the pit, too, was still more raised, being one level line from the highest back part of the upper gallery to the front of the stage. The front boxes were a continued semicircle to the bare walls of the house on each side. This extraordinary and superfluous space occasion'd such an undulation from the voice of every actor, that generally what they said sounded like the gabbling of so many people in the lofty isles in a cathedral — the tone of a trumpet, or the swell of an eunuch's holding note, 'tis true, might be sweeten'd by it, but the articulate sounds of a speaking voice were drown'd by the hollow reverberations of one word upon another. To this inconvenience, why may we not add that of its situation? For at that time it had not the advantage of almost a large city which has since been

built in its neighbourhood; those costly spaces of Hanover, Grosvenor, and Cavendish Squares, with the many and great adjacent streets about them, were then all but so many green fields of pasture, from whence they could draw little or no sustenance, unless it were that of a milk diet. The city, the inns of court, and the middle part of the town, which were the most constant support of a theatre, and chiefly to be relied on, were now too far out of the reach of an easy walk, and coach-hire is often too hard a tax upon the pit and gallery.[1] But from the vast increase of the buildings I have mention'd, the situation of that theatre has since that time received considerable advantages; a new world of people of condition are nearer to it than formerly, and I am of opinion that if the auditory part were a little more reduced to the model of that in Drury Lane, an excellent company of actors would now find a better account in it than in any other house in this populous city.[2] Let me not be mistaken, I say an excellent company, and such as might be able to do justice to the best

[1] In Dryden's prologue at the opening of Drury Lane in 1674, in comparing the situation of Drury Lane with that of Dorset Garden, which was at the east end of Fleet Street, he talks of —

. . . "a cold bleak road,
Where bears in furs dare scarcely look abroad."

This is now the Strand and Fleet Street! No doubt the road westward to the Haymarket was equally wild.

[2] This experiment was never tried. From the time Cibber wrote, the house was used as an opera-house.

of plays, and throw out those latent beauties in them which only excellent actors can discover and give life to. If such a company were now there, they would meet with a quite different set of auditors than other theatres have lately been used to: polite hearers would be content with polite entertainments; and I remember the time when plays, without the aid of farce or pantomime, were as decently attended as operas or private assemblies, where a noisy sloven would have past his time as uneasily in a front box as in a drawing-room; when a hat upon a man's head there would have been look'd upon as a sure mark of a brute or a booby. But of all this I have seen, too, the reverse, where in the presence of ladies at a play common civility has been set at defiance, and the privilege of being a rude clown, even to a nusance, has in a manner been demanded as one of the rights of English liberty. Now, though I grant that liberty is so precious a jewel that we ought not to suffer the least ray of its lustre to be diminish'd, yet methinks the liberty of seeing a play in quiet has as laudable a claim to protection as the privilege of not suffering you to do it has to impunity. But since we are so happy as not to have a certain power among us, which in another country is call'd the police, let us rather bear this insult than buy its remedy at too dear a rate; and let it be the punishment of such wrong-headed savages, that they never will or can know the true value of that

liberty which they so stupidly abuse: such vulgar minds possess their liberty as profligate husbands do fine wives, only to disgrace them. In a word, when liberty boils over, such is the scum of it. But to our new erected theatre.

Not long before this time the Italian opera began first to steal into England,[1] but in as rude a disguise and unlike itself as possible; in a lame, hobling translation into our own language, with false quantities, or metre out of measure to its original notes, sung by our own unskilful voices, with graces misapply'd to almost every sentiment, and with action lifeless and unmeaning through every character. The first Italian performer that made any distinguish'd figure in it was Valentini, a true sensible singer at that time, but of a throat too weak to sustain those melodious warblings for which the fairer sex have since idolis'd his successors. However, this defect was so well sup-

[1] "To court,
Her seat imperial Dulness shall transport.
Already Opera prepares the way,
The sure forerunner of her gentle sway."
— *Dunciad*, iii. verses 301–303.

"When lo! a harlot form soft sliding by,
With mincing step, small voice, and languid eye;
Foreign her air, her robe's discordant pride
In patchwork fluttering, and her head aside;
By singing peers upheld on either hand,
She tripp'd and laugh'd, too pretty much to stand."
— *Dunciad*, iv. verses 44–50.

ply'd by his action, that his hearers bore with the absurdity of his singing his first part of Turnus in "Camilla" all in Italian, while every other character was sung and recited to him in English.[1] This I have mention'd to shew not only our tramontane taste, but that the crowded audiences which follow'd it to Drury Lane might be another occasion of their growing thinner in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

To strike in, therefore, with this prevailing novelty, Sir John Vanbrugh and Mr. Congreve open'd their new Hay-Market Theatre with a translated opera to Italian musick, called the "Triumph of Love," but this not having in it the charms of "Camilla," either from the inequality of the musick or voices, had but a cold reception, being perform'd but three days, and those not crowded. Immediately upon the failure of this opera, Sir John Vanbrugh produced his comedy call'd the "Confederacy,"[2] taken (but greatly improv'd) from the "Bourgeois à la mode" of Dancour. Though the fate of this play was something better, yet I thought it was not equal

[1] Salvini, the great Italian actor, played in America with an English company, he speaking in Italian, they answering in English. I have myself seen a similar polyglot performance at the Edinburgh Lyceum Theatre, where the manager, Mr. J. B. Howard, acted Iago (in English), while Signor Salvini and his company played in Italian. I confess, the effect was not so startling as I expected.

[2] "The Confederacy" was not produced till the following season — 30th October, 1705.

to its merit,[1] for it is written with an uncommon vein of wit and humour. Which confirms me in my former observation, that the difficulty of hearing distinctly in that then wide theatre was no small impediment to the applause that might have followed the same actors in it upon every other stage; and indeed every play acted there before the house was alter'd seemed to suffer from the same inconvenience. In a word, the prospect of profits from this theatre was so very barren, that Mr. Congreve in a few months gave up his share and interest in the government of it wholly to Sir John Vanbrugh.[2] But Sir John, being sole proprietor of the house, was at all events oblig'd to do his utmost to support it. As he had a happier talent of throwing the English spirit into his translation of French plays than any former author who had borrowed from them, he in the same season gave the publick three more of that kind, call'd the "Cuckold in Conceit," from the "Cocu Imaginaire" of Molière;[3] "Squire Trelooby," from his "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac," and "The Mistake," from the "Dépit Amoureux" of the same author.[4] Yet all these, however well executed,

[1] It was acted ten times.

[2] Genest (ii. 333) says that Congreve resigned his share at the close of the season 1704–05.

[3] Cibber should have said "The Confederacy." "The Cuckold in Conceit" has never been printed, and Genest doubts if it is by Vanbrugh. Besides, it was not produced till 22d March, 1707.

[4] "The Mistake" was produced 27th December, 1705.

came to the ear in the same undistinguish'd utterance by which almost all their plays had equally suffered. For what few could plainly hear, it was not likely a great many could applaud.

It must farther be consider'd, too, that this company were not now what they had been when they first revolted from the patentees in Drury Lane, and became their own masters in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Several of them, excellent in their different talents, were now dead, as Smith, Kynaston, Sandford, and Leigh; Mrs. Betterton and Underhil being, at this time, also superannuated pensioners whose places were generally but ill supply'd. Nor could it be expected that Betterton himself, at past seventy, could retain his former force and spirit; though he was yet far distant from any competitor. Thus, then, were these remains of the best set of actors that I believe were ever known at once in England, by time, death, and the satiety of their hearers, moul-d'ring to decay.

It was now the town talk that nothing but a union of the two companies could recover the stage to its former reputation,[1] which opinion was

"Squire Trelooby," which was first played in 1704, was revived 28th January, 1706, with a new second act.

[1] A junction of the companies seems to have been talked of as early as 1701. In the prologue to "The Unhappy Penitent" (1701), the lines occur:

> "But now the peaceful tattle of the town,
> Is how to join both houses into one."

certainly true. One would have thought, too, that the patentee of Drury Lane could not have fail'd to close with it, he being then on the prosperous side of the question, having no relief to ask for himself, and little more to do in the matter than to consider what he might safely grant. But it seems this was not his way of counting; he had other persons who had great claims to shares in the profits of this stage, which profits, by a union, he foresaw would be too visible to be doubted of, and might raise up a new spirit in those adventurers to revive their suits at law with him; for he had led them a chace in chancery several years,[1] and when they had driven him into a contempt of that court, he conjur'd up a spirit in the shape of six and eight pence a day, that constantly struck the tip staff blind whenever he came near him. He knew the intrinsick value of delay, and was resolv'd to stick to it as the surest way to give the plaintiffs enough on't. And by this expedient our good master had long walk'd about at his leisure, cool and contented as a fox when the hounds were drawn off and gone home from him. But whether I am right or not in my conjectures, certain it is that this close master of Drury Lane

[1] In "The Post Boy Rob'd of His Mail," p. 342, some curious particulars of the negotiations for a union are given. One of Rich's objections to it is that he has to consider the interests of his partners, with some of whom he has already been compelled to go to law on monetary questions.

had no inclination to a union, as will appear by the sequel.[1]

Sir John Vanbrugh knew, too, that to make a union worth his while he must not seem too hasty for it; he therefore found himself under a necessity, in the meantime, of letting his whole theatrical farm to some industrious tenant that might put it into better condition. This is that crisis, as I observed in the eighth chapter, when the royal licence for acting plays, etc., was judg'd of so little value as not to have one suitor for it. At this time, then, the master of Drury Lane happened to have a sort of primier agent in his stage affairs, that seem'd in appearance as much to govern the master as the master himself did to govern his actors: but this person was under no stipulation or sallary for the service he render'd, but had gradually wrought himself into the master's extraordinary confidence and trust, from an habitual intimacy, a cheerful humour, and an indefatigable zeal for his interest. If I should farther say, that this person has been well known

[1] In July, 1705, Rich was approached on behalf of Vanbrugh regarding a union, and the lord chamberlain supported the latter's proposal. Rich, in declining, wrote: "I am concern'd with above forty persons in number, either as adventurers under the two patents granted to Sir William Davenant, and Tho. Killigrew, Esq.; or as renters of Covent Garden and Dorset Garden Theatres. . . . I am a purchaser under the patents, to above the value of two thousand pounds (a great part of which was under the marriage settlements of Doctor Davenant)." — *The Post Boy Rob'd of His Mail*, p. 344.

in almost every metropolis in Europe; that few private men have, with so little reproach, run through more various turns of fortune; that, on the wrong side of three-score, he has yet the open spirit of a hale young fellow of five and twenty; that though he still chuses to speak what he thinks to his best friends with an undisguis'd freedom, he is, notwithstanding, acceptable to many persons of the first rank and condition; that any one of them (provided he likes them) may now send him, for their service, to Constantinople at half a day's warning; that time has not yet been able to make a visible change in any part of him but the colour of his hair, from a fierce coal-black to that of a milder milk-white: when I have taken this liberty with him, methinks it cannot be taking a much greater if I at once should tell you that this person was Mr. Owen Swiney,[1] and that it

[1] Owen Swiney, or Mac Swiney, was an Irishman. As is related by Cibber in this and following chapters, he leased the Haymarket from Vanbrugh from the beginning of the season 1706–07. At the union, 1707–08, the Haymarket was made over to him for the production of operas; and when, at the end of 1708–09, Rich was ordered to silence his company at Drury Lane, Swiney was allowed to engage the chief of Rich's actors to play at the Haymarket, where they opened September, 1709. At the beginning of season 1710–11, Swiney and his partners became managers of Drury Lane, but Swiney was forced at the end of that season to resume the management of the operas. After a year of the opera-house (end of 1711–12), Swiney was ruined and had to go abroad. He remained abroad some twenty years. On 26th February, 1735, he had a benefit at Drury Lane, at

was to him Sir John Vanbrugh, in this exigence of his theatrical affairs, made an offer of his actors, under such agreements of sallary as might be made with them; and of his house, cloaths, and scenes, with the queen's licence to employ them, upon payment of only the casual rent of five pounds upon every acting day, and not to exceed £700 in the year. Of this proposal Mr. Swiney desir'd a day or two to consider; for, however he might like it, he would not meddle in any sort without the consent and approbation of his friend and patron, the master of Drury Lane. Having given the reasons why this patentee was averse to a union, it may now seem less a wonder why he immediately consented that Swiney should take the Hay-Market house, etc., and continue that company to act against him; but the real truth was, that he had a mind both companies should be clandestinely under one and the same interest, and yet in so loose a manner that he might declare his verbal agreement with Swiney good, or null and void, as he might best find his account in either. What flatter'd him that he had this wholsom project, and Swiney to execute it, both in his

which Cibber played for his old friend. The "Biographia Dramatica" says that he received a place in the custom house, and was made keeper of the king's mews. He died 2d October, 1754, leaving his property to Mrs. Woffington. Davies, in his "Dramatic Miscellanies" (i. 232), tells an idle tale of a scuffle between Swiney and Mrs. Clive's brother, which Bellchambers quotes at length, though it has no special reference to anything.

power, was that at this time Swiney happen'd to stand in his books debtor to cash upwards of £200. But here, we shall find, he overrated his security. However, Swiney as yet follow'd his orders; he took the Hay-Market Theatre, and had, farther, the private consent of the patentee to take such of his actors from Drury Lane as either from inclination or discontent might be willing to come over to him in the Hay-Market. The only one he made an exception of was myself: for tho' he chiefly depended upon his singers and dancers,[1] he said it would be necessary to keep some one tolerable actor with him, that might enable him to set those machines a-going. Under this limitation of not entertaining me, Swiney seem'd to acquiesce 'till after he had open'd with the so recruited company in the Hay-Market: the actors that came to him from Drury-Lane were Wilks, Estcourt,[2] Mills, Keen,[3] Johnson, Bullock, Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Rogers, and some few others of less note. But I must here let you know that this project was form'd and put

[1] At Drury Lane this season (1706–07) very few plays were acted, Rich relying chiefly on operas.

[2] Cibber seems to be wrong in including Estcourt in this list. His name appears in the Drury Lane bills for 1706–07, and his great part of Sergeant Kite ("Recruiting Officer") was played at the Haymarket by Pack. On 30th November, 1706, it was advertised that "the true Sergeant Kite is performed at Drury Lane."

[3] See memoir of Theophilus Keen at end of second volume.

in execution all in very few days, in the summer season, when no theatre was open. To all which I was entirely a stranger, being at this time at a gentleman's house in Gloucestershire, scribbling, if I mistake not, the "Wife's Resentment." [1]

The first word I heard of this transaction was by a letter from Swiney, inviting me to make one in the Hay-Market company, whom he hop'd I could not but now think the stronger party. But I confess I was not a little alarm'd at this revolution. For I consider'd, that I knew of no visible fund to support these actors but their own industry; that all his recruits from Drury Lane would want new cloathing; and that the warmest industry would be always labouring up-hill under so necessary an expence, so bad a situation, and so inconvenient a theatre. I was always of opinion, too, that in changing sides, in most conditions, there generally were discovered more unforeseen inconveniencies than visible advantages; and that at worst there would always some sort of merit

[1] Downes (p. 50) gives the following account of the transaction:

"In this interval Captain Vantbrugg by agreement with Mr. Swinny, and by the concurrence of my lord chamberlain, transferr'd and invested his license and government of the theatre to Mr. Swinny; who brought with him from Mr. Rich, Mr. Wilks, Mr. Cyber, Mr. Mills, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Keene, Mr. Norris, Mr. Fairbank, Mrs. Oldfield, and others; united them to the old company; Mr. Betterton and Mr. Underhill being the only remains of the Duke of York's Servants, from 1662, till the union in October, 1706."

remain with fidelity, tho' unsuccessful. Upon these considerations I was only thankful for the offers made me from the Hay-Market, without accepting them, and soon after came to town towards the usual time of their beginning to act, to offer my service to our old master. But I found our company so thinn'd that it was almost impracticable to bring any one tolerable play upon the stage.[1] When I ask'd him where were his actors, and in what manner he intended to proceed, he reply'd, "Don't you trouble yourself; come along, and I'll shew you." He then led me about all the by-places in the house, and shew'd me fifty little back-doors, dark closets, and narrow passages; in alterations and contrivances of which kind he had busied his head most part of the vacation; for he was scarce ever without some notable joyner, or a bricklayer extraordinary, in pay, for twenty years. And there are so many odd obscure places about a theatre, that his genius in nook-building was never out of employment; nor could the most vain-headed author be more deaf to an interruption in reciting his works, than our wise master was while entertaining me with the improvements he had made in his invisible architecture; all which, without thinking any one part of it necessary, tho' I

[1] The chief actors left at Drury Lane were Estcourt, Pinkethman, Powell, Captain Griffin, Mrs. Tofts, Mrs. Mountfort (that is, the great Mrs. Mountfort's daughter), and Mrs. Cross: a miserably weak company.

seem'd to approve, I could not help now and then breaking in upon his delight with the impertinent question of 'But, master, where are your actors?" But it seems I had taken a wrong time for this sort of enquiry; his head was full of matters of more moment, and (as you find) I was to come another time for an answer. A very hopeful condition I found myself in, under the conduct of so profound a vertuoso and so considerate a master! But to speak of him seriously, and to account for this disregard to his actors, his notion was that singing and dancing, or any sort of exotick entertainments, would make an ordinary company of actors too hard for the best set who had only plain plays to subsist on. Now, though I am afraid too much might be said in favour of this opinion, yet I thought he laid more stress upon that sort of merit than it would bear; as I therefore found myself of so little value with him, I could not help setting a little more upon myself, and was resolv'd to come to a short explanation with him. I told him I came to serve him at a time when many of his best actors had deserted him; that he might now have the refusal of me; but I could not afford to carry the compliment so far as to lessen my income by it; that I therefore expected either my casual pay to be advanced, or the payment of my former sallary made certain for as many days as we had acted the year before. No, he was not willing to alter his former method; but I might

chuse whatever parts I had a mind to act of theirs who had left him. When I found him, as I thought, so insensible or impregnable, I look'd gravely in his face, and told him he knew upon what terms I was willing to serve him, and took my leave. By this time the Hay-Market company had begun acting to audiences something better than usual, and were all paid their full sallaries, a blessing they had not felt in some years in either house before. Upon this success Swiney press'd the patentee to execute the articles they had as yet only verbally agreed on, which were in substance, that Swiney should take the Hay-Market house in his own name, and have what actors he thought necessary from Drury Lane, and after all payments punctually made, the profits should be equally divided between these two undertakers. But soft and fair! Rashness was a fault that had never yet been imputed to the patentee; certain payments were methods he had not of a long, long time been us'd to; that point still wanted time for consideration. But Swiney was as hasty as the other was slow, and was resolv'd to know what he had to trust to before they parted; and to keep him the closer to his bargain, he stood upon his right of having me added to that company if I was willing to come into it. But this was a point as absolutely refus'd on one side as insisted on on the other. In this contest high words were exchang'd on both sides, 'till, in the end, this their last pri-

vate meeting came to an open rupture. But before it was publickly known, Swiney, by fairly letting me into the whole transaction, took effectual means to secure me in his interest. When the mystery of the patentee's indifference to me was unfolded, and that his slighting me was owing to the security he rely'd on of Swiney's not daring to engage me, I could have no further debate with myself which side of the question I should adhere to. To conclude, I agreed, in two words, to act with Swiney,[1] and from this time every change that happen'd in the theatrical government was a nearer step to that twenty years of prosperity which actors, under the menagement of actors, not long afterwards enjoy'd. What was the immediate consequence of this last desertion from Drury Lane shall be the subject of another chapter.

[1] Swiney's company began to act at the Haymarket on 15th October, 1706. Cibber's first appearance seems to have been on 7th November, when he played Lord Foppington in "The Careless Husband."

END OF VOL. I.