The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (1753) eBook

The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (1753) by Theodore Watts-Dunton

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Page 1

VOL. III.

MDCCLIII.

VOLUME III.

Contains the

LIVES

OF

Denham
Killegrew
Howard
Behn, Aphra
Etherege
Mountford
Shadwell
Killegrew, William,
Howard
Flecknoe
Dryden
Sedley
Crowne
Sackville, E. Dorset
Farquhar
Ravenscroft
Philips, John
Walsh
Betterton
Banks
Chudley, Lady
Creech
Maynwaring
Monk, the Hon. Mrs.
Browne Tom.
Pomfret
King
Sprat, Bishop
Montague, E. Hallifax
Wycherley

Tate
Garth
Rowe
Sheffield, D. Buck.
Cotton
Additon
Winshelsea, Anne
Gildon
D'Urfey
Settle

The

Lives

OF THE

Poets.

* * * * *

Sir *John Denham*.

An eminent poet of the 17th century, was the only son of Sir John Denham, knight, of Little Horsley in Essex, and sometime baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, and one of the lords justices of that kingdom. He was born in Dublin, in the year 1615[1]; but was brought over from thence very young, on his father's being made one of the barons of the Exchequer in England 1617.

He received his education, in grammar learning, in London; and in Michaelmas term 1631 he was entered a gentleman commoner in Trinity College, Oxford, being then 16 years of age; where, as Wood expresses it, 'being looked upon as a slow dreaming young man, and more addicted to gaming than study, they could never imagine he could ever enrich the world with the issue of his brain, as he afterwards did.'

He remained three years at the university, and having been examined at the public schools, for the degree of bachelor of arts, he entered himself in Lincoln's-Inn, where he was generally thought to apply himself pretty closely to the study of the common law. But notwithstanding his application to study, and all the efforts he was capable of making, such was his propensity to gaining, that he was often stript of all his money; and his father severely chiding him, and threatening to abandon him if he did not reform, he wrote a little essay against that vice, and presented it to his father, to convince him of his resolution against it[2]. But no sooner did his father die, than being unrestrained by paternal authority, he reassumed the practice, and soon squandered away several thousand pounds.

Page 2

In the latter end of the year 1641 he published a tragedy called the Sophy, which was greatly admired, and gave Mr. Waller occasion to say of our author, 'That he broke out like the Irish rebellion, threescore thousand strong, when no body was aware, nor in the least expected it.' Soon after this he was pricked for high sheriff for the county of Surry, and made governor of Farnham-Castle for the King; but not being well skilled in military affairs, he soon quitted that post and retired to his Majesty at Oxford, where he published an excellent poem called Cooper's-hill, often reprinted before and since the restoration, with considerable alterations; it has been universally admired by all good judges, and was translated into Latin verse, by Mr. Moses Pengry of Oxford.

Mr. Dryden speaking of this piece, in his dedication of his Rival Ladies, says, that it is a poem, which, for the Majesty of the stile, will ever be the exact standard of good writing, and the noble author of an essay on human life, bestows upon it the most lavish encomium[3]. But of all the evidences in its favour, none is of greater authority, or more beautiful, than the following of Mr. Pope, in his Windsor Forest.

Ye sacred nine, that all my soul possess,
Whose raptures fire me, and whose visions bless;
Bear me, O bear me, to sequester'd scenes,
The bow'ry mazes, and surrounding greens;
To Thames's bank which fragrant breezes fill,
Or where the muses sport on Cooper's-hill.
(On Cooper's hill eternal wreaths shall grow,
While lasts the mountain, or while Thames shall flow.)
I seem thro' consecrated walks to rove,
I hear soft music die along the grove,
Led by the found, I roam from shade to shade,
By god-like poets venerable made:
Here his last lays majestic Denham sung,
There the last numbers flow'd from Cowley's tongue.

In the year 1647 he was entrusted by the Queen with a message to the King, then in the hands of the army, and employed in other affairs, relating to, his Majesty. In his dedication of his poems to Charles *ii*. he observes, that after the delivery of the person of his royal father into the hands of the army, he undertook for the Queen-mother, to get access to his Majesty, which he did by means of Hugh Peters; and upon this occasion, the King discoursed with him without reserve upon the state of his affairs. At his departure from Hampton-court, says he, 'The King commanded me to stay privately in London, to send to him and receive from him all his letters, from and to all his correspondents, at home and abroad, and I was furnished with nine several cyphers in order to it. Which I trust I performed with great safety to the persons with whom we corresponded; but about nine months after being discovered by their knowledge of Mr. Cowley's hand, I happily escaped both for myself and those who held correspondence with me.'

Page 3

In April 1648 he conveyed away James duke of York, then under the tuition of Algernon earl of Northumberland, from St. James's, and carried him into France, to the prince of Wales and Queenmother. This circumstance is related by Wood, but Clarendon, who is a higher authority, says, that the duke went off with colonel Bamfield only, who contrived the means of his escape. Not long after, he was sent embassador to the King of Poland, in conjunction with lord Crofts, to whom he addresses a poem written on their journey; from whence he brought ten thousand pounds for his Majesty, by the decimation of his Scottish subjects there.

About the year 1652, he returned into England, and was well received by the earl of Pembroke at Wilton, and continued with that nobleman about a year; for his own fortune by the expence he was at during the civil war, and his unconquerable itch of gaming was quite exhausted. From that year to the restoration, there are no accounts of our author; but as soon as his Majesty returned, he entered upon the office of surveyor of his Majesty's buildings, in the room of Inigo Jones, deceased; and at the coronation of King Charles *ii*. was created a knight of the Bath. Upon some discontent arising from his second marriage he lost his senses, but soon recovering from that disorder, he continued in great esteem at court for his poetical writings. In the dedication of his poems to King Charles *ii*. he tells us that he had been discouraged by King Charles I. from writing verses.

'One morning (says he) when I was waiting upon the King at Causham, smiling upon me, he said he could tell me some news of myself, which was that he had seen some verses of mine the evening before (being those to Sir Robert Fanshaw) and asking me when I made them, I told him two or three years since; he was pleased to say, that having never seen them before, he was afraid I had written them since my return into England; and though he liked them well he would advise me to write no more: alledging, that when men are young, and having little else to do, they might vent the over-flowings of their fancy that way, but when they were thought fit for more serious employments, if they still persisted in that course, it would look as if they minded not the way to any better; whereupon I stood corrected as long as I had the honour to wait upon him.' This is a strong instance of his duty to the King; but no great compliment to his Majesty's taste: nor was the public much obliged to the Monarch for this admonition to our author.

But King Charles *ii* being of an humour more sprightly than his father, was a professed encourager of poetry, and in his time a race of wits sprung up, unequalled by those of any other reign.

This monarch was particularly delighted with the poetry of our author, especially when he had the happiness to wait upon him, in Holland and Flanders; and he was pleased sometimes to give him arguments to write upon, and divert the evil hours of their banishment, which now and then, Sir John tells us, he acquitted himself not much short of his Majesty's expectation.

Page 4

In the year 1688 Sir John Denham died, at his office in Whitehall, and was interred in Westminster-Abbey, near the tombs of Chaucer, Spenser, and Cowley.

Our author's works are,

1. Cooper's-hill, of which we have already taken some notice.

2. The Destruction of Troy, an Essay on the second book of Virgil's AEneis, written 1636.

3. On the Earl of Strafford's Trial and Death.

4. On my Lord Crofts's Journey into Poland.

5. On Mr. Thomas Killegrew's return from Venice; and Mr. William Murrey's from Scotland.

6. To Sir John Mennis, being invited from Calais to Bologne to eat a pig.

7. Natura Naturata.

8. Sarpedon's Speech to Glaucus, in the twelfth book of Homer.

9. Out of an Epigram of Martial.

10. Friendship and Single Life, against Love and Marriage.

11. On Mr. Abraham Cowley's Death and Burial.

12. A Speech against Peace at the Close Committee.

13. To the Five Members of the honourable House of Commons: The humble Petition of the Poets.

14. A Western Wonder.

15. A Second Western Wonder.

16. News from Colchester; or, a proper new Ballad, of certain carnal Passages betwixt a Quaker and a Colt, at Horsley in Essex.

17. A Song.

18. On Mr. John Fletcher's Works.

19. To Sir Richard Fanshaw, on his translation of Pastor Fido.

20. A Dialogue between Sir John Pooley, and Mr. Thomas Killegrew.

21. An occasional Imitation of a modern Author, upon a Game at Chess.

22. The Passion of Dido for AEneas.

23. Of Prudence, of Justice.

24. The Progress of Learning.

25. Cato Major of old Age, a Poem: It is taken from the Latin of Tully, though much alter'd from the original, not only by the change of the stile, but by addition and subtraction. Our author tells us, that intending to translate this piece into prose (where translation ought to be strict) finding the matter very proper for verse, he took the liberty to leave out what was only necessary, to that age and place, and to take or add what was proper to this preset age and occasion, by laying the scene clearer and in fewer words, according to the stile and ear of the times.

26. The Sophy, a Tragedy; the above pieces have been several times printed together, in one volume in 12mo. under the Title of Poems and Translations; with the Sophy, a Tragedy, written by Sir John Denham.

Besides these, Wood mentions a Panegyric on his excellency general Monk 1659, in one sheet quarto. Though Denham's name is not to it, it is generally ascribed to him. A Prologue to his majesty, at the first play represented at the Cock-pit in White-hall, being part of that noble entertainment, which their majesties received, November 19, 1660, from his grace the duke of Albemarle. A new Version of the Psalms

Page 5

of David. The True Presbyterian, without Disguise; or, a Character of a Presbyterian's Ways and Actions, London 1680, in half a sheet in folio. In the year 1666 there were printed by stealth, in octavo, certain Poems, intitled Directions to a Painter, in four copies or parts, each dedicated to King Charles the IId. They were very satyrically written against several persons engaged in the Dutch war, in 1661. At the end of them was a piece entitled Clarendon's Housewarming; and after that his Epitaph, both containing bitter reflexions against that earl. Sir John Denham's name is to these pieces, but they were generally thought to be written by Andrew Marvel, Esq; a Merry Droll in Charles the IId's Parliaments, but so very honest, that when a minister once called at his lodgings, to tamper with him about his vote, he found him in mean apartments up two pair of stairs, and though he was obliged to send out that very morning to borrow a guinea, yet he was not to be corrupted by the minister, but denied him his vote. The printer of these poems being discovered, he was sentenced to stand in the pillory for the same.

We have met with no authors who have given any account of the moral character of Sir John Denham, and as none have mentioned his virtues, so we find no vice imputed to him but that of gaming; to which it appears he was immoderately addicted. If we may judge from his works, he was a good-natur'd man, an easy companion, and in the day of danger and tumult, of unshaken loyalty to the suffering interest of his sovereign. His character as a poet is well known, he has the fairest testimonies in his favour, the voice of the world, and the sanction of the critics; Dryden and Pope praise him, and when these are mentioned, other authorities are superfluous.

We shall select as a specimen of Sir John Denham's Poetry, his Elegy on his much loved and admired friend Mr. Abraham Cowley.

Old mother Wit and nature gave
Shakespear, and Fletcher all they have;
In Spencer and in Johnson art,
Of slower nature, got the start.
But both in him so equal are,
None knows which bears the happiest share.
To him no author was unknown,
Yet what he wrote was all his own:
He melted not the ancient gold,
Nor, with Ben Johnson, did make bold.
To plunder all the Roman stores
Of poets and of orators.
Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,
He did not steal, but emulate;
And he would like to them appear,

Their garb, but not their cloaths did wear.
He not from Rome alone but Greece,
Like Johnson, brought the golden fleece.
And a stiff gale, (as Flaccus sings)
The Theban swan extends his wings,
When thro' th' aethereal clouds he flies,
To the same pitch our swan doth rise:
Old Pindar's flights by him new-reach'd,
When on that gale, his wings are stretch'd.

[Footnote 1: Ath. Oxon. vol. ii.]

Page 6

[Footnote 2: Wood.]

[Footnote 3: In the preface to 2d edition, 1736, 4to.]

* * * * *

THOMAS KILLEGREW,

A Gentleman, who was page of honour to king Charles I. and groom of the bed-chamber to king Charles *ii*. with whom he endured twenty-years exile. During his abode beyond sea, he took a view of France, Italy and Spain, and was honoured by his majesty, with the employment of resident at the state of Venice, whither he was sent in August 1651. During his exile abroad, he applied his leisure hours to the study of poetry, and the composition of Several plays, of which Sir John Denham. in a jocular way takes notice, in his copy of verses on our author's return from his embassy from Venice.

I.

Our resident Tom,
From Venice is come,
And hath left the statesman behind him.
Talks at the same pitch,
Is as wise, is as rich,
And just where you left him, you find him.

II.

But who says he was not,
A man of much plot,
May repent that false accusation;
Having plotted, and penn'd
Six plays to attend,
The farce of his negotiation.

Killegrew was a man of very great humour, and frequently diverted king Charles *ii*, by his lively spirit of mirth and drollery. He was frequently at court, and had often access to king Charles when admission was denied to the first peers in the realm. Amongst many other merry stories, the following is related of Killegrew. Charles *ii*, who hated business as much as he loved pleasure, would often disappoint the council in vouchsafing his royal presence when they were met, by which their business was necessarily delay'd and many of the council much offended by the disrespect thrown on them: It happened

one day while the council were met, and had sat some time in expectation of his majesty, that the duke of Lauderdale, who was a furious ungovernable man, quitted the room in a passion, and accidentally met with Killegrew, to whom he expressed himself irreverently of the king: Killegrew bid his grace be calm, for he would lay a wager of a hundred pounds, that he would make his majesty come to council in less than half an hour. Lauderdale being a little heated, and under the influence of surprize, took him at his word;—Killegrew went to the king, and without ceremony told him what had happened, and added, “I know that your majesty hates Lauderdale, tho’ the necessity of your affairs obliges you to behave civilly to him; now if you would get rid of a man you hate, come to the council, for Lauderdale is a man so boundlessly avaricious, that rather than pay the hundred pounds lost in this wager, he will hang himself, and never plague you more.” The king was pleased with the archness of this observation,

Page 7

and answered, ‘then Killegrew I’ll positively go,’ which he did.—It is likewise related, that upon the king’s suffering his mistresses to gain so great an ascendant over him as to sacrifice for them the interest of the state, and neglect the most important affairs, while, like another Sardanapalus, he wasted his hours in the apartments of those enchantresses: Killegrew went one day into his apartment dress’d like a pilgrim, bent upon a long journey. The king being surprized at this extraordinary frolic, asked him the meaning of it, and to what distant country he was going, to which Killegrew bluntly answered, the country I seek, may it please your majesty, is hell; and what to do there? replies the king? to bring up Oliver Cromwel from thence, returned the wag, to take care of the English affairs, for his successor takes none.—We cannot particularly ascertain the truth of these relations, but we may venture to assert that these are not improbable, when it is considered how much delighted king Charles the IId. was with a joke, however severe, and that there was not at court a more likely person to pass them than Killegrew, who from his long exile with the king, and being about his person, had contracted a kind of familiarity, which the lustre that was thrown round the prince upon his restoration was not sufficient to check.

Tho’ Sir John Denham mentions but six, our author wrote nine Plays in his travels, and two at London, amongst which his Don Thomaso, in two parts, and his Parson’s Wedding, will always be valued by good judges, and are the best of his performances. The following is a list of his plays.

1. Bellamira’s Dream, or Love of Shadows, a Tragi-Comedy; the first part printed in folio 1663, written in Venice, and dedicated to the lady Mary Villiers, duchess of Richmond and Lennox.

2. Bellamira’s Dream, the second part, written in Venice; printed in folio, London 1663, and dedicated to the lady Anne Villiers, countess of Essex.

3. Cicilia and Clorinda, or Love in Arms, a Tragi-comedy; the first part printed in folio, London, 1663, written in Turin.

4. Cicilia and Clorinda, the second part, written at Florence 1651, and dedicated to the lady Dorothy Sidney, countess of Sunderland.

5. Claracilla, a Tragi-comedy, printed in folio, London 1663; written at Rome, and dedicated to his sister in-law lady Shannon; on this play and another of the author’s called the Prisoners, Mr. Cartwright has written an ingenious copy of verses.

6. The Parson’s Wedding, a Comedy, printed in folio, London 1663; written at Basil in Switzerland. This play was revived at the old Theatre, at little Lincoln’s Inn-Fields, and acted all by women; a new prologue and epilogue, being spoken by Mrs. Marshal in

Man's cloaths, which Mr. Langbain says is printed in the Covent-Garden Drollery. This was a miscellaneous production of those times, which bore some resemblance to our Magazines; but which in all probability is now out of print.

Page 8

7. The Pilgrim, a Tragedy, printed in folio, London 1663; written in Paris in the year 1651, and dedicated to the countess of Carnarvon.

8. The Princess, or Love at first Sight, a Tragi-Comedy, printed in folio, London 1663; written at Naples, and dedicated to his niece, the lady Anne Wentworth, wife to lord Lovelace.

9. The Prisoners, a Tragi-Comedy, printed in folio; London 1663; written at London and dedicated to the lady Crompton.

10. Don Thomaso, or the Wanderer, a Comedy in two parts, printed in folio, London 1663; and dedicated to the fair and kind friends of prince Palatine Polexander. In the first part of this play, the author has borrowed several ornaments from Fletcher's play called the Captain. He has used great freedom with Ben Johnson, for not only the characters of Lopus, but even the very words are repeated from Johnson's Fox, where Volpone personates Scoto of Mantua. I don't believe that our author designed to conceal his assistance, since he was so just as to acknowledge a song against jealousy, which he borrowed from Mr. Thomas Carew, cup-bearer to king Charles the Ist, and sung in a masque at Whitehall, anno 1633. This Chorus, says he, 'I presume to make use of here, because in the first design it was written at my request, upon a dispute held between Mrs. Cicilia Crofer and myself, when he was present; she being then maid of honour. This I have set down, lest any man should imagine me so foolish as to steal such a poem, from so famous an author.' If he was therefore so scrupulous in committing depredations upon Carew, he would be much more of Ben Johnson, whose fame was so superior to Carew's. All these plays were printed together in one volume in folio, London 1664.

* * * * *

Edward Howard, *Esq*;

Was descended from the noble family of the earl of Berkshire, and was more illustrious by his birth than his genius; he addicted himself to the study of dramatic poetry, and produced four plays, but gained no reputation by any of them.

1. The Man of New-Market, a Comedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal; and printed in quarto, London 1678.

2. Six Days Adventure, or the New Utopia, a Comedy, acted at his royal highness the duke of York's Theatre, printed in quarto 1671. This play miscarried in the action, as he himself acknowledges in his preface; and the earl of Rochester, with his usual virulence, writ an invective against it; but, Mrs. Behn, Mr. Ravenscroft, and some other poets, taking compassion on him, sent the author recommendatory verses, which are printed

before that play, and in return he writ a Pindarique to Mrs. Behn, which she printed in a Collection of Poems 1685.

3. The Usurper, a Tragedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal, and printed 1668, in which the character of Damocles, is said to have been drawn for Oliver Cromwel, and that the play is a parallel of those times.

Page 9

4. Women's Conquest, a Tragi-Comedy, acted at the Duke's Theatre 1677.

Besides these plays, Mr. Howard has published an Epic Poem in octavo, called the British Princes, which the earl of Rochester likewise handled pretty severely. There is likewise ascribed to him another Book of Poems and Essays, with a Paraphrase on Cicero's Laelius, or Tract of Friendship, printed in 8vo. The Earl of Dorset, who was called by cotemporary writers, the best good man, with the worst natured Muse, has dedicated a few lines to the damnation of this extraordinary epic production of Mr. Howard's.

The Spectator observes, that this epic piece is full of incongruity, or in other words, abounds with nonsense. He quotes the two following lines,

A coat of mail Prince Vortiger had on,
Which from a naked pict his grandsire won.

Who does not see the absurdity of winning a coat from a naked man?

The earl of Dorset thus addresses him;

To Mr. *Edward Howard*, on his incomparable, incomprehensible *poem* called the *British princes*.

Come on, ye critics, find one fault who dare,
For, read it backward like a witch's prayer,
'Twill do as well; throw not away your jests
On solid nonsense that abides all tests.
Wit, like tierce-claret, when't begins to pall,
Neglected lies, and's of no use at all,
But, in its full perfection of decay,
Turns vinegar, and comes again in play.
Thou hast a brain, such as it is indeed;
On what else mould thy worm of fancy feed?
Yet in a Filbert I have often known
Maggots survive when all the kernel's gone.
This simile shall stand, in thy defence,
'Gainst such dull rogues as now and then write sense.
Thy style's the same, whatever be thy theme,
As some digestion turns all meat to phlegm.
He lyes, dear Ned, who says, thy brain it barren,
Where deep conceits, like vermin breed in carrion.
Thy stumbling founder'd jade can trot as high
As any other Pegasus can fly.
So the dull Eel moves nimbler in the mud,

Than all the swift-finn'd racers of the flood.
As skilful divers to the bottom fall,
Sooner than those that cannot swim at all,
So in the way of writing, without thinking,
Thou hast a strange alacrity in sinking.
Thou writ'st below ev'n thy own nat'ral parts,
And with acquir'd dulness, and new arts
Of studied nonsense, tak'st kind readers hearts.
Therefore dear Ned, at my advice forbear,
Such loud complaints 'gainst critics to prefer,
Since thou art turn'd an arrant libeller:
Thou sett'st thy name to what thyself do'st write;
Did ever libel yet so sharply bite?

* * * * *

Mrs. *Aphra Behn*,

Page 10

A celebrated poetess of the last age, was a gentlewoman by birth, being descended, as her life-writer says, from a good family in the city of Canterbury. She was born in Charles Ist's reign[1], but in what year is not known. Her father's name was Johnson, whose relation to the lord Willoughby engaged him for the advantageous post of lieutenant general of Surinam, and six and thirty islands, to undertake a voyage, with his whole family, to the West-Indies, at which time our poetess was very young. Mr. Johnson died at sea, in his passage thither; but his family arrived at Surinam, a place so delightfully situated, and abounding with such a vast profusion of beauties, that, according to Mrs. Behn's description, nature seems to have joined with art to render it perfectly elegant: her habitation in that country, called St. John's Hill, she has challenged all the gardens in Italy, nay, all the globe of the world, to shew so delightful a recess. It was there our poetess became acquainted with the story and person of the American Prince Oroonoko, whose adventures she has so feelingly and elegantly described in the celebrated Novel of that name, upon which Mr. Southern has built his Tragedy of Oroonoko, part of which is so entertaining and moving, that it is almost too much for nature. Mrs. Behn tells us, that she herself had often seen and conversed with that great man, and been a witness to many of his mighty actions, and that at one time, he, and Imoinda his wife, were scarce an hour in a day from her lodgings; that they eat with her, and that she obliged them in all things she was capable of, entertaining them with the lives of the Romans and great men, which charmed him with her company; while she engaged his wife with teaching her all the pretty works she was mistress of, relating stories of Nuns, and endeavouring to bring her to the knowledge of the true God. This intimacy between Oroonoko and Mrs. Behn occasioned some reflexions on her conduct, from which the authoress of her life, already quoted, justified her in the following manner; 'Here, says she, I can add nothing to what she has given the world already, but a vindication of her from some unjust aspersions I find are insinuated about this town, in relation to that prince. I knew her intimately well, and I believe she would not have concealed any love affair from me, being one of her own sex, whose friendship and secrecy she had experienced, which makes me assure the world that there was no intrigue between that Prince and Astraea. She had a general value for his uncommon virtues, and when he related the story of his woes, she might with the Desdemona of Shakespear, cry out, That it was pitiful, wondrous pitiful, which never can be construed into an amour; besides, his heart was too violently set on the everlasting charms of his Imoinda, to be shook with those more faint (in his eye) of a white beauty; and Astrea's relations there present kept too watchful an eye over her, to permit the frailty of her youth, if that had

Page 11

been powerful enough.’ After this lady’s return to London, she was married to Mr. Behn, a Merchant there, but of Dutch extraction. This marriage strengthening her interest, and, perhaps, restoring her character, gave her an opportunity of appearing with advantage at court. She gave King Charles *ii*. so accurate and agreeable an account of the colony of Surinam, that he conceived a great opinion of her abilities, and thought her a proper person to be entrusted with the management of some important affairs, during the Dutch war; which occasioned her going into Flanders, and residing at Antwerp. Here, by her political intrigues, she discovered the design formed by the Dutch, of sailing up the river Thames, and burning the English ships in their harbours, which she communicated to the court of England; but her intelligence, though well grounded, as appeared by the event, being only laughed at and slighted, she laid aside all other thoughts of state affairs, and amused herself during her stay at Antwerp with the gallantries in that city. But as we have mentioned that she discovered the design of the Dutch to burn our ships, it would be injustice to the lady, as well as to the reader, not to give some detail of her manner of doing it. She made this discovery by the intervention of a Dutchman, whom her life-writer calls by the name of Vander Albert. As an ambassador, or negociator of her sex could not take the usual means of intelligence; of mixing with the multitude, and bustling in the cabals of statesmen, she fell upon another way, perhaps more efficacious, of working by her eyes. This Vander Albert had been in love with her before her marriage with Mr. Behn, and no sooner heard of her arrival at Antwerp, than he paid her a visit; and after a repetition of his former vows, and ardent professions for her service, pressed her to receive from him some undeniable proofs of the vehemence and sincerity of his passion, for which he would ask no reward, ’till he had by long and faithful services convinced her that he deserved it. This proposal was so suitable to her present aim in the service of her country, that she accepted it, and employed Albert in such a manner, as made her very serviceable to the King. The latter end of the year 1666, he sent her word, by a special messenger, that he would be with her at a day appointed, at which time, he revealed to her, that Cornelius de Wit, who, with the rest of that family, had an implacable hatred to the English nation and the house of Orange, had, with de Ruyter, proposed to the States the expedition abovementioned. This proposal, concurring with the advice which the Dutch spies in England had given them, of the total neglect of all naval preparations, was well received, and was resolved to be put in execution, as a thing neither dangerous nor difficult. Albert having communicated a secret of this importance, and with such marks of truth, that she had no room to doubt of it: as soon as the interview was at an end, she dispatched an account of what she had discovered, to England[2].

Page 12

But we cannot conclude Mrs. Behn's gallantries at Antwerp, without being a little more particular, as we find her attacked by other lovers, and thought she found means to preserve her innocence, yet the account that she herself gives of her affairs there, is both humorous and entertaining.

In a letter to a friend she proceeds thus, 'My other lover is about twice Albert's age, nay and bulk too, tho' Albert "be not the most Barbary shape you have seen, you must know him by the name of Van Bruin, and he was introduced to me by Albert his kinsman, and was obliged by him to furnish me in his absence, with what money and other things I should please to command, or have occasion for. This old fellow had not visited me often, before I began to be sensible of the influence of my eyes upon this old piece of touchwood; but he had not the confidence to tell me he loved me, and modesty you know is no common fault of his countrymen. He often insinuated that he knew a man of wealth and substance, though striken indeed in years, and on that account not so agreeable as a younger man, was passionately in love with me, and desired to know whether my heart was so far engaged, that his friend should not entertain, any hopes. I replied that I was surprized to hear a friend of Albert's making an interest in me for another, and that if love were a passion, I was any way sensible of, it could never be for an old man, and much to that purpose. But all this would not do, in a day or two I received this eloquent epistle from him." Here Mrs. Behn inserts a translation of Van Bruin's letter, which was wrote in French, and in a most ridiculous stile, telling her, he had often strove to reveal to her the tempests of his heart, and with his own mouth scale the walls of her affections; but terrified with the strength of her fortifications, he concluded to make more regular approaches, to attack her at a farther distance, and try first what a bombardment of letters would do; whether these carcasses of love thrown into the sconces of her eyes, would break into the midst of her breast, beat down the out-guard of her aversion, and blow up the magazine of her cruelty, that she might be brought to a capitulation, and yield upon, reasonable terms. He then considers her as a goodly ship under sail for the Indies; her hair is the pennants, her fore-head the prow, her eyes the guns, her nose the rudder. He wishes he could once see her keel above water, and desires to be her pilot, to steer thro' the Cape of Good-Hope, to the Indies of love.

Our ingenious poetess sent him a suitable answer to this truly ridiculous and Dutchman like epistle. She rallies him for setting out in so unprofitable a voyage as love, and humorously reckons up the expences of the voyage; as ribbons, and hoods for her pennants, diamond rings, lockets, and pearl-necklaces for her guns of offence and defence, silks, holland, lawn, cambric, &c. for her rigging.

Page 13

Mrs. Behn tells us she diverted herself with Van Bruin in Albert's absence, till he began to assume and grow troublesome to her by his addresses, so that to rid himself of him, she was forced to disclose the whole affair to Albert, who was so enraged that he threatened the death of his rival, but he was pacified by his mistress, and content to upbraid the other for his treachery, and forbid him the house, but this says Mrs. Behn, 'produced a very ridiculous scene, for 'my Nestorian lover would not give ground to Albert, but was as high as he, challenged him to sniker-snee for me, and a thousand things as comical; in short nothing but my positive command could satisfy him, and on that he promised no more to trouble me. Sure as he thought himself of me, he was thunder-struck, when he heard me not only forbid him the house, but ridicule all his addresses to his rival Albert; with a countenance full of despair, he went away not only from my lodgings, but the next day from Antwerp, unable to stay in a place where he had met so dreadful a defeat.'

The authoress of her life has given us a farther account of her affairs with Vander Albert, in which she contrived to preserve her honour, without injuring her gratitude. There was a woman at Antwerp, who had often given Astraea warning of Albert's fickleness and inconstancy, assuring her he never loved after enjoyment, and sometimes changed even before he had that pretence; of which she herself was an instance; Albert having married her, and deserted her on the wedding-night. Our poetess took the opportunity of her acquaintance with this lady to put an honest trick upon her lover, and at the same time do justice to an injured woman. Accordingly she made an appointment with Albert, and contrived that the lady whose name was Catalina, should meet him in her stead. The plot succeeded and Catalina infinitely pleased with the adventure, appointed the next night, and the following, till at last he discovered the cheat, and resolved to gratify both his love and resentment, by enjoying Astaea even against her will. To this purpose he bribed an elderly gentlewoman, whom Mrs. Behn kept out of charity, to put him to bed drest in her night-cloaths in her place, when Astraea was passing the evening in a merchant's house in the town. The merchant's son and his two daughters waited on Astraea home; and to conclude the evening's mirth with a frolick, the young gentleman proposed going to bed to the old woman, and that they should all come in with candles and surprize them together. As it was agreed so they did, but no sooner was the young spark put to bed, but he found himself accosted with ardour, and a man's voice, saying, 'have I now caught thee, thou malicious charmer! now I'll not let thee go till thou hast done me justice for all the wrongs thou hast offered my dealing love.' The rest of the company were extremely surprized to find Albert in Astraea's bed instead of the old woman, and Albert no less surprized to find the young spark

Page 14

instead of Astraea. In the conclusion, the old woman was discarded, and Albert's fury at his disappointment appeased by a promise from Mrs. Behn, of marrying him at his arrival in England; but Albert returning to Holland to make preparations for his voyage to England, died of a Fever at Amsterdam[3]. From this adventure it plainly appears, that the observation of a Dutchman's not being capable to love is false; for both Albert, and the Nestorian wooer, seem to have been warm enough in their addresses.

After passing some time in this manner at Antwerp, she embarked at Dunkirk for England; and in her passage, was near being lost, for the ship being driven on the coast, foundered within sight of land, but by the assistance of boats from the shore, they were all saved; and Mrs. Behn arriving in London, dedicated the rest of her life to pleasure and poetry. Besides publishing three volumes of miscellany poems, she wrote seventeen plays, and some histories and novels. She translated Fontenelle's History of Oracles, and plurality of worlds, to which last she annexed an Essay on Translation, and translated Prose. The Paraphrase of Oenone's, Epistle to Paris, in the English Translation of Ovid's Epistles is Mrs. Behn's; as are the celebrated Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister. Her wit gained her the esteem of Mr. Dryden, Mr. Southern, &c. and at the same time the love and addresses of several gentlemen, in particular one, with whom she corresponded under the name of Lycida, who it seems did not return her passion with equal warmth, and with the earnestness and rapture, she imagined her beauty had a right to command.

Mrs. Behn died after a long indisposition, April 16, 1689, and was buried in the cloister of Westminster Abbey. We shall beg leave to exhibit her character, as we find it drawn by some of her cotemporaries, and add a remark of our own. 'Mr. Langbain 'thinks her Memory will be long fresh among all lovers of dramatic poetry, as having been sufficiently eminent, not only for her theatrical performances; but several other pieces both in prose and verse, which gained her an esteem among the wits almost equal to that of the incomparable Orinda, Mrs. Katherine Phillips.'

There are several encomiums on Mrs. Behn prefixed to her lover's watch; among the rest, Mr. Charles Cotton, author of Virgil Travesty, throws in his mite in her praise; though the lines are but poorly writ. But of all her admirers, Mr. Charles Gildon, who was intimately acquainted with our poetess, speaks of her with the highest encomiums.

In his epistle dedicatory to her histories and novels, he thus expresses himself. 'Poetry, the supreme pleasure of the mind, is begot, and born in pleasure, but oppressed and killed with pain. This reflexion ought to raise our admiration of Mrs. Behn, whose genius was of that force, to maintain its gaiety in the midst of disappointments, which a woman of her sense and merit ought never to have met

Page 15

with. But she had a great strength of mind, and command of thought, being able to write in the midst of company, and yet have the share of the conversation: which I saw her do in writing Oroonoko, and other parts of her works, in every part of which you'll find an easy stile and a peculiar happiness of thinking. The passions, that of love especially, she was mistress of, and gave us such nice and tender touches of them, that without her name we might discover the author.' To this character of Mrs. Behn may be very properly added, that given of her by the authoress of her life and memoirs, in these words.

'She was of a generous humane disposition, something passionate, very serviceable to her friends in all that was in her power, and could sooner forgive an injury than do one. She had wit, humour, good-nature and judgment. She was mistress of all the pleasing arts of conversation: She was a woman of sense, and consequently a lover of pleasure. For my part I knew her intimately, and never saw ought unbecoming the just modesty of our sex; though more gay and free, than the folly of the precise will allow.'

The authors of the Biographia Brittanica say, that her poetry is none of the best; and that her comedies, tho' not without humour, are full of the most indecent scenes and expressions. As to the first, with submission to the authority of these writers, the charge is ill-founded, which will appear from the specimen upon which Dryden himself makes her a compliment; as to the latter, I'm afraid it cannot be so well defended; but let those who are ready to blame her, consider, that her's was the sad alternative to write or starve; the taste of the times was corrupt; and it is a true observation, that they who live to please, must please to live.

Mrs. Behn perhaps, as much as any one, condemned loose scenes, and too warm descriptions; but something must be allowed to human frailty. She herself was of an amorous complexion, she felt the passions intimately which she describes, and this circumstance added to necessity, might be the occasion of her plays being of that cast.

The stage how loosely does Astrea tread,
Who fairly puts, all characters to bed.

Are lines of Mr. Pope:

And another modern speaking of, the vicissitudes to which the stage is subjected, has the following,

Perhaps if skill could distant times explore,
New Behn's, new Durfey's, yet remain in store,
Perhaps, for who can guess th' effects of chance,
Here Hunt[4] may box, and Mahomet[5] may dance.

This author cannot be well acquainted with Mrs. Behn's works, who makes a comparison between them and the productions of Durfey. There are marks of a fine understanding in the most unfinished piece of Mrs. Behn, and the very worst of this lady's compositions are preferable to Durfey's bell. It is unpleasing to have the merit of any of the Fair Sex lessened. Mrs. Behn suffered enough at the hands of supercilious prudes, who had the barbarity to construe her sprightliness into lewdness; and because she had wit and beauty, she must likewise be charged with prostitution and irreligion.

Page 16

Her dramatic works are,

1, 2. The Rover: Or, the banished Cavalier. In two parts, both comedies; acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1677 and 1681. Those plays are taken in a great measure from Killegrew's Don Thomaso, or the wanderer.

3. The Dutch Lover, a Comedy, acted at the Duke's theatre, and printed in 4to, 1673. The plot of this play is founded upon a Spanish Comedy entitled, Don Fenise, written by Don Francisco de las Coveras.

4. Abdelazer; or the Moor's Revenge, a Tragedy, acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1671. It is taken from an old play of Marlow's, intitled, Lust's Dominion; or the Lascivious Queen, a Tragedy.

5. The Young King; or the Mistake, a Tragi-Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. in 1683. The design of this play is taken from the story of Alcamenes and Menalippa, in Calprenede's Cleopatra.

6. The Round-Heads; or the Good Old Cause, a Comedy; acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1682. It is dedicated to Henry Fitzroy—duke of Grafton.

7. The City Heiress; or Sir Timothy Treatwell, a Comedy; acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. in 1682, dedicated to Henry Earl of Arundel, and Lord Mowbray. Most of the characters in this play are borrowed, according to Langbaine, from Massinger's Guardian, and Middleton's Mad World my Masters.

8. The Town Fop, or Sir Timothy Tawdry, a Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1677. This play is founded on a comedy written by one George Wilkins, entitled, the Miseries of inforced Marriage.

9. The False Count, or a New Way to play an old Game, a Comedy; acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1682 Isabella's being deceived by the Chimney Sweeper is borrowed from Mollier's precieuse Ridicules.

10. The Lucky Chances; or an Alderman's Bargain, a Comedy, acted by the King's company, and printed in 4to. in 1687. It is dedicated to Hyde Earl of Rochester. This play was greatly condemned by the critics; some incidents in it are borrowed from Shirley's Lady of Pleasure.

11. The forced Marriage; or the jealous Bridegroom, a Tragi-Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to, 1671.

12. Sir Patient Fancy; a Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1678. The plot of this play, and some of the characters, particularly Sir Patient, is borrowed from Moliere's Malades Imaginaires.

13. The Widow Ranter; or the History of Bacon in Virginia, a Tragi-Comedy, acted by the King's company, and printed 1690. It is uncertain where she had the history of Bacon; but the catastrophe seems founded on the story of Cassius, who died by the hand of his freed man. This play was published after Mrs. Behn's death by one G.I., her friend.

14. The Feigned Courtezan; or a Night's Intrigue, a Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1679. It is dedicated to the famous Ellen Gwyn, King Charles IId's mistress, and is esteemed one of Mrs. Behn's best plays.

Page 17

15. Emperor of the Moon, a Farce, acted at the Queen's theatre, and printed 4to. 1687. It is dedicated to the Marquis of Worcester. The Plot is taken from an Italian piece translated into French, under the title of Harlequin Empereur, Dans le Monde de la Lune, and acted at Paris above eighty nights without intermission.

16. The Amorous Prince; or the Curious Husband, a Comedy, acted at the duke of York's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1671. The plot is borrowed from the novel of the Curious Impertinent in Don Quixote.

17. The younger Brother; or the Amorous Jilt; a Comedy, published after her death by Mr. Gildon. It was taken from a true story of colonel Henry Martin, and a certain lady.

Mrs. Behn's plays, all but the last, were published together in two volumes 8vo. But the edition of 1724 is in four volumes 12mo. including the Younger Brother.

The following is an account of her novels, and histories,

They are extant in two volumes 12mo. Lond. 1735, 8th edition, published by Mr. Charles Gildon, and dedicated to Simon Scroop, Esq; to which is prefixed the history of the Life and Memoirs of our authoress, written by one of the fair sex.

1. The History of Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave: This was founded on a true story, the incidents of which happened during her residence at Surinam. It gave birth to Mr. Southern's celebrated play of that name; who in his dedication of it, speaking of his obligation to Mrs. Behn for the subject, says,

'She had a great command of the stage, and I have often wondered that she would bury her favorite hero in a novel, when she might have revived him in the scene. She thought either, that no actor could represent him, or she could not bear him represented; and I believe the last, when I remember what I have heard from a friend of her's, that she always told a story more feelingly than she writ.'

2. The Fair Jilt; or the Amours of Prince Tarquin and Miranda. This is likewise said to be derived from a true story, to a great part of which she tells she was an eye witness; and what she did not see, she learned from some of the actors concerned in it, the Franciscans of Antwerp, where the scene is laid.

3. The Nun, or the perjured Beauty, a true novel.

4. The History of Agnes de Castro.

5. The Lover's Watch; or the Art of making love. It is taken from M. Bonnecourte's le Montre, or the Watch. It is not properly a novel. A lady, under the name of Iris, being absent from her lover Damon, is supposed to send him a Watch, on the dial plate of

which the whole business of a lover, during the twenty-four hours, is marked out, and pointed to by the dart of a Cupid in the middle.—

“Thus eight o’clock is marked agreeable to reverie; nine o’Clock, design to please no body; ten o’clock, reading of letters, &c.”

To which is added, as from Damon to Iris, a description of the case of the watch.

Page 18

6. The Lady's Looking-Glass, to dress themselves by. Damon is supposed to send Iris a looking-glass, which represents to her all her charms, *viz*. her shape, complexion, hair, &c. This likewise, which is not properly a novel, is taken from the French.

7. The Lucky Mistake, a new novel.

8. The Court of the King of Bantam.

9. The Adventures of the Black Lady. The reader will distinguish the originals from translations, by consulting the 2d and 3d tomes of Recueil des pieces gallantet, en prose et en verse. Paris 1684.

We have observed, that in the English translation of Ovid's Epistles, the paraphrase of Oenone's Epistle to Paris is her's. In the preface to that work Mr. Dryden pays her this handsome compliment.

"I was desired to say, that the author, who is of the fair sex, understood not Latin; but if she does not, I'm afraid she has given us occasion to be ashamed who do."

Part of this epistle transcribed will afford a specimen of her verification.

Say lovely youth, why wouldst thou, thus betray,
My easy faith, and lead my heart away.
I might some humble shepherd's choice have been,
Had I not heard that tongue, those eyes not seen;
And in some homely cot, in low repose,
Liv'd undisturb'd, with broken vows and oaths;
All day by shaded springs my flocks have kept,
And in some honest arms, at night have slept.
Then, un-upbraided with my wrongs thou'dit been,
Safe in the joys of the fair Grecian queen.
What stars do rule the great? no sooner you
Became a prince, but you were perjured too.
Are crowns and falsehoods then consistent things?
And must they all be faithless who are Kings?
The gods be prais'd that I was humble born,
Ev'n tho' it renders me my Paris' scorn.
And I had rather this way wretched prove,
Than be a queen, dishonest in my love.

[Footnote 1: Memoirs prefixed to her Novels, by a lady.]

[Footnote 2: Memoires ubi supra.]

[Footnote 3: Memoirs ubi supra.]

[Footnote 4: A noted boxer.]

[Footnote 5: A Turk, famous for his performances on a wire, after the manner of rope-dancers.]

* * * * *

Sir *George etherege*,

A Celebrated wit in the reign of Charles and James *ii*. He is said to have been descended of an ancient family of Oxfordshire, and born about the year 1636; it is thought he had some part of his education at the university of Cambridge, but in his younger years he travelled into France, and consequently made no long stay at the university. Upon his return, he, for some time, studied the Municipal Law at one of the Inns of Court, in which, it seems, he made but little progress, and like other men of sprightly genius, abandoned it for pleasure, and the gayer accomplishments.

Page 19

In the year 1664 the town was obliged with his first performance for the stage, entitled the Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub, the writing whereof brought him acquainted, as he himself informed us, with the earl of Dorset, to whom it is by the author dedicated. The fame of this play, together with his easy, unreserved conversation, and happy address, rendered him a favourite with the leading wits, such as the duke of Buckingham, Sir Charles Sedley, the earl of Rochester, Sir Car Scroop. Being animated by this encouragement, in 1668, he brought another comedy upon the stage, entitled She Would if She Could; which gained him no less applause, and it was expected, that by the continuance of his studies, he would polish and enliven the theatrical taste, and be no less constant in such entertainments, than the most assiduous of his cotemporaries, but he was too much addicted to pleasure, and being impelled by no necessity, he neglected the stage, and never writ, till he was forced to it, by the importunity of his friends. In 1676, his last comedy called the Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter, came on the stage, with the most extravagant success; he was then a servant to the beautiful duchess of York, of whom Dryden has this very singular expression, 'that he does not think, that at the general resurrection, she can be made to look more charming than now.' Sir George dedicates this play to his Royal Mistress, with the most courtly turns of compliment. In this play he is said to have drawn, or to use the modern cant, taken off, some of the cotemporary coxcombs; and Mr. Dryden, in an Epilogue to it, has endeavoured to remove the suspicion of personal satire, and says, that the character of Flutter is meant to ridicule none in particular, but the whole fraternity of finished fops, the idolaters of new fashions.

His words are,

True fops help nature's work, and go to school,
To file and finish God Almighty's fool:
Yet none Sir Fopling, him, or him, can call,
He's Knight o'th' Shire, and represents you all.

But this industry, to avoid the imputation of personal satire, but served to heighten it; and the town soon found out originals to his characters. Sir Fopling was said to be drawn for one Hewit, a beau of those times, who, it seems, was such a creature as the poet ridiculed, but who, perhaps, like many other coxcombs, would never have been remembered, but for this circumstance, which transmits his memory to posterity.

The character of Dorimant was supposed to represent the earl of Rochester, who was inconstant, faithless, and undetermined in his amours; and it is likewise said, in the character of Medley, that the poet has drawn out some sketch of himself, and from the authority of Mr. Bowman, who played Sir Fopling, or some other part in this comedy, it is said, that the very Shoemaker in Act I. was also meant for a real person, who, by his improvident courses before, having been unable

Page 20

to make any profit by his trade, grew afterwards, upon the public exhibition of him, so industrious and notable, that he drew a crowd of the best customers to him, and became a very thriving tradesman. Whether the poet meant to display these characters, we cannot now determine, but it is certain, the town's ascribing them to some particular persons, was paying him a very high compliment; and if it proved no more, it at least demonstrated, a close imitation of nature, a beauty which constitutes the greatest perfection of a comic poet.

Our author, it seems, was addicted to some gay extravagances, such as gaming, and an unlicensed indulgence in women and wine, which brought some satirical reflexions, upon him. Gildon in his Lives of the Dramatic Poets, says, that upon marrying a fortune, he was knighted; the circumstances of it are these: He had, by his gaming and extravagance, so embarrassed his affairs, that he courted a rich widow in order to retrieve them; but she being an ambitious woman, would not condescend to marry him, unless he could make her a lady, which he was obliged to do by the purchase of a knighthood; and this appears in a Consolatary Epistle to captain Julian, from the duke of Buckingham, in, which this match is reflected on. We have no account of any issue he had by this lady, but from the information of Mr. Bowman we can say, that he cohabited, for some time, with the celebrated Mrs. Barry the actress, and had one daughter by her; that he settled 5 or 6000 l. on her, but that she died young.

From the same intelligence, it also appears, that Sir George was, in his person, a fair[1], slender, genteel man, but spoiled his countenance with drinking, and other habits of intemperance. In his deportment he was very affable and courteous, of a generous disposition, which, with his free, lively, and natural vein of writing, acquired him the general character of gentle George, and easy Etherege, in respect of which qualities, we often find him compared to Sir Charles Sedley. His courtly and easy behaviour so recommended him to the Duchess of York, that when on the accession of King James *ii*. she became Queen, she sent him ambassador abroad, Gildon says, to Hamburgh; but it is pretty evident, that he was in that reign a minister at Ratisbon, at least, from the year 1686, to the time his majesty left this kingdom, if not later, but it appears that he was there, by his own letters wrote from thence to the earl of Middleton.

After this last comedy, we meet with no more he ever wrote for the stage; however, there are preserved some letters of his in prose, published among a collection of Familiar Letters, by John earl of Rochester; two of which, sent to the duke of Buckingham, have particular merit, both for the archness of the turns, and the acuteness of the observations. He gives his lordship a humorous description of some of the Germans, their excessive drunkenness; their plodding stupidity and

Page 21

ostensive indelicacy; he complains that he has no companion in that part of the world, no Sir Charles Sedleys, nor Buckinghams, and what is still worse, even deprived of the happiness of a mistress, for, the women there, he says, are so coy, and so narrowly watched by their relations, that there is no possibility of accomplishing an intrigue. He mentions, however, one Monsieur Hoffman, who married a French lady, with whom he was very great, and after the calamitous accident of Mr. Hoffman's being drowned, he pleasantly describes the grief of the widow, and the methods he took of removing her sorrow, by an attempt in which he succeeded. These two letters discover the true character of Etherege, as well as of the noble person to whom they were sent, and mark them as great libertines, in speculation as in practice.

As for the other compositions of our author, they consist chiefly of little airy sonnets, smart lampoons, and smooth panegyrics. All that we have met with more than is here mentioned, of his writing in prose, is a short piece, entitled An Account of the Rejoicing at the Diet of Ratisbon, performed by Sir George Etherege, Knight, residing there from his Majesty of Great Britain, upon Occasion of the Birth of the Prince of Wales; in a Letter from himself, printed in the Savoy 1688. When our author died, the writers of his life have been very deficient; Gildon says, that after the Revolution, he followed his master into France, and died there, or very soon after his arrival in England from thence. But there was a report (say the authors of the Biograph. Brit. which they received from an ingenious gentleman) 'that Sir George came to an untimely death, by an unlucky accident at Ratisbon, for, after having treated some company with a liberal entertainment at his house there, when he had taken his glass too freely, and, being through his great complaisance too forward, in waiting on his guests at their departure, flushed as he was, he tumbled down stairs, and broke his neck, and so fell a martyr to jollity and civility.'

One of the earliest of our author's lesser poems, is that addressed to her Grace the Marchioness of Newcastle, after reading her poems, and as it is esteemed a very elegant panegyric, we shall give the conclusion of it as a specimen.

While we, your praise, endeavouring to rehearse,
Pay that great duty in our humble verse;
Such as may justly move your anger, now,
Like Heaven forgive them, and accept them too.
But what we cannot, your brave hero pays,
He builds those monuments we strive to raise;
Such as to after ages shall make known,
While he records your deathless fame his own:
So when an artist some rare beauty draws,
Both in our wonder there, and our applause.

His skill, from time secures the glorious dame,
And makes himself immortal in her fame.

Besides his Songs, little panegyrical Poems and Sonnets, he wrote two Satires against Nell Gwyn, one of the King's mistresses, though there is no account how a quarrel happened between them; the one is called Madam Nelly's Complaint, beginning,

Page 22

If Sylla's ghost made bloody Cat'line start.

The other is called the Lady of Pleasure, with; its Argument at the Head of it, whereof the first line is,

The life of Nelly truly shewn.

Sir George spent a life of ease, pleasure, and affluence, at least never was long, nor much, exposed to want. He seems to have possessed a sprightly genius, to have had an excellent turn for comedy, and very happy in a courtly dialogue. We have no proof of his being a scholar, and was rather born, than made a poet. He has not escaped the censure of the critics; for his works are so extremely loose and licentious, as to render them dangerous to young, unguarded minds: and on this account our witty author is, indeed, justly liable to the severest censure of the virtuous, and sober part of mankind.

[Footnote 1: Biogr. Brit. p. 1844.]

* * * * *

THE LIFE OF

William Mountford.

This gentleman, who was very much distinguished as a player, was born in the year 1659, but of what family we have no account, farther than that they were of Staffordshire; the extraordinary circumstances of Mr. Mountford's death, have drawn more attention upon him, than he might otherwise have had; and though he was not very considerable as a poet, yet he was of great eminence as an actor. Mr. Cibber, in his Apology for his own Life, has mentioned him with the greatest respect, and drawn his character with strong touches of admiration. After having delineated the theatrical excellences of Kynaston, Sandford, &c. he thus speaks of Mountford. '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.

All this he particularly verified in that scene of Alexander, where the hero 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 polished by 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 played them; he filled the stage, not by elbowing and crossing it before others, or disconcerting their action, but by surpassing them in true and masterly touches of nature; he never laughed at his own jest, unless the point of his raillery upon another required it; he had a particular talent in giving life to bons mots and repartees; the wit of the poet seemed always to

Page 23

come from him extempore, and sharpened into more wit from his brilliant manner of delivering it; he had himself a good share of it, or what is equal to it, so lively a pleasantness of humour, that when either of these fell into his hands upon the stage, he wantoned with them to the highest delight of his auditors. The agreeable was so natural to him, that even in that dissolute character of the Rover, he seemed to wash off the guilt from vice, and gave it charms and merit; for though it may be a reproach to the poet to draw such characters, not only unpunished, but rewarded, the actor may still be allowed his due praise in his excellent performance; and this was a distinction which, when this comedy was acted at Whitehall, King William's Queen Mary was pleased to make in favour of Mountford, notwithstanding her disapprobation of the play; which was heightened by the consideration of its having been written by a lady, *viz*. Mrs. Behn, from whom more modesty might have been expected.

'He had, besides all this, a variety in his genius, which few capital actors have shewn, or perhaps have thought it any addition of their merit to arrive at; he could entirely change himself, could at once throw off the man of sense, for the brisk, vain, rude, 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 Sparkish, in Wycherley's Country Wife: in that of Sir Courtly Nice, by Crown, his excellence was still greater; there his whole man, voice, mien, and gesture, was no longer Mountford, 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 observed, that had he not been an entire matter of nature, had he not kept his judgment, as it were a centinel upon himself, not to admit the least likeness of what he used to be, to enter into any part of his performance, he could not possibly have so compleatly finished it.'

Mr. Cibber further observes, that if, some years after the death of Mountford, he himself had any success in those parts, he acknowledges the advantages he had received from the just idea, and strong impressions from Mountford's acting them.' 'Had he been remembered (says he) when I first attempted them, my defects would have been more easily discovered, and consequently my favourable reception in them must have been very much, and justly abated. If it could be remembered, how much he had the advantage of me in voice and person, I could not here be suspected of an affected modesty, or overvaluing his excellence; for he sung a clear, counter-tenor, and had a melodious, warbling throat, which could not but set off the last scene of Sir Courtly with uncommon happiness, which I, alas! could only struggle through, with the faint excuses, and real confidence of a fine singer, under the imperfection of a feigned, and screaming treble, which, at least, could only shew you. what I would have done, had nature been more favourable to me.'

Page 24

This is the amiable representation which Mr. Cibber makes of his old favourite, and whose judgment in theatrical excellences has been ever indisputed. But this finished performer did not live to reap the advantages which would have arisen from the great figure he made upon the stage.

He fell in the 33d year of his age, by the hand of an assassin, who cowardly murdered him, and slid from justice. As we imagine it will not be unpleasing to the reader to be made acquainted with the most material circumstances relating to that affair, we mail here insert them, as they appear on the trial of lord Mohun, who was arraigned for that murder, and acquitted by his peers. Lord Mohun, it is well known, was a man of loose morals, a rancorous spirit, and, in short, reflected no honour on his titles. It is a true observation, that the temper and disposition of a man may be more accurately known by the company he keeps, than by any other means of reading the human heart: Lord Mohun had contracted a great intimacy with one captain Hill, a man of scandalous morals, and despicable life, and was so fond of this fellow, whom, it seems, nature had wonderfully formed to be a cut throat, that he entered into his schemes, and became a party in promoting his most criminal pleasures.

This murderer had long entertained a passion for Mrs. Bracegirdle, so well known, as an excellent actress, and who died not many years ago, that it would be superfluous to give a particular account of her; his passion was rejected with disdain by Mrs. Bracegirdle, who did not think such a heart as his worth possessing. The contempt with which she used captain Hill fired his resentment; he valued himself for being a gentleman, and an officer in the army, and thought he had a right, at the first onset, to triumph over the heart of an actress; but in this he found himself miserably mistaken: Hill, who could not bear the contempt shewn him by Mrs. Bracegirdle, conceived that her aversion must proceed from having previously engaged her heart to some more favoured lover; and though Mr. Mountford was a married man, he became jealous of him, probably, from no other reason, than the respect with which he observed Mr. Mountford treat her, and their frequently playing together in the same scene. Confirmed in this suspicion, he resolved to be revenged on Mountford, and as he could not possess Mrs. Bracegirdle by gentle means, he determined to have recourse to violence, and hired some ruffians to assist him in carrying her off. His chief accomplice in this scheme was lord Mohun, to whom he communicated his intention, and who concurred with him in it. They appointed an evening for that purpose, hired a number of soldiers, and a coach, and went to the playhouse in order to find Mrs. Bracegirdle, but she having no part in the play of that night, did not come to the house. They then got intelligence that she was gone with her mother to sup at one Mrs. Page's in Drury-Lane;

Page 25

thither they went, and fixed their post, in expectation of Mrs. Bracegirdle's coming out, when they intended to have executed their scheme against her. She at last came out, accompanied with her mother and Mr. Page: the two adventurers made a sign to their hired bravo's, who laid their hands on Mrs. Bracegirdle: but her mother, who threw her arms round her waist, preventing them from thrusting her immediately into the coach, and Mr. Page gaining time to call assistance, their attempt was frustrated, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, her mother, and Mr. Page, were safely conveyed to her own house in Howard-street in the Strand. Lord Mohnn and Hill, enraged at this disappointment, resolved, since they were unsuccessful in one part of their design, they would yet attempt another; and that night vowed revenge against Mr. Mountford.

They went to the street where Mr. Mountford lived, and there lay in wait for him: Old Mrs. Bracegirdle and another gentlewoman who had heard them vow revenge against Mr. Mountford, sent to his house, to desire his wife to let him know his danger, and to warn him not to come home that night, but unluckily no messenger Mrs. Mountford sent was able to find him: Captain Hill and lord Mohun paraded in the streets with their swords drawn; and when the watch made enquiry into the cause of this, lord Mohun answered, that he was a peer of the realm, and dared them to touch him at their peril; the night-officers being intimidated at this threat, left them unmolested, and went their rounds. Towards midnight Mr. Mountford going home to his own house was saluted in a very friendly manner, by lord Mohun; and as his lordship seemed to carry no marks of resentment in his behaviour, he used the freedom to ask him, how he came there at that time of night? to which his lordship replied, by asking if he had not heard the affair of the woman? Mountford asked what woman? to which he answered Mrs. Bracegirdle; I hope, says he, my lord, you do not encourage Mr. Hill in his attempt upon Mrs. Bracegirdle; which however is no concern of mine; when he uttered these words, Hill, behind his back, gave him some desperate blows on his head, and before Mr. Mountford had time to draw, and stand on his defence, he basely run him thro' the body, and made his escape; the alarm of murder being given, the constable seized lord Mohun, who upon hearing that Hill had escaped expressed great satisfaction, and said he did not care if he were hanged for him: When the evidences were examined at Hicks's-Hall, one Mr. Bencroft, who attended Mr. Mountford, swore that Mr. Mountford declared to him as a dying man, that while he was talking to lord Mohun, Hill struck him, with his left hand, and with his right hand run him thro' the body, before he had time to draw his sword.

Thus fell the unfortunate Mountford by the hand of an assassin, without having given him any provocation; save that which his own jealousy had raised, and which could not reasonably be imputed to Mountford as a crime.

Page 26

Lord Mohun, as we have already observed, was tried, and acquitted by his peers; as it did not appear, that he immediately assisted Hill, in perpetrating the murder, or that they had concerted it before; for tho' they were heard to vow revenge against Mountford, the word murther was never mentioned. It seems abundantly clear, that lord Mohun, however, if not active, was yet accessary to the murther; and had his crime been high treason, half the evidence which appeared against him, might have been sufficient to cost him his head. This nobleman himself was killed at last in a duel with the duke of Hamilton.[1]

Mr. Mountford, besides his extraordinary talents as an actor, is author of the following dramatic pieces.

1. The Injured Lovers, or the Ambitious Father, a Tragedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal 1688, dedicated to James earl of Arran, son to the duke of Hamilton.

2. The Successful Strangers, a Tragi-Comedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal 1690; dedicated to lord Wharton. The plot is taken from the Rival Brothers, in Scarron's Novels.

3. Greenwich-Park, a Comedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal 1691; dedicated to Algernon earl of Essex.

Besides these, he turned the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus into a Farce, with the Humours of Harlequin and Scaramouch, acted at the queen's theatre in Dorset-Garden, and revived at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields 1697.

Mr. Mountford has written many Prologues and Epilogues, scattered in Dryden's Miscellanies; and likewise several Songs. He seems to have had a sprightly genius, and possessed a pleasing gaiety of humour.—He was killed in the year 1692; and was buried in St. Clement Danes.

[Footnote 1: The foundation of the quarrel between lord Mohun and the duke (however it might be improved by party suggestions) was a law suit between these noblemen, on account of part of the earl of Macclesfield's estate, which Mr. Savage would have been heir to, had not his mother, to facilitate her designed divorce from that earl (with the pleasing view of having her large fortune restored to her, and the no less pleasing prospect of being freed from an uncomfortable husband) declared unhappy Savage to be illegitimate, and natural son of the then earl Rivers. Of this farther notice will be taken in Savage's Life.]

* * * * *

THOMAS SHADWELL.

This celebrated poet laureat was descended of a very antient family in Staffordshire; the eldest branch of which has enjoyed an estate there of five-hundred pounds per ann. He was born about the year 1640, at Stanton-Hall in Norfolk, a seat of his father's, and educated at Caius College in Cambridge[1], where his father had been likewise bred; and then placed in the middle Temple, to study the law; where having spent some time, he travelled abroad. Upon his return home he became acquainted with the most celebrated

Page 27

persons of wit, and distinguished quality, in that age; which was so much addicted to poetry and polite literature, that it was not easy for him, who had no doubt a native relish for the same accomplishments, to abstain from these the fashionable studies and amusements of those times. He applied himself chiefly to the dramatic kind of writing, in which he had considerable success. At the revolution, Mr. Dryden, who had so warmly espoused the opposite interest, was dispossessed of his place of Poet Laureat, and Mr. Shadwell succeeded him in it, which employment he possessed till his death. Mr. Shadwell has been illustrious, for nothing so much as the quarrel which subsisted between him and Dryden, who held him in the greatest contempt. We cannot discover what was the cause of Mr. Dryden's aversion to Shadwell, or how this quarrel began, unless it was occasioned by the vacant Laurel being bellowed on Mr. Shadwell: But it is certain, the former prosecuted his resentment severely, and, in his Mac Flecknoe, has transmitted his antagonist to posterity in no advantageous light. It is the nature of satire to be biting, but it is not always its nature to be true: We cannot help thinking that Mr. Dryden has treated Shadwell a little too unmercifully, and has violated truth to make the satire more pungent. He says, in the piece abovementioned,

Others to some saint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Which is not strictly true. There are high authorities in favour of many of his Comedies, and the best wits of the age gave their testimony for them: They have in them fine strokes of humour, the characters are often original, strongly mark'd, and well sustained; add to this, that he had the greatest expedition in writing imaginable, and sometimes produced a play in less than a month. Shadwell, as it appears from Rochester's Session of the Poets, was a great favourite with Otway, and as they lived, in intimacy together, it might perhaps be the occasion of Dryden's expressing so much contempt for Otway; which his cooler judgment could never have directed him to do.

Mr. Shadwell died the 19th of December 1692, in the fifty-second year of his age, as we are informed by the inscription upon his monument in Westminster Abbey; tho' there may be some mistake in that date; for it is said in the title page of his funeral sermon preached by Dr. Nicholas Brady, that he was interred at Chelsea, on the 24th of November, that year. This sermon was published 1693, in quarto, and in it Dr. Brady tells us, 'That our author was 'a man of great honesty and integrity, an inviolable fidelity and strictness in his word, an unalterable friendship wherever he professed it, and however the world maybe mistaken in him, he had a much deeper sense of religion than many who pretended more to it. His natural and acquired abilities, continues the Dr. made him very amiable to all who knew and conversed with him, a very few being equal in the becoming qualities, which adorn, and fit off a complete gentleman; his very enemies, if he have now any left, will give him this character, at least if they knew him so thoroughly as I did.—His death seized him suddenly, but he could not be

unprepared, since to my certain knowledge he never took a dose of opium, but he solemnly recommended himself to God by prayer.'

Page 28

When some persons urged to the then lord chamberlain, that there were authors who had better pretensions to the Laurel; his lordship replied, 'He did not pretend to say how great a poet Shadwell might be, but was sure he was an honest man.'

Besides his dramatic works, he wrote several other pieces of poetry; the chief of which are his congratulatory poem on the Prince of Orange's coming to England; another on queen Mary; his translation of the 10th Satire of Juvenal, &c. Shadwell in his Comedies imitated Ben Johnson, and proposed him as his model of excellence, with what degree of success we shall not take upon us to determine, but proceed to give an account of his plays.

1. The Sullen Lovers, or the Impertinent, a Comedy; acted at the duke's theatre, dedicated to William duke of Newcastle: the dedication is dated September 1st, 1668.

2. The Humorist, a Comedy; acted by his royal highest servants, dedicated to Margaret duchess of Newcastle.

3. The Royal Shepherdess, a Tragi-Comedy; acted by the duke of York's servants, printed at London 1669, in quarto. This play was originally written by Mr. Fountain of Devonshire, but altered throughout by Mr. Shadwell.

4. The Virtuoso, a Comedy; acted at the duke's theatre, printed at London 1676, in quarto, dedicated to the duke of Newcastle.

Mr. Langbaine observes, that no body will deny this play its due applause; at least I know, says he, that the university of Oxford, who may be allowed competent judges of comedy, especially such characters as Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, and Sir Formal Trifle, applauded it. And as no man ever undertook to discover the frailties of such pretenders to this kind of knowledge before Mr. Shadwell, so none since Johnson's time, ever drew so many different characters of humour, and with such success.

5. Pysche, a Tragedy; acted at the duke's theatre, printed in London 1675 in 4to, and dedicated to the duke of Monmouth. In the preface he tell us, that this play was written in five weeks.

6. The Libertine, a Tragedy; acted by his royal highness's servants, printed in London 1676, in quarto, and dedicated to the duke of Newcastle. In the preface Mr. Shadwell observes, that the story from which he took the hint of this play, is famous all over Spain, Italy, and France. It was first used in a Spanish play, the Spaniards having a tradition of such a vicious Spaniard, as is represented in this play; from them the Italian comedians took it; the French borrowed it from them, and four several plays have been made upon the story.

7. Epsom Wells, a comedy; acted at the duke's theatre; printed at London 1676, in 4to, and dedicated to the duke of Newcastle. Mr. Langbaine says, that this is so diverting and so true a comedy, that even foreigners, who are not in general kind to the wit of our nation, have extremely commended it.

8. The History of Timon of Athens the Manhater; acted at the duke's theatre, printed at London 1678, in 4to. In the dedication to George duke of Buckingham he observes, that this play was originally Shakespear's, who never made, says he, more masterly strokes than in this; yet I can truly say, I have made it into a play.

Page 29

9. The Miser, a Comedy; acted at the theatre royal, dedicated to the earl of Dorset. In the preface our author observes, he took the foundation of it from Moliere's L'Avare.

10. A true Widow, a Comedy; acted at the duke's theatre, printed in 1679, in 4to, dedicated to Sir Charles Sidley. The prologue was written by Mr. Dryden; for at this time they lived in friendship.

11. The Lancashire Witches, and Teague O Divelly, the Irish priest, a comedy; acted at the duke's theatre, printed at London 1682. Our author has a long preface to this play, in which he vindicates his piece from the charge of reflecting upon the church, and the sacred order. He apologizes for the magical part, and observes, that he had no hopes of equaling Shakespear in his fancy, who created his Witches for the most part out of his imagination; in which faculty no man ever excelled led him, and therefore, says he, I resolve to take mine from authority.

12. The Woman Captain, a Comedy; acted by his royal highness's servants.

13. The Squire of Alsatia, a Comedy; acted by his Majesty's servants, printed at London 1688, in 4to. and dedicated to the earl of Dorset and Middlesex.

14. Bury-Fair, a Comedy; acted by his Majesty's servants, printed at London 1689 in 4to. and dedicated to the earl of Dorset. In the dedication he observes, 'That this play was written during eight months painful sickness, wherein all the several days in which he was able to write any part of a scene amounted not to one month, except some few, which were employed in indispensible business.'

15. Amorous Bigot, with the second part of Teague O Divelly, a Comedy, acted by their Majesties servants, printed 1690 in 4to. dedicated to Charles earl of Shrewsbury.

16. The Scowerers, a Comedy, acted by their Majesties servants, and printed in 4to. 1690.

17. The Volunteers, or the Stock-Jobbers, a Comedy, acted by their Majesties servants, dedicated to the Queen by Mrs. Anne Shadwell, our author's widow.

In the epilogue the character of Mr. Shadwell, who was then dead, was given in the following lines.

Shadwell, the great support o'th'comic stage,
Born to expose the follies of the age,
To whip prevailing vices, and unite,
Mirth with instruction, profit with delight;
For large ideas, and a flowing pen,
First of our times, and second but to Ben;
Whose mighty genius, and discerning mind,

Trac'd all the various humours of mankind;
Dressing them up, with such successful care
That ev'ry fop found his own picture there.
And blush'd for shame, at the surprising skill,
Which made his lov'd resemblance look so ill.
Shadwell who all his lines from nature drew,
Copy'd her out, and kept her still in view;
Who never sunk in prose, nor soar'd in verse,
So high as bombast, or so low as farce;
Who ne'er was brib'd by title or estate
To fawn or flatter with the rich or great;
To let a gilded vice or folly pass,
But always lash'd the villain and the ass.

Page 30

[Footnote 1: General Dictionary. See the article Shadwell.]

* * * * *

Sir *William Killegrew*.

The eldest son of Sir Robert Killegrew, Knt. chamberlain to the Queen, was born at the Manor of Hanworth, near Hampton-Court, in the month of May, 1605. He became a gentleman commoner in St. John's College in Midsummer term 1622; where continuing about three years he travelled beyond seas, and after his return, was made governor of Pendennis castle, and of Falmouth haven in Cornwall, with command of the militia in the west part of that county. After this he was called to attend King Charles I. as one of his gentlemen ushers of his privy chamber; in which employment he continued till the breaking out of the great rebellion; and had the command given him of one of the two great troops of horse that guarded the King's person, during the whole course of the war between his Majesty and his Parliament. Our author was in attendance upon the King when the court resided at Oxford, and was created doctor of the civil laws 1642;[1] and upon the ruin of the King's affairs, he suffered for his attachment to him, and compounded with the republicans for his estate.

Upon the restoration of King Charles *ii*. he was the first of his father's servants that he took any notice of, and made him gentleman-usher of his privy chamber: the same place he enjoyed under the deceased King. Upon Charles IId's marriage with Donna Catherina of Portugal, he was created his Majesty's first vice chamberlain, in which honourable station he continued twenty-two years.

His dramatic works are,

1. Orinasdes, or Love and friendship, a tragi-comedy.

2. Pandora, or the Converts, a Comedy.

3. Siege of Urbin, a Tragi-Comedy.

4. Selindra, a Tragi-Comedy.

All these plays were printed together in folio, Oxon 1666. There is another play ascribed to our author, called the Imperial Tragedy, printed in 1699; the chief part was taken out of a Latin play, and much altered by him for his own diversion; tho' upon the importunity of his friends, he was prevailed upon to publish it, but without his name. The plot is founded upon the history of Zeno, the 12th emperor of Constantinople after Constantine. Sir William Killegrew's plays have been applauded by men very eminent in poetry, particularly Mr. Waller, who addresses a copy of verses to him upon his altering Pandora from a tragedy into a comedy, because not approved on the stage.

Sir William has also a little poem extant, which was set to music by Mr. Henry Lawes, a man in the highest reputation of any of his profession in his time. Mr. Wood says, that after our author had retired from court in his declining age, he wrote

The Artless Midnight Thoughts of a Gentleman at Court; who for many years built on sand, which every blast of cross fortune has defaced; but now he has laid new foundations, on the rock of his salvation, &c. London 1684. It is dedicated to King Charles *ii*. and besides 233 thoughts in it, there are some small pieces of poetry.

Page 31

Midnight and Daily thoughts in verse and prose, Lond. 1694, with commendatory verses before it, by H. Briket. He died 1693, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

[Footnote 1: Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. 2.]

* * * * *

Sir *Robert Howard*.

This gentleman was a younger son of Thomas earl of Berkshire, by Elizabeth his wife, one of the daughters and coheirs of William lord Burghley, and received his education at Magdalen-college, Oxford, under the tuition of Dr. E. Drope. During the civil wars, he suffered with the rest of his family, who maintained their loyalty to the unfortunate King Charles I. Upon the restoration, our author was made a knight, and was chosen one of the burgesses for Stockbridge in Hampshire, to serve in the Parliament which began at Westminster 8th of May 1661; he was quickly preferred to the place of auditor of the Exchequer, then worth some thousand pounds per annum, and was reckoned one of King Charles's creatures, whom he advanced, on account of his faithful services in cajoling the Parliament for Money.

In the year 1679 he was chosen burgess for Castle-rising in Norfolk, to serve in that Parliament which began at Westminster on the 17th of October 1680. When the revolution was effected, and King William ascended the throne, he was elected burgess again for Castle-rising, to fit in the Parliament which began the 22d of January 1688, was made one of the privy council, about the 16th of February took the usual oaths, and commenced from that moment a violent persecutor of the Non-jurors, and disclaimed all manner of conversation and intercourse with any of that character. He is said to have been a man extremely positive, and a pretender to a more general understanding than he really possessed. His obstinacy and pride procured him many enemies, amongst whom the duke of Buckingham was the first; who intended to have exposed Sir Robert under the name of Bilboa in the Rehearsal; but the plague which then prevailed occasioned the theatres to be shut up, and the people of fashion to quit the town. In this interval he altered his resolution, and levelled his ridicule at a much greater name, under that of Bayes.

Thomas Shadwell the poet, tho' a man of the same principles with Sir Robert, concerning the revolution and state matters, was yet so angry with the knight for his supercilious domineering manner of behaving, that he points him out under the name of Sir Positive At All, one of his characters in the comedy called the Sullen Lovers, or the Impertinents; and amongst the same persons is the lady Vain, a Courtezan, which the wits then understood to be the mistress of Sir Robert Howard, whom he afterwards thought proper to marry.

In February 1692, being then in the decline of life, he married one Mrs Dives, maid of honour to the Queen. The merit of this author seems to have been of a low rate, for very little is preserved concerning him, and none of his works are now read; nor is he ever mentioned, but when that circumstance of the duke of Buckingham's intending to ridicule him, is talked of.

Page 32

Had Sir Robert been a man of any parts, he had sufficient advantages from his birth and fortune to have made a figure, but the highest notice which he can claim in the republic of letters, is, that he was brother-in-law to Dryden.

His works are,

Poems, containing a panegyric on the King, and songs and sonnets, Lond. 1660, and a panegyric on general Monk.

His plays are six in number, *viz*.

1. The Blind Lady, a Comedy.

2. The Committee, or the Faithful Irishman, a Comedy, printed folio, London 1665. This comedy is often acted, and the success of it chiefly depends upon the part of Teague being well performed.

3. The Great Favourite, or the Duke of Lerma, a Tragi-Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal 1668. This play was criticised by Mr. Dryden.

4. The Indian Queen, a Tragedy.

5. Surprizal, a Tragi-comedy, acted at the theatre royal 1665.

6. The Vestal Virgin; or the Roman Ladies, a Tragedy, 1665. In his prologue to this play, Sir Robert has the following couplet, meant as an answer to Dryden's animadversions on the Duke of Lerma.

This doth a wretched dearth of wit betray,
When things of kind on one another prey.

He has written likewise,

The History of the Reigns of Edward and Richard *ii*. with Reflections and Characters on their chief ministers and favourites. As also a comparison between these princes Edward and Richard *ii*. with Edward I. and Edward *iii*. London printed 1690.

A Letter to Mr. Samuel Johnson, occasioned by a scurrilous pamphlet, entitled, Animadversions on Mr. Johnson's Answer to Jovian, in three Letters to a country friend, Lond. 1692. At the end of this letter is reprinted the preface before the history of the reigns of Edward and Richard *ii*. before mentioned.

The History of Religion, Lond. 1694.

The 4th book of Virgil translated into English, which contains the loves of Dido and AEneas, 1660.

Likewise P. Papinius Statius, his Achilles, in five books; to each of which he has subjoined Annotations.

* * * * *

RICHARD FLECKNOE

This poet lived in the reign of King Charles *ii*. and is more remarkable for having given name to a satire of Mr. Dryden's, than for all his own works. He is said to have been originally a jesuit, and to have had connexions in consequence thereof, with such persons of distinction in London as were of the Roman Catholic persuasion, Langbaine says, his acquaintance with the nobility was more than with the mules, and he had a greater propensity to rhiming, than genius to poetry.

Tho' he wrote several plays, yet he never could obtain the favour to have more than one of them acted.

His dramatic works are:

1. Damoiselles a-la-mode, a Comedy, printed 8vo, Lond. 1667, and addressed to the duke and duchess of Newcastle. This comedy was designed by the author to have been acted by his Majesty's servants, which they thought proper however to refuse, we know not for what reason,—The poet indeed has assigned one, whether true or false is immaterial; but it may serve to shew his humour.

Page 33

For the acting this comedy (says he) those who have the government of the stage have their humours, and would be intreated; and I have mine, and won't entreat them; and were all dramatic writers of my mind, they should wear their old plays thread-bare, er'e they should have any new, till they better understood their own interest, and how to distinguish between good and bad.'

This anger of Mr. Flecknoe's at the players for refusing the piece, bears some resemblance to that of Bayes, when the players went to dinner without his leave. 'How! are the players gone to dinner? If they are I will make them know what it is to injure a person who does them the honour to write for them, and all that; a company of proud, conceited, humorous, cross-grain'd persons, and all that; I'll make them the most contemptible, despicable, inconsiderable persons, and all that; &c. &c. &c.

2. Ermina, or the chaste lady; printed in octavo, London 1665.

3. Love's Dominion; a dramatic piece, which the author says, is full of excellent morality; and is written as a pattern of the reformed stage, printed in octavo, London 1654, and dedicated to the lady Elizabeth Claypole. In this epistle the author insinuates the use of plays, and begs her mediation to gain license to act them.

4. Love's Kingdom, a Tragi-Comedy; not as it was acted at the theatre in Lincoln's-Inn; but as it was written and since corrected, printed in octavo, London 1664, and dedicated to his excellency William lord marquis of Newcastle. This is no more than the former play a little alter'd, with a new title; and after the king's return, it seems the poet obtained leave to have it acted, but it had the misfortune to be damned by the audience, which Mr. Flecknoe stiles the people, and calls them judges without judgment, for want of its being rightly represented to them; he owns it wants much of the ornaments of the stage, but that, he says, by a lively imagination may be easily supplied. 'To the same purpose he speaks of his Damoiselles a la Mode:

That together with the persons represented, he had set down the comedians he had designed should represent them; that the reader might have half the pleasure of seeing it acted, and a lively imagination might have the pleasure of it all entire.

5. The Marriage of Oceanus and Britannia, a Masque.

Our author's other works consist of Epigrams and Enigmas. There is a book of his writing, called the Diarium, or the Journal; divided into twelve jornadas, in burlesque verse.

Dryden, in two lines in his Mac Flecknoe, gives the character of our author's works.

In prose and verse was own'd without dispute,
Thro' all the realms of nonsense absolute.

We cannot be certain in what year Mr. Flecknoe died: Dryden's satire had perhaps rendered him so contemptible, that none gave themselves the trouble to record any particulars of his life, or to take any notice of his death.

Page 34

* * * * *

John Dryden, Esq;

This illustrious Poet was son of Erasmus Dryden, of Tickermish in Northamptonshire, and born at Aldwincle, near Oundle 1631[1], he had his education in grammar learning, at Westminster-school, under the famous Dr. Busby, and was from thence elected in 1650, a scholar of Trinity-College in Cambridge.

We have no account of any extraordinary indications of genius given by this great poet, while in his earlier days; and he is one instance how little regard is to be paid to the figure a boy makes at school: Mr. Dryden was turned of thirty before he introduced any play upon the stage, and his first, called the Wild Gallants, met with a very indifferent reception; so that if he had not been impelled by the force of genius and propension, he had never again attempted the stage: a circumstance which the lovers of dramatic poetry must ever have regretted, as they would in this case have been deprived of one of the greatest ornaments that ever adorned the profession.

The year before he left the university, he wrote a poem on the death of lord Hastings, a performance, say some of his critics, very unworthy of himself, and of the astonishing genius he afterwards discovered.

That Mr. Dryden had at this time no fixed principles, either in religion or politics, is abundantly evident, from his heroic stanzas on Oliver Cromwel, written after his funeral 1658; and immediately upon the restoration he published Astraea Redux, a poem on the happy restoration of Charles the IId; and the same year, his Panegyric to the king on his coronation: In the former of these pieces, a remarkable distich has expos'd our poet to the ridicule of the wits.

An horrid stillness first invades the ear,
And in that silence we the tempest hear.

Which it must be owned is downright nonsense, and a contradiction in terms: Amongst others captain Radcliff has ridiculed this blunder in the following lines of his News from Hell.

Laureat who was both learn'd and florid,
Was damn'd long since for silence horrid:
Nor had there been such clutter made,
But that his silence did invade.
Invade, and so it might, that's clear;
But what did it invade? An ear!

In 1662 he addressed a poem to the lord chancellor Hyde, presented on new-year's-day; and the same year published a satire on the Dutch. His next piece, was his Annus Mirabilis, or the Year of Wonders, 1668, an historical poem, which celebrated the duke of York's victory over the Dutch. In the same year Mr. Dryden succeeded Sir William Davenant as Poet Laureat, and was also made historiographer to his majesty; and that year published his Essay on Dramatic Poetry, addressed to Charles earl of Dorset and Middlesex. Mr. Dryden tells his patron, that the writing this Essay, served as an amusement to him in the country, when he was driven from town by

Page 35

the violence of the plague, which then raged in London; and he diverted himself with thinking on the theatres, as lovers do by ruminating on their absent mistresses: He there justifies the method of writing plays in verse, but confesses that he has quitted the practice, because he found it troublesome and slow[2]. In the preface we are informed that the drift of this discourse was to vindicate the honour of the English writers from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French to them. Langbaine has injuriously treated Mr. Dryden, on account of his dramatic performances, and charges him as a licentious plagiary. The truth is, our author as a dramatist is less eminent than in any other sphere of poetry; but, with all his faults, he is even in that respect the most eminent of his time.

The critics have remarked, that as to tragedy, he seldom touches the passions, but deals rather in pompous language, poetical flights, and descriptions; and too frequently makes his characters speak better than they have occasion, or ought to do, when their sphere in the drama is considered: And it is peculiar to Dryden (says Mr. Addison) to make his personages, as wise, witty, elegant and polite as himself. That he could not so intimately affect the tender passions, is certain, for we find no play of his, in which we are much disposed to weep; and we are so often inchanted with beautiful descriptions, and noble flights of fancy, that we forget the business of the play, and are only attentive to the poet, while the characters sleep. Mr. Gildon observes in his laws of poetry, that when it was recommended to Mr. Dryden to turn his thoughts to a translation of Euripides, rather than of Homer, he confessed that he had no relish for that poet, who was a great master of tragic simplicity. Mr. Gildon, further observes, as a confirmation that Dryden's taste for tragedy was not of the genuine sort, that he constantly expressed great contempt for Otway, who is universally allowed to have succeeded very happily in affecting the tender passions: Yet Mr. Dryden, in his preface to the translation of M. Du Fresnoy, speaks more favourably of Otway; and after mentioning these instances, Gildon ascribes this taste in Dryden, to his having read many French Romances.—The truth is, if a poet would affect the heart, he must not exceed nature too much, nor colour too high; distressful circumstances, short speeches, and pathetic observations never fail to move infinitely beyond the highest rant, or long declamations in tragedy: The simplicity of the drama was Otway's peculiar excellence; a living poet observes, that from Otway to our own times,

> From bard to bard, the frigid caution crept,
> And declamation roar'd while passion slept.

Mr. Dryden seems to be sensible, that he was not born to write comedy; for, says he, 'I want that gaiety of humour which is required in it; my conversation is slow and dull, my humour saturnine and reserved. In short, I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, and make repartees; so that those who decry my comedies, do me no

injury, except it be in point of profit: Reputation in them is the last thing to which I shall pretend[3].'

Page 36

This ingenuous confession of inability, one would imagine were sufficient to silence the clamour of the critics against Mr. Dryden in that particular; but, however true it may be, that Dryden did not succeed to any degree in comedy, I shall endeavour to support my assertion, that in tragedy, with all his faults, he is still the most excellent of his time. The end of tragedy is to instruct the mind, as well as move the passions; and where there are no shining sentiments, the mind may be affected, but not improved; and however prevalent the passion of grief may be over the heart of man, it is certain that he may feel distress in the acutest manner, and not be much the wiser for it. The tragedies of Otway, Lee and Southern, are irresistibly moving, but they convey not such grand sentiments, and their language is far from being so poetical as Dryden's; now, if one dramatic poet writes to move, and another to enchant and instruct, as instruction is of greater consequence than being agitated, it follows naturally, that the latter is the most excellent writer, and possesses the greatest genius.

But perhaps our poet would have wrote better in both kinds of the drama, had not the necessity of his circumstances obliged him to comply with the popular taste. He himself, in his dedication to the Spanish Fryar, insinuates as much. 'I remember, says he, some verses of my own Maximin and Almanzor, which cry vengeance upon me for their extravagance. All that I can say for those passages, which are I hope not many, is, that I knew they were bad when I wrote them. But I repent of them amongst my sins, and if any of their fellows intrude by chance, into my present writings, I draw a veil over all these Dalilahs of the theatre, and am resolved, I will settle myself no reputation upon the applause of fools. 'Tis not that I am mortified to all ambition, but I scorn as much to take it from half witted judges, as I should to raise an estate by cheating of bubbles. Neither do I discommend the lofty stile in tragedy, which is naturally pompous and magnificent; but nothing is truely sublime that is not just and proper.' He says in another place, 'that his Spanish Fryar was given to the people, and that he never wrote any thing in the dramatic way, to please himself, but his All for Love.'

In 1671 Mr. Dryden was publicly ridiculed on the stage, in the duke of Buckingham's comedy, culled the Rehearsal, under the character of Bays: This character, we are informed, in the Key to the Rehearsal, was originally intended for Sir Robert Howard, under the name of Bilboa; but the representation being put a stop to, by the breaking out of the plague, in 1665, it was laid by for several years, and not exhibited on the stage till 1671, in which interval, Mr. Dryden being advanced to the Laurel, the noble author changed the name of his poet, from Bilboa to Bays, and made great alterations in his play, in order to ridicule several dramatic performances, that appeared since the first writing it. Those of Mr. Dryden, which fell under his grace's lash, were the Wild Gallant, Tyrannic Love, the Conquest of Granada, Marriage A la-Mode, and Love in a Nunnery: Whatever was extravagant, or too warmly expressed, or any way unnatural, the author has ridiculed by parody.

Page 37

Mr. Dryden affected to despise the satire levelled at him in the Rehearsal, as appears from his dedication of the translation of Juvenal and Persius where speaking of the many lampoons, and libels that had, been written against him, he says, 'I answered not to the Rehearsal, because I knew the author sat to himself when he drew the picture, and was the very Bays of his own farce; because also I knew my betters were more concerned than I was in that satire; and lastly, because Mr. Smith and Mr. Johnson, the main pillars of it, were two such languishing gentlemen in their conversation, that I could liken them to nothing but their own relations, those noble characters of men of wit and pleasure about town.'

In 1679 came out an Essay on Satire, said to be written jointly by Mr. Dryden and the earl of Mulgrave; this piece, which was handed about in manuscript, containing Reflexions on the Duchess of Portsmouth, and the Earl of Rochester; who suspecting, as Wood says, Mr. Dryden to be the author, hired three ruffians to cudgel him in Wills's coffee-house at eight o'clock at night. This short anecdote, I think, cannot be told without indignation. It proved Rochester was a malicious coward, and, like other cowards, cruel and insolent; his foul was incapable of any thing that approached towards generosity, and when his resentment was heated, he pursued revenge, and retained the most lasting hatred; he had always entertained a prejudice against Dryden, from no other motive than envy, Dryden's plays met with success, and this was enough to fire the resentment of Rochester, who was naturally envious. In order to hurt the character, and shake the interest of this noble poet, he recommended Crown, an obscure man, to write a Masque for the court, which was Dryden's province, as poet-laureat, to perform. Crown in this succeeded, but soon after, when his play called the Conquest of Jerusalem met with such extravagant applause, Rochester, jealous of his new favourite, not only abandoned him, but commenced from that moment his enemy.

The other person against whom this satire was levelled, was not superior in virtue to the former, and all the nation over, two better subjects for satire could not have been found, than lord Rochester, and the duchess of Portsmouth. As for Rochester, he had not genius enough to enter the lists with Dryden, so he fell upon another method of revenge; and meanly hired bravoes to assault him.

In 1680 came out a translation of Ovid's Epistles in English verse, by several hands, two of which were translated by Mr. Dryden, who also wrote the preface. In the year following our author published Absalom and Achitophel. It was first printed without his name, and is a severe satire against the contrivers and abettors of the opposition against King Charles *ii*. In the same year that Absalom and Achitophel was published, the Medal, a Satire, was likewise given to the public. This piece is aimed against sedition,

Page 38

and was occasioned by the striking of a medal, on account of the indictment against the earl of Shaftsbury for high treason being found ignoramus by the grand jury, at the Old Bailey, November 1681: For which the Whig party made great rejoicings by ringing of bells, bonfires, &c. in all parts of London. The poem is introduced with a very satirical epistle to the Whigs, in which the author says, 'I have one favour to desire you at parting, that when you think of answering this poem, you would employ the same pens against it, who have combated with so much success against Absalom and Achitophel, for then you may assure yourselves of a clear victory without the least reply. Rail at me abundantly, and not break a custom to do it with wit. By this method you will gain a considerable point, which is wholly to wave the answer of my arguments. If God has not blessed you with the talent of rhiming, make use of my poor stock and welcome; let your verses run upon my feet, and for the utmost refuge of notorious blockheads, reduced to the last extremity of sense, turn my own lines against me, and in utter despair of my own satire, make me satirize myself.' The whole poem is a severe invective against the earl of Shaftsbury; who was uncle to that earl who wrote the Characteristics. Mr. Elkanah Settle wrote an answer to this poem, entitled the Medal Reversed. However contemptible Settle was as a poet, yet such was the prevalence of parties at that time, that, for some years, he was Dryden's rival on the stage. In 1682 came out his Religio Laici, or a Layman's Faith; this piece is intended as a defence of revealed religion, and the excellency and authority of the scriptures, as the only rule of faith and manners, against Deists, Papists, and Presbyterians. He acquaints us in the preface, that it was written for an ingenious young gentleman, his friend; upon his translation of Father Simons's Critical History of the Old Testament, and that the stile of it was epistolary.

In 1684 he published a translation of M. Maimbourg's. History of the League, in which he was employed by the command of King Charles *ii*. on account of the plain parallel between the troubles of France, and those of Great Britain. Upon the death of Charles *ii*. he wrote his Threnodia Augustalis, a Poem, sacred to the happy memory of that Prince. Soon after the accession of James *ii*. our author turned Roman Catholic, and by this extraordinary step drew upon himself abundance of ridicule from wits of the opposite faction; and in 1689 he wrote a Defence of the Papers, written by the late King of blessed memory, found in his strong box. Mr. Dryden, in the abovementioned piece, takes occasion to vindicate the authority of the Catholic Church, in decreeing matters of faith, upon this principle, that the church is more visible than the scriptures, because the scriptures are seen by the church, and to abuse the reformation in England, which he affirms was erected on the foundation

Page 39

of lust, sacrilege, and usurpation. Dr. Stillingfleet hereupon answered Mr. Dryden, and treated him with some severity. Another author affirms, that Mr. Dryden's tract is very light, in some places ridiculous; and observes, that his talent lay towards controversy no more in prose, than, by the Hind and Panther, it appeared to do in verse. This poem of the Hind and Panther is a direct defence of the Romish Church, in a dialogue between a Hind, which represents the Church of Rome, and a Panther, which supports the character of the Church of England. The first part of this poem consists most in general characters and narration, which, says he, 'I have endeavoured to raise, and give it the majestic turn of heroic poetry. The second being matter of dispute, and chiefly concerning church authority, I was obliged to make as plain and perspicuous as possibly I could, yet not wholly neglecting the numbers, though I had not frequent occasion for the magnificence of verse. The third, which has more of the nature of domestic conversation, is, or ought to be, more free and familiar than the two former. There are in it two episodes or fables, which are interwoven with the main design, so that they are properly parts of it, though they are also distinct stories of themselves. In both of these I have made use of the common places of satire, whether true or false, which are urged by the members of the one church against the other.'

Mr. Dryden speaks of his own conversion in the following terms;

But, gracious God, how well dost thou provide,
For erring judgments, an unerring guide.
Thy throne is darkness, in th' abyss of light,
A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.
O teach me to believe thee, thus concealed,
And search no further than thyself revealed;
But her alone for my director take,
Whom thou hast promis'd never to forsake!
My thoughtless youth was wing'd with vain desires;
My manhood, long misled by wand'ring fires,
Follow'd false lights; and when their glimpse was gone,
My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
Such was I, such by nature still I am,
Be thine the glory, and be mine the shame,
Good life be now my talk, my doubts are done.[4]

This poem was attacked by Mr. Charles Montague, afterwards Earl of Hallifax, and Mr. Matthew Prior, who joined in writing the Hind and Panther, transversed to the Country Mouse, and City Mouse, Lond. 1678, 4to. In the preface to which, the author observes, 'that Mr. Dryden's poem naturally falls into ridicule, and that in this burlesque, nothing is represented monstrous and unnatural, that is not equally so in the original.' They afterwards remark, that they have this comfort under the severity of Mr. Dryden's satire,

to see his abilities equally lessened with his opinion of them, and that he could not be a fit champion against the Panther till he had laid aside his judgment.

Page 40

Mr. Dryden is supposed to have been engaged in translating M. Varillas's History of Heresies, but to have dropped that design. This we learn from a passage in Burnet's reflexions on the ninth book of the first volume of M. Varillas's History, being a reply to his answer.

I shall here give the picture the Dr. has drawn of this noble poet, which is, like a great many of the doctor's other characters, rather exhibited to please himself than according to the true resemblance.

The doctor says, 'I have been informed from England, that a gentleman who is famous both for poetry, and several other things, has spent three months in translating Mr. Varillas's history; but as soon as my reflexions appeared, he discontinued his labours, finding the credit of his author being gone. Now if he thinks it is recovered by his answer, he will, perhaps, go on with his translation; but this may be, for ought I know, as good an entertainment for him, as the conversation he has set on foot between the Hinds and Panthers, and all the rest of the animals; for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough as an author; and this history and that poem are such extraordinary things of their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become the translator of the worst history, that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve so proportionably, we shall hardly find, that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion, to chuse one of the worst. It is true he had somewhat to sink from in matter of wit, but as for his morals, it is scarce possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three months labour; but in it he has done me all the honour a man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be that he would go and finish his translation. By that it will appear whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge of this matter, has upon seeing this debate, pronounced in M. Varillas's favour or me. It is true, Mr. Dryden will suffer a little by it; but at least it will serve to keep him in from other extravagancies; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it, as he has done by his last employment.'

When the revolution was compleated, Mr. Dryden having turned Papist, became disqualified for holding his place, and was accordingly dispossessed of it; and it was conferred on a man to whom he had a confirmed aversion; in consequence whereof he wrote a satire against him, called Mac Flecknoe, which is one of the severest and best; written satires in our language.

Mr. Richard Flecknoe, the new laureat, with whose name it is inscribed, was a very indifferent poet of those times; or rather as Mr. Dryden expresses it, and as we have already quoted in Flecknoe's life.

In prose and verse was own'd without dispute,
Thro' all the realms of nonsense absolute.

Page 41

This poem furnished the hint to Mr. Pope to write his Dunciad; and it must be owned the latter has been more happy in the execution of his design, as having more leisure for the performance; but in Dryden's Mac Flecknoe there are some lines so extremely pungent, that I am not quite certain if Pope has any where exceeded them.

In the year wherein he was deprived of the laurel, he published the life of St. Francis Xavier, translated from the French of father Dominic Bouchours. In 1693 came out a translation of Juvenal and Persius; in which the first, third, sixth, tenth, and fifteenth satires of Juvenal, and Persius entire, were done by Mr. Dryden, who prefixed a long and ingenious discourse, by way of dedication, to the earl of Dorset. In this address our author takes occasion a while to drop his reflexions on Juvenal; and to lay before his lordship a plan for an epic poem: he observes, that his genius never much inclined him to the stage; and that he wrote for it rather from necessity than inclination. He complains, that his circumstances are such as not to suffer him to pursue the bent of his own genius, and then lays down a plan upon which an epic poem might be written: to which, says he, I am more inclined. Whether the plan proposed is faulty or no, we are not at present to consider; one thing is certain, a man of Mr. Dryden's genius would have covered by the rapidity of the action, the art of the design, and the beauty of the poetry, whatever might have been defective in the plan, and produced a work which have been the boast of the nation.

We cannot help regretting on this occasion, that Dryden's fortune was not easy enough to enable him, with convenience and leisure, to pursue a work that might have proved an honour to himself, and reflected a portion thereof on all, who should have appeared his encouragers on this occasion.

In 1695 Mr. Dryden published a translation in prose of Du Fresnoy's Art of Painting, with a preface containing a parallel between painting and poetry. Mr. Pope has addressed a copy of verses to Mr. Jervas in praise of Dryden's translation. In 1697 his translation of Virgil's works came out. This translation has passed thro' many editions, and of all the attempts which have been made to render Virgil into English. The critics, I think, have allowed that Dryden[5] best succeeded: notwithstanding as he himself says, when he began it, he was past the grand climacteric! so little influence it seems, age had over him, that he retained his judgment and fire in full force to the last. Mr. Pope in his preface to Homer says, if Dryden had lived to finish what he began of Homer, he, (Mr. Pope) would not have attempted it after him, 'No more, says he, than I would his Virgil, his version of whom (notwithstanding some human errors) is the most noble and spirited translation I know in any language.'

Dr. Trap charges Mr. Dryden with grossly mistaking his author's sense in many places; with adding or retrenching as his turn is best served with either; and with being least a translator where he shines most as a poet; whereas it is a just rule laid down by lord Roscommon, that a translator in regard to his author should

Page 42

"Fall as he falls, and as he rises rise"

Mr. Dryden, he tells us, frequently acts the very reverse of this precept, of which he produces some instances; and remarks in general, that the first six books of the AEneis, which are the best and most perfect in the original, are the least so in the translation. Dr. Trap's remarks may possibly be true; but in this he is an instance how easy it is to discover faults in other men's works, and how difficult to avoid them in our own.

Dr. Trap's translation is close, and conveys the author's meaning literally, so consequently may be fitter for a school-boy, but men of riper judgment, and superior taste, will hardly approve it; if Dryden's is the most spirited of any translation, Trap's is the dullest that ever was written; which proves that none but a good poet is fit to translate the works of a good poet.

Besides the original pieces and translations hitherto mentioned, Mr. Dryden wrote many others, published in six volumes of Miscellanies, and in other collections. They consist of translations from the Greek and Latin poets, Epistles to several persons, prologues, and epilogues to several plays, elegies, epitaphs, and songs. His last work was his Fables, ancient and modern, translated into verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer. To this work, which is perhaps, one of his most imperfect, is prefixed by way of preface, a critical account of the authors, from whom the fables are translated. Among the original pieces, the Ode to St. Cecilia's day is justly esteemed one of the most elevated in any language. It is impossible for a poet to read this without being filled with that sort of enthusiasm which is peculiar to the inspired tribe, and which Dryden largely felt when he composed it. The turn of the verse is noble, the transitions surprizing, the language and sentiments just, natural, and heightened. We cannot be too lavish in praise of this Ode: had Dryden never wrote any thing besides, his name had been immortal. Mr. Pope has the following beautiful lines in its praise.[6]

Hear how Timotheus varied lays surprize,
And bid alternate passions fall and rise!
While, at each change, the son of Lybian Jove
Now burns with glory, and then melts with love:
Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow;
Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow;
Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found,
And the world's victor flood subdued by sound:
The power of music all our hearts allow;
And what Timotheus was, is Dryden now.

As to our author's performances in prose, besides his Dedications and Prefaces, and controversial Writings, they consist of the Lives of Plutarch and Lucian, prefixed to the Translation of those Authors, by several Hands; the Life of Polybius; before the

Translation of that Historian by Sir Henry Sheers, and the Preface to the Dialogue concerning Women, by William Walsh, Esquire.

Page 43

Before we give an account of the dramatic works of Dryden, it will be proper here to insert a story concerning him, from the life of Congreve by Charles Wilson esquire, which that gentleman received from the lady whom Mr. Dryden celebrates by the name of Corinna, of whom it appears he was very fond; and who had the relation from lady Chudleigh. Dryden with all his undemanding was weak enough to be fond of Judicial Astrology, and used to calculate the nativity of his children. When his lady was in labour with his son Charles, he being told it was decent to withdraw, laid his watch on the table, begging one of the ladies then present, in a most solemn manner, to take exact notice of the very minute the child was born, which she did, and acquainted him with it. About a week after, when his lady was pretty well recovered, Mr. Dryden took occasion to tell her that he had been calculating the child's nativity, and observed, with grief, that he was born in an evil hour, for Jupiter, Venus, and the sun, were all under the earth, and the lord of his ascendant afflicted with a hateful square of Mars and Saturn. If he lives to arrive at his 8th year (says he) 'he will go near to die a violent death on his very birth-day, but if he should escape, as I see but small hopes, he will in the 23d year be under the very same evil direction, and if he should escape that also, the 33d or 34th year is, I fear'—here he was interrupted by the immoderate grief of his lady, who could no longer hear calamity prophecy'd to befall her son. The time at last came, and August was the inauspicious month in which young Dryden was to enter into the eighth year of his age. The court being in progress, and Mr. Dryden at leisure, he was invited to the country seat of the earl of Berkshire, his brother-in-law, to keep the long vacation with him in Charlton in Wilts; his lady was invited to her uncle Mordaunt's, to pass the remainder of the summer. When they came to divide the children, lady Elizabeth would have him take John, and suffer her to take Charles; but Mr. Dryden was too absolute, and they parted in anger; he took Charles with him, and she was obliged to be content with John. When the fatal day came, the anxiety of the lady's spirits occasioned such an effervescence of blood, as threw her into, so violent a fever, that her life was despaired of, till a letter came from Mr. Dryden, reproving her for her womanish credulity, and assuring her, that her child was well, which recovered her spirits, and in six weeks after she received an ecclaircissement-of the whole affair. Mr. Dryden, either thro' fear of being reckoned superstitious, or thinking it a science beneath his study, was extremely cautious of letting any one know that he was a dealer in Astrology; therefore could not excuse his absence, on his son's anniversary, from a general hunting match lord Berkshire had made, to which all the adjacent gentlemen, were invited. When he went out, he took care to set the boy a double exercise in the Latin tongue, which

Page 44

he taught his children himself, with a strict charge not to stir out of the room till his return; well knowing the task he had set him would take up longer time. Charles was performing his duty, in obedience to his father, but as ill fate would have it, the stag made towards the house; and the noise alarming the servants, they hasted out to, see the sport. One of them took young Dryden by the hand, and led him out to see it also, when just as they came to the gate, the stag being at bay with the dogs, made a bold push and leaped over the court wall, which was very low, and very old; and the dogs following, threw down a part of the wall ten yards in length, under which Charles Dryden lay buried. He was immediately dug out, and after six weeks languishing in a dangerous way he recovered; so far Dryden's prediction was fulfilled: In the twenty-third year of his age, Charles fell from the top of an old tower belonging to the Vatican at Rome, occasioned by a swimming in his head, with which he was seized, the heat of the day being excessive. He again recovered, but was ever after in a languishing sickly state. In the thirty-third year of his age, being returned to England, he was unhappily drowned at Windsor. He had with another gentleman swam twice over the Thames; but returning a third time, it was supposed he was taken with the cramp, because he called out for help, tho' too late. Thus the father's calculation proved but too prophetical.

Mr. Dryden died the first of May 1701, and was interred in Westminster Abby. On the 19th of April he had been very bad with the gout, and erisipelas in one leg; but he was then somewhat recovered, and designed to go abroad; on the Friday following he eat a partridge for his supper, and going to take a turn in the little garden behind his house in Gerard-street, he was seized with a violent pain under the ball of the great toe of his right foot; that, unable to stand, he cried out for help, and was carried in by his servants, when upon sending for surgeons, they found a small black spot in the place affected; he submitted to their present applications, and when gone called his son Charles to him, using these words. 'I know this black spot is a mortification: I know also, that it will seize my head, and that they will attempt to cut off my leg; but I command you my son, by your filial duty, that you do not suffer me to be dismembered:' As he foretold, the event proved, and his son was too dutiful to disobey his father's commands.

On the Wednesday morning following, he breathed his last, under the most excruciating pains, in the 69th year of his age; and left behind him the lady Elizabeth, his wife, and three sons. Lady Elizabeth survived him eight years, four of which she was a lunatic; being deprived of her senses by a nervous fever in 1704.

John, another of his sons, died of a fever at Rome; and Charles as has been observed, was drowned in the Thames; there is no account when, or at what place Harry his third son died.

Page 45

Charles Dryden, who was some time usher to pope Clement *ii*. was a young gentleman of a very promising genius; and in the affair of his father's funeral, which I am about to relate, shewed himself a man of spirit and resolution.[7]

The day after Mr. Dryden's death, the dean of Westminster sent word to Mr. Dryden's widow, that he would make a present of the ground, and all other Abbey-fees for the funeral: The lord Halifax likewise sent to the lady Elizabeth, and to Mr. Charles Dryden, offering to defray the expences of our poet's funeral, and afterwards to bestow 500 l. on a monument in the Abbey: which generous offer was accepted. Accordingly, on Sunday following, the company being assembled, the corpse was put into a velvet hearse, attended by eighteen mourning coaches. When they were just ready to move, lord Jefferys, son of lord chancellor Jeffreys, a name dedicated to infamy, with some of his rakish companions riding by, asked whose funeral it was; and being told it was Mr. Dryden's, he protested he should not be buried in that private manner, that he would himself, with the lady Elizabeth's leave, have the honour of the interment, and would bestow a thousand pounds on a monument in the Abbey for him. This put a stop to their procession; and the lord Jefferys, with several of the gentlemen, who had alighted from their coaches, went up stairs to the lady, who was sick in bed. His lordship repeated the purport of what he had said below; but the lady Elizabeth refusing her consent, he fell on his knees, vowing never to rise till his request was granted. The lady under a sudden surprise fainted away, and lord Jeffery's pretending to have obtained her consent, ordered the body to be carried to Mr. Russel's an undertaker in Cheapside, and to be left there till further orders. In the mean time the Abbey was lighted up, the ground opened, the choir attending, and the bishop waiting some hours to no purpose for the corpse. The next day Mr. Charles Dryden waited on my lord Halifax, and the bishop; and endeavoured to excuse his mother, by relating the truth. Three days after the undertaker having received no orders, waited on the lord Jefferys; who pretended it was a drunken frolic, that he remembered nothing of the matter, and he might do what he pleased with the body. Upon this, the undertaker waited on the lady Elizabeth, who desired a day's respite, which was granted. Mr. Charles Dryden immediately wrote to the lord Jefferys, who returned for answer, that he knew nothing of the matter, and would be troubled no more about it. Mr. Dryden hereupon applied again to the lord Halifax, and the bishop of Rochester, who absolutely refused to do any thing in the affair.

Page 46

In this distress, Dr. Garth, who had been Mr. Dryden's intimate friend, sent for the corpse to the college of physicians, and proposed a subscription; which succeeding, about three weeks after Mr. Dryden's decease, Dr. Garth pronounced a fine latin oration over the body, which was conveyed from the college, attended by a numerous train of coaches to Westminster-Abbey, but in very great disorder. At last the corpse arrived at the Abbey, which was all unlighted. No organ played, no anthem sung; only two of the singing boys preceded the corpse, who sung an ode of Horace, with each a small candle in their hand. When the funeral was over, Mr. Charles Dryden sent a challenge to lord Jefferys, who refusing to answer it, he sent several others, and went often himself; but could neither get a letter delivered, nor admittance to speak to him; which so incensed him, that finding his lordship refused to answer him like a gentleman, he resolved to watch an opportunity, and brave him to fight, though with all the rules of honour; which his lordship hearing, quitted the town, and Mr. Charles never had an opportunity to meet him, though he sought it to his death, with the utmost application.

Mr. Dryden had no monument erected to him for several years; to which Mr. Pope alludes in his epitaph intended for Mr. Rowe, in this line.

Beneath a rude and nameless stone he lies.

In a note upon which we are informed, that the tomb of Mr. Dryden was erected upon this hint, by Sheffield duke of Buckingham, to which was originally intended this epitaph.

This Sheffield raised.—The sacred dust below,
Was Dryden once; the rest who does not know.

Which was since changed into the plain inscription now upon it, *viz*.

J. *Dryden*,
Natus Aug. 9. 1631.
Mortus Maii 1. 1701.
Johannes Sheffield, Dux Buckinghamienfis secit.

The character of Mr. Dryden has been drawn by various hands; some have done it in a favourable, others in an opposite manner. The bishop of Sarum in the history of his own times, says, that the stage was defiled beyond all example. 'Dryden, the great master of dramatic poetry, being a monster of immodesty and impurities of all sorts.'[8] The late lord Lansdown took upon himself to vindicate Mr. Dryden's character from this severe imputation; which was again answered, and apologies for it, by Mr. Burnet, the bishop's son. But not to dwell on these controversies about his character, let us hear what Mr. Congreve says in the dedication of Dryden's works to the duke of Newcastle: Congreve knew him intimately, and as he could have no motive to deceive the world in that particular; and being a man of untainted morals, none can suspect his authority; and by

his account we shall see, that Dryden was indeed as amiable in private life, as a Man, as he was illustrious in the eye of the public, as a Poet.

Page 47

Mr. Dryden (says Congreve) 'had personal qualities, to challenge love and esteem from all who were truly acquainted with him. He was of a nature exceeding humane and compassionate, easily forgiving injuries, and capable of a prompt and sincere reconciliation with those who had offended him.—His friendship, where he professed it, went much beyond his professions.—As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory, tenacious of every thing he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge, than he was communicative of it; but then, his communication of it was by no means pedantic, or imposed upon the conversation, but just such, and went so far, as by the natural turns of the discourse in which he was engaged, it was necessarily prompted, or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in the correction of the errors of any writer, who thought fit to consult him, and full as ready and patient to admit of the reprehension of others in respect of his own oversight or mistakes. He was of a very easy, I may say, of very pleasing access; but something slow, and as it were dissident in his advances to others. He had something in his nature that abhorred intrusion in any society whatsoever; and indeed, it is to be regretted, that he was rather blameable on the other extreme. He was of all men I ever knew, the most modest, and the most easy to be discountenanced in his approaches, either to his superiors or his equals.—As to his writings—may venture to say in general terms, that no man hath written in our language so much, and so various matter; and in so various manners so well. Another thing I may say, was very peculiar to him, which is, that his parts did not decline with his years, but that he was an improving writer to the last, even to near 70 years of age, improving even in fire and imagination as well as in judgment, witness his Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, and his fables, his latest performances. He was equally excellent in verse and prose: His prose had all the clearness imaginable, without deviating to the language or diction of poetry, and I have heard him frequently own with pleasure, that if he had any talent for writing prose; it was owing to his frequently having read the writings of the great archbishop Tillotson. In his poems, his diction is, wherever his subject requires it, so sublime and so truly poetical, that it's essence, like that of pure gold cannot be destroyed. Take his verses, and divest them of their rhimes, disjoint them of their numbers, transpose their expressions, make what arrangement or disposition you please in his words; yet shall there eternally be poetry, and something which will be found incapable of being reduced to absolute prose; what he has done in any one species, or distinct kind of writing, would have been sufficient to have acquired him a very great name. If he had written nothing but his Prefaces, or nothing but his Songs, or his Prologues, each of them would have entitled him to the preference and distinction of excelling in its kind.'

Page 48

Besides Mr. Dryden's numerous other performances, we find him the author of twenty-seven dramatic pieces, of which the following is an account.

1. The Wild Gallant, a Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to, Lond. 1699.

2. The Indian Emperor; or the Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, acted with great applause, and written in verse.

3. An Evening's Love; or the Mock Astrologer, a Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to. 1671. It is for the most part taken from Corneille's Feint Astrologue, Moliere's Depit Amoreux, and Precieux Ridicules.

4. Marriage A-la-mode, a Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to. 1673, dedicated to the earl of Rochester.

5. Araboyna, a Tragedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to 1673. It is dedicated to the lord Clifford of Chudleigh. The plot of this play is chiefly founded in history, giving an account of the cruelty of the Dutch towards our countrymen at Amboyna, A.D. 1618.

6. The Mistaken Husband, a Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to. 1675. Mr. Langbaine tells us, Mr. Dryden was not the author of this play, tho' it was adopted by him as an orphan, which might well deserve the charity of a scene he bestowed on it. It is in the nature of low comedy, or farce, and written on the model of Plautus's Menaechmi.

7. Aurenge-zebe; or the Great Mogul, a Tragedy, dedicated to the earl of Mulgrave, acted 1676. The story is related at large in Taverner's voyages to the Indies, vol. i. part 2. This play is written in heroic verse.

8. The Tempest; or the inchanted Island, a Comedy, acted at the duke of York's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1676. This is only an alteration of Shakespear's Tempest, by Sir William Davenant and Dryden. The new characters in it were chiefly the invention and writing of Sir William, as acknowledged by Mr. Dryden in his preface.

9. Feigned Innocence; or Sir Martin Mar-all, a Comedy, acted at the duke of York's theatre, and printed in 4to. 1678. The foundation of this is originally French, the greatest part of the plot and some of the language being taken from Moliere's Eteurdi.

10. The Assignation; or Love in a Nunnery, a Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to. 1678, addressed to Sir Charles Sedley. This play, Mr. Langbain tells us, was damned on the stage, or as the author expresses it in the epistle dedicatory, succeeded ill in the representation; but whether the fault was in the play itself, or in the

lameness of the action, or in the numbers of its enemies, who came resolved to damn it for the title, he will not pretend any more than the author to determine.

11. The State of Innocence; or the Fall of Man, an Opera, written in heroic verse, and printed in 4to. 1678. It is dedicated to her royal highness the duchess of York, on whom the author passes the following extravagant compliment.

Page 49

’Your person is so admirable, that it can scarce receive any addition when it shall be glorified; and your soul which shines thro’ it, finds it of a substance so near her own, that she will be pleased to pass an age within it, and to be confined to such a palace.’

To this piece is prefixed an apology for heroic poetry, and poetic licence. The subject is taken from Milton’s Paradise Lost, of which it must be acknowledged, it is a poor imitation.

12. The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards, in two parts, two Tragi-Comedies, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed 1678. These two plays are dedicated to the duke of York, and were received on the stage with great applause. The story is to be found in Mariana’s history of Spain, B. 25. chap. 18.

These plays are written in rhime. To the first is prefixed an essay on heroic plays, and to the second an essay on the dramatic poetry of the last age.

13. All for Love, or the World well Lost, a Tragedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in quarto, 1678. It is dedicated to the earl of Danby.

This is the only play of Mr. Dryden’s which he says ever pleased himself; and he tells us, that he prefers the scene between Anthony and Ventidius in the first act, to any thing he had written in this kind. It is full of fine sentiments, and the most poetical and beautiful descriptions of any of his plays: the description of Cleopatra in her barge, exceeds any thing in poetry, except Shakespear’s, and his own St. Cecilia.

14. Tyrannic Love; or the Royal Martyr, a Tragedy, acted at the theatre-royal 1679. It is written in rhime, and dedicated to the duke of Monmouth.

15. Troilus and Cressida; or Truth found too late; a Tragedy, acted at the duke’s theatre, and printed in 4to. 1679. It is dedicated to the earl of Sunderland, and has a preface prefixed concerning grounds of criticism in tragedy. This play was originally Shakespear’s, and revised, and altered by Mr. Dryden, who added several new scenes. —The plot taken from Chaucer’s Troilus and Cressida, which that poet translated from the original story written in Latin verse, by Lollius, a Lombard.

17. Secret Love; or the Maiden Queen, a Tragi-Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to, 1697. The serious part of the plot is founded on the history of Cleobuline, Queen of Corinth.

18. The Rival Ladies, a Tragi-Comedy, acted at the theatre-royal 1679. It is dedicated to the earl of Orrery. The dedication is in the nature of a preface, in defence of English verse or rhime.

19. The Kind Keeper; or Mr. Limberham, a Comedy, acted at the duke’s theatre, printed in 4to. 1680. It is dedicated to John lord Vaughan. Mr. Langbain says, it so much

exposed the keepers about town, that all the old letchers were up in arms against it, and damned it the third night.

20. The Spanish Fryar; or the Double Discovery, a Tragi Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, and printed 1681. It is dedicated to John lord Haughton. This is one of Mr. Dryden's best plays, and still keeps possession of the stage. It is said, that he was afterwards so much concerned for having ridiculed the character of the Fryar, that it impaired his health: what effect bigotry, or the influence of priests, might have on him, on this occasion, we leave others to determine.

Page 50

21. Duke of Guise, a Tragedy, acted 1688. It was written by Dryden and Lee, and dedicated to Hyde earl of Rochester. This play gave great offence to the Whigs, and engaged several writers for and against it.

22. Albion and Albanius, an Opera, performed at the Queen's theatre in Dorset-Gardens, and printed in folio 1685. The subject of it is wholly allegorical, and intended to expose my lord Shaftfbury and his party.

23. Don Sebastian King of Portugal, a Tragedy, acted 1690, dedicated to the earl of Leicester.

24. King Arthur; or the British worthy, a Tragedy, acted 1691, dedicated to the marquis of Hallifax.

25. Amphytrion; or the two Socias, a Comedy, acted 1691, dedicated to Sir Leveson Gower, taken from Plautus and Moliere.

26. Cleomenes, the Spartan Hero, a Tragedy, acted at the theatre-royal, and printed in 4to. 1692, dedicated to the earl of Rochester. There is prefixed to it the Life of Cleomenes, translated from Plutarch by Mr. Creech. This play was first prohibited by the lord Chamberlain, but upon examination being found innocent of any design to satirize the government, it was suffered to be represented, and had great success. In the preface, the author tells us, that a foolish objection had been raised against him by the sparks, for Cleomenes not accepting the favours of Cassandra. 'They (says he) would not have refused a fair lady; I grant they would not, but let them grant me, that they are no heroes.'

27. Love Triumphant; or Nature will prevail, a Tragi-comedy, acted 1694. It is dedicated to the earl of Shaftsbury, and is the last Mr. Dryden wrote, or intended for the theatre. It met with but indifferent success, tho' in many parts the genius of that great man breaks out, especially in the discovery of Alphonfo's successful love, and in the catastrophe, which is extremely effecting.

In Obitum JOHAN. DRYDENI,
poetarum Anglorum facile principis.

Pindarus Anglorum magnus, cujusque senilem
Ornavit nuper frontem Parnissia laurus,
Sive cothurnatum molitur musa laborem,
Sive levem ludit foccum, seu grande Maronis
Immortalis epos tentat, seu carmine pingit
Mordaci mores homitium, nunc occidit, eheu!
Occidit, atque tulit secum Permessidos undas;
Et fontem exhausit totum Drydenius Heros.

Heu! miserande senex! jam frigida tempora circum Marcessit laurus, musae, maestissima turba! Circumstant, largoque humeclant imbre cadaver; Sheffeildum video, in lacrymis multoque dolore Formosum, aetatis Flaccum, vatisque patronum; Te Montacute, te, cujus musa triumphos Carmine Boynaeos cucinit, magnumque Wilhelmum AEternavit, et olim Boynam, ignobile flumen; Teque, O! et legum et musarum gloria! et alter Maecenas; cui lingua olim facunda labantem Defendit mitrae causam; nee teruit aula Prava jubens—vos, O jam tanguni funera vatis!

Jamque dies aderat, magna stipante caterva,

Page 51

Quo Phoebea cohors facras comitatur ad urnam
Reliquias, et supremum pia solvit honorem;
Jamque graves planctus, jamque illaetabile murmur
Audio Melpomenis late, dum noster Apollo
Flebilis ante omnes, Sacvillus, tristia ducit
Agmina Pieridum, Cytharamqueaccommodatodae;
Ipse ego, dum totidem comitentur funera musae,
Ipse sequor maestus; bustum venerabile fletu
Carminibufque struam multis, animumque poetae
His faltem donis cumulabo, et fungar inani
Munere.——

At te musa mori vetat, O post sata, vel ipsa
Marmora, cum annorum fuerint rubigine scabra;
Major eris vivo; tibi scripta perennius aere
Aut faxo, condent monumentum illustre per orbem,
Secula cuncta legant, et te mirentur in illis.

JOHAN. *Philips*,

1700. AEtat. 24. Interioris templi alumnus.

The above were thrown in Dryden's grave. We are assured they were never in print before.

[Footnote 1: Athen. Oxon.]

[Footnote 2: He might have added, 'twas unnatural.]

[Footnote 3: Defence, or the Essay on Dramatic Poetry.]

[Footnote 4: Original Poems.]

[Footnote 5: This was written before Mr. Dodsley's edition of Virgil in English appeared.]

[Footnote 6: Essay on Criticism.]

[Footnote 7: Life of Congreve.]

[Footnote 8: In Millar's edition of the bishop's work, we have the following note upon this passage. 'This (says the editor) must be understood of his performances for the

stage; for as to his personal character, there was nothing remarkably vicious in it: but his plays are, some of them, the fullest of obscenity of any now extant.']

* * * * *

Sir *Charles Sedley*, Bart.

This gentleman, who obtained a great name in the world of gallantry, was son of Sir John Sedley, of Aylesford in Kent. When our author was about the age of 17, he became a fellow of Wadham college 1656, but he took no degree. When he quitted the university, he retired into his own country, and neither went to travel nor to the inns of court. As soon as the restoration was effected, Sir Charles came to London, in order to join in the general jubilee, and then commenced wit, courtier, poet, and gallant.

He was so much applauded in all conversations that he began to be the oracle of the poets; and it was by his judgment every performance was approved or condemned; which made the King jest with him, and tell him, that nature had given him a patent to be Apollo's viceroy. Lord Rochester bears testimony to this, when he puts him foremost among the judges of poetry.

I loath the rabble, tis enough for me,
If Sedley, Shadwell, Shepherd, Wycherly,
Godolphin, Butler, Buckhurst, Buckingham,
And some few more, whom I omit to name,
Approve my sense, I count their censure same.

Page 52

It happened by Sir Charles, in respect of the king, as is said of the famous cardinal Richlieu, *viz*. That they who recommended him to the Royal savour, thereby supplanted themselves, and afterwards envied him; but with this difference between the Cardinal and Sir Charles, that the latter was never ungrateful. When he had a taste of the court, as the King never would part with him, so he never would part from the King; and yet two things proved particularly detrimental to him in it, first his estate, so far from being improved was diminished; and secondly his morals were debauched. The King delighted in his conversation, and he was the dearer to his Majesty on this account, that he never asked a favour; whereas some other courtiers by their bold importunity exhausted that prince's treasures, who could not deny a man who craved, tho' he hated his forwardness; nor could remember the silent indigence of his friend, tho' he applauded the modesty of it. He was deeply immersed in the public distractions of the times, and is said to have committed many debaucheries, of which the following instance has been recorded.

In the month of June 1663 our author, Charles lord Buckhurst, and Sir Thomas Ogle, were convened at a public house in Bow-street, Covent-Garden, and being enflamed with strong liquors, they went up to the balcony belonging to that house, and there shewed very indecent postures, and gave great offence to the passengers in the street by very unmannerly discharges upon them; which done, Sedley stripped himself naked, and preached to the people in a gross and scandalous manner; whereupon a riot being raised, the mob became very clamorous, and would have forced the door next to the street; but being opposed, the preacher and his company were driven off the balcony, and the windows of a room into which they retired were broken by the mob. The frolic being soon spread abroad, and as persons of fashion were concerned in it, it was so much the more aggravated. The company were summoned to appear before a court of justice in Westminster-Hall, where being indicted for a riot before Sir Robert Hyde, lord chief justice of the Common Pleas, they were all fined, and Sir Charles being sentenced to pay 500 l. he used some very impertinent expressions to the judge; who thereupon asked him if he had ever read a book called the Compleat Gentleman; to which Sir Charles made answer, that he had read more books than his lordship.

The day for payment being appointed, Sir Charles desired Mr. Henry Killegrew, and another gentleman to apply to his Majesty to have the fine remitted, which they undertook to do; but in place of supplicating for it, they represented Sir Charles's frolic rather in an aggravating light, and not a farthing was abated.

After this affair, Sir Charles's mind took a more serious turn, and he began to apply himself to the study of politics, by which he might be of some service to his country. He was chosen, says Wood, a recruiter of that long parliament, which began at Westminster the 8th of May 1661, to serve for New Romney in Kent, and sat in three succeeding Parliments since the dissolution of that.

Page 53

Sir Charles, considered as an author, has great delicacy in his turns, and Eachard observes in his dedication of Plautus's three comedies to Sir Charles, that the easiness of his stile, the politeness of his expressions in his Bellamira, and even those parts of it which are purely translation, are very delightful, and engaging to the reader.

Lord Rochester, in his imitation of the 10th satire of the first book of Horace, has the following verses in his commendation.

Sedley has that prevailing gentle art,
That can with a resistless charm impart.
The loosest wishes to the chastest heart:
Raise such a conflict, kindle such a fire,
Betwixt declining virtue and desire;
That the poor vanquish'd maid dissolves away
In dreams all night, in sighs and tears all day.

Before we give an account of our author's works, it will not be amiss to observe, that he was extremely active in effecting the revolution, which was thought the more extraordinary, as he had received favours from King James *ii*. That Prince, it seems, had fallen in love with a daughter of Sir Charles's, who was not very handsome; for James was remarkable for dedicating his affections to women who were not great beauties; in consequence of his intrigue with her, and in order to give her greater lustre in life, he created Miss Sedley countess of Dorchester. This honour, so far from pleasing, greatly shocked Sir Charles. However libertine himself had been, yet he could not bear the thoughts of his daughter's dishonour; and with regard to this her exaltation, he only considered it as rendering her more conspicuously infamous. He therefore conceived a hatred to James, and readily joined to dispossess him of his throne and dominions.

Being asked one day, why he appeared so warm against the King, who had created his daughter a Countess? It is from a principle of gratitude I am so warm, returns Sir Charles; for since his Majesty has made my daughter a Countess, it is fit I should do all I can to make his daughter a Queen.

Our author's works are,

1. The Mulberry Garden, a Comedy, acted by his Majesty's servants at the theatre-royal 1668, dedicated to the duchess of Richmond and Lennox.

2. Anthony and Cleopatra, a Tragedy, acted at the Duke of York's theatre 1667. This play was acted with great applause. The Story from Plutarch's Life of Anthony.

3. Bellamira; or the Mistress, a Comedy, acted by his Majesty's servants, 1687. It is taken from Terence's Eunuch. While this play was acting, the roof of the play-house fell

down, but very few were hurt, except the author: whose merry friend Sir Fleetwood Shepherd told him, that there was so much fire in the play, that it blew up the poet, house and all: Sir Charles answered, No, the play was so heavy it brought down the house, and buried the poet in his own rubbish.

4. Beauty the Conqueror; or the Death of Mark Anthony, a Tragedy.

Page 54

Besides these plays, Mr. Coxeter says, he is author of the two following, which were never printed till with his works in 2 vols. 8vo. 1719, dedicated by Briscoe the bookseller to the duke of Chandois.

The Grumbler, a Comedy of three acts, scene Paris.

The Tyrant King of Crete, a Tragedy.

Sedley's poems, however amorously tender and delicate, yet have not much strength; nor do they afford great marks of genius. The softness of his verses is denominated by the Duke of Buckingham, Sedley's Witchcraft. It was an art too successful in those days to propagate the immoralities of the times, but it must be owned that in point of chastity he excels Dorset, and Rochester; who as they conceived lewdly, wrote in plain English, and did not give themselves any trouble to wrap up their ribbaldry in a dress tollerably decent. But if Sedley was the more chaste, I know not if he was the less pernicious writer: for that pill which is gilded will be swallowed more readily, and with less reluctance, than if tendered in its own disgustful colours. Sedley insinuates gently into the heart, without giving any alarm, but is no less fraught with poison, than are those whose deformity bespeaks their mischief.

It would be tedious to enumerate here all the poems of Sir Charles Sedley; let it suffice to say, that they are printed in two small volumes along with his plays, and consist of translations of Virgil's Pastorals, original Pastorals, Prologues, Songs, Epilogues, and little occasional pieces.

We shall present the reader with an original pastoral of Sir Charles's, as a specimen of his works.

He lived to the beginning of Queen Anne's reign, and died at an age near 90; his wit and humour continuing to the last.

A Pastoral Dialogue between THIRSIS and *Strephon*.

THIRSIS.

Strephon, O Strephon, once the jolliest lad,
That with shrill pipe did ever mountain glad;
Whilome the foremost at our rural plays,
The pride and envy of our holidays:
Why dost thou sit now musing all alone,
Teaching the turtles, yet a sadder moan?
Swell'd with thy tears, why does the neighbouring brook
Bear to the ocean, what she never took?

Thy flocks are fair and fruitful, and no swain,
Than thee, more welcome to the hill or plain.

Strephon.

I could invite the wolf, my cruel guest,
And play unmov'd, while he on all should feast:
I cou'd endure that very swain out-run,
Out-threw, out-wrestled, and each nymph shou'd shun
The hapless Strephon.——

THIRSIS.

Tell me then thy grief,
And give it, in complaints, some short relief.

Strephon.

Had killing mildews nipt my rising corn,
My lambs been all found dead, as soon as born;
Or raging plagues run swift through every hive,
And left not one industrious bee alive;
Had early winds, with an hoarse winter's found
Scattered my rip'ning fruit upon the ground:
Unmov'd, untoucht, I cou'd the loss sustain,
And a few days expir'd, no more complain.

Page 55

THIRSIS.

E’er the sun drank of the cold morning dew,
I’ve known thee early the tuskt boar pursue:
Then in the evening drive the bear away,
And rescue from his jaws the trembling prey.
But now thy flocks creep feebly through the fields,
No purple grapes, thy half-drest vineyards yields:
No primrose nor no violets grace thy beds,
But thorns and thistles lift their prickly heads.
What means this change?

STREPHON

&nb
sp; Enquire no more;
When none can heal, ’tis pain to search the sore;
Bright Galatea, in whose matchless face
Sat rural innocence, with heavenly grace;
In whose no less inimitable mind,
With equal light, even distant virtues shin’d;
Chaste without pride, and charming without art,
Honour the tyrant of her tender heart:
Fair goddess of these fields, who for our sports,
Though she might well become, neglected courts:
Belov’d of all, and loving me alone,
Is from my sight, I fear, for ever gone.

THIRSIS.

Thy case indeed is pitiful, but yet
Thou on thy loss too great a price dost set.
Women like days are, Strephon, some be far
More bright and glorious than others are:
Yet none so gay, so temperate, so clear,
But that the like adorn the rowling year,
Pleasures imparted to a friend, increase,
Perhaps divided sorrow may grow less.

Strephon.

Others as fair, to others eyes may seem,
But she has all my love and my esteem:

Her bright idea wanders in my thought,
At once my poison, and my antidote.

THIRSIS.

Our hearts are paper, beauty is the pen,
Which writes our loves, and blots ’em out agen.
Phillis is whiter than the rising swan,
Her slender waist confin’d within a span:
Charming as nature’s face in the new spring,
When early birds on the green branches sing.
When rising herbs and buds begin to hide,
Their naked mother, with their short-liv’d pride,
Chloe is ripe, and as the autumn fair,
When on the elm the purple grapes appear,
When trees, hedge-rows, and every bending bush,
With rip’ning fruit, or tasteful berries blush,
Lydia is in the summer of her days,
What wood can shade us from her piercing rays?
Her even teeth, whiter than new yean’d lambs,
When they with tender cries pursue their dams.
Her eyes as charming as the evening sun,
To the scorch’d labourer when his work is done,
Whom the glad pipe, to rural sports invites,
And pays his toil with innocent delights.
On some of these fond swain fix thy desire,
And burn not with imaginary fire.

Strephon.

The flag shall sooner with the eagle soar,
Seas leave their fishes naked on the shore;
The wolf shall sooner by the lamkin die,
And from the kid the hungry lion fly,
Than I abandon Galatea’s love,
Or her dear image from my thoughts remove.

Page 56

THIRSIS.

Damon this evening carries home his bride,
In all the harmless pomp of rural pride:
Where, for two spotted lambkins, newly yean'd,
With nimble feet and voice, the nymphs contend:
And for a coat, thy Galatea spun,
The Shepherds wrestle, throw the bar, and run.

Strephon.

At that dear name I feel my heart rebound,
Like the old steed, at the fierce trumpet's sound;
I grow impatient of the least delay,
No bastard swain shall bear the prize away.

THIRSIS.

Let us make haste, already they are met;
The echoing hills their joyful shouts repeat.

* * * * *

JOHN CROWNE

Was the son of an independent minister, in that part of North America, which is called Nova Scotia. The vivacity of his genius made him soon grow impatient of the gloomy education he received in that country; which he therefore quitted in order to seek his fortune in England; but it was his fate, upon his first arrival here, to engage in an employment more formal, if possible, than his American education. Mr. Dennis, in his Letters, vol. i. p. 48, has given us the best account of this poet, and upon his authority the above, and the succeeding circumstances are related. His necessity, when he first arrived in England, was extremely urgent, and he was obliged to become a gentleman usher to an old independent lady; but he soon grew as weary of that precise office, as he had done before of the discipline of Nova Scotia. One would imagine that an education, such as this, would be but an indifferent preparative for a man to become a polite author, but such is the irresistable force of genius, that neither this, nor his poverty, which was very deplorable, could suppress his ambition: aspiring to reputation, and distinction, rather than to fortune and power. His writings soon made him known to the court and town, yet it was neither to the savour of the court, nor to that of the earl of Rochester, that he was indebted to the nomination the king made of him, for the writing the Masque of Calypso, but to the malice of that noble lord, who designed by that preference to mortify Mr. Dryden.

Upon the breaking out of the two parties, after the pretended discovery of the Popish plot, the favour he was in at court, and the gaiety of his temper, which inclined him to join with the fashion, engaged him to embrace the Tory party. About that time he wrote the City Politicks, in order to satirize and expose the Whigs: a comedy not without wit and spirit, and which has obtained the approbation of those of contrary principles, which is the highest evidence of merit; but after it was ready for the stage, he met with great embarrassments in getting it acted. Bennet lord Arlington (who was then lord chamberlain, was secretly in the cause of the Whigs, who were at that time potent in Parliament,

Page 57

in order to support himself against the power of lord treasurer Danby, who was his declared enemy) used all his authority to suppress it. One while it was prohibited on account of its being dangerous; another while it was laid aside upon pretence of its being flat and insipid; till Mr. Crowne, at last, was forced to have recourse to the King himself, and engage him to lay his absolute commands on the lord chamberlain to have it no longer delayed. This command he was pleased to give in his own person, for Charles *ii*. loved comedy above all other amusements, except one which was both more expensive, and less innocent, and besides, had a very high opinion of Mr. Crowne's abilities. While he was thus in favour with the King and court, Mr. Dennis declares, he has more than once heard him say, that though he had a sincere affection for the King, he had yet a mortal hatred to the court. The promise of a sum of money made him sometimes appear there, to sollicit the payment of it, but as soon as he received the sum, he vanished, and for a long time never approached it.

It was at the latter end of King Charles's reign, that Mr. Crowne, tired with the fatigue of writing, shocked with the uncertainty of theatrical success, and desirous to shelter himself from the resentment of those numerous enemies he had made, by his City Politics, immediately addressed the King himself, and desired his Majesty to establish him in some office, that might be a security to him for life: the King answered, he should be provided for; but added, that he would first see another comedy. Mr. Crowne endeavouring to excuse himself, by telling the King he plotted slowly and awkwardly, his Majesty replied, that he would help him to a plot, and so put in his hand the Spanish Comedy called Non Poder Esser. Mr. Crowne was obliged immediately to go to work upon it, but after he had written three acts of it, found, to his surprize, that the Spanish play had some time before been translated, and acted and damned, under the title of Tarugo's Wiles, or the Coffee-House: yet, supported by the King's command, he went briskly on, and finished it.

Mr. Crowne, who had once before obliged the commonwealth of taste, with a very agreeable comedy in his City Politics, yet, in Sir Courtly Nice went far beyond it, and very much surpassed himself; for though there is something in the part of Crack, which borders upon farce, the Spanish author alone must answer for that: for Mr. Crowne could not omit the part of Crack, that is, of Tarugo, and the Spanish farce depending upon it, without a downright affront to the King, who had given him the play for his ground-work. All that is of English growth in Sir Courtly Nice is admirable; for though it has neither the fine designing of Ben Johnson, nor the masculine satire of Wycherley, nor the grace, delicacy, and courtly air of Etherege, yet is the dialogue lively and spirited, attractively diversified, and adapted to the several characters.

Page 58

Four of these characters are entirely new, yet general and important, drawn truly, and graphically and artfully opposed to each other, Surly to Sir Courtly, and Hot-head to Testimony: those extremes of behaviour, the one of which is the grievance, and the other the plague of society and conversation; excessive ceremony on the one side, and on the other rudeness, and brutality are finely exposed in Surly and Sir Courtly: those divisions and animosities in the two great parties of England, which have so long disturbed the public quiet, and undermined the general interest, are happily represented and ridiculed in Testimony and Hot-head. Mr. Dennis, speaking of this comedy, says, 'that though he has more than twenty times read it, yet it still grows upon him, and he delivers it as his opinion, that the greatest comic poet, who ever lived in any age, might have been proud to have been the author of it.'

The play was now just ready to appear to the world. Every one that had seen it rehearsed, was highly pleased with it. All who had heard of it conceived great expectations, and Mr. Crowne was delighted with the flattering hope of being made happy for the remaining part of his life, by the performance of the King's promise: But upon the very last day of the rehearsal, he met Underhill coming from the playhouse, as he himself was going towards it, upon which the poet reprimanding the player for neglecting so considerable a part as he had in the comedy, and on a day of so much consequence, as the very last of the rehearsal. Oh Lord, says Underhill, we are all undone! how! says Crowne, is the Playhouse on fire? the whole nation, replies the player, will quickly be so, for the King is dead; at the hearing of which dismal words, the author was thrown almost into distraction; for he who the moment before was ravished with the thought of the pleasure he was about to give the King, and the favours which he was afterwards to receive from him, this moment found, to his unspeakable sorrow, that his Royal patron was gone for ever, and with him all his hopes. The King indeed revived from this apoplectic fit, but three days after died, and Mr. Crowne by his death was replunged into the deepest melancholly.

Thus far Mr. Dennis has traced the life of Crowne; in the same letter he promises a further account of him upon another occasion, which, it seems, never occurred, for we have not been able to find that he has any where else mentioned our author.

The King's death having put a period to Mr. Crowne's expectations of court-favour (for the reign of his successor was too much hurried with party designs, to admit of any leisure to reward poetical merit, though the Prince himself, with all his errors about him, was a man of taste, and had a very quick discernment of the power of genius) he, no doubt, had recourse to writing plays again for bread, and supporting himself the best way he could by his wits, the most unpleasing, and precarious manner of life, to which any man can be exposed. We cannot be absolutely certain when Mr. Crowne died; Mr. Coxeter in his notes says, he was alive in the year 1703, and as he must then have

been much advanced in years, in all probability he did not long survive it. He is the author of 17 Plays.

Page 59

1. Juliana, or the Princess of Poland, a Tragi-Comedy; acted at the duke of York's theatre 1671, dedicated to the earl of Orrery.

2. Andromache, a Tragedy; acted at the duke's theatre in Covent Garden, 1675. This play was only a translation of M. Racine, by a young gentleman, chiefly in prose, and published by Mr. Crown. It was brought upon the stage, but without success.

3. Calisto, or the Chaste Nymph, a masque, 1675; written by command of the queen, and oftentimes performed at court by persons of quality. It is founded on a story in Ovid's Metamorphoses, lib. 2.

4. The Country Wit, a Comedy; acted at the duke's theatre 1675. This play contains a good deal of low humour; and was approved by king Charles the IId.

5. The Destruction of Jerusalem, by Titus Vespasian, in two parts, acted 1677; addressed to the duchess of Portsmouth. These Tragedies met with extravagant applause, which excited the envy of lord Rochester so much, that on this account he commenced an enemy to the bard he before had so much befriended.

6. The Ambitious Statesman, or the Royal Favourite, a Tragedy; acted at the theatre-royal 1679. This play had but indifferent success, though esteemed by the author one of the best he ever wrote.

7. Charles the VIIIth King of France, or the Invasion of Naples by the French; this play is written in heroic verse.

8. Henry the VIth, the first part, with the murther of Humphrey duke of Gloucester; acted 1681, dedicated to Sir Charles Sedley. This play was at first acted with applause; but at length, the Romish faction opposed it, and by their interest at court got it suppressed. Part of this play was borrowed from Shakespear's Henry the VIth.

9. Henry the VIth, the second part; or the Miseries of Civil War; a Tragedy, acted 1680.

10. Thyestes, a Tragedy; acted at the theatre-royal 1681. The plot from Seneca's Thyestes.

11. City Politics, a Comedy, 1683; of this already we have given some account.

12. Sir Courtly Nice, or It Cannot be; dedicated to the duke of Ormond, of which we have given an account in the author's life.

13. Darius King of Persia, a Tragedy; acted in 1688. For the plot, see Quint. Curt. lib. 3, 4, and 5.

14. The English Fryar, or the Town Sparks, a Comedy; printed in quarto 1690, dedicated to William earl of Devonshire. This play had not the success of the other pieces of the same author.

15. Regulus, a Tragedy; acted at the theatre-royal 1694. The design of this play is noble; the example of Regulus being the most celebrated for honour, and constancy of any of the Romans. There is a play of this name, written by Mr. Havard, a comedian now belonging to the theatre-royal in Drury-lane.

16. The Married Beaux, or the Curious Impertinent, a Comedy; acted at the theatre-royal, 1694, dedicated to the marquis of Normanby. To this play the author has prefixed a preface in vindication of himself, from the aspersions cast on him by some persons, as to his morals. The story is taken from Don Quixot.

Page 60

17. Caligula, Emperor of Rome, a Tragedy; acted at the theatre-royal, 1698.

Our author's other works are, Pandion and Amphigenia, or the coy Lady of Thessalia; adorned with sculptures, printed in octavo, 1665.

Daeneids, or the noble Labours of the great Dean of Notre-Dame in Paris, for the erecting in his choir, a Throne for his Glory; and the eclipsing the pride of an imperious usurping Chanter, an heroic poem, in four Canto's; printed in quarto 1692. It is a burlesque Poem, and is chiefly taken from Boileau's Lutrin.

We shall shew Mr. Crown's versification, by quoting a speech which he puts into the mouth of an Angel, in the Destruction of Jerusalem. The Angel is represented as descending over the altar prophesying the fall of that august city.

Stay, stay, your flight, fond men, Heaven does despise
All your vain incense, prayers, and sacrifice.
Now is arriv'd Jerusalem's fatal hour,
When she and sacrifice must be no more:
Long against Heav'n had'st thou, rebellious town,
Thy public trumpets of defiance blown;
Didst open wars against thy Lord maintain,
And all his messengers of peace have slain:
And now the hour of his revenge is come,
Thy weeks are finish'd, and thy slumb'ring doom,
Which long has laid in the divine decree,
Is now arous'd from his dull lethargy;
His army's rais'd, and his commission seal'd,
His order's given, and cannot be repeal'd:
And now thy people, temple, altars all
Must in one total dissolution fall.
Heav'n will in sad procession walk the round,
And level all thy buildings with the ground.
And from the soil enrich'd with human blood,
Shall grass spring up, where palaces have stood,
Where beasts shall seed; and a revenge obtain
For all the thousands at thy altars slain.
And this once blessed house, where Angels came
To bathe their airy wings in holy flame,
Like a swift vision or a flash of light,
All wrapt in fire shall vanish in thy sight;
And thrown aside amongst the common store,
Sink down in time's abyss, and rise no more.

* * * * *

Charles Sackville, Earl of *Dorset*,

Eldest son of Richard earl of Dorset, born the 24th of January 1637, was one of the most accomplished gentlemen of the age in which he lived, which was esteemed one of the most courtly ever known in our nation; when, as Pope expresses it,

> The soldiers ap'd the gallantries of France,
> And ev'ry flow'ry courtier writ romance.

Page 61

Immediately after the restoration, he was chosen member of parliament for East-Grimstead, and distinguished himself while he was in the House of Commons. The sprightliness of his wit, and a most exceeding good-nature, recommended him very early to the favour of Charles the IId, and those of the greatest distinction in the court; but his mind being more turned to books, and polite conversation, than public business, he totally declined the latter, tho' as bishop Burnet[1] says, the king courted him as a favorite. Prior in his dedication of his poems, observes, that when the honour and safety of his country demanded his assistance, he readily entered into the most active parts of life; and underwent the dangers with a constancy of mind, which shewed he had not only read the rules of philosophy, but understood the practice of them. He went a volunteer under his royal highness the duke of York in the first Dutch war, 1665, when the Dutch admiral Opdam was blown up, and about thirty capital ships taken and destroyed; and his composing a song before the engagement, carried with it in the opinion of many people to sedate a presence of mind, and such unusual gallantry, that it has been much celebrated.

This Song, upon so memorable an occasion, is comprised in the following stanzas.

I.

To all you ladies, now at land,
We men at sea indite,
But first would have you understand,
How hard it is to write;
The Muses now, and Neptune too,
We must implore to write to you,
With a fa, la, la, la, la.

II.

For tho' the Muses should prove kind,
And fill our empty brain;
Yet if rough Neptune rouze the wind,
To wave the azure main,
Our paper, pen and ink, and we,
Roll up and down our ships at sea,
With a la fa, &c.
III.

Then if we write not, by each post,
Think not, we are unkind;
Nor yet conclude our ships are lost,
By Dutchmen or by wind:
Our tears, we'll send a speedier way,

The tide shall waft them twice a day.
With a fa, &c.

IV.

The king with wonder, and surprize,
Will swear the seas grow bold;
Because the tides will higher rise,
Then e'er they did of old:
But let him knew it is our tears,
Bring floods of grief to Whitehall-Stairs.
With a fa, &c.

V.

Should foggy Opdam chance to know;
Our sad and dismal story;
The Dutch would scorn so weak a foe,
And quit their fort at Goree:
For what resistance can they find,
From men who've left their hearts behind.
With a fa, &c.

VI.

Let wind, and weather do its worst,
Be you to us but kind;
Let Dutchmen vapour, Spaniards curse,
No sorrow we shall find;
'Tis then no matter, how things go,
Or who's our friend, or who's our foe.
With a fa, &c.

VII.

Page 62

To pass our tedious hours away,
We throw a merry main;
Or else at serious Ombre play;
But why should we in vain
Each other's ruin thus pursue?
We were undone, when we left you.
With a fa, &c.

VIII.

But now our fears tempestuous grow,
And cast our hopes away;
Whilst you, regardless of our woe,
Sit carelessly at play;
Perhaps permit some happier man,
To kiss your hand, or flirt your fan.
With a fa, &c.

IX.

When any mournful tune, you hear,
That dies in every note;
And if it sigh'd with each man's care,
For being so remote;
Think then, how often love we've made
To you, when all those tunes were play'd.
With a fa, &c.

X.

In justice, you cannot refuse,
To think of our distress;
When we for hopes of honour lose,
Our certain happiness;
All those designs are but to prove,
Ourselves more worthy of your love.
With a fa, &c.

XI.

And, now we've told you all our loves,
And likewise all our fears;
In hopes this declaration moves,
Some pity for our tears:

Let's hear of no inconstancy,
We have too much of that at sea.
With a fa, &c.

To maintain an evenness of temper in the time of danger, is certainly the highest mark of heroism; but some of the graver cast have been apt to say, this sedate composure somewhat differs from that levity of disposition, or frolic humour, that inclines a man to write a song. But, let us consider my lord's fervour of youth, his gaiety of mind, supported by strong spirits, flowing from an honest heart, and, I believe, we shall rather be disposed to admire, than censure him on this occasion. Remember too, he was only a volunteer. The conduct of the battle depended not on him. He had only to shew his intrepidity and diligence, in executing the orders of his commander, when called on; as he had no plans of operation to take up his thoughts why not write a song? there was neither indecency, nor immorality in it: I doubt not, but with that chearfulness of mind he composed himself to rest, with as right feelings, and as proper an address to his maker, as any one of a more melancholly disposition, or gloomy aspect.

Most commanders, in the day of battle, assume at least a brilliancy of countenance, that may encourage their soldiers; and they are admired for it: to smile at terror has, before this, been allowed the mark of a hero. The dying Socrates discoursed his friends with great composure; he was a philosopher of a grave cast: Sir Thomas Moore (old enough to be my lord's father) jok'd, even on the scaffold; a strong instance of his heroism, and no contradiction to the rectitude of his mind. The verses the Emperor Adrian wrought on his death-bed (call them a song if you will) have been admired, and approved, by several great men; Mr. Pope has not only given his opinion in their favour, but elegantly translated them, nay, thought them worthy an imitation, perhaps exceeding the original. If this behaviour of my lord's is liable to different constructions, let good nature, and good manners, incline us to bestow the most favourable thereon.

Page 63

After his fatigues at sea, during the remainder of the reign of Charles the IId, he continued to live in honourable leisure. He was of the bed-chamber to the king, and possessed not only his master's favour, but in a great degree his familiarity, never leaving the court but when he was sent to that of France, upon some short commission, and embassies of compliment; as if the king designed to rival the French in the article of politeness, who had long claimed a superiority in that accomplishment, by shewing them that one of the most finished gentlemen in Europe was his subject; and that he understood his worth so well, as not to suffer him to be long out of his presence. Among other commissions he was sent in the year 1669, to compliment the French king on his arrival at Dunkirk, in return of the compliment of that monarch, by the duchess of Orleans, then in England.

Being possessed of the estate of his uncle the earl of Middlesex, who died in the year 1674, he was created earl of that county, and baron of Cranfield, by letters patent, dated the fourth of April, 1675. 27 C. II; and in August 1677 succeeded his father as earl of Dorset; as also, in the post of lord lieutenant of the county of Sussex, having been joined in the commission with him in 1670[2]. Also the 20th of February 1684 he was made custos rotulorum for that county.

Having buried his first lady, Elizabeth, daughter of Harvey Bagot, of Whitehall in the county of Warwick, Esq; widow of Charles Berkley, earl of Falmouth, without any issue by her, he married, in the year 1684, the lady Mary, daughter of James Compton, earl of Northampton, famed for her beauty, and admirable endowments of mind, who was one of the ladies of the bed-chamber to Queen Mary, and left his lordship again a widower, August 6, 1691, leaving issue by him one son, his grace Lionel now duke of Dorset, and a daughter, the lady Mary, married in the year 1702 to Henry Somerset duke of Beaufort, and dying in child-bed, left no issue.

The earl of Dorset appeared in court at the trial of the seven bishops, accompanied with other noblemen, which had a good effect on the jury, and brought the judges to a better temper than they had usually shewn. He also engaged with those who were in the prince of Orange's interest; and carried on his part of that enterprize in London, under the eye of the court, with the same courage and resolution as his friend the duke of Devonshire did in open arms, at Nottingham. When prince George of Denmark deserted King James, and joined the prince of Orange, the princess Anne was in violent apprehensions of the King's displeasure, and being desirous of withdrawing herself, lord Dorset was thought the properest guide for her necessary flight[3]. She was secretly brought to him by his lady's uncle, the bishop of London: who furnished the princess with every thing necessary for her flight to the Prince of Orange, and attended her northward, as far as Northampton, where he quickly

Page 64

brought a body of horse to serve for her guard, and went from thence to Nottingham, to confer with the duke of Devonshire. After the misguided monarch had withdrawn himself, lord Dorset continued at London, and was one of those peers who sat every day in the Council-chamber, and took upon them the government of the realm, in this extremity, till some other power should be introduced. In the debates in Parliament immediately after this confusion, his lordship voted for the vacancy of the throne, and that the prince and princess of Orange should be declared King and Queen of England, &c. When their Majesties had accepted the crown of these realms, his lordship was the next day sworn of the privy-council, and declared lord chamberlain of the household, 'A place, says Prior, which he eminently adorned by the grace of his person, the fineness of his breeding, and the knowledge and practice of what was decent and magnificent.' It appears by the history of England, that he had the honour to stand godfather, with King William to a son of the prince and princess of Denmark, born at Hampton-court, the 24th of July 1689, and christened the 27th by the name of William, whom his Majesty declared duke of Gloucester. When the King had been earnestly entreated by the States of Holland, and the confederate princes in Germany, to meet at a general congress to be held at the Hague, in order to concert matters for the better support of the confederacy, and thereupon took shipping the 16th of January 1692, his lordship was among the peers, who to honour their King and Country, waited on their sovereign in that cold season. When they were two or three leagues off Goree, his Majesty having by bad weather been four days at sea, was so impatient to go on shore, that taking boat, and a thick fog rising soon after, they were surrounded so closely with ice, as not to be able either to make the shore, or get back to the ship; so that lying twenty-two hours, enduring the most bitter cold, and almost despairing of life, they could hardly stand or speak at their landing; and his lordship was so lame, that for some time he did not recover; yet on his return to England, he neither complained of the accident nor the expence.

On the 2d of February 1691, at a chapter of the most noble order of the garter, held at Kensington, his lordship was elected one of the knights companions of this order, with his highness John-George, the fourth elector of Saxony, and was installed at Windsor on the February following. He was constituted four times one of the regents of the kingdom in his Majesty's absence. About the year 1698, his health sensibly declining, he left public business to those who more delighted in it, and appeared only sometimes at council, to shew his respect to the commission which he bore, for he had already tasted all the comfort which court favour could bestow; he had been high in office, respected by his sovereign and the idol of the people; but now when the evening of life approached, he began to look upon such enjoyments with less veneration, and thought proper to dedicate some of his last hours to quiet and meditation. Being advised to go to Bath for the recovery of his health, he there ended his life on the 29th of January 1705-6, and was buried at Witham on the 17th of February following.

Page 65

Lord Dorset was a great patron of men of letters and merit. Dr. Sprat, bishop of Rochester, celebrated for his polite writings, appealed to him when under a cloud, for the part he acted in the reign of King James *ii*. and by his lordship's interest preserved himself. To him Mr. Dryden dedicated his translation of Juvenal, in which he is very lavish in his lordship's praise, and expresses his gratitude for the bounty he had experienced from him.

Mr. Prior (among others who owed their life and fortune to my lord Dorset) makes this public acknowledgment, 'That he scarce knew what life was, sooner than he found himself obliged to his favour; or had reason to feel any sorrow so sensibly as that of his death.' Mr. Prior then proceeds to enumerate the valuable qualities of his patron; in which the warmth of his gratitude appears in the most elegant panegyric. I cannot imagine that Mr. Prior, with respect to his lordship's morals, has in the least violated truth; for he has shewn the picture in various lights, and has hinted at his patron's errors, as well as his graces and virtues. Among his errors was that of indulging passion, which carried him into transports, of which he was often ashamed; and during these little excesses (says he) 'I have known his servants get into his way, that they might make a merit of it immediately after; for he who had the good fortune to be chid, was sure of being rewarded for it.'

His lordship's poetical works have been published among the minor poets 1749, and consist chiefly of a poem to Mr. Edward Howard, on his incomprehensible poem called the British Princes, in which his lordship is very satyrical upon that author.

Verses to Sir Thomas St. Serfe, on his printing his play called Tarugo's Wiles, acted 1668.

An Epilogue to Moliere's Tartuff.

An epilogue on the revival of Ben Johnson's play called Every Man in his Humour.

A Song writ at Sea, in the time of the Dutch war 1665, the night before an engagement.

Verses addressed to the Countess of Dorchester.

A Satirical piece, entitled, A Faithful Catalogue of our most eminent Ninnies; written in the year 1683.

Several Songs.

From the specimens lord Dorset has given us of his poetical talents, we are inclined to wish, that affairs of higher consequence had permitted him to have dedicated more of his time to the Muses. Though some critics may alledge, that what he has given the public is rather pretty than great; and that a few pieces of a light nature do not

sufficiently entitle him to the character of a first rate poet; yet, when we consider, that notwithstanding they were merely the amusement of his leisure hours, and mostly the productions of his youth, they contain marks of a genius, and as such, he is celebrated by Dryden, Prior, Congreve, Pope, &c.

We shall conclude his life with the encomium Pope bestows on him, in the following beautiful lines.

Page 66

Dorset, the grace of courts, the muses pride,
Patron of arts, and judge of nature, dy'd:
The scourge of pride, the sanctify'd or great,
Of fops in learning, and of knaves in state.
Yet soft his nature, tho severe his lay,
His anger moral, and his wisdom gay.
Blest satyrist, who touch'd the mean so true,
As shew'd vice had his hate and pity too.
Blest courtier! who could King and Country please,
Yet sacred keep his friendship, and his ease.
Blest peer! his great forefathers ev'ry grace
Reflecting, and reflected in his race;
Where other Buckhursts, other Dorsets thine.
And patriots still, or poets deck the line

[Footnote 1: History of his own times; p. 264.]

[Footnote 2: Collin's Peerage, p. 575. vol. I.]

[Footnote 3: Burnet's Hist. of his own times.]

* * * * *

Mr. GEORGE FARQUHAR

Was descended of a Family of no mean rank in the North of Ireland; we have been informed that his father was dean of Armagh, but we have not met with a proper confirmation of this circumstance; but it is on all hands agreed, that he was the son of a clergyman, and born at London-Derry in that kingdom, in the year 1678, as appears from Sir James Ware's account of him. There he received the rudiments of education, and discovered a genius early devoted to the Muses; Before he was ten years of age he gave specimens of his poetry, in which, force of thinking, and elegance of turn and expression are manifest; and if the author, who has wrote Memoirs of his life, may be credited, the following stanza's were written by him at that age,

The pliant soul of erring youth,
  Is like soft wax, or moisten'd clay;
Apt to receive all heavenly truth
  Or yield to tyrant ill the sway.

Slight folly in your early years,
  At manhood may to virtue rise;

But he who in his youth appears
A fool, in age will ne'er be wise.

His parents, it is said, had a numerous family, so could bestow no fortune upon him, further than a genteel education. When he was qualified for the university, he was, in 1694, sent to Trinity College in Dublin: here, by the progress he made in his studies, he acquired a considerable reputation[1], but it does not appear, that he there took his degree of bachelor of arts; for his disposition being volatile and giddy, he soon grew weary of a dull collegiate life; and his own opinion of it, in that sense, he afterwards freely enough displayed in several parts of his comedies, and other writings. Besides, the expence of it, without any immediate prospect of returns, might be inconsistent with his circumstances. The polite entertainments of the town more forcibly attracted his attention, especially the diversions of the Theatre, for which, he discovered a violent propension. When Mr. Ashbury, who then

Page 67

was manager of Dublin Theatre, had recruited his company with the celebrated Mr. Wilks (who had for some seasons engaged with Mr. Christopher Rich at Drury-Lane, from whom his encouragement was not equal to his merit) Farquhar having acquaintance with him, Mr. Wilks, was soon introduced upon the stage by his means, where he did not long continue, nor make any considerable figure. His person was sufficiently advantageous, he had a ready memory, proper gesture, and just elocution, but then he was unhappy in his voice, which had not power enough to rouse the galleries, or to rant with any success; besides, he was defective in point of assurance, nor could ever enough overcome his natural timidity. His more excellent talents however might, perhaps, have continued the player at Dublin, and lost the poet at London; but for an accident, which was likely to turn a feigned tragedy into a real one: The story is this.

Mr. Farquhar was extremely beloved in Ireland; having the advantage of a good person, though his voice was weak; he never met with the least repulse from the audience in any of his performances: He therefore resolved to continue on the stage till something better should offer, but his resolution was soon broke by an accident. Being to play the part of Guyomar in Dryden's Indian Emperor, who kills Vasquez, one of the Spanish generals; and forgetting to exchange his sword for a foil, in the engagement he wounded his brother tragedian, who acted Vasquez, very dangerously; and though it proved not mortal, yet it so shocked the natural tenderness of Mr. Farquhar's temper, that it put a period to his acting ever after.

Soon after this, Mr. Wilks received from Mr. Rich a proposal of four pounds a week, if he would return to London (such was the extent of the salaries of the best players in that time, which, in our days, is not equal to that of a second rate performer) which he thought proper to accept of; and Mr. Farquhar, who now had no inducement to remain at Dublin, accompanied Mr. Wilks to London, in the year 1696. Mr. Wilks, who was well acquainted with the humour and abilities of our author, ceased not his solicitation 'till he prevailed upon him to write a play, assuring him, that he was considered by all who knew him in a much brighter light than he had as yet shewn himself, and that he was fitter to exhibit entertaining compositions for the stage, than to echo those of other poets upon it.

But he received still higher encouragement by the patronage of the earl of Orrery, who was a discerner of merit, and saw, that as yet, Mr. Farquhar's went unrewarded. His lordship conferred a lieutenant's commission upon him in his own regiment then in Ireland, which he held several years[2] and, as an officer, he behaved himself without reproach, and gave several instances both of courage and conduct: Whether he received his commission before or after he obliged the town with his first comedy, we cannot be certain.

Page 68

In the year 1698, his first Comedy called Love and a Bottle appeared on the stage, and for its sprightly dialogue, and busy scenes was well received by the audience, though Wilks had no part in it. In 1699 the celebrated Mrs. Anne Oldfield was, partly upon his judgment, and recommendation, admitted on the Theatre.

Now we have mentioned Mrs. Oldfield, we shall present the reader with the following anecdote concerning that celebrated actress, which discovers the true manner of her coming on the stage; the account we have from a person who belonged to Mr. Rich, in a letter he wrote to the editor of Mrs. Oldfield's Life, in which it is printed in these words;

Sir,

In your Memoirs of Mrs. Oldfield, it may not be amiss to insert the following facts, on the truth of which you may depend. Her father, captain Oldfield, not only run out all the military, but the paternal bounds of his fortune, having a pretty estate in houses in Pall-mall. It was wholly owing to captain Farquhar, that Mrs. Oldfield became an actress, from the following incident; dining one day at her aunt's, who kept the Mitre Tavern in St. James's Market, he heard miss Nanny reading a play behind the bar, with so proper an emphasis, and so agreeable turns suitable to each character, that he swore the girl was cut out for the stage, for which she had before always expressed an inclination, being very desirous to try her fortune that way. Her mother, the next time she saw captain Vanburgh, who had a great respect for the family, told him what was captain Farquhar's opinion; upon which he desired to know whether in the plays she read, her fancy was most pleased with tragedy or comedy; miss being called in, said comedy, she having at that time gone through all Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies, and the play she was reading when captain Farquhar dined there, was the Scornful Lady. Captain Vanburgh, shortly after, recommended her to Mr. Christopher Rich, who took her into the house at the allowance of fifteen shillings a week. However, her agreeable figure, and sweetness of voice, soon gave her the preference, in the opinion of the whole town, to all our young actresses, and his grace the late duke of Bedford, being pleased to speak, to Mr. Rich in her favour, he instantly raised her allowance to twenty shillings a week; her fame and salary at last rose to her just merit,

Your humble servant,

Nov. 25, 1730[3].

Charles TAYLOUR.'

In the beginning of the year 1700, Farquhar brought his Constant Couple, or Trip to the Jubilee, upon the stage, it being then the jubilee year at Rome; but our author drew so gay, and airy a figure in Sir Harry Wildair, so suited to Mr. Wilks's talents, and so animated by his gesture, and vivacity of spirit, that it is not determined whether the poet

or the player received most reputation by it. Towards the latter end of this year we meet with Mr. Farquhar

Page 69

in Holland, probably upon his military duty, from whence he has given a description in two of his letters dated that year from Brill, and from Leyden, no less true than humorous, as well of those places as the people; and in a third, dated from the Hague he very facetiously relates how merry he was there, at a treat made by the earl of Westmoreland, while, not only himself, but king William, and other of his subjects were detained there by a violent storm, which he has no less humorously described, and has, among his poems, written also an ingenious copy of verses to his mistress on the same subject. Whether this mistress was the same person he calls his charming Penelope, in several of his love letters addressed to her, we know not, but we have been informed by an old officer in the army, who well knew Mr. Farquhar, that by that name we are to understand Mrs. Oldfield, and that the person meant by Mrs. V—— in one of them, said to be her bedfellow, was Mrs. Verbruggen the actress, the same who was some years before Mrs. Mountfort, whom Mrs. Oldfield succeeded, (when Mrs. V—— died some years after in child-bed) with singular commendation, in her principal parts; and from so bright a flame it was no wonder that Farquhar was more than ordinarily heated. The author of Mrs. Oldfield's life says, that she has often heard her mention some agreeable hours she spent with captain Farquhar: As she was a lady of true delicacy, nor meanly prostituted herself to every adorer, it would be highly ungenerous to suppose, that their hours ever passed in criminal freedoms. And 'tis well known, whatever were her failings, she wronged no man's wife; nor had an husband to injure.

Mr. Farquhar, encouraged by the success of his last piece, made a continuation of it in 1701, and brought on his Sir Harry Wildair; in which Mrs. Oldfield received as much reputation, and was as greatly admired in her part, as Wilks was in his.

In the next year he published his Miscellanies, or Collection of Poems, Letters, and Essays, already mentioned, and which contain a variety of humorous, and pleasant sallies of fancy: There is amongst them a copy of verses addressed to his dear Penelope, upon her wearing her Masque the evening before, which was a female fashion in those days, as well at public walks, as among the spectators at the Playhouse. These verses naturally display his temper and talents, and will afford a very clear idea of them; and therefore we shall here insert them.

'The arguments you made use of last night for keeping on your masque, I endeavoured to defeat with reason, but that proving ineffectual, I'll try the force of rhyme, and send you the heads of our chat, in a poetical dialogue between You and I.'

You.

Thus images are veil'd which you adore;
Your ignorance does raise your zeal the more.

I.

All image worship for false zeal is held;
False idols ought indeed to be conceal'd.

Page 70

You.

Thus oracles of old were still receiv'd;
The more ambiguous, still the more believ'd.

I.

But oracles of old were seldom true,
The devil was in them, sure he's not in you.

You.

Thus mask'd in mysteries does the godhead stand:
The more obscure, the greater his command.

I.

The Godhead's hidden power would soon be past,
Did we not hope to see his face at last.

You.

You are my slave already sir, you know, To Shew more charms, would but increase your woe, I scorn an insult to a conquer'd foe.

I.

I am your slave, 'tis true, but still you see, All slaves by nature struggle to be free; But if you would secure the stubborn prize, Add to your wit, the setters of your eyes; Then pleas'd with thraldom, would I kiss my chain And ne'er think more of liberty again.[4]

It is said, some of the letters of which we have been speaking, were published from the copies returned him at his request, by Mrs. Oldfield, and that she delighted to read them many years after they were printed, as she also did the judicious essay at the end of them, which is called a Discourse upon Comedy, in Reference to the English Stage; but what gives a yet more natural and lively representation of our author still, is one among those letters, which he calls the Picture, containing a description and character of himself, which we should not now omit transcribing, if his works were not in every body's hands.

In 1703 came out another Comedy, entitled the Inconstant, or the Way to Win Him, which had sufficient merit to have procured equal success to the rest; but for the inundation of Italian, French, and other farcical interruptions, which, through the interest of some, and the depraved taste of others, broke in upon the stage like a torrent, and swept down before thorn all taste for competitions of a more intrinsic excellence. These

foreign monsters obtained partisans amongst our own countrymen, in opposition to English humour, genuine wit, and the sublime efforts of genius, and substituted in their room the airy entertainments of dancing and singing, which conveyed no instruction, awakened no generous passion, nor filled the breast with any thing great or manly. Such was the prevalence of these airy nothings, that our author's comedy was neglected for them, and the tragedy of Phaedra slid Hippolitus, which for poetry is equal to any in our tongue, (and though Mr. Addison wrote the prologue, and Prior the epilogue) was suffered to languish, while multitudes flocked to hear the warblings of foreign eunuchs, whose highest excellence, as Young expresses it, was,

'Nonsense well tun'd with sweet stupidity.'

Very early in the year 1704, a farce: called the Stage Coach, in the composition whereof he was jointly concerned with another, made its first appearance in print, and it has always given satisfaction.

Page 71

Mr. Farquhar had now been about a twelve-month married, and it was at first reported, to a great fortune; which indeed he expected, but was miserably disappointed. The lady had fallen in love with him, and so violent was her passion, that she resolved to have him at any rate; and as she knew Farquhar was too much dissipated in life to fall in love, or to think of matrimony unless advantage was annexed to it, she fell upon the stratagem of giving herself out for a great fortune, and then took an opportunity of letting our poet know that she was in love with him. Vanity and interest both uniting to persuade Farquhar to marry, he did not long delay it, and, to his immortal honour let it be spoken, though he found himself deceived, his circumstances embarrassed, and his family growing upon him, he never once upbraided her for the cheat, but behaved to her with, all the delicacy, and tenderness of an indulgent husband.

His next comedy named the Twin-Rivals, was played in 1705.

Our poet was possessed of his commission in the army when the Spanish expedition was made under the conduct of the earl of Peterborough, tho' it seems he did not keep it long after, and tho' he was not embarked in that service, or present at the defeat of the French forces, and the conquest of Barcelona; yet from some military friends in that engagement, he received such distinct relations of it in their epistolary correspondency, that he wrote a poem upon the subject, in which he has made the earl his hero. Two or three years after it was written, the impression of it was dedicated by the author's widow to the same nobleman, in which are some fulsome strains of panegyric, which perhaps her necessity excited her to use, from a view of enhancing her interest by flattery, which if excusable at all, is certainly so in a woman left destitute with a family, as she was.

In 1706 a comedy called the Recruiting Officer was acted at the theatre-royal. He dedicates to all friends round the Wrekin, a noted hill near Shrewsbury, where he had been to recruit for his company; and where, from his observations on country-life, the manner that serjeants inveigle clowns to enlist, and the behaviour of the officers towards the milk-maids and country-wenches, whom they seldom fail of debauching, he collected matter sufficient to build a comedy upon, and in which he was successful: Even now that comedy fails not to bring full houses, especially when the parts of Captain Plume, Captain Brazen, Sylvia, and Serjeant Kite are properly disposed of.

His last play was the Beaux—Stratagem, of which he did not live to enjoy the full success.

Of this pleasing author's untimely end, we can give but a melancholy account.

Page 72

He was oppressed with some debts which obliged him to make application to a certain noble courtier, who had given him formerly many professions of friendship. He could not bear the thought that his wife and family would want, and in this perplexity was ready to embrace any expedient for their relief. His pretended patron persuaded him to convert his commission into the money he wanted, and pledged his honour, that in a very short time he would provide him another. This circumstance appeared favourable, and the easy bard accordingly sold his commission; but when he renewed his application to the nobleman, and represented his needy situation, the latter had forgot his promise, or rather, perhaps, had never resolved to fulfil it.

This distracting disappointment so preyed upon the mind of Mr. Farquhar, who saw nothing but beggary and want before him, that by a sure, tho' not sudden declension of nature, it carried him off this worldly theatre, while his last play was acting in the height of success at that of Drury-lane; and tho' the audience bestowed the loudest applauses upon the performance, yet they could scarce forbear mingling tears with their mirth for the approaching loss of its author, which happened in the latter end of April 1707, before he was thirty years of age.

Thus having attended our entertaining dramatist o'er the contracted stage of his short life, thro' the various characters he performed in it, of the player, the lover, and the husband, the soldier, the critic, and the poet, to his final catastrophe, it is here time to close the scene. However, we shall take the liberty to subjoin a short character of his works, and some farther observations on his genius.

It would be injurious to the memory of Wilks not to take notice here, of his generous behaviour towards the two daughters of his deceased friend. He proposed to his brother managers, (who readily came into it) to give each of them a benefit, to apprentice them to mantua-makers; which is an instance amongst many others that might be produced, of the great worth of that excellent comedian.

The general character which has been given of Mr. Farquhar's comedies is, 'That the success of the most of them far exceeded the author's expectations; that he was particularly happy in the choice of his subjects, which he took care to adorn with a variety of characters and incidents; his style is pure and unaffected, his wit natural and flowing, and his plots generally well contrived. He lashed the vices of the age, tho' with a merciful hand; for his muse was good-natured, not abounding over-much with gall, tho' he has been blamed for it by the critics: It has been objected to him, that he was too hasty in his productions; but by such only who are admirers of stiff and elaborate performances, since with a person of a sprightly fancy, those things are often best, that are struck off in a heat[5]. It is thought that in all his heroes, he generally sketched out his own character, of a young, gay, rakish spark, blessed with parts and abilities. His works are loose, tho' not so grossly libertine, as some other wits of his time, and leave not so pernicious impressions on the imagination as other figures of the like kind more strongly stampt by indelicate and heavier hands.'

Page 73

He seems to have been a man of a genius rather sprightly than great, rather flow'ry than solid; his comedies are diverting, because his characters are natural, and such as we frequently meet with; but he has used no art in drawing them, nor does there appear any force of thinking in his performances, or any deep penetration into nature; but rather a superficial view, pleasant enough to the eye, though capable of leaving no great impression on the mind. He drew his observations chiefly from those he conversed with, and has seldom given any additional heightening, or indelible marks to his characters; which was the peculiar excellence of Shakespear, Johnson, and Congreve.

Had he lived to have gained a more general knowledge of life, or had his circumstances not been straitened, and so prevented his mingling with persons of rank, we might have seen his plays embellished with more finished characters, and with a more polished dialogue.

He had certainly a lively imagination, but then it was capable of no great compass; he had wit, but it was of no peculiar a sort, as not to gain ground upon consideration; and it is certainly true, that his comedies in general owe their success full as much to the player, as to any thing intrinsically excellent in themselves.

If he was not a man of the highest genius, he seems to have had excellent moral qualities, of which his behaviour to his wife and tenderness to his children are proofs, and deserved a better fate than to die oppressed with want, and under the calamitous apprehensions of leaving his family destitute: While Farquhar will ever be remembered with pleasure by people of taste, the name of the courtier who thus inhumanly ruined him, will be for ever dedicated to infamy.

[Footnote 1: Memoirs of Wilks by Obrian, 8vo. 1732.]

[Footnote 2: Memoirs of Mr. Farquhar, before his Works.]

[Footnote 3: For the moral character of Mrs. Oldfield, see the Life of Savage.]

[Footnote 4: Farquhar's Letters.]

[Footnote 5: Memoirs, ubi. supra.]

* * * * *

Edward Ravenscroft.

This gentleman is author of eleven plays, which gives him a kind of right to be named in this collection. Some have been of opinion, he was a poet of a low rate, others that he was only a wit collector; be this as it may, he acquired, some distinction by the vigorous opposition he made to Dryden: And having chosen so powerful an antagonist, he has

acquired more honour by it, than by all his other works put together; he accuses Dryden of plagiary, and treats him severely.

Mr. Dryden, indeed, had first attacked his Mamamouchi; which provoked Ravenscroft to retort so harshly upon him; but in the opinion of Mr. Langbain, the charge of plagiarism as properly belonged to Ravenfcroft himself as to Dryden; tho' there was this essential difference between the plagiary of one and that of the other; that Dryden turned whatever he borrowed into gold, and Ravenscroft made use of other people's materials, without placing them in a new light, or giving them any graces, they had not before.

Page 74

Ravenscroft thus proceeds against Mr. Dryden: 'That I may maintain the character of impartial, to which I pretend, I must pull off his disguise, and discover the politic plagiary that lurks under it. I know he has endeavoured to shew himself matter of the art of swift writing, and would persuade the world that what he writes is extempore wit, currente calamo. But I doubt not to shew that tho' he would be thought to imitate the silk worm that spins its webb from its own bowels, yet I shall make him appear like the leech that lives upon the blood of men, drawn from the gums, and when he is rubbed with salt, spues it up again. To prove this, I shall only give an account of his plays, and by that little of my own knowledge, that I shall discover, it will be manifest, that this rickety poet, (tho' of so many years) cannot go without others assistance; for take this prophecy from your humble servant, or Mr. Ravenscroft's Mamamouchi, which you please,

'When once our poet's translating vein is past,
From him, you can't expect new plays in haste.

Thus far Mr. Ravenscroft has censured Dryden; and Langbain, in order to prove him guilty of the same poetical depredation, has been industrious to trace the plots of his plays, and the similarity of his characters with those of other dramatic poets; but as we should reckon it tedious to follow him in this manner, we shall only in general take notice of those novels from which he has drawn his plots.

We cannot ascertain the year in which this man died; he had been bred a templer, which he forsook as a dry unentertaining study, and much beneath the genius of a poet.

His dramatic works are,

1. The Careless Lovers, a Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, 4to. 1673. The scene Covent-Garden, part of this play is borrowed from Moliere's Monsieur de Pourceaugnac.

2. Mamamouchi; or the Citizen turned Gentleman, a Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, 4to. 1675, dedicated to his Highness prince Rupert. Part of this play is taken from Moliere's le Bourgeois Gentilliome. Scene London.

3. Scaramouch a Philosopher, Harlequin a schoolboy, Bravo Merchant and Magician; a Comedy, after the Italian manner, acted at the theatre-royal 1677. The poet in his preface to this play boasts his having brought a new sort of Comedy on our stage; but his critics will not allow any one scene of it to be the genuine offspring of his own brain, and denominate him rather the midwife than the parent of this piece; part of it is taken from le Burgeois Gentilhome, & la Marriage Force.

4. The Wrangling Lovers; or the Invisible Mistress, a Comedy, acted at the duke's theatre, 4to. 1677. This play is founded upon Corneille's Les Engagements du Hazard, and a Spanish Romance, called, Deceptio visus; or seeing and believing are two things.

5. King Edgar, and Alfreda, a Tragedy, acted at the theatre-royal 1677. The story is taken from the Annals of Love, a novel, and Malmesbury, Grafton, Stow, Speed, and other English chronicles.

Page 75

6. The English Lawyer, a Comedy; acted at the theatre-royal 1678; this is only a translation of the celebrated latin comedy of Ignoramus, written by Mr. Ruggle of Clare-hall, Cambridge. Scene Bourdeaux.

7. The London Cuckolds, a Comedy; acted at the duke of York's theatre. This play is collected from the novels of various authors, and is esteemed one of the most diverting, though perhaps the most offensive play of the author's; it was first acted 1682. This play has hitherto kept possession of the flags, a circumstance owing to the annual celebration of the lord mayor's inauguration: Though it seems to be growing into a just disesteem. It was deprived of its annual appearance at Drury-Lane Theatre, in the year 1752, by Mr. Garrick; whose good sense would not suffer him to continue so unwarrantable and ridiculous an insult, upon so respectable a body of men as the magistrates of the city of London.

The citizens are exposed to the highest ridicule in it; and the scenes are loose and indecent. The reason why the comic poets have so often declared themselves open enemies to the citizens, was plainly this: The city magistrates had always opposed the court, on which the poets had their dependance, and therefore took this method of revenge.

8. Dame Dobson, or the Cunning Woman, a Comedy; acted and damn'd at the duke's theatre, printed in quarto, 1684. This is a translation of a French comedy.

9. The Canterbury Guests, or a Bargain Broken, a Comedy; acted at the theatre-royal, in 1695.

10. The Anatomist, or the Sham Doctor, a Comedy; acted at the theatre-royal in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, 1697.

11. The Italian Husband, a Tragedy; acted at the theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields 1698. To this play, besides the prologue, is prefixed a dialogue, which the author calls the prelude, managed by the poet, a critic, and one Mr. Peregrine the poet's friend. The author here seems to be under the same mistake with other modern writers, who are fond of barbarous and bloody stories. The Epilogue is written by Jo. Haynes.

* * * * *

JOHN PHILIPS,

A poet of very considerable eminence, was son of Dr. Stephen Philips, arch-deacon of Salop, and born at Brampton in Oxfordshire, December 30, 1676. After he had received a grammatical education at home, he was sent to Winchester school, where he made himself master of the Latin and Greek languages, and was soon distinguished for an happy imitation of the excellences which he discovered in the best classical authors.

With this foundation he was removed to Christ's Church in Oxford, where he performed all his university exercises with applause, and besides other valuable authors in the poetical way, he became particularly acquainted with, and studied the works of Milton. The ingenious Mr. George Sewel, in his life and character of our author, observes, 'that there was not

Page 76

an allusion in Paradise Lost, drawn from the thoughts and expressions of Homer or Virgil, which Mr. Philips could not immediately refer to, and by that he perceived what a peculiar life and grace their sentiments added to English poetry; how much their images raised its spirit, and what weight and beauty their words, when translated, gave to its language: nor was he less curious in observing the force and elegance of his mother tongue; but by the example of his darling Milton, searched backwards into the works of our old English poets, to furnish him with proper sounding, and significant expressions, and prove the due extent, and compass of the language. For this purpose he carefully read over Chaucer and Spencer, and afterwards, in his writings, did not scruple to revive any words or phrases which he thought deserved it, with that modesty, and liberty which Horace allows of, either in the coining of new, or the restoring of ancient expressions.' Our author, however, was not so much enamoured of poetry, as to neglect other parts of literature, but was very well acquainted with the whole compass of natural philosophy. He seems in his studies, as well as his writings, to have made Virgil his pattern, and often to have broken out with him in the following rapturous wish, in the Second Book of the Georgies which, for the sake of the English reader, we shall give in Mr. Dryden's translation.

'Give me the ways of wand'ring stars to know,
The depths of heav'n above, or earth below;
Teach me the various labours of the moon,
And whence proceed the eclipses of the sun.
Why slowing tides prevail upon the main,
And in what dark recess they shrink again.
What shakes the solid earth, what cause delays
The summer-nights, and the short winter days.'

Mr. Philips was a passionate admirer of nature, and it is not improbable but he drew his own character in that description which he gives of a philosophical and retired life, at the latter end of the first Book of his Cyder.

—He to his labour hies,
Gladsome intent on somewhat that may ease
Unearthly mortals and with curious search
Examine all the properties of herbs,
Fossils, and minerals, that th' embowell'd earth
Displays, if by his industry he can
Benefit human race.

Though the reader will easily discover the unpoetical flatness of the above lines, yet they shew a great thirst after natural knowledge, and we have reason to believe, that much might have been attained, and many new discoveries made, by so diligent an

enquirer, and so faithful a recorder of physical operations. However, though death prevented the hopes of the world in that respect, yet the passages of that kind, which we find in his Poem on Cyder, may convince us of the niceness of his observations in natural causes. Besides this, he was particularly skilled in antiquities, especially those of his own country; and part of this study too, he has with much art and beauty intermixed with his poetry.

Page 77

While Mr. Philips continued at the university, he was honoured with the acquaintance of the best and politest men in it, and had a particular intimacy with Mr. Edmund Smith, author of Phaedra and Hippolitus. The first poem which got him reputation, was his Splendid Shilling, which the author of the Tatler has stiled the best burlesque poem in the English Language; nor was it only, says Mr. Sewel, 'the finest of that kind in our tongue, but handled in a manner quite different from what had been made use of by any author of our own, or other nation, the sentiments, and stile being in this both new; whereas in those, the jest lies more in allusions to the thoughts and fables of the ancients, than in the pomp of expression. The same humour is continued thro' the whole, and not unnaturally diversified, as most poems of that nature had been before.

Out of that variety of circumstances, which his fruitful invention must suggest to him, on such a subject, he has not chosen any but what are diverting to every reader, and some, that none but his inimitable dress could have made diverting to any: when we read it, we are betrayed into a pleasure which we could not expect, tho' at the same time the sublimity of the stile, and the gravity of the phrase, seem to chastise that laughter which they provoke.' Mr. Edmund Smith in his beautiful verses on our Author's Death, speaks thus concerning this poem;

'In her best light the comic muse appears,
When she with borrowed pride the buskin
wears.'

This account given by Mr. Sewel of the Splendid Shilling, is perhaps heightened by personal friendship, and that admiration which we naturally pay to the productions of one we love. The stile seems to be unnatural for a poem which is intended to raise laughter; for that laboured gravity has rather a contrary influence; disposing the mind to be serious: and the disappointment is not small, when a man finds he has been betrayed into solemn thinking, in reading the description of a trifle; if the gravity of the phrase chastises the laughter, the purpose of the poem is defeated, and it is a rule in writing to suit the language to the subject. Philips's Splendid Shilling may have pleased, because, its manner was new, and we often find people of the best sense throw away their admiration on monsters, which are seldom to be seen, and neglect more regular beauty, and juster proportion.

It is with reserve we offer this criticism against the authority of Dr. Sewel, and the Tatler; but we have resolved to be impartial, and the reader who is convinced of the propriety and beauty of the Splendid Shilling, has, no doubt, as good a right to reject our criticism, as we had to make it.

Our author's coming to London, we are informed, was owing to the persuasion of some great persons, who engaged him to write on the Battle of Blenheim; his poem upon which introduced him to the earl of Oxford, and Henry St. John, esq; afterwards lord viscount Bolingbroke, and other noble patrons. His swelling stile, it must be owned, was

better suited to a subject of this gravity and importance, than to that of a light and ludicrous nature: the exordium of this piece is poetical, and has an allusion to that of Spencer's Fairy Queen:

Page 78

From low and abject themes the grov'ling muse
Now mounts aerial to sing of arms
Triumphant, and emblaze the martial acts
Of Britain's hero.

The next poem of our author was his Cyder, the plan of which he laid at Oxford, and afterwards compleated it in London. He was determined to make choice of this subject, from the violent passion he had for the productions of nature, and to do honour to his native country. The poem was founded upon the model of Virgil's Georgics, and approaches pretty near it, which, in the opinion of critics in general, and Mr. Dryden in particular, even excels the Divine AEneid: He imitates Virgil rather like a pursuer, than a follower, not servilely tracing, but emulating his beauties; his conduct and management are superior to all other copiers of that original; and even the admired Rapin (says Dr. Sewel) is much below him, both in design and success, 'for the Frenchman either fills his garden with the idle fables of antiquity, or new transformations of his own; and, in contradiction of the rules of criticism, has injudiciously blended the serious, and sublime stile of Virgil, with the elegant turns of Ovid in his Metamorphosis; nor has the great genius of Cowley succeeded better in his Books of Plants, who, besides the same faults with the former, is continually varying his numbers from one sort of verse to another, and alluding to remote hints of medicinal writers, which, though allowed to be useful, are yet so numerous, that they flatten the dignity of verse, and sink it from a poem, to a treatise of physic,' Dr. Sewel has informed us, that Mr. Philips intended to have written a poem on the Resurrection, and the Day of Judgment, and we may reasonably presume, that in such a work, he would have exceeded his other performances. This awful subject is proper to be treated in a solemn stile, and dignified with the noblest images; and we need not doubt from his just notions of religion, and the genuine spirit of poetry, which were conspicuous in him, he would have carried his readers through these tremendous scenes, with an exalted reverence, which, however, might not participate of enthusiasm. The meanest soul, and the lowest imagination cannot contemplate these alarming events described in Holy Writ, without the deepest impressions: what then might we not expect from the heart of a good man, and the regulated flights and raptures of a christian poet? Our author's friend Mr. Smith, who had probably seen the first rudiments of his design, speaks thus of it, in a poem upon his death.

O! had relenting Heaven prolong'd his days,
The tow'ring bard had sung in nobler lays:
How the last trumpet wakes the lazy dead;
How saints aloft the cross triumphant spread;
How opening Heav'ns their happier regions, shew,
And yawning gulphs with flaming vengeance glow,
And saints rejoice above, and sinners howl below.
Well might he sing the day he could not fear,
And paint the glories he was sure to wear.

Page 79

All that we have left more of this poet, is a Latin Ode to Henry St. John, esq; which is esteemed a master-piece; the stile being pure and elegant, the subject of a mixt nature, resembling the Jublime spirit, and gay facetious humour of Horace. He was beloved, says Dr. Sewel, 'by all who knew him; somewhat reserved and silent amongst strangers, but free, familiar, and easy with his friends; he was averse to disputes, and thought no time so ill spent, and no wit so ill used, as that which was employed in such debates; his whole life was distinguished by a natural goodness, and well-grounded and unaffected piety, an universal charity, and a steady adherence to his principles; no one observed the natural and civil duties of life with a stricter regard, whether a son, a friend, or a member of society, and he had the happiness to fill every one of these parts, without even the suspicion either of undutifulness, insincerity, or disrespect. Thus he continued to the last, not owing his virtues to the happiness of his constitution, but the frame of his mind, insomuch, that during a long sickness, which is apt to ruffle the smoothest temper; he never betrayed any discontent or uneasiness, the integrity of his life still preserving the chearfulness of his spirits; and if his friends had measured their hopes of his life, only by his unconcern in his sickness, they could not but conclude, that either his date would be much longer, or that he was at all times prepared for death.' He had long been troubled with a lingering consumption, attended with an asthma; and the summer before he died, by the advice of his physicians, he removed to Batly, where he got only some present ease, but went from thence with but small hopes of recovery; and upon the return of the distemper, he died at Hereford the 15th of February, 1708. He was interred in the Cathedral church of that city, with an inscription upon his grave-stone, and had a monument erected to his memory in Westminster-abbey by Sir Simon Harcourt, afterwards lord chancellor; the epitaph of which was written by Dr. Friend.

* * * * *

William Walsh, Esq;

This poet was the son of Joseph Walsh, of Aberley in Worcestershire. He became a gentleman-commoner of Wadham-College Oxford, in Easter-Term, 1678, when he was only fifteen years of age; he left it without a degree, retired to his native county, and some time after went to London. He wrote a Dialogue concerning Women, being a Defence of the Fair-Sex, addressed to Eugenia, and printed in the year 1691. This is the most considerable of our author's productions, and it will be somewhat necessary to take further notice of it, which we cannot more effectually do, than by transcribing the words of Dryden in its commendation.—That great critic thus characterises it. 'The perusal of this dialogue, in defence of the Fair-Sex, written by a gentleman of my acquaintance, much surprised me: For it was not easy for me to imagine, that

Page 80

one so young could have treated so nice a subject with so much judgment. It is true, I was not ignorant that he was naturally ingenious, and that he had improved himself by travelling; and from thence I might reasonably have expected, that air of gallantry which is so visibly diffused through the body of the work, and is, indeed, the soul that animates all things of this nature; but so much variety of reading, both in ancient and modern authors, such digestion of that reading, so much justness of thought, that it leaves no room for affectation or pedantry; I may venture to say, are not over common amongst practised writers, and very rarely to be found amongst beginners. It puts me in mind of what was said of Mr. Waller, the father of our English numbers, upon the sight of his first verses, by the wits of the last age; that he came out into the world forty-thousand strong, before they had heard of him. Here in imitation of my friend's apostrophes, I hope the reader need not be told, that Mr. Waller is only mentioned for honour's sake, that I am desirous of laying hold on his memory on all occasions, and thereby acknowledging to the world, that unless he had written, none of us all could write. My friend, had not it seems confidence enough to send this piece out into the world, without my opinion of it, that it might pass securely, at least among the fair readers, for whose service it was principally designed. I am not so presuming, as to think my opinion can either be his touch-stone, or his passport; but, I thought I might send him back to Ariosto, who has made it the business of almost thirty stanza's, in the beginning of the thirty-seventh book of his Orlando Furioso; not only to praise that beautiful part of the creation, but also to make a sharp satire on their enemies; to give mankind their own, and to tell them plainly, that from their envy it proceeds, that the virtue and great actions of women are purposely concealed, and the failings of some few amongst them exposed, with all the aggravating circumstances of malice. For my own part, who have always been their servant, and have never drawn my pen against them, I had rather see some of them praised extraordinarily, than any of them suffer by detraction, and that at this age, and at this time particularly, wherein I find more heroines, than heroes; let me therefore give them joy of their new champion: If any will think me more partial to him, than I really am, they can only say, I have returned his bribe; and he word I wish him is, that he may receive justice from the men, and favour only from the ladies.'

This is the opinion of Mr. Dryden in favour of this piece, which is sufficient to establish its reputation. Mr. Wood, the antiquarian, observes, that this Eugenia was the mistress of Walsh; but for this he produces no proof, neither is it in the lead material whether the circumstance is true or no. Mr. Walslh is likewise author of several occasional poems, printed 1749, amongst the works of the Minor Poets, and which he first published in the year 1692, with some letters amorous, and gallant, to which is prefixed the following address to the public.

Page 81

Go, little book, and to the world impart
The faithful image of an amorous heart;
Those who love's dear deluding pains have known,
May in my fatal sorrows read their own:
Those who have lived from all its torments free,
May find the things they never, felt by me.
Perhaps advis'd avoid the gilded bait,
And warn'd by my example shun my fate.
Whilst with calm joy, safe landed on the coast
I view the waves, on which I once was tost.
Love is a medley of endearments, jars,
Suspicions, quarrels, reconcilements, wars;
Then peace again. O would it not be best,
To chase the fatal poison from our breast?
But since, so few can live from passion free,
Happy the man, and only happy he,
Who with such lucky stars begins his love,
That his cool judgment does his choice approve.
Ill grounded passions quickly wear away;
What's built upon esteem can ne'er decay.

Mr. Walsh was of an amorous complexion, and in one of his letters mentions three of his amours, in pretty singular terms. 'I valued (says he) one mistress, after I left loving her; I loved another after I left valuing her; I love and value the third, after having lost all hopes of her; and according to the course of my passions, I should love the next after having obtained her. However, from this time forward, upon what follies soever you fall, be pleased, for my sake, to spare those of love; being very well satisfied there is not one folly of that kind (excepting marriage) which I have not already committed. I have been, without raillery, in love with the beauty of a woman whom I have never seen; with the wit of one whom I never heard speak, nor seen any thing she has written, and with the heroic virtues of a woman, without knowing any one action of her, that could make me think; she had any; Cupid will have it so, and what can weak mortals do against so potent a god?' Such were the sentiments of our author when he was about 30 years of age.

Queen Anne constituted Mr. Walsh her master of the horse. On what account this place, in particular, was allotted him, we know not; but, with regard to his literary abilities, Mr. Dryden in his postscript to his translation of Virgil, has asserted, that Mr. Walsh was the best critic then living; and Mr. Pope, speaking of our author, thus concludes his Essay on Criticism, *viz*.

To him, the wit of Greece, and Rome was known,
And ev'ry author's merit, but his own.
Such late was Walsh: the muses judge and friend,

Who justly knew to blame, or to commend;
To failings mild, but zealous for desert,
The clearest head, and the sincerest heart.

Page 82

In the year 1714 the public were obliged with a small posthumous piece of Mr. Walsh's, entitled AEsculapius, or the Hospital of Fools, in imitation of Lucian. There is printed amongst. Mr. Walsh's other performances, in a volume of the Minor Poets, an Essay on Pastoral Poetry, with a Short Defence of Virgil, against some of the reflexions of M. Fontenelle. That critic had censured Virgil for writing his pastorals in a too courtly stile, which, he says, is not proper for the Doric Muse; but Mr. Walsh has very judiciously shewn, that the Shepherds in Virgil's time, were held in greater estimation, and were persons of a much superior figure to what they are now. We are too apt to figure the ancient countrymen like our own, leading a painful life in poverty, and contempt, without wit, or courage, or education; but men had quite different notions of these things for the first four thousand years of the world. Health and strength were then more in esteem, than the refinements of pleasure, and it was accounted, more honourable to till the ground, and keep a flock of sheep, than to dissolve in wantonness, and effeminating sloth.

Mr. Walsh's other pieces consist chiefly of Elegies, Epitaphs, Odes, and Songs; they are elegant, tho' not great, and he seems to have had a well cultivated, tho' not a very extensive, understanding. Dryden and Pope have given their sanction in his favour, to whom he was personally known, a circumstance greatly to his advantage, for had there been no personal friendship, we have reason to believe, their encomiums would have been less lavish; at least his works do not carry so high an idea of him, as they have done. Mr. Walsh died about the year 1710.

* * * * *

THOMAS BETTERTON.

(Written by R.S.[1])

Almost every circumstance relating to the life of this celebrated actor, is exposed to dispute, and his manner of first coming on the stage, as well as the action of his younger years have been controverted. He was son of Mr. Betterton, undercook to king Charles the Ist, and was born in Tothill-street Westminster, some time in the year 1635. Having received the rudiments of a genteel education, and discovering a great propensity to books, it was once proposed he should have been educated to some learned profession; but the violence and confusion of the times putting this out of the power of his family, he was at his own request bound apprentice to a bookseller, one Mr. Holden, a man of some eminence, and then happy in the friendship of Sir William Davenant. In the year 1656 it is probable Mr. Betterton made his first appearance on the stage, under the direction of Sir William, at the Opera-house in Charter-house-yard. It is said, that going frequently to the stage about his mailer's business, gave Betterton the first notion of it, who shewed such indications of a theatrical genius, that Sir William readily accepted him as a

Page 83

performer. Immediately after the restoration two distinct companies were formed by royal authority; the first in virtue of a patent granted to Henry Killegrew, Esq; called the king's company, the other in virtue of a patent granted to Sir William Davenant, which was stiled the duke's company.[2] The former acted at the theatre royal in Drury-lane, the other at that in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. In order that the theatres might be decorated to the utmost advantage, and want none of the embellishments used abroad, Mr. Betterton, by command of Charles *ii*. went to Paris, to take a view of the French stage, that he might the better judge what would contribute to the improvement of our own. Upon his return, Mr. Betterton introduced moving scenes into our theatre, which before had the stage only hung with tapestry. The scenes no doubt help the representation, by giving the spectator a view of the place, and increase the distress, by making the deception more powerful, and afflicting the mind with greater sensibility. The theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields being very inconvenient, another was built for them in Dorset-Garden, called the duke's theatre, to which they removed and followed their profession with great success, during all that reign of pleasure.

The stage at this time was so much the care of the state, that when any disputes arose, they were generally decided by his majesty himself or the duke of York, and frequently canvassed in the circle. Mr. Cibber assigns very good reasons, why at this time, theatrical amusements were so much in vogue; the first is, that after a long eclipse of gallantry during the rage of the civil war, people returned to it with double ardour; the next is, that women were then introduced on the stage, their parts formerly being supplied by boys, or effeminate young men, of which the famous Kynaston possessed the capital parts. When any art is carried to perfection, it seldom happens, that at that particular period, the profits arising from it are high; and at this time the advantages of playing were very inconsiderable: Mr. Hart the greatest performer at the king's theatre, had but three pounds a week, and Mr. Betterton, then but young, very probably had not so much, and besides, benefits then were things unheard of.

In 1670 Mr. Betterton married a gentlewoman on the same stage, one Mrs. Saunderson, who excelled as an actress, every thing but her own conduct in life. In her, he was compleatly happy, and by their joint endeavours even in those days, they were able not only to acquire a genteel subsistence, but also to save what might support them in an advanced age[3].

Page 84

After Sir William Davenant's death, the patent came into the hands of his son, Dr. Charles Davenant, so well known to the world by his political, writings; but, whether his genius was less fit than his father's for such an administration, or the king's Company were really superior to his in acting, we cannot determine; but they gained upon the town, and Dr. Davenant was obliged to have recourse to the dramatic opera, rich scenes, and fine music, to support the stage on which Betterton played. The Dr. himself wrote the Opera of Circe, which came first on the stage in 1675, and was received with, such applause, as gave hopes of succeeding in this new way. The same year a Pastoral, called Calista, or the Chaste Nymph, written by Mr. Crowne, at the desire of queen Katherine, was represented at court; and the ladies, Mary and Anne, daughters to the duke of York, played parts in it. On this occasion Mr. Betterton instructed the actors, and Mrs. Betterton gave lessons to the princesses; in grateful remembrance of which queen Anne settled a pension of 100 l. per annum upon her. During this time an emulation subsisted between the two companies, and a theatrical war was proclaimed aloud, in which the town reaped the advantage, by seeing the parts performed with the greater life. The duke's company however maintained it's superiority, by means of the new-invented artillery, of music, machines, and scenery, and other underhand dealings, and bribing of actors in the opposite faction from performing their duty. By these measures, a coalition was effected, and the two companies joined together, and being united formed one of the perfectest that ever filled a stage, in 1682. It was in this united company that the merit of Betterton shone with unrivalled lustre, and having survived the great actors on whose model he had formed himself he was at liberty to discover his genius in its full extent, by replacing many of them with advantage in these very characters, in which, during their life-times, they had been thought inimitable; and all who have a taste for scenical entertainments cannot but thank the present laureat, for preserving for them so lively a portrait of Betterton, and painting him in so true a light, that without the imputation of blind adulation, he may be justly stiled the British Roscius.

This account is too important and picturesque to be here omitted; and it would be an injury to Betterton not to shew him in that commanding light, in which the best judge of that species of excellence has placed him.

"Betterton was an actor, as Shakespear was an author, both without competitors! form'd for the mutual assistance, and illustration of each others 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

Page 85

the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record! that the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them; or at belt 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 their beauties in their belt 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, Mackbeths, 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 thundered with applause; tho' the misguided actor was all the while (as Shakespear terms it) tearing a passion into rags—am the more bold to offer you this particular instance, because the late Mr. Addison, while I sate by him, to see this scene acted, made the same observation, asking me with some surprize, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a passion with the Ghost, which though it might have astonished, 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 distress, might wish or enjoin a sorrowful son to execute towards his future quiet in the grave? this was the light into which Betterton threw this scene; which he open'd with a pause of mute amazement! then rising slowly, to a solemn, trembling voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the spectator, as to himself! and in the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave him, the boldness of his expostulation was still governed by decency, manly, but not braving; his voice never rising into that seeming outrage, or wild defiance of what he naturally rever'd. But alas! to preserve this medium, between mouthing, and meaning too little, to keep the attention more pleasingly awake, by a tempered 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

Page 86

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 so often tempted, at this easy rate, to excite it. Shall I go a little farther? and allow that this extreme is more pardonable than its opposite error. I mean that dangerous affectation of the monotone, or solemn sameness of pronunciation, which to my ear is insupportable; for of all faults that so frequently pass upon the vulgar, that of flatness will have the fewest admirers. That this is an error of ancient standing seems evident by what Hamlet says, in his instructions to the players, *viz*.

Be not too tame, neither, &c.

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

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

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

A farther excellence in Betterton, was that he could vary his spirit to the different characters he acted. Those wild impatient starts, that fierce and flaming 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 provoked, 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 repell'd 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 flares?

And a little after,

There is no terror, Cassius, in your looks! &c.

Not but, in some part of this scene, where he reproaches Cassius, his temper is not under this 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 cou'd put colours in our words to paint the voice with.

Page 87

Et si vis similem pingere, pinge sonum, is enjoining 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 united, he gratifies at once your eye, your ear, and your understanding. To conceive the pleasure rising from such harmony, you must have been present at it! ’tis not to be told you!

Thus was Betterton happy in his fortune, in the notice of his sovereign, in his fame and character, and in a general respect of all ranks of life; thus happy might he have continued, had he not been persuaded to attempt becoming rich, and unluckily engaged in a scheme that swept away all his capital, and left him in real distress. This accident fell out in 1692; and is of too particular a kind to pass unnoticed. Mr. Betterton had a great many friends amongst the wealthy traders in the city, and so amiable was his private life, that all who knew him were concerned, and interested in his success: Amongst these, there was a gentleman, whose name the author of his life thinks proper to conceal, who entered into the strictest amity with this actor. This gentleman in the year 1692 was concerned in an adventure to the East-Indies, upon the footing then allowed by the company’s charter, which vessels so employed were stiled interlopers. The project of success was great, the gain unusually high; and this induced Mr. Betterton, to whom his friend offered any share in the business he pleased, to think of so large a sum as eight-thousand pounds; but it was not for himself, as he had no such sum in his power: and whoever considers the situation of the stage at that time will need no other argument to convince him of it. Yet he had another friend whom, he was willing to oblige, which was the famous Dr. Radcliffe; so Mr. Betterton advanced somewhat more than two-thousand pounds, which was his all, and the Dr. made it up eight-thousand. The vessel sailed to the East-Indies, and made as prosperous a voyage as those concerned in her could wish, and the war with France being then, very warm, the captain very prudently came home north about, and arrived safe in Ireland; but in his passage from thence he was taken by the French. His cargo was upwards of 120,000 l. which ruined Mr. Betterton, and broke the fortune and heart of his friend in the city: As for doctor Radcliffe, he expressed great concern for Mr. Betterton, but none for himself; the Dr. merrily consoled himself with observing, ’that it was only trotting up 200 pair of stairs more, and things are as they were.’

Page 88

This accident, however fatal to Mr. Betterton's fortune, yet proved not so to his peace, for he bore it without murmur, and even without mention; so far from entertaining resentment against his friend in the city, who doubtless meant him well, he continued his intimacy till his death, and after his decease took his only daughter under his protection, and watched over her education till she thought proper to dispose of herself in marriage to Mr. Bowman the player, whose behaviour was such, as to gain the esteem of all that knew him; he has not been many years dead, and reflected credit on the reports of the excellency of the old stage.

Such the virtue, such the honour of Mr. Betterton! who in his private character was as amiable as any he borrowed from the poets, and therefore was always deservedly considered as the head of the theatre, though vetted there with very little power. The managers, as the companies were now united, exercised the mod despotic stage-tyranny; and obliged our author to remonstrate to them the hardships they inflicted on their actors, and represent that bad policy of the few, forgetting their obligations to the many. This language in the ears of the theatrical ministry, sounded like treason; and therefore, instead of considering how to remedy the mischiefs complained of, they bent their thoughts to get rid of their monitor: as if the not hearing of faults was equivalent to mending them. It was with this view they began to give away some of Betterton's first parts to young actors,[4] supposing this would abate his influence. This policy ruined them, and assisted him: The public resented their having plays ill acted when they knew they might have better.

The best players attached themselves wholly to Betterton, and desired him to turn his thoughts on some method of procuring himself and them justice. Thus theatrical despotism produced its own definition, and the very steps taken to render Betterton desperate, pointed out the way for his deliverance. Mr. Betterton, who had a general acquaintance with people of fashion, represented his case to them, and at last by the interposition of the earl of Dorset, a patent was granted him for building a new play-house in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, which he effected by a subscription. The patentees, in order to make head against them, got over to their party Mr. Williams, and Mrs. Mountford, both eminent players; they had also recruits from the country, but with all the art of which they were capable, they continued still unequal to Mr. Betterton's company. The new theatre was opened in 1695, with very great advantages: Mr. Congreve accepted of a share with this company, as Mr. Dryden had formerly with the king's; and the first play they acted was Congreve's Comedy of Love for Love. The king honoured it with his presence, there was a large and splendid audience, Mr. Betterton spoke a Prologue, and Mrs. Bracegirdle an Epilogue suited to the occasion, and it appeared by the reception they met with, that the town knew how to reward the merit of those the patentees used so ill. But with all these vast advantages, Betterton's company were not able to maintain this flow of prosperity, beyond two or three seasons: Mr. Congreve was a slow writer, Vanbrugh, and Mr. Cibber, who wrote for the other house, were more expeditious; and if they did not finish, they at least writ pleasing Comedies.

Page 89

The frequency of new pieces, however, gave such a turn in their favour, that Betterton's company with all their merit, had been undone, had not the Mourning Bride, and the Way of the World, come like reprieves, and saved them from the last gasp[5]. In a few years however, it appearing plainly, that without a new support from their friends, it was impossible for them to maintain their superiority, or independance; the patrons of Mr. Betterton set about a new subscription, for building a theatre in the Hay-market, under the direction of Sir John Vanbrugh, which was finished in 1706[6]; and was to be conducted upon a new plan; music and scenery to be intermixed with the drama, which with the novelty of a new house, was likely to retrieve Mr. Betterton's affairs. This favour was kindly received by Mr. Betterton; but he was now grown old, his health and strength much impaired by constant application, and his fortune still worse than his health; he chose therefore (as a mutinous spirit, occasioned by disappointments, grew up amongst the actors) to decline the offer, and so put the whole design under the conduct of Sir John Vanbrugh, and Mr. Congreve, the latter of whom soon abandoned it entirely; and Mr. Betterton's strength failing, many of the old players dying, and other accidents intervening, a reunion of the companies became absolutely necessary, and soon after took place.

Hitherto, Betterton is considered as at the head of his company, and the affairs of the stage are naturally connected with his, as the transactions of a nation are interwoven with the life of a prince. After our author reached seventy, his infirmities grew upon him greatly, his fits of the gout were more lasting, and more severe: His circumstances also, which had not been mended since he took upon him the conduct of the theatre, grew more necessitous, and all this joined to his wife's ill state of health, made his condition melancholy, at a time when the highest affluence could not have made them chearful. Yet under all these pressures, he kept up his spirit, and though less active, was as serene as ever. The public in those days, had a grateful remembrance of the pleasure Betterton had given them, and would not suffer so distinguished, and so deserving a man, after fifty-years service, to withdraw, till he had received from them some marks of their favour.

In the spring of 1709 a benefit was granted to Mr. Betterton, and the play of Love for Love was acted for that purpose. Two of the best actresses that ever graced the stage appeared on it upon that occasion, tho' they had long quitted it, to render the benefit more advantageous: The part of Valentine was performed by Mr. Betterton, Angelica by Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mrs. Barry performed that of Frail. The epilogue was written by Mr. Rowe. Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Barry, and Mr. Betterton, appeared on the stage together, and the ladies taking hold of him, represented his infirmities of age, and pleaded his ancient merit, in a very natural and moving manner: This epilogue is exquisite in its kind. The profits arising from that benefit, we are told, amounted to 500 l. He had also a promise that the favour should be annually continued.

Page 90

These extraordinary acts of public gratitude had a proper effect upon Mr. Betterton; who instead of indulging himself on their bounty, exerted the spirit given by this generosity, in their service, and appeared and acted as often as his health would permit[7]. On the 20th of September following, in particular, he performed the part of Hamlet, with such vivacity, as well as justice, that it gave ample satisfaction to the best judges. This activity in the winter kept off the gout longer than usual, but the fit returning in the spring, was the more unlucky, as it happened at the time of his benefit, when the success of his play was sure to depend in a great measure upon his own performance. The play he made choice of was the Maid's Tragedy, in which he acted the part of Melantius; and notice was accordingly given by his good friend the Tatler; but the fit intervened; and that he might not disappoint the town, Mr. Betterton was forced to submit to outward applications, to reduce the swelling of his feet: Which had such an effect, that he was able to appear on the stage, though he was obliged to use a slipper. He acted that day, says the Laureat, with unusual spirit, and briskness, by which he obtained universal applause; but this could not prevent his paying a very dear price for these marks of approbation, since the gouty humour, repelled by fomentations, soon seized upon the nobler parts; which being perhaps weakened by his extraordinary fatigue on that occasion, he was not able to make a long resistance: But on the 28th of April, 1710, he paid the debt to nature; and by his death occasioned the most undissembled mourning amongst people of rank and fashion.

His behaviour as a man, and his abilities as a player, raised his character, and procured him the esteem of all worthy and good men; and such honours were paid his memory, as only his memory could deserve.

On the second of May, his corpse was with much ceremony interred in Westminster Abbey, and the excellent author of the Tatler, has given such an account of the solemnity of it, as will outlast the Abbey itself. And it is no small mortification to us, that it is inconsistent with our proposed bounds, to transcribe the whole: It is writ with a noble spirit; there is in it an air of solemnity and grandeur; the thoughts rise naturally from one another; they fill the mind with an awful dread, and consecrate Mr. Betterton to immortality, with the warmth of friendship, heightened by admiration.

As to the character of this great man in his profession, the reader need but reflect on Mr. Colley Cibber's account here inserted, who was well qualified to judge, and who, in his History of the Stage, has drawn the most striking pictures that ever were exhibited; even the famous lord Clarendon, whose great excellence is characterising, is not more happy in that particular, than the Laureat; no one can read his portraits of the players, without imagining he sees the very actors before his eyes, their air, their attitudes, their gesticulations.

Page 91

Mr. Betterton was a man of great study and application; and, with respect to the subjects that employed his attention, he was as much a master of them as any man. He was an excellent critic, more especially on Shakespear, and Fletcher. Mr. Rowe, who was a good judge, and also studied the same authors with deep attention, gives this testimony in his favour, and celebrates, in the warmest manner, Betterton's critical abilities. His knowledge of Shakespear's merit, gave him so strong, and so perfect an esteem for him, that he made a pilgrimage into Staffordshire to visit his tomb, and to collect whatever particulars tradition might have preserved in relation to his history; and these he freely communicated to the same friend, who candidly acknowledges, that the Memoirs of Shakespear's Life he published, were the produce of that journey, and freely bestowed upon him by the collector. Mr. Booth, who knew him only in his decline, frequently made mention of him, and said, he never saw him either off, or on the stage, without learning something from him; he frequently observed, that Mr. Betterton was no actor, but he put on his part with his clothes, and was the very man he undertook to be, 'till the play was over, and nothing more. So exact was he in following nature, that the look of surprize he assumed in the character of Hamlet so astonished Booth (when he first personated the Ghost) as to disable him for some moments from going on. He was so communicative, that in the most capital parts, he would enter into the grounds of his action, and explain, the principles of his art. He was an admirable master of the action of the stage, considered as independent of sentiment; and knew perfectly the connection, and business of the scenes, so as to attract, preserve, and satisfy the attention of art audience: An art extremely necessary to an actor, and very difficult to be attained.

What demonstrated his thorough skill in dramatic entertainments, was, his own performance, which was sufficient to establish a high reputation, independent of his other merit. As he had the happiness to pass through life without reproach, a felicity few attain, so he was equally happy in the choice of a wife, with whom he spent his days in domestic quiet, though they were of very different tempers; he was naturally gay and chearful, she of a melancholy reserved disposition. She was so strongly affected by his death, which was, in some measure, sudden, that she ran distracted, tho' she appeared rather a prudent and constant, than a fond and passionate wife: She was a great ornament to the stage, and her death, which happened soon after, was a public loss.

Page 92

The Laureat, in his Apology, thus characterises her: 'She was, says he, though far advanced in years, so great a mistress of nature, that even Mrs. Barry, who acted 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 rendered them at once tremendous and delightful. Time could not impair her skill, though it 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 excelled, and without a rival. When she quitted the stage, several good actresses were the better for her instruction. She was a woman of an unblemished and sober life, and had the honour to teach Queen Anne, when Princess, the part of Semandra in Mithridates, which she acted at court in King Charles's time. After the death of Mr. Betterton, that Princess, when Queen, ordered her a pension for life, but she lived not to receive more than the first half year of it.' Thus we have seen, that it is not at all impossible for persons of real worth, to transfer a reputation acquired on the stage, to the characters they possess in real life, and it often happens, as in the words of the poet,

That scenic virtue forms the rising age,
And truth displays her radiance from the stage.

The following are Mr. Betterton's dramatic works;

1. The Woman made a Justice; a Comedy.

2. The Unjust Judge, or Appius and Virginia; a Tragedy, written originally by Mr. John Webster, an old poet, who lived in the reign of James I. It was altered only by Mr. Betterton, who was so cautious, and reserved upon this head, that it was by accident the fact was known, at least with certainty.

3. The Amorous Widow, or the Wanton Wife, a Play, written on the plan of Moliere's George Dandin. The Amorous Widow has an under-plot interwoven, to accommodate the piece to the prevailing English taste. Is was acted with great applause, but Mr. Betterton, during his life, could never be induced to publish it; so that it came into the world as a posthumous performance.

The chief merit of this, and his other pieces, lies in the exact disposition of the scenes; their just length, great propriety, and natural connexions; and of how great consequence this is to the fate of either tragedy or comedy, may be learned from all Banks's plays, which, though they have nothing else to recommend them, yet never fail to move an audience, much more than some justly esteemed superior. Who ever saw Banks's earl of Essex represented without tears; how few bestow them upon the Cato of Addison.

Besides these pieces, Betterton wrote several occasional Poems, translations of Chaucer's Fables, and other little exercises. In a word, to sum up all that we have been

saying, with regard to the character of this extraordinary person, as he was the most perfect model of dramatic action, so was he the most unblemished pattern of private and social qualities: Happy is it for that player who imitates him in the one, and still more happy that man who copies him in the other.[8]

Page 93

[Footnote 1: Mr. Theophilus Cibber being about to publish, in a work entirely undertaken by himself the Lives and Characters of all our Eminent Actors and Actresses, from Shakespear to the present time; leaves to the other Gentlemen concerned in this collection, the accounts of some players who could not be omitted herein, as Poets.]

[Footnote 2: Cibber's apology.]

[Footnote 3: Biograph. Brittan. from the information of Southern.]

[Footnote 4: Cibber's Life.]

[Footnote 5: Cibber's Life.]

[Footnote 6: Memoirs of Vanbrugh's Life.]

[Footnote 7: History of the stage.]

[Footnote 8: We acknowledge a mistake, which we committed in the life of Mavloe, concerning Betterton. It was there observed that he formed himself upon Alleyn, the famous founder of Dulwich-Hospital, and copied his theatrical excellencies: which, upon a review of Betterton's life, we find could not possibly happen as Alleyn was dead several years before Betterton was born: The observation should have been made of Hart.]

* * * * *

JOHN BANKS.

This gentleman was bred a lawyer, and was a member of the society at New Inn. His genius led him to make several attempts in dramatic poetry, in which he had various success; but even when he met with the greatest encouragement, he was very sensible of his error, in quitting the profitable practice of the law, to pursue the entertainments of the stage, but he was fired with a thirst of fame which reconciled to his mind the many uneasy sensations, to which the precarious success of his plays, and the indigence of his profession naturally exposed him: Mr. Banks no doubt has gained one part of his design by commencing poet, namely, that of being remembered after death, which Pope somewhere calls the poor estate of wits: For this gentleman has here a place amongst the poets, while nine tenths of the lawyers of his time, now sleep with their fathers secure in oblivion, and of whom we can only say, they lived, and died.

Mr. Banks's genius was wholly turned for tragedy; his language is certainly unpoetical, and his numbers unharmonious; but he seems not to have been ignorant of the

dramatic art: For in all his plays he has very forcibly rouzed the passions, kept the scene busy, and never suffered his characters to languish.

In the year 1684 Mr. Banks offered a tragedy to the stage called the Island Queens, or the Death of Mary Queen of Scots, which, it seems, was rejected, whether from its want of merit, or motives of a political kind, we cannot now determine, but Mr. Banks thought proper then to publish it. In the year 1706, he obtained the favour of Queen Anne to command it to be acted at the Theatre-Royal, which was done with success, for it is really a very moving tragedy. It has been often revived, and performed at the Theatres, with no inconsiderable applause.

Page 94

His dramatic works are,

1. The Rival Kings, or the Loves of Oroondates and Statira, a Tragedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal 1677. This play is dedicated to the Lady Catherine Herbert, and is chiefly formed on the Romance of Cassandra.

2. The Destruction of Troy, a Tragedy, acted 1679. This play met with but indifferent success.

3. Virtue Betrayed, or Anna Bullen, a Tragedy, acted 1682. This play has been often acted with applause.

4. The Earl of Essex, or the Unhappy Favourite, acted 1682, with the most general applause. Mr. Dryden wrote the Prologue, and Epilogue. It will be naturally expected, that, having mentioned the earl of Essex by Banks, we should say something of a Tragedy which has appeared this year on the Theatre at Covent-Garden, of the same name. We cannot but acknowledge, that Mr. Jones has improved the story, and heightened the incident in the last act, which renders the whole more moving; after the scene of parting between Essex, and Southampton, which is very affecting, Rutland's distress upon the melancholy occasion of parting from her husband, is melting to the last degree. It is in this scene Mr. Barry excells all his cotemporaries in tragedy; he there shews his power over our passions, and bids the heart bleed, in every accent of anguish. After Essex is carried out to execution, Mr. Jones introduces the queen at the tower, which has a very happy effect, and her manner of behaving on that occasion, makes her appear more amiable than ever she did in any play on the same subject. Mr. Jones in his language (in this piece) does not affect being very poetical;—nor is his verification always mellifluent, as in his other writings;—but it is well adapted for speaking: The design is well conducted, the story rises regularly, the business is not suspended, and the characters are well sustained.

5. The Island Queens, a Tragedy, of which we have already given some account; the name of it was afterwards changed to the Albion Queens.

6. The Innocent Usurper, or the Death of Lady Jane Gray, a Tragedy, printed 1694. It was prohibited the stage, on account of some groundless insinuations, that it reflected upon the government. This play, in Banks's own opinion, is inferior to none of his former. Mr. Rowe has written likewise a Tragedy on this subject, which is a stock play at both houses; it is as much superior to that of our author, as the genius of the former was greater than that of the latter.

7. Cyrus the Great, a Tragedy. This play was at first rejected, but it afterwards got upon the stage, and was acted with great success; the plot is taken from Scudery's Romance of the Grand Cyrus.

We cannot ascertain the year in which Banks died. He seems to have been a man of parts; his characteristic fault as a writer, was aiming at the sublime, which seldom failed to degenerate into the bombast; fire he had, but no judgment to manage it; he was negligent of his poetry, neither has he sufficiently marked, and distinguished his characters; he was generally happy in the choice of his fables, and he has found a way of drawing tears, which many a superior poet has tried in vain.

Page 95

* * * * *

LADY CHUDLEIGH

Was born in the year 1656, and was daughter of Richard Lee of Winslade, in the county of Devon, esq; She had an education in which literature seemed but little regarded, being taught no other language than her native tongue; but her love of books, incessant industry in the reading of them, and her great capacity to improve by them, enabled her to make a very considerable figure in literature.

She was married to Sir George Chudleigh of Ashton in the county of Devon, Bart, by whom she had issue Eliza Maria, who died in the bloom of life, (much lamented by her mother, who poured out her griefs on that occasion, in a Poem entitled a Dialogue between Lucinda and Marissa) and George, who succeeded to the title and estate, Thomas, and others.

She was a lady of great virtue, as well as understanding, and she made the latter of these subservient to the promotion of the former, which was much improved by study; but though she was enamoured of the charms of poetry, yet she dedicated some part of her time to the severer study of philosophy, as appears from her excellent essays, which discover an uncommon degree of piety, and knowledge, and a noble contempt of those vanities which the unthinking part of her sex so much regard, and so eagerly pursue.

The works which this lady produced, are,

The Ladies Defence, or the Bride-Woman's Counsellor answered, a Poem; in a Dialogue between Sir John Brute, Sir William Loveall, Melissa, and a Parson. This piece has been several times printed; the writing it was occasioned by an angry sermon preached against the fair sex, of which her ladyship gives the following account; 'Mr. Lintot, says she, some time since, intending to reprint my poems, desired me to permit him to add to them a Dialogue I had written in the year 1700, on a Sermon preached by Mr. Sprint, a Nonconformist, at Sherbourne in Dorsetshire; I refusing, for several reasons, to grant his request, he, without my knowledge, bought the copy of the Bookseller who formerly printed it, and, without my consent, or once acquainting me with his resolution, added to it the second edition of my poems; and that which makes the injury the greater, is, his having omitted the Epistle Dedicatory, and the Preface, by which means he has left the reader wholly in the dark, and exposed me to censure. When it was first printed I had reason to complain, but not so much as now: Then the Dedication was left entire as I had written it, but the Preface so mangled, altered, and considerably shortened, that I hardly knew it to be my own; but being then published without a name, I was the less concerned, but since, notwithstanding the great care I

took to conceal it, it is known to be mine; I think myself obliged, in my own defence, to take some notice of it[1].' The omission of this Preface, which contained an answer

Page 96

to part of the sermon, and gave her reasons for writing the poem, had occasioned some people to make ill-natured reflexions on it: this put her ladyship on justifying herself, and assuring her readers, that there are no reflexions in it levelled at any particular persons, besides the author of the Sermon; him (says she) I only blame for being too angry, for his not telling us our duty in a softer more engaging way: address, and good manners render reproofs a kindness; but where they are wanting, admonitions are always taken ill: as truths of this sort ought never to be concealed from us, so they ought never to be told us with an indecent warmth; a respectful tenderness would be more becoming a messenger of peace, the disciple of an humble, patient, meek, commiserating Saviour.'

Besides this lady's poems, of which we shall give some account when we quote a specimen; she wrote Essays upon several subjects, in prose and verse, printed in 8vo. 1710. These Essays are upon Knowledge, Pride, Humility, Life, Death, Fear, Grief, Riches, Self-love, Justice, Anger, Calumny, Friendship, Love, Avarice, Solitude, and are much admired for the delicacy of the stile, there being not the least appearance of false wit, or affected expression, the too common blemishes of this sort of writing: they are not so much the excursions of a lively imagination, which can often expatiate on the passions, and actions of men, with small experience of either, as the deliberate result of observations on the world, improved with reading, regulated with judgment, softened by good manners, and heightened with sublime thoughts, and elevated piety. This treatise is dedicated to her Royal Highness the Princess Sophia, Electress, and Duchess Dowager of Brunswick, on which occasion that Princess, then in her 80th year, honoured her with the following epistle, written by the Electress in French, but which we shall here present to the reader in English.

Hanover June 25, 1710.

Lady Chudleigh,

You have done me a very great pleasure in letting me know by your agreeable book, that there is such a one as you in England, and who has so well improved herself, that she can, in a fine manner, communicate her sentiments to all the world. As for me I do not pretend to deserve the commendations you give me, but by the esteem which I have of your merit, and of your good sense, I will be always entirely

Your affectionate friend

to serve you,

Sophia ELECTRICE.

At the end of the second volume of the duke of Wharton's poems, are five letters from lady Chudleigh, to the revd. Mr. Norris of Bemmerton, and Mrs. Eliz. Thomas, the celebrated Corinna of Dryden.

She wrote several other things, which, though not printed, are carefully preserved in the family, *viz*. two Tragedies, two Operas, a Masque, some of Lucian's Dialogues, translated into Verse, Satirical Reflexions on Saqualio, in imitation of one of Lucian's Dialogues, with several small Poems on various Occasions.

Page 97

She had long laboured under the pains of a rheumatism, which had confined her to her chamber a considerable time before her death, which happened at Ashton in Devonshire, December 15, 1710, in the 55th year of her age, and lies buried there without either monument or inscription.

The poetical Works of this Lady consist chiefly in the Song of the Three Children Paraphrased, some Pindaric Odes, Familiar Epistles, and Songs. We shall select as a specimen, a Dialogue between Lucinda and Marissa, occasioned by the death of her Ladyship's Daughter, in the early bloom of her youth. It is of a very melancholy cast, and expressive of the grief me must have felt upon that tender occasion. Her ladyship has informed us in her preface to her poems, that she generally chose subjects suited to her present temper of mind. 'These pieces (says she) were the employments of my leisure hours, the innocent amusements of a solitary life; in them the reader will find a picture of my mind, my sentiments all laid open to their view; they will sometimes see me chearful, pleased, sedate, and quiet; at other times, grieving, complaining, and struggling with my passions, blaming myself, endeavouring to pay homage to my reason, and resolving for the future with a decent calmness, an unshaken constancy, and a resigning temper, to support all the troubles, all the uneasiness of life, and then, by unexpected emergencies, unforeseen disappointments, sudden, and surprising turns of fortune, discomposed, and shock'd, 'till I have rallied my scattered fears, got new strength, and by making unwearied resistance, gained the better of my afflictions, and restored my mind to its former tranquility. Would we (continues her ladyship) contract our desires, and learn to think that only necessary, which nature has made so; we should be no longer fond of riches, honours, applauses, and several other things, which are the unhappy occasions of much mischief to the world; and doubtless, were we so happy as to have a true notion of the dignity of our nature, of those great things for which we were designed, and of the duration and felicity of that state to which we are hastening, we should scorn to stoop to mean actions, and blush at the thoughts of doing any thing below our character.' In this manner does our authoress discover her sentiments of piety. We now shall subjoin the specimen;

Dialogue.

Marissa.

O my Lucinda! O my dearest friend!
Must my afflictions never, never end!
Has Heav'n for me, no pity left in store,
Must I! O must I ne'er be happy more!
Philanda's loss had almost broke my heart,
From her alas! I did but lately part:
And must there still be new occasions found
To try my patience, and my soul to wound?
Must my lov'd daughter too be snatch'd away,

Must she so soon the call of fate obey?
In her first dawn, replete with youthful charms,
She's fled, she's fled, from

Page 98

my deserted arms.
Long did she struggle, long the war maintain,
But all th' efforts of life, alas! were vain.
Could art have saved her, she had still been mine,
Both art and care together did combine:
But what is proof against the will divine?
Methinks I still her dying conflict view,
And the sad sight does all my grief renew;
Rack'd by convulsive pains, she meekly lies,
And gazes on me with imploring eyes;
With eyes which beg relief, but all in vain,
I see but cannot, cannot ease her pain.
She must the burden unassisted bear,
I cannot with her in her tortures share:
Would they were mine, and me flood easy by;
For what one loves, sure 'twere not hard to die.
See how me labours, how me pants for breath,
She's lovely still, she's sweet, she's sweet in death!
Pale as she is, me beauteous does remain,
Her closing eyes their lustre still retain:
Like setting suns with undiminish'd light,
They hide themselves within the verge of night.
She's gone, she's gone, she sigh'd her soul away!
And can I, can I any longer stay?
My life alas has ever tiresome been,
And I few happy easy days have seen;
But now it does a greater burden grow,
I'll throw it off, and no more sorrow know,
But with her to calm peaceful regions go.
Stay, thou dear innocence, retard thy flight,
O stop thy journey to the realms of light;
Stay 'till I come: to thee I'll swiftly move,
Attracted by the strongest passion, love.

Lucinda.

No more, no more let me such language hear,
I can't, I can't the piercing accents bear:
Each word you utter stabs me to the heart,
I could from life, not from Marissa part:

And were your tenderness as great as mine,
While I were left, you would net thus repine.
My friends are riches, health, and all to me;
And while they're mine I cannot wretched be.

Marissa.

If I on you could happiness bestow,
I still the toils of life would undergo,
Would still contentedly my lot sustain,
And never more of my hard fate complain:
But since my life to you will useless prove,
O let me hasten to the joys above:
Farewel, farewel, take, take my last adieu,
May Heaven be more propitious still to you,
May you live happy when I'm in my grave,
And no misfortunes, no afflictions have:
If to sad objects you'll some pity lend
And give a sigh to an unhappy friend,
Think of Marissa, and her wretched state,
How's she's been us'd by her malicious fate;
Recount those storms which she has long sustain'd,
And then rejoice that she the part has gain'd;
The welcome haven of eternal rest,
Where she shall be for ever, ever bless'd;
And in her mother's, and her daughter's

Page 99

arms
Shall meet with new, with unexperienc'd charms,
O how I long those dear delights to taste;
Farewel, farewel, my soul is much in haste.
Come death; and give the kind releasing blow,
I'm tir'd of life, and overcharg'd with woe:
In thy cool silent, unmolested shade
O let me be by their dear relics laid;
And there with them from all my troubles free,
Enjoy the blessing of a long tranquillity.

Lucinda.

O thou dear sufferer, on my breast recline Thy drooping head, and mix thy tears with mine: Here rest awhile, and make a truce with grief: Consider; sorrow brings you no relief. In the great play of life, we must not chuse, Nor yet the meanest character refuse. Like soldiers we our general must obey, Must stand our ground, and not to fear give way, But go undaunted on'till we have won the day. Honour is ever the reward of pain, A lazy virtue no applause will gain. All such as to uncommon heights would rise, And on the wings of fame ascend the skies, Must learn the gifts of fortune to despise; They to themselves their bliss must still confine, Must be unmoved, and never once repine: But few to this perfection can attain, Our passions often will th' ascendant gain, And reason but alternately does reign; Disguised by pride we sometimes seem to bear A haughty port, and scorn to shed a tear; While grief within still acts a tragic part, And plays the tyrant in the bleeding heart. Your sorrow is of the severest kind, And can't be wholly to your soul confin'd, Losses like yours may be allowed to move A gen'rous mind, that knows what 'tis to love. These afflictions;— Will teach you patience, and the careful skill To rule your passions, and command your will; To bear afflictions with a steady mind, Still to be easy, pleas'd, and still resign'd, And look as if you did no inward sorrow find.

Marissa.

I know Lucinda this I ought to do,
But oh! 'tis hard my frailties to subdue;
My headstrong passions will resistance make,
And all my firmed resolutions make.
I for my daughter's death did long prepare,
And hop'd I should the stroke with temper bear,
But when it came grief quickly did prevail,
And I soon found my boasted courage fail:
Yet still I strove, but 'twas alas! in vain,

My sorrow did at length th' ascendant gain:
But I'm resolv'd I will no longer yield;
By reason led, I'll once more take the field,
And there from my insulting passions try,
To gain a full, a glorious victory:
Which 'till I've done, I never will give o'er
But still fight on, and think of peace no more;
With an unwearied courage still contend,
'Till death, or conquest, doth my labour end.

[Footnote 1: Preface to her Essays.]

* * * * *

Thomas Creech.

Page 100

This gentleman was born near Sherborne in Dorsetshire, and bred up at the free school in that town, under Mr. Carganven, a man of eminent character, to whom in gratitude he inscribes one of the Idylliums of Theocritus, translated by him. His parents circumstances not being sufficient to bestow a liberal education upon him, colonel Strangeways, who was himself a man of taste and literature, took notice of the early capacity of Creech, and being willing to indulge his violent propensity to learning, placed him at Wadham College in Oxford, in the 16th year of his age, anno 1675, being then put under the tuition of two of the fellows. In the year 1683 he was admitted matter of arts, and soon elected fellow of All-soul's College; at which time he gave distinguished proofs of his classical learning, and philosophy, before those who were appointed his examiners. The first work which brought our author into reputation, was his translation of Lucretius, which succeeded so well, that Mr. Creech had a party formed for him, who ventured to prefer him to Mr. Dryden, in point of genius. Mr. Dryden himself highly commended his Lucretius, and in his preface to the second volume of Poetical Miscellanies thus characterises it. 'I now call to mind what I owe to the ingenious, and learned translator of Lucretius. I have not here designed to rob him of any part of that commendation, which he has so justly acquired by the whole author, whose fragments only fall to my portion. The ways of our translation are very different; he follows him more closely than I have done, which became an interpreter to the whole poem. I take more liberty, because it best suited with my design, which was to make him as pleasing as I could. He had been too voluminous, had he used my method, in so long a work; and I had certainly taken his, had I made it my business to translate the whole. The preference then is justly his; and I join with Mr. Evelyn in the confession of it, with this additional advantage to him, that his reputation is already established in this poet; mine is to make its fortune in the world. If I have been any where obscure in following our common author; or if Lucretius himself is to be condemned, I refer myself to his excellent annotations, which I have often read, and always with some pleasure.'

Many poets of the first class, of those times, addressed Mr. Creech in commendatory verses, which are prefixed to the translation of Lucretius: but this sudden blaze of reputation was soon obscured, by his failing in an arduous task, which the success of his Lucretius prompted him to attempt. This was a translation of the works of Horace, an author more diversified, and consequently more difficult than Lucretius. Some have insinuated, that Mr. Dryden, jealous of his rising fame, and willing to take advantage of his vanity, in order to sink his reputation, strenuously urged him to this undertaking, in which he was morally certain Creech could not succeed. Horace is so,

Page 101

various, so exquisite, and perfectly delightful, that he who culls flowers in a garden so replenished with nature's productions, must be well acquainted with her form, and able to delineate her beauties. In this attempt Creech failed, and a shade was thrown over his reputation, which continued to obscure it to the end of his life. It is from this circumstance alleged, that Mr. Creech contracted a melancholy, and moroseness of temper, which occasioned the disinclination of many towards him, and threw him into habits of recluseness, and discontent. To this some writers likewise impute the rash attempt on his own life, which he perpetrated at Oxford, in 1701. This act of suicide could not be occasioned by want, for Mr. Jacob tells us, that just before that accident, he had been presented by the college to the living of Welling in Hertfordshire. Mr. Barnard in his Nouvelles de la Republiques de Lettres, assigns another cause besides the diminution of his fame, which might occasion this disastrous fate. Mr. Creech, though a melancholy man, was yet subject to the passion of love. It happened that he fixed his affections on a lady who had either previously engaged hers, or who could not bestow them upon him; this disappointment, which was a wound to his pride, so affected his mind, that, unable any longer to support a load of misery, he hanged himself in his own chamber. Which ever of these causes induced him, the event was melancholy, and not a little heightened by his being a clergyman, in whose heart religion should have taken deeper root, and maintained a more salutary influence, than to suffer him thus to stain his laurels with his own blood.

Mr. Creech's works, besides his Lucretius already mentioned, are chiefly these,

The Second Elegy of Ovid's First Book of Elegies. The 6th, 7th, 8th, and 12th Elegies of Ovid's Second Book of Elegies. The 2d and 3d Eclogue of Virgil. The Story of Lucretia, from Ovid de Fastis. B. ii. The Odes, Satires, and Epistles of Horace already mentioned, dedicated to John Dryden, esq; who is said to have held it in great contempt, which gave such a shock to Mr. Creech's pride. The author in his preface to this translation has informed us, that he had not an ear capable of distinguishing one note in music, which, were there no other, was a sufficient objection against his attempting the most musical poet in any language.

The same year he published his Translation of the Idylliums of Theocritus, with Rapin's Discourse on Pastorals, as also the Life of Phelopidas, from the Latin of Cornelius Nepos.

In Dryden's Translation of Juvenal and Persius, Mr. Creech did the 13th Satire of Juvenal, and subjoined Notes. He also translated into English, the verses before Mr. Quintenay's Compleat Gardiner. The Life of Solon, from the Greek of Plutarch. Laconic Apophthegms, or Remarkable Sayings of the Spartans, printed in the first Volume of Plutarch's Morals. A Discourse concerning Socrates's Daemon. The two First Books of the Symposiacs.

Page 102

These are the works of Mr. Creech: A man of such parts and learning, according to the accounts of all who have written of him, that, had he not by the last act of his life effaced the merit of his labours, he would have been an ornament as well to the clerical profession, as his country in general. He well understood the ancients, had an unusual penetration in discovering their beauties, and it appears by his own translation of Lucretius, how elegantly he could cloath them in an English attire. His judgment was solid; he was perfectly acquainted with the rules of criticism, and he had from nature an extraordinary genius. However, he certainly over-rated his importance, or at lead his friends deceived him, when they set him up as a rival to Dryden! but if he was inferior to that great man in judgment, and genius, there were few of the same age to whom he needed yield the palm. Had he been content to be reckoned only the second, instead of the first genius of the times, he might have lived happy, and died regreted and reverenced, but like Caesar of old, who would rather be the lord of a little village, than the second man in Rome, his own ambition overwhelmed him.

We shall present the reader with a few lines from the second Book of Lucretius, as a specimen of our author's versification, by which it will be found how much he fell short of Dryden in point of harmony, though he seems to have been equal to any other poet, who preceded Dryden, in that particular.

'Tis pleasant, when the seas are rough, to stand,
And view another's danger, safe at land:
Not 'cause he's troubled, but 'tis sweet to see
Those cares and fears, from which our selves are free.
'Tis also pleasant to behold from far
How troops engage, secure ourselves from war.
But above all, 'tis pleasantest to get
The top of high philosophy, and sit
On the calm, peaceful, flourishing head of it:
Whence we may view, deep, wondrous deep below,
How poor mistaken mortals wand'ring go,
Seeking the path to happiness: some aim
At learning, wit, nobility, or fame:
Others with cares and dangers vex each hour
To reach the top of wealth, and sov'reign pow'r:
Blind wretched man! in what dark paths of strife
We walk this little journey of our life!
While frugal nature seeks for only ease;
A body free from pains, free from disease;
A mind from cares and jealousies at peace.
And little too is needful to maintain
The body sound in health, and free from pain:
Not delicates, but such as may supply
Contented nature's thrifty luxury:

She asks no more. What tho' no boys of gold
Adorn the walls, and sprightly tapers hold,
Whose beauteous rays, scatt'ring the gawdy light,
Might grace the feast, and revels of the night:
What tho' no gold adorns; no music's sound
With double sweetness from the roofs rebound;

Page 103

Yet underneath a loving myrtle's shade,
Hard by a purling stream supinely laid,
When spring with fragrant flow'rs the earth has spread,
And sweetest roses grow around our head;
Envy'd by wealth and pow'r, with small expence
We may enjoy the sweet delights of sense.
Who ever heard a fever tamer grown
In cloaths embroider'd o'er, and beds of down.
Than in coarse rags?
Since then such toys as these
Contribute nothing to the body's ease,
As honour, wealth, and nobleness of blood,
'Tis plain they likewise do the mind no good:
If when thy fierce embattell'd troops at land
Mock-fights maintain; or when thy navies Hand
In graceful ranks, or sweep the yielding seas,
If then before such martial fights as these,
Disperse not all black jealousies and cares,
Vain dread of death, and superstitious fears
Not leave thy mind; but if all this be vain,
If the same cares, and dread, and fears remain,
If Traytor-like they seize thee on the throne,
And dance within the circle of a crown;
If noise of arms, nor darts can make them fly,
Nor the gay sparklings of the purple dye.
If they on emperors will rudely seize,
What makes us value all such things as these,
But folly, and dark ignorance of happiness?
For we, as boys at night, by day do fear
Shadows as vain, and senseless as those are.
Wherefore that darkness, which o'erspreads our fouls,
Day can't disperse; but those eternal rules,
Which from firm premises true reason draws,
And a deep insight into nature's laws.

* * * * *

Arthur Maynwaring, Esq;

A Gentleman distinguished both for poetry and politics, as well as the gay accomplishments of life. He was born at Ightfield, in the year 1668, and educated at the grammar-school at Shrewsbury, where he remained four or five years; and at about seventeen years of age, was removed to Christ's Church in Oxford, under the tuition of Mr. George Smalridge, afterwards bishop of Bristol. After he removed from Oxford, he went into Cheshire, where he lived several years with his uncle, Mr. Francis Cholmondley, a gentleman of great integrity and honour; but by a political prejudice, very averse to the government of William the IIId, to whom he refused to take the oaths, and instilled anti-revolution principles into his nephew,[1] who embraced them warmly; and on his first entry into life, reduced to practice what he held in speculation. He wrote several pieces in favour of James the IId's party: amongst which was a Panegyric on that King. He wrote another intitled the King of Hearts, to ridicule lord Delamere's entry into London, at his first coming to town after the revolution. This poem was said to be Dryden's, who was charged with it by Mr. Tonson; but he disowned it, and told him it was written by an ingenious young gentleman, named Maynwaring, then about twenty two years of age.

Page 104

When our author was introduced to the acquaintance of the duke of Somerset, and the earls of Dorset, and Burlington, he began to entertain (says Oldmixon) very different notions of politics: Whether from the force of the arguments made use of by those noblemen; or, from a desire of preferment, which he plainly saw lay now upon the revolution interest, cannot be determined; but he espoused the Whig ministry, as zealously as he had formerly struggled for the exiled monarch.

Our author studied the law till he was five or six and twenty years old, about which time his father died, and left him an estate of near eight-hundred pounds a year, but so incumbred, that the interest money amounted to almost as much as the revenue. Upon the conclusion of the peace of Ryswick, he went to Paris, where he became acquainted with Monsieur Boileau, who invited him to his country house, entertained him very elegantly, and spoke much to him of the English poetry, but all by way of enquiry; for he affected to be as ignorant of the English Muse, as if our nation had been as barbarous as the Laplanders.

A gentleman, a friend of Mr. Maynwaring, visiting him some time after, upon the death of Mr. Dryden 'Boileau, said that he was wonderfully pleased to see by the public papers, that the English nation had paid so extraordinary honours to one of their poets, burying him at the public charge;' and then asked the gentleman who that poet was, with as much indifference as if he had never heard Dryden's name; which he could no more be unacquainted with, than our country was with his; for he often frequented lord Montague's house, when he was embassador in France, and being also an intimate friend of Monsieur De la Fontaine, who had spent some time in England, it was therefore impossible he could be ignorant of the fame of Dryden; but it is peculiar to that nation to hold all others in contempt. The French would as fain monopolize wit, as the wealth and power of Europe; but thanks to the arms and genius of Britain, they have attempted both the one and the other without success.

Boileau's pretending not to know Dryden, to use the words of Milton, 'argued himself unknown.' But perhaps a reason may be assigned, why the wits of France affected a contempt for Mr. Dryden, which is this. That poet, in many of his Prefaces and Dedications, has unanswerably shewn, that the French writers are really deficient in point of genius;' that the correctness for which they are remarkable, and that even pace which they maintain in all their dramatic compositions, is a proof that they are not capable of sublime conceptions; that they never rise to any degree of elevation, and are in truth uninspired by the muses:—Judgment they may have to plan and conduct their designs; but few French poets have ever found the way of writing to the heart. Have they attained the sublime height of Shakespear, the tenderness of Otway, or the pomp of Rowe? and yet these are names which a French versifier will pretend, with an air of contempt, never to have heard of.

Page 105

The truth is, our poets have lately done the French too much honour, by translating their pieces, and bringing them on the stage; as if our own stock was exhausted and the British genius had failed: But it is some satisfaction that these attempts seem now to be discouraged; we have seen a late play of theirs (we call it a play, for it was neither a tragedy nor a comedy) translated by a languid poet of our own, received with the coolness it deserved.

But to return to Mr. Maynwaring. Upon his arrival in England, from France, he was made one of the commissioners of the customs, in which post he distinguished himself by his skill and fidelity. Of the latter of these qualities we have an instance, in his treatment of a man, who sollicited to be a tide-waiter: Somebody had told him that his best way to succeed would be to make a present. The advice had been perhaps good enough if he had not mistaken his man. For understanding that Mr. Maynwaring had the best interest at the board of any of the commissioners, with the lords of the treasury; he sent him a letter, with a purse of fifty-guineas, desiring his favour towards obtaining the place he sollicited: Afterwards he delivered a petition to the board, which was read, and several of the commissioners having spoke to it, Mr. Maynwaring took out the purse of fifty guineas, and the letter, telling them that as long as he could prevent it, that man should never have this, or any other place in the revenue[2].

Mr. Maynwaring was admitted a member of the Kit-Kat Club, and was considered as one of the chief ornaments of it, by his pleasantry and wit.

In the beginning of queen Anne's reign, lord treasurer Godolphin, engaged Mr. Donne, to quit the office of auditor of the imprests, his lordship paying him several thousand pounds for his doing it, and he never let Mr. Maynwaring know what he was doing for him, till he made him a present of a patent for that office, worth about two-thousand pounds a year in time of business. In the Parliament which met in 1705, our author was chosen a burgess for Preston in Lancashire[3].

He had a considerable share in the Medley, and was author of several other pieces, of which we shall presently give some account.

He died at St. Albans, November the 13th, 1712, having some time before made his will; in which he left Mrs. Oldfield, the celebrated actress his executrix, by whom he had a son, named Arthur Maynwaring. He divided his estate pretty equally between that child, Mrs. Oldfield, and his sister; Mr. Oldmixon tells us, that Mr. Maynwaring loved this actress, for nine or ten years before his death, with the strongest passion: It was in some measure owing to his instructions that she became so finished a player; for he understood the action of the stage as well as any man, and took great pleasure to see her excell in it. He wrote several Prologues and Epilogues for her, and would always hear her rehearse them in private, before she

Page 106

spoke them on the stage. His friends of both sexes quarrelled with him for his attachment to her, and so much resented it, that Mrs. Oldfield frequently remonstrated to him, that it was for his honour and interest to break off the intrigue: which frankness and friendship of hers, did, as he often confessed, but engage him the more firmly; and all his friends at last gave over importuning him to leave her, as she gained more and more upon him.

In honour of our author, Mr. Oldmixon observes, that he had an abhorrence of those that swore, or talked profanely in conversation. He looked upon it as a poor pretence to wit, and never excused it in himself or others.—I have already observed, that our author had a share in the Medley, a paper then set up in favour of the Hanoverian succession, in which he combats the Examiner, who wrote on the opposite, or, at least, the High-Church Interest.

He also wrote the following pieces.

1. Remarks on a late Romance, intitled the Memorial of the Church of England, or the History of the Ten Champions.

2. A Translation of the second Ode, of the first book of Horace.

3. A Translation of the fifth Book of Ovid's Metamorphoses.

4. A Character of the new Ministers, 1710.

5. Several Songs, Poems, Prologues and Epilogues.

6. There was a Manuscript given him to peruse, which contained Memoirs of the duke of Marlborough's famous march to Blenheim: It was written by a chaplain of the duke's, with great exactness as to the incidents, but was defective in form. Mr. Maynwaring was desired to alter and improve it, which he found too difficult a task; but being greatly pleased with the particular account of all that pass'd in that surprizing march, he resolved that it should not be lost, and to give it a new and more perfect form himself, by reducing a kind of diary into a regular history. These papers fell into the hands of Sir Richard Steel.

7. A Translation of part of Tully's Offices.

8. Four Letters to a Friend in North-Britain, written upon the publishing Dr. Sacheveral's Trial.

9. The History of Hannibal, and Hanno, from the best authors: In this piece he is supposed to intend by Hannibal, the duke of Marlborough; by Hanno, the lord treasurer

Oxford, by Valerius Flaccus, count Tallard, and by Asdrubal, Dr. Robinson, bishop of Bristol.

10. The Speech of Alcibiades to the Athenians, printed in the Whig-Examiner, Numb. 3.

11. The French King's Promise to the Pretender.

12. A Short Account, and Defence of the Barrier Treaty.

13. Remarks upon the present Negotiation of Peace, begun between Great-Britain and France.

14. The Bewdley Cafe.

15. He had a considerable hand in a Letter to a High-Churchman.

16. He revived and published a treatise called Bouchain, in a Dialogue between the Medley and the Examiner, about the management of the war in 1711.

Page 107

17. He wrote a Letter to the Free-holders, a little before the election of the new Parliament.

18. He had a great hand in a pamphlet, entitled the British Academy, wherein he rallied Dr. Swift's Letter to the lord treasurer Oxford, about altering the English language.

19. The Letter from Doway, was written by him, or some friend of his, with his assistance.

These are chiefly the works of Maynwaring, who was a gentleman of genius, and appears to have been a good-natur'd honest man. His moral life has only been blamed for his intrigue with Mrs. Oldfield; but I am persuaded when the accomplishments of that lady are remembered, (so bright) is employed in the composition of one book, a bookseller may publish twenty; so that in the very nature of things, a bookseller without oppression, a crime which by unsuccessful writers is generally imputed to them, may grow rich, while the most industrious and able author can arrive at no more than a decent competence: and even to that, many a great genius has never attained.

No sooner had Mr. Head a little recovered himself, than we find him cheated again by the syren alurements of pleasure and poetry, in the latter of which, however, it does not appear he made any proficiency. He failed a second time, in the world, and having recourse to his pen, wrote the first part of the English Rogue, which being too libertine, could not be licensed till he had expunged some of the most luscious descriptions out of it.

Mr. Winstanley, p. 208, has informed us, that at the coming out of this first part, he was with him at the Three Cup tavern in Holborn drinking a glass of Rhenish, and made these verses upon him,

What Gusman, Buscan, Francion, Rablais writ,
I once applauded for most excellent wit;
But reading thee, and thy rich fancy's store,
I now condemn, what I admir'd before.
Henceforth translations pack away, be gone,
No Rogue so well writ, as the English one.

We cannot help observing, that Winstanley has a little ridiculously shewn his vanity, by informing the world, that he could afford to drink a glass of Rhenish; and has added nothing to his reputation by the verses, which have neither poetry nor wit in them.

[Footnote 1: Oldmixon's Life of Maynwaring.]

[Footnote 2: Life, p. xviii. xix.]

[Footnote 3: Ibid. p. xxii.]

* * * * *

The *hon*. Mrs. *Monk*.

This Lady was the daughter of the Right Hon. the Lord Molesworth, a nobleman of Ireland, and wife of George Monk, Esq; By the force of her natural genius, she learnt the Latin, Italian, and Spanish tongues, and by a constant reading of the best authors in those languages, became so great a proficient, especially in poetry, that she wrote many pieces that were deemed worthy of publication, and soon after her death, were printed and published with the following title, Marinda. Poems, and Translations upon several occasions, printed in London, 1716. The book is addressed to her Royal Highness Carolina Princess of Wales, in a long dedication, dated March 26, 1716, written by her father, who thus affectionately speaks of the poems and their author.

Page 108

’Most of them (says he) are the product of the leisure hours of a young gentlewoman lately deceased; who in a remote country retirement, without omitting the daily care due to a large family, not only perfectly acquired the several languages here made use of; but the good morals and principles contained in those books, so as to put them in practice, as well during her life and languishing sickness, as the hour of her death; in short she died not only like a Christian, but a Roman lady, and so became at once the object of the grief, and comfort of her relations. As much as I am obliged to be sparing in commending what belongs to me, I cannot forbear thinking some of these circumstances uncommon enough to be taken notice of: I loved her more, because she deserved it, than because she was mine, and I cannot do greater honour to her memory, than by consecrating her labours, or rather diversion to your Royal Highness, as we found most of them in her escrutore, after her death, written with her own hand, little expecting, and as little desiring the public should have any opportunity, either of applauding or condemning them.’

Mr. Jacob tells us, that these Poems and Translations, shew the true spirit, and numbers of poetry, a delicacy of turn, and justness of thought and expression. They consist of Ecclogues; the Masque of the Virtues against Love, from Guarini; some translations from the French and Italians; Familiar Epistles, Odes and Madrigals.

Her poetry has great warmth, and tenderness of sentiment. The following Epitaph on a lady of pleasure, was written by her,

O’er this marble drop a tear,
Here lies fair Rosalinde,
All mankind was pleas’d with her,
And she with all mankind.

And likewise this Epigram upon another lady of the same character.

Chloe, her gossips entertains,
With stories of her child-bed pains,
And fiercely against Hymen rails:
But Hymen’s not so much to blame;
She knows, unless her memory fails,
E’er she was wed, ’twas much the same.

The following verses, which breathe a true spirit of tenderness, were written by her, on her death-bed at Bath, when her husband was in London,

Thou, who dost all my worldly thoughts employ,
Thou pleasing source of all my earthly joy:
Thou tenderest husband, and thou best of friends,
To thee, this first, this last adieu I send.

At length the conqueror death asserts his right,
And will forever veil me from thy sight.
He wooes me to him, with a chearful grace;
And not one terror clouds his meagre face.
He promises a lasting rest from pain;
And shews that all life's fleeting joys are vain.
Th' eternal scenes of Heaven he sets in view,
And tells me, that no other joys are true.
But love, fond love, would yet resist his power;
Would fain a-while defer the parting hour:
He brings the mourning image to my eyes,

Page 109

And would obstruct my journey to the skies.
But say thou dearest, thou unwearied friend;
Say should'st thou grieve to see my sorrows end?
Thou know'st a painful pilgrimage I have past,
And should'st thou grieve, that rest is come at last;
Rather rejoice to see me shake off life,
And die as I have liv'd, thy faithful wife.

* * * * *

Mr. *Thomas Brown*.

This humorous poet was the son of a considerable Farmer of Shiffnall, in Shropshire, and educated at Newport-school in that county, under the reverend and learned Dr. Edwards, a gentleman who had the honour to qualify many persons of distinction for the university. Under the tuition of this master, he attained a knowledge of the Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and Spanish languages, and his exercises were generally so well performed, that the Dr. was filled with admiration of his parts. From Newport school he removed to Christ's-Church College in Oxford, and distinguished himself there for his easy attainments in literature; but some little irregularities of his life would not suffer him to continue long at the university. It is probable he became sick of that discipline, which they who spend their life in the recluseness of a college, are in some measure obliged to submit to. The father of Mr. Brown, who intended to have him educated to some profession, was not made acquainted with his design of quitting the university, and having remitted him a sum of money, to be appropriated for the promotion of his studies, his son thought proper to defeat his kind intentions. With this money, our author plann'd a scheme of going to London, which he soon after executed, not very advantageously. —'My first business, says he, was to apply myself to those few friends I had there, who conjecturing I had left the university, exclusive of my father's knowledge, gave but slender encouragement to a young beginner. However, no whit daunted (my first resolution still standing by me) I launched forth into the world, committing myself to the mercy of fortune, and the uncertain temper of the town. I soon acquired a new set of acquaintance; and began to have a relish of what I had only tasted before by hearsay; and indeed, every thing served to convince me, I had changed for the better, except that my slender subsistance began to waste extremely; and ruminating upon the difficulty of obtaining a supply, I was then laid under the necessity of thinking what course to steer. I knew how justly I had incurred the displeasure of an indulgent father, and how far I had put myself from retrieving his favour. Amidst this serious contemplation! I resolved to go through stitch with my enterprize, let what will come on't: However, that I might use discretion, to palliate an unforeseen event, I determined 'twere better to trust to the

flexibility of a father's temper, than to lay too great a stress upon the humanity of fortune, who would let a man

Page 110

of morals starve if he depended on her favours. Therefore, without more ado (having taken my sorrowful leave of my last guinea, and reduced Carolus Secundus, from a whole number, to decimal fractions) I dispatched a letter into the country, full of excuse, and penitence, baited with all the submissive eloquence imaginable. In the mean time, I was no less sedulous to find out some employment, that might suit with my genius, and with my dependencies at home, render my life easy.'

Whether his father was touched by the epistle which our author in consequence of this resolution wrote to him, we cannot ascertain, as there is no mention made of it. Soon after this, we find him school master of Kingston upon Thames, and happy for him, had he continued in that more certain employment, and not have so soon exchanged it for beggary and reputation. Mr. Brown, impatient of a recluse life, quitted the school, and came again to London; and as he found his old companions more delighted with his wit, than ready to relieve his necessities, he had recourse to scribbling for bread, which he performed with various success. Dr. Drake, who has written a defence of our author's character, prefixed to his works, informs us, that the first piece which brought him into reputation, was an account of the conversion of Mr. Bays, in a Dialogue, which met with a reception suitable to the wit, spirit, and learning of it. But though this raised his fame, yet it added very little to his profit: For, though it made his company exceedingly coveted, and might have recommended him to the great, as well as to the ingenious, yet he was of a temper not to chuse his acquaintance by interest, and slighted such an opportunity of recommending himself to the powerful and opulent, as, if wisely improved, might have procured him dignities and preferments. The stile of this dialogue, was like that of his ordinary conversation, lively and facetious. It discovered no small erudition, but managed with a great deal of humour, in a burlesque way; which make both the reasoning and the extensive reading, which are abundantly shewn in it, extremely surprizing and agreeable. The same manner and humour runs through all his writings, whether Dialogues, Letters, or Poems.

The only considerable objection, which the critics have made to his works is, that they want delicacy. But in answer to this, it may be affirmed, that there is as much refinement in his works, as the nature of humorous satire, which is the chief beauty of his compositions, will admit; for, as satire requires strong ideas, the language will sometimes be less polished. But the delicacy so much demanded, by softening the colours weakens the drawing. Mr. Brown has been charged with inequality in his writings: which is inseparable from humanity.

Page 111

Our author's letters, though written carelesly to private friends, bear the true stamp and image of a genius. The variety of his learning may be seen in the Lacedaemonian Mercury, where abundance of critical questions of great nicety, are answered with much solidity and judgment, as well as wit, and humour. But that design exposing him too much to the scruples of the grave and reserved, as well as to the censure, and curiosity of the impertinent, he soon discontinued it. Besides, as this was a periodical work, he who was totally without steadiness, was very ill qualified for such an undertaking. When the press called upon him for immediate supply, he was often found debauching himself at a tavern, and by excessive drinking unable to perform his engagements with the public, by which no doubt the work considerably suffered.

But there is yet another reason why Mr. Brown has been charged with inequality in his writings, *viz*. that most of the anonymous pieces which happened to please the town, were fathered upon him. This, though in reality an injury to him, is yet a proof of the universality of his reputation, when whatever pleased from an unknown hand was ascribed to him; but by these means he was reputed the writer of many things unworthy of him. In poetry he was not the author of any long piece, for he was quite unambitious of reputation of that kind. They are generally Odes, Satires, and Epigrams, and are certainly not the best part of his works. His Translations in Prose are many, and of various kinds. His stile is strong and masculine; and if he was not so nice in the choice of his authors, as might be expected from a man of his taste, he must be excused; for he performed his translations as a talk, prescribed him by the Booksellers, from whom he derived his chief support. It was the misfortune of our author to appear on the stage of the world, when fears, and jealousies had soured the tempers of men, and politics, and polemics, had almost driven mirth and good nature out of the nation: so that the careless gay humour, and negligent chearful wit, which in former days of tranquility, would have recommended him to the conversation of princes, was, in a gloomy period, lost upon a people incapable of relishing genuine humour.

An anonymous author who has given the world some account of Mr. Brown, observes, 'that it was not his immorality that hindered him from climbing to the top of poetry, and preferment; but that he had a particular way of sinning to himself. To speak in plain English (says he) Tom Brown had less the spirit of a gentleman than the rest of the Wits, and more of a Scholar. Tom thought himself as happy with a retailer of damnation in an obscure hole, as another to have gone to the devil with all the splendour of a fine equipage. 'Twas not the brightness of Caelia's eyes, nor her gaudy trappings that attracted his heart. Cupid might keep his darts to himself; Tom always carried his fire about him. If he had but a mouth, two

Page 112

eyes, and a nose, he never enquired after the regularity of her dress, or features. He always brought a good stomach with him, and used but little ceremony in the preface. As of his mistresses, so he was very negligent in the choice of his companions, who were sometimes mean and despicable, a circumstance which never fails to ruin a man's reputation. He was of a lazy temper, and the Booksellers who gave him credit enough as to his capacity, had no confidence to put in his diligence. The same gentleman informs us, that though Tom Brown was a good-natured man, yet he had one pernicious quality, which eternally procured him enemies, and that was, rather to lose his friend, than his joke.

One of his lampoons had almost cost him a procession at the cart's tail; nor did he either spare friend or foe, if the megrim of abuse once seized him. He had a particular genius for scandal, and dealt it out liberally when he could find occasion. He is famed for being the author of a Libel, fixed one Sunday morning on the doors of Westminster-abbey, and many others, against the clergy and quality. As for religion, Brown never professed any, and used to say, that he understood the world better than to have the imputation of righteousness laid to his charge: and the world, to be even with him, really thought him an Atheist. But though Brown never made any professions of religion, yet it proceeded more from affectation than conviction. When he came upon his death-bed, he expressed remorse for his past life, and discovered at that period, sentiments which he had never before suffered to enter his mind. This penitential behaviour, in the opinion of some, was the occasion why all his brethren neglected him, and did not bestow on his memory one elegiac song, nor any of the rites of verse. We find no encomiums upon him, but what appeared in a Grubstreet Journal, which, however, are much superior to what was usually to be found there.

——A mournful muse from Albion swains produce, Sad as the song a gloomy genius chuse, In artful numbers let his wit be shewn, And as he sings of Doron's speak his own; Such be the bard, for only such is fit, To trace pale Doron thro' the fields of wit.

Towards the latter end of our author's life, we are informed by Mr. Jacob, that he was in favour with the earl of Dorset, who invited him to dinner on a Christmas-day, with Mr. Dryden, and some other gentlemen, celebrated for ingenuity, (according to his lordship's usual custom) when Mr. Brown, to his agreeable surprize, found a Bank Note of 50 l. under his plate, and Mr. Dryden at the same time was presented with another of 100 l. Acts of munificence of this kind were very common with that generous spirited nobleman.

Mr. Brown died in the year 1704, and was interred in the Cloyster of Westminster-abbey, near the remains of Mrs. Behn, with whom he was intimate in his life-time. His whole works consisting of Dialogues, Essays, Declamations, Satires, Letters from the Dead to the Living, Translations, Amusements, &c. were printed in 4 vol. 12mo, 1707. In order

that the reader may conceive a true idea of the spirit and humour, as well as of the character of Tom Brown, we shall here insert an Imaginary Epistle, written from the Shades to his Friends among the Living; with a copy of Verses representing the Employment of his poetical Brethren in that fancied Region.

Page 113

Tom. *Brown* to his Friends among the Living.

Gentlemen,

I bear it with no little concern to find myself so soon forgot among ye; I have paid as constant attendance to post-hours, in expectation to hear from ye, as a hungry Irish Man (at twelve) to a three-penny ordinary, or a decayed beau for nice eating to a roasting-cock's. No amorous-keeping fool, banished from his Chloris in town, to his country solitude, has waited with greater impatience for a kind epistle from her, than I for one from you. I have searched all private packets, and examined every straggling ghost that came from your parts, without being able to get the least intelligence of your affairs. This is the third since my arrival in these gloomy regions, and I can give myself no reason why I have received none in answer, unless the packet-boat has been taken by the French, or that so little time has quite excluded me from your memories. In my first I gave you an account of my journey hither, and my reception among the ingenious in these gloomy regions.

I arrived on the Banks of Acheron, and found Charon scooping his wherry, who seeing me approach him, bid me sit down a little, for he had been hard worked lately, and could not go with a single passenger: I was willing enough to embrace the proposal, being much fatigued and weary. Having finished what he was about, he cast his rueful aspect up to the clouds, and demonstrating from thence (as I suppose) it was near dinner-time, he took from out a locker or cupboard in the stern of his pinnace, some provender pinned up in a clean linnen clout, and a jack of liquor, and fell too without the least shew of ceremony, unless indeed it were to offer me the civility of partaking with him. He muttered something to himself, which might be grace as far as I know; but if it were, 'twas as short as that at an Auction-dinner, nor did he devour what was before him with less application than I have seen some there. For my part, I could not but contemplate on his shaggy locks, his wither'd sun-burnt countenance, together with the mightiness and sanctity of his beard; but above all, his brawny chopt knuckles employed my attention: In short, having satisfied the cormorant in his guts, he had time to ask me what country-man I was? to which I submissively answered, an English-man: O, says he, those English-men are merry rogues, and love mischief; I have sometimes a diverting story from thence: What news have you brought with you? truly I told his highness I came away a little dissatisfied, and had not made any remarks on the world for some time before my death; and for news I had not leisure to bring any thing of moment. But ere we had talked much more, we saw two other passengers approach us, who, by their often turning to one another, and their laying down arguments with their hands, seemed to be in warm debate together; which was as we conjectured; for when they drew nearer to us, they proved to be a termagant High-Flyer,

Page 114

and a puritanical Scripturian, a fiery Scotchman: Occasional Conformity was their subject; for I heard the Scot tell him ’twas all popery, downright popery, and that the inquisition in Spain was christianity to it, by retarding the sons of grace from partaking of the gifts of the Lord; he said it was the building of Babel, and they were confounded in the works of their hands by the confusion of tongues; such crys, says he, went forth before the desolation of the great city.

Thou the son of grace, says the other, thou art a son of Satan, and hast preached up iniquity; ye are the evil tares, and the land can never prosper ’till ye are rooted out from among the good corn.

Thou art an inventer of lies, said the disciple of John Calvin, and the truth is not in thee; ye are bloody minded wretches, and your fury is the only sign of your religion, as the steeple is to the church; your organs are the prophane tinkling of the cimbals of Satan, that tickle the ears with vanity.

Thus the dispute lasted till they came to us, and getting into the boat, they jostled for preeminence, which might have proved a sharp conflict, had not the old fellow took up a stretcher and parted them. After which we parted peaceably over to the other side: being-landed, the Scot and I took our way together, and left the furious churchman to vent his spleen by himself. We had not travelled long before we came to a populous village, where, from the various multitude, our eyes encountered at a distance, we might easily conjecture that something more than ordinary had gathered them together in that manner; it resembled (as near as I can describe it) that famous place called Sherrick-fair, or a Staffordshire-Wake. While we were applying our admiration that way, we arrived at a small hut erected for that purpose, where Nero the tyrant, like a blind fiddler, was surrounded by a confused tribe of all sorts and sexes, like another Orpheus among the beasts.

The various remarks I made (some dancing, some prancing; some clapping, some knapping; some drinking, some winking; some kissing, some pissing; some reeling, some stealing) urged my curiosity to enquire for what it was possible those noble sports might be ordained, and was soon satisfied it was the Anniversary Feast of their Great Lady Proserpine’s birth-day. But these things that I took to be diverting, so elevated the spleen of my Puritan companion, that he began loudly to exclaim against those prophane exercises: he said, they were impure, and lifted up the mind to lewdness; that those that followed them, were the sons of Belial, and wore the mark of the beast in their foreheads. I endeavoured to pacify the sanctified brother, by putting him in mind where we were, and that his rashness might draw us into danger, being in a strange place; but all was in vain, I but stirred up his fury more; for, turning his rebukes upon me, he told me, I was myself one of the wicked, and did rejoice in my heart at the deeds of darkness: no, says he, I will not be pacified, I will roar aloud to drown their incantations;

yea, I will set out a throat even as the beast that belloweth! so that perceiving the mob gather about him, I thought it prudence to steal off, and leave him to the fury of those, whose displeasure he was about to incur.

Page 115

I had not gone far, but I ’spied two brawney champions at a rubbers of cuffs, which by the dexterity of their head’s, hands, and heels, I judged could be no other than Englishmen: nor were my sentiments groundless, for presently I heard the mob cry out, O! rare Jo! O! rare Jo! and attentively Surveying the combatants, I found it to be the merry Jo Haynes, fallen out with Plowden the famous Lawyer, about a game at Nine-holes; and that shout had proclaimed Joe victorious. I was something scrupulous of renewing my acquaintance, not knowing how the conqueror, in the midst of his success, might use me for making bold with his character in my letters from the read; though I felt a secret desire to discover myself, yet prudence withstood my inclination, ’till a more convenient season might so that I brushed off to a place where I saw a concourse of the better sort of people; there I found Millington the famous Auctioneer, among a crowd of Lawyers, Physicians, Scholars, Poets, Critics, Booksellers, &c. exercising his old faculty; for which, gentlemen, he is as particularly famed in these parts, as Herostratus for firing the famous Temple, or Barthol Swarts, for the invention of Gunpowder. He is head journey-man to Ptolemy, who keeps a Bookseller’s shop here, and rivals even Jacob Tonson in reputation among the great wits.

But most of all I was obliged to admire my friend Millington, who, by his powerful knack of eloquence, to the wonder of the whole company, sold Cave’s Lives of the Fathers to Solomon the Magnificent, and the Scotch Directory to the Priests of the Sun; nay, he sold-Archbishop Laud’s Life to Hugh Peters, Hob’s Leviathan to Pope Boniface, and pop’d Bunyan’s Works upon Bellarmine for a piece of unrevealed Divinity; After the sale was over, I took an opportunity of making myself known to him, who caressed me with all the freedom imaginable, asking me, how long I had been in these parts? and what news from the other world? and a thousand particular questions about his old friends; to all which I responded as well as I could: and having given me a caution to avoid some people, by whom I was threatened, for exposing them in my letters, we went to take a bottle together.

Now I presume, gentlemen, you will conclude it high time for me to take my leave; nor shall I tire your patience much longer, only permit me to give ye the trouble of some particular services to those honest gentlemen whose generosity gave me the reputation of a funeral above what I e’er expected, especially to Dr. S——t for bestowing the ground I never frequented, to Dr. Garth and the rest for the charge of a hearse and mourning coaches, which I could not have desired, and to Dr. D——ke for designing me a monument I know the world will reflect I never deserved; but for that, let my works testify for me. And though ye are satisfied my genius was never over-fruitful in the product of verse, yet knowing these favours require something a little uncommon to make a suitable return, I shall take my leave in metre, and, if contrary to my opinion, it meets with a kind acceptance from the town, honest Sam. may clap it in the next edition of the State Poems, with Buckingham’s name to it.

Page 116

When a scurvy disease had lain hold of my carcase,
And death to my chamber was mounting the stair-case.
I call'd to remembrance the sins I'd committed,
Repented, and thought I'd for Heaven been fitted;
But alas! there is still an old proverb to cross us,
I found there no room for the sons of Parnassus;
And therefore contented like others to fare,
To the shades of Elizium I strait did repair;
Where Dryden and other great wits o' the town,
To reward all their labours, are damn'd to write on.
Here Johnson may boast of his judgment and plot,
And Otway of all the applause that he got;
Loose Eth'ridge presume on his stile and his wit,
And Shadwell of all the dull plays he e'r writ;
Nat. Lee here may boast of his bombast and rapture,
And Buckingham rail to the end of the chapter;
Lewd Rochester lampoon the King and the court,
And Sidley and others may cry him up for't;
Soft Waller and Suckling, chaste Cowley and others,
With Beaumont and Fletcher, poetical brothers,
May here scribble on with pretence to the bays,
E'en Shakespear himself may produce all his plays,
And not get for whole pages one mouth full of praise.

To avoid this disaster, while Congreve reforms,
His muse and his morals fly to Bracegirdle's arms;
Let Vanbrugh no more plotless plays e'er impose,
Stuft with satire and smut to ruin the house;
Let Rowe, if he means to maintain his applause,
Write no more such lewd plays as his Penitent was.
O Satire! from errors instruct the wild bard,
Bestow thy advice to reclaim each lewd bard;
Bid the Laureat sincerely reflect on the matter;
Bid Dennis drink less, but bid him write better;
Bid Durfey cease scribbling, that libelling song-ster;
Bid Gildon and C——n be Deists no longer;
Bid B——t and C——r, those wits of the age,
Ne'er expose a dull coxcomb, but just on the stage;
Bid Farquhar (tho' bit) to his consort be just,
And Motteux in his office be true to his trust;
Bid Duffet and Cowper no longer be mad,
But Parsons and Lawyers mind each their own trade.
To Grubster and others, bold satire advance;

Bid Ayliffe talk little, and P——s talk sense;
Bid K——n leave stealing as well as the rest;
When this can be done, they may hope to be blest.

* * * * *

The Revd. Mr. *John Pomfret*.

This Gentleman's works are held in very great esteem by the common readers of poetry; it is thought as unfashionable amongst people of inferior life, not to be possessed of the poems of Pomfret, as amongst persons of taste not to have the works of Pope in their libraries. The subjects upon which Pomfret wrote were popular, his versification is far from being unmusical, and as there is little force of thinking in his writings, they are level to the capacities of those who admire them.

Page 117

Our author was son of the rev. Mr. Pomfret, rector of Luton in Bedfordshire, and he himself was preferred to the living of Malden in the same county. He was liberally educated at an eminent grammar school in the country, from whence he was sent to the university of Cambridge, but to what college is not certain. There he wrote most of his poetical pieces, took the degree of master of arts, and very early accomplished himself in most kinds of polite literature. A gentleman who writes under the name of Philalethes, and who was an intimate friend of Pomfret's, has cleared his reputation from the charge of fanaticism, which some of his malicious enemies brought against him. It was shortly after his leaving the university, that he was preferred to the living of Malden abovementioned, and was, says that gentleman, so far from being tinctured with fanaticism, that I have often heard him express his abhorrence of the destructive tenets maintained by that people, both against our religious and civil rights. This imputation it seems was cast on him by there having been one of his sur-name, though not any way related to him, a dissenting teacher, and who published some rhimes upon spiritual subjects, as he called them, and which sufficiently proved him an enthusiast.

About the year 1703 Mr. Pomfret came up to London, for institution and induction, into a very considerable living, but was retarded for some time by a disgust taken by dr. Henry Compton, then bishop of London, at these four lines, in the close of his poem entitled The Choice.

And as I near approach'd the verge of life,
Some kind relation (for I'd have no wife)
Should take upon him all my worldly care,
While I did for a better state prepare.

The parenthesis in these verses was so maliciously represented to the bishop, that his lordship was given to understand, it could bear no other construction than that Mr. Pomfret preferred a mistress before a wife; though the words may as well admit of another meaning, and import no more, than the preference of a single life to marriage; unless the gentlemen in orders will assert, that an unmarried Clergyman cannot live without a mistress. But the bishop was soon convinced that this aspersion against him, was no more than an effort of malice, as Mr. Pomfret at that time was really married. The opposition which his enemies made to him, had, in some measure, its effect; for by the obstructions he met with, he was obliged to stay longer in London than he intended, and as the Small-pox then raged in the metropolis, he sickened them, and died in London in the 36th year of his age.

Page 118

The above-mentioned friend of Mr. Pomfret, has likewise shewn the ungenerous treatment he met with in regard to his poetical compositions, in a book entitled Poems by the Earl of Roscommon, and Mr. Duke, printed 1717, in the preface to which, the publisher has peremptorily inserted the following paragraph. 'In this collection says he, of my lord Roscommon's poems, care has been taken to insert all I possibly could procure, that are truly genuine, there having been several things published under his name, which were written by others, the authors of which I could set down if it were material. Now, says the gentleman, this arrogant editor would have been more just, both to the public, and to the earl of Roscommon's memory, in telling us what things had been published under his lordship's name by others, than by concealing the authors of any such gross impositions. Instead of which, he is so much a stranger to impartiality, that he has been guilty of the very crime he exclaims against; for he has not only attributed the prospect of death to the earl of Roscommon, which was wrote by Mr. Pomfret, after the decease of that lord; but likewise another piece entitled the Prayer of Jeremy Paraphrased, prophetically representing the passionate grief of the Jewish people, for the loss of their town, and sanctuary, written by Mr. Southcot, a gentleman who published it in the year 1717, so that it is to be hoped, in a future edition of the earl of Roscommon's, and Mr. Duke's poems, the same care will be taken to do these gentlemen justice, as to prevent any other person from hereafter injuring the memory of his lordship.'

Mr. Pomfret published his poems in the year 1690, to which he has prefixed a very modest and sensible preface, 'I am not so fond of fame, says he, as to desire it from the injudicious many; nor as so mortified a temper as not to wish it from the discerning few. 'Tis not the multitude of applauders, but the good fame of the applauders, which establishes a valuable reputation.'

His poetical compositions consist chiefly of

1. The Choice, which we shall insert as a specimen.

2. Cruelty and Lust, an Epistolary Essay, founded upon the famous Story which happened in the reign of King James *ii*. Kirk, who was that Prince's general against the duke of Monmouth. was sollicited by a beautiful lady in behalf of her husband, who then lay under sentence of death. The inhuman general consented to grant his fair petitioner her request; but at no less a price than that of her innocence. The lady doated on her husband, and maintained a hard struggle between virtue, and affection, the latter of which at last prevailed, and she yielded to his guilty embraces. The next morning Kirk, with unparalleled brutality, desired the lady to look out at the window of his bedchamber, when she was struck with the horrid sight of her husband upon a scaffold, ready to receive the blow of the executioner; and before she could reach the place where he was, in order to take a last embrace, her husband was no more.

Page 119

How far the lady may be justified in this conduct, is not our business to discuss: if it is called by the name of guilt, none ever had more pressing motives; and if such a crime could admit of an excuse, it must be upon such an occasion.

3. Several Epistles to his Friends under affliction.

4. Upon the Divine Attributes.

5. A Prospect of Death.

5. Upon the General Conflagration, and the ensuing Judgment. There were two pieces of our author's, published after his death by his friend Philalethes; the first of these entitled Reason, was wrote by him in the year 1700, when the debates concerning the doctrine of the Trinity were carried on with so much heat by the Clergy one against another, that the royal authority was interposed in order to put an end to a controversy, which could never be settled, and which was pernicious in its consequences. This is a severe satire, upon one of the parties engaged in that dispute, but his not inserting it amongst his other poems when he collected them into a volume, was, on account of his having received very particular favours, from some of the persons therein mentioned. The other is entitled Dies Novissima, or the Last Epiphany, a Pindaric Ode on Christ's second Appearance to judge the World. In this piece the poet expresses much heart-felt piety: It is animated, if not with a poetical, at least with so devout a warmth, that as the Guardian has observed of Divine Poetry, 'We shall find a kind of refuge in our pleasure, and our diversion will become our safety.'

This is all the account we are favoured with of the life and writings of Mr. Pomfret: A man not destitute either of erudition or genius, of unexceptionable morals, though exposed to the malice of antagonists. As he was a prudent man, and educated to a profession, he was not subject to the usual necessities of the poets, but his sphere being somewhat obscure, and his life unactive, there are few incidents recorded concerning him. If he had not fortune sufficient to render him conspicuous, he had enough to keep his life innocent, which he seems to have spent in ease and tranquillity, a situation much more to be envied than the highest blaze of fame, attended with racking cares, and innumerable sollicitudes.

The *choice*.

If Heav'n the grateful liberty would give,
That I might chuse my method how to live.
And all those hours propitious fate should lend,
In blissful ease and satisfaction spend,

Near some fair town I'd have a private seat,
Built uniform; not little, nor too great:

Better if on a rising ground it flood
On this side fields, on that a neighb’ring wood.
It should within no other things contain,
But what were useful, necessary, plain:
Methinks ’tis nauseous, and I’d ne’r endure
The needless pomp of gawdy furniture.
A little garden, grateful to the eye,
And a cool rivulet run murm’ring

Page 120

by:
On whose delicious banks a slately row
Of shady Lymes or Sycamores should grow.
At th' end of which a silent study plac'd,
Should be with all the noblest authors grac'd.
Horace and Virgil, in whose mighty lines
Immortal wit and solid learning shines.
Sharp Juvenal, and am'rous Ovid too,
Who all the turns of love's soft passion knew:
He that with judgment reads his charming lines,
In which strong art with stronger nature joins,
Must grant his fancy, does the best excel;
His thoughts so tender, and express'd so well.
With all those moderns, men of steady sense,
Esteem'd for learning, and for eloquence.
In some of these, as fancy should advise.
I'd always take my morning exercise:
For sure no minutes bring us more content,
Than those in pleasing, useful studies spent.

I'd have a clear, and competent estate,
That I might live genteely, but not great:
As much as I could moderately spend,
A little more, sometimes t' oblige a friend.
Nor should the sons of poverty repine
Too much at fortune, they should taste of mine;
And all that objects of true pity were
Should be reliev'd with what my wants could spare:
For that, our Maker has too largely giv'n,
Should be return'd, in gratitude to Heav'n,
A frugal plenty mould my table spread;
With healthy, not luxurious, dimes fed:
Enough to satisfy, and something more
To feed the stranger, and the neighb'ring poor:
Strong meat indulges vice, and pamp'ring food
Creates diseases, and inflames the blood.
But what's sufficient to make nature strong,
And the bright lamp of life continue long,
I'd freely take, and, as I did possess,
The bounteous author of my plenty bless.

I'd have a little vault, but always stor'd
With the best wines each vintage could afford.
Wine whets the wit, improves its native force,
And gives a pleasant flavour to discourse:
By making all our spirits debonair,
Throws off the lees, the sediment of care,
But as the greatest blessing Heav'n lends,
May be debauch'd and serve ignoble ends:
So, but too oft, the Grape's refreshing juice
Does many mischievous effects produce.
My house should no such rude disorders know,
As from high drinking consequently flow:
Nor would I use what was so kindly giv'n
To the dishonour of indulgent Heav'n.
If any neighbour came, he should be free,
Us'd with respect, and not uneasy be,
In my retreat, or to himself or me.
What freedom, prudence, and right reason give,
All men may with impunity receive:
But the least swerving from their rule's too much;
For what's forbidden us, 'tis death to touch.

Page 121

That life might be more comfortable yet,
And all my joys resin'd, sincere, and great;
I'd chuse two friends, whose company would be
A great advance to my felicity.
Well born, of humour suited to my own;
Discreet, and men, as well as books, have known.
Brave, gen'rous, witty, and exactly free
From loose behaviour, or formality.
Airy, and prudent, merry, but not light;
Quick in discerning, and in judging right.
Secret they should be, faithful to their trust;
In reas'ning cool, strong, temperate, and just.
Obliging, open, without huffing, brave,
Brisk in gay talking, and in sober, grave.
Close in dispute, but not tenacious; try'd
By solid reason, and let that decide.
Not prone to lust, revenge, or envious hate;
Nor busy medlers with intrigues of state.
Strangers to slander, and sworn foes to spight:
Not quarrelsome, but stout enough to fight.
Loyal, and pious, friends to Caesar, true
As dying martyrs, to their Maker too.
In their society I could not miss
A permanent, sincere, substantial bliss.

Would bounteous Heav'n once more indulge; I'd chuse
(For who would so much satisfaction, lose,
As witty nymphs in conversation, give)
Near some obliging, modest fair to live;
For there's that sweetness in a female mind,
Which in a man's we cannot hope to find:
That by a secret, but a pow'rful art,
Winds up the springs of life, and does impart
Fresh vital heat, to the transported heart.

I'd have her reason all her passions sway;
Easy in company, in private gay:
Coy to a fop, to the deserving free,
Still constant to herself, and just to me.
A soul she should have, for great actions fit;
Prudence and wisdom to direct her wit:
Courage to look bold danger in the face,
No fear, but only to be proud, or base:
Quick to advise, by an emergence prest,

To give good counsel, or to take the best.
I'd have th' expression of her thoughts be such
She might not seem reserv'd, nor talk too much.
That shew a want of judgment and of sense:
More than enough is but impertinence.
Her conduct regular, her mirth resin'd,
Civil to strangers to her neighbours kind,
Averte to vanity, revenge, and pride,
In all the methods of deceit untry'd.
So faithful to her friend, and good to all,
No censure might upon her actions fall:
Then would e'en envy be compell'd to say,
She goes the least of woman kind astray.

To this fair creature I'd sometimes retire,
Her conversation would new joys inspire;
Give life an edge so keen, no surly care
Would venture to assault my soul, or dare
Near my retreat to hide one secret snare.
But so divine, so noble a repast
I'd seldom, and with moderation taste,
For highest cordials all their virtue lose
By a too frequent, and too bold an use:
And what would cheer the spirit in distress;
Ruins our health, when taken to excess.

Page 122

I'd be concern'd in no litigious jar,
Belov'd by all, not vainly popular.
Whate'er assistance I had pow'r to bring
T' oblige my country, or to serve my King,
Whene'er they call'd, I'd readily afford
My tongue, my pen, my counsel, or my sword.
Law suits I'd shun, with as much studious care,
As I would dens where hungry lions are:
And rather put up injuries, than be
A plague to him, who'd be a plague to me.
I value quiet at a price too great,
To give for my revenge so dear a rate:
For what do we by all our bustle gain,
But counterfeit delight, for real pain;

If Heav'n a date of many years would give,
Thus I'd in pleasure, ease, and plenty live.
And as I near approach'd the verge of life,
Some kind relation (for I'd have no wife)
Should take upon him all my worldly care,
While I did for a better state prepare.
Then I'd not be with any trouble vex'd;
Nor have the evening of my days perplex'd.
But by a silent, and a peaceful death,
Without a sigh, resign my aged breath:
And when committed to the dust, I'd have
Few tears, but friendly, dropt into my grave.
Then would my exit so propitious be,
All men would wish to live and die, like me.

* * * * *

The *life* of

Dr. *William king*.

This ingenious gentleman, was son of Ezekiel King, of London. He received the rudiments of his education in Westminster-school, under Dr. Busby, and was removed from thence to Christ's-Church in Oxford, in Michaelmas term, 1681, when at the age of eighteen. He studied the civil law, and practiced it at Doctor's Commons, with very great reputation; but the natural gaiety of his temper, and the love of company, betrayed him into those pleasures, which were incompatible with his profession.

Our author, by the reputation of his abilities obtained a patron in the earl of Pembroke, who upon his being appointed lord Lieutenant of Ireland, press'd him to go over to that kingdom.

Upon Dr. King's arrival in Ireland, his excellency appointed him judge advocate, sole commissioner of the prizes, and record keeper. There, he was well received, and countenanced by persons of the most distinguished rank, and could he have changed his disposition with the climate, had then an opportunity of making his fortune; but so far was he from improving this occasion to the purposes of his interest, that he returned back to England, with no other treasure, than a few merry Poems, and humorous Essays. He was naturally of a courteous behaviour, and very obliging: His conversation was chearful, and his wit pleasant and entertaining. But at length he chiefly subsisted on his fellowship in Christ-Church College: Before this time, he had published his most ingenious Poem, called the Art of Cookery, in imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry, with some

Page 123

Letters to Dr. Lister and others; occasioned principally by the title of a book, published by the Dr. being the works of Apicius Coelius, concerning the soups and sauces of the ancients, with an extract of the greatest curiosities contained in that book. Amongst his Letters, is one upon the Denti Scalps, or Tooth-picks of the Antients: Another contains an imitation of Horace: Epist. 5. Book I. being his invitation of Torquatus to supper. And a third, contains remarks on lord Grimston's play, called the Lawyer's Fortune; or Love in a Hollow-Tree.

At his leisure hours he wrote likewise, The Art of Love, an imitation of Ovid, De Arte Amandi. To which he prefixed an account of Ovid. In the latter part of his life, about the year 1711, he published an Historical Account of the Heathen Gods, and Heroes, for the use of Westminster, and other schools; for the better and more easy understanding of the Classics. Besides these performances, we likewise find three numbers of a project, entitled, the Transactioner, or, Useful Transactions: Containing a great number of small pieces, which it would be tedious here to enumerate.[1]

We have already observed, that our author while in Ireland, neglected the best opportunity of encreasing his fortune; and the circumstance which occasioned it we find to be this: He had contracted an intimacy which soon grew into friendship, with judge Upton, a man of the same temper with himself, who delighted in retirement and poetical amusement. He had a country villa called Mountown, near Dublin, where he and Dr. King used to retire, and spend most of their time without any regard to their public offices; and by these means neglecting to pay court to the lord lieutenant, they fell under his displeasure. These two poetical companions, indulged no other thoughts but those of living and dying in their rural retreat. Upon this occasion, Dr. King wrote a Pastoral Poem, called Mully of Mountown: Mully was the name of a Red-Cow which gave him milk, whom he made the chief subject of his Poem; which at that time the critics would have imposed upon the word as a political allegory, tho' this was a manner of writing, with which the Dr. was totally unacquainted.

When Dr. King, after his return from Ireland, had retired to live upon his fellowship at Oxford, he was sollicited by the earl of Anglesey to come to town, and undertake a cause of his, then before the House of Lords, (in relation to some cruelties he was accused of using to his lady) back'd by the violent prosecution of his mother-in-law, the countess of Dorchester. Upon this occasion the Doctor shook off the indolence of his nature, and so strenuously engaged in the cause of his patron, that he gained the reputation of an able lawyer as well as a poet. He naturally hated business, especially that of an advocate; but when appointed as a delegate, made a very discerning and able judge, yet never could bear the fatigue of wrangling. His chief pleasure consisted in trifles, and he was

Page 124

never happier, than when hid from the world. Few people pleased him in conversation, and it was a proof of his liking them, if his behaviour was tolerably agreeable. He was a great dissembler of his natural temper, which was fallen, morose, and peevish, where he durst shew it; but he was of a timorous disposition and the least slight or neglect offered to him, would throw him into a melancholy despondency. He was apt to say a great many ill-natur'd things, but was never known to do one: He was made up of tenderness, pity, and compassion; and of so feminine a disposition, that tears would fall from his eyes upon the smallest occasion.

As his education had been strict, so he was always of a religious disposition, and would not enter upon the business of the day, till he had performed his devotion, and read several portions of scripture out of the Psalms, the Prophets, and the New-Testament.

It appears from his loose papers, which he calls Adversaria, that he had been such an arduous student, that before he was eight-years in the university, he had read over and made reflections on twenty-two thousand books and manuscripts; a few of which, we shall give as specimen, in order to let the reader into the humour and taste of our author.

'Diogenes Laertius, Book I.——Thales, being asked how a man might most easily brook misfortunes? answered, if he saw his enemies in a worse condition. It is not agreed, concerning the wisemen; or whether indeed they were seven.'

'There is a very good letter of Pisistratus to Solon, and of the same stile and character with those of Phalaris.'

'Solon ordained, that the guardians of orphans should not cohabit with their mothers: And that no person should be a guardian to those, whose estate descended to them at the orphan's decease. That no seal-graver should keep the seal of a ring that was sold: That, if any man put out the eye of him who had but one, he should lose both, his own: That, where a man never planted, it should be death to take away: That, it should be death for a magistrate to be taken in drink. Solon's letters at the end of his life, in Laertius, give us a truer Idea of the man, than all he has written before, and are indeed very fine: Solon's to Craesus are very genteel; and Pitaccus's on the other side, are rude and philosophical; However, both shew Craesus to have been a very good man. These epistles give a further reason to believe, that the others were written by Phalaris. There is a letter from Cleobulus to Solon, to invite him to Lindus.'

'Bion used to say, it was more easy to determine differences, between enemies than friends; for that of two friends, one would become an enemy; but of two enemies, one would become a friend.'

’Anacharsis has an epistle to Craesus, to thank him for his invitation; and Periander one to all the wise men, to invite them to Corinth to him, after their return from Lydia. Epimenides has an epistle to Solon, to invite him to Crete, under the tyranny of Pisistratus.’

Page 125

‘Epimenides often pretended that he rose from death to life.’

The above notes are sufficient to shew that he read the ancients with attention, and knew how to select the most curious passages, and most deserving the reader’s observation.

About the year 1711 the Dr. published a piece called the British Palladium, or a welcome of lord, Bolingbroke from France. Soon after this, Dr. Swift, Dr. Friend, Mr. Prior, with some others of lord Bolingbroke’s adherents, paid a visit to Dr. King, and brought along with them, the key of the Gazetteer’s office, together with another key for the use of the paper office. The day following this friendly visit, the Dr. entered upon his new post; and two or three days after waited on his benefactor lord Bolingbroke, then secretary of state.

The author of the Doctor’s life, published by Curl, has related an instance of inhumanity in alderman Barber, towards Dr. King. This magistrate was then printer of the Gazette, and was so cruel as to oblige the Dr. to sit up till three or four o’clock in the morning, upon those days the Gazette was published, to correct the errors of the press; which was not the business of the author, but a corrector, who is kept for that purpose in every printing-office of any consequence. This slavery the Dr. was not able to bear, and therefore quitted the office. The alderman’s severity was the more unwarrantable, as the Dr. had been very kind in obliging him, by writing Examiners, and some other papers, gratis, which were of advantage to him as a printer. Those writings at that juncture made him known to the ministry, who afterwards employed him in a state paper called the Gazettee.

About Midsummer 1712 the Dr. quitted his employ, and retired to a gentleman’s house on Lambeth side the water; where he had diverted himself a summer or two before: Here he enjoyed his lov’d tranquility, with a friend, a bottle, and his books; he frequently visited lord Clarendon, at Somerset-house, as long as he was able. It was the autumn season, and the Dr. began insensibly to droop: He shut himself up entirely from his nearest friends, and would not so much as see lord Clarendon; who hearing of his weak condition, ordered his sister to go to Lambeth, and fetch him from thence to a lodging he had provided for him, in the Strand, over against Somerset-house where next day about noon he expired, with all the patience, and resignation of a philosopher, and the true devotion of a christian; but would not be persuaded to go to rest the night before, till he made such a will, as he thought would be agreeable to lord Clarendon’s inclinations; who after his death took care of his funeral. He was decently interred in the cloisters of Westminster-Abbey, next to his master Dr. Knipe, to whom a little before, he dedicated his Heathen Gods.——The gentleman already mentioned, who has transmitted some account of our author to posterity, delineates his character in the following manner. ’He was a civilian, exquisitely well read; a skillful judge, and among the learned, an universal scholar, a critic, and an adept; in all sciences and languages expert; and our English. Ovid, among the poets: In conversation, he was grave and entertaining,

without levity or spleen: As an author, his character may be also summ'd up in the following lines.'

Page 126

Read here, in softest sounds the sweetest satire,
A pen dipt deep in gall, a heart good-nature;
An English Ovid, from his birth he seems,
Inspired alike with strong poetic dreams;
The Roman, rants of heroes, gods, and Jove,
The Briton, purely paints the art of love.

As a specimen of our author's versification, we shall select a Poem of his called, the Art of making Puddings; published in his Miscellanies.

I sing of food, by British nurse design'd,
To make the stripling brave, and maiden kind.
Delay not muse in numbers to rehearse
The pleasures of our life, and sinews of our verse.
Let pudding's dish, most wholsome, be thy theme,
And dip thy swelling plumes in fragrant cream.
Sing then that dim so fitting to improve
A tender modesty, and trembling love;
Swimming in butter of a golden hue,
Garnish'd with drops of Rose's spicy dew.
Sometimes the frugal matron seems in haste,
Nor cares to beat her pudding into paste:
Yet milk in proper skillet she will place,
And gently spice it with a blade of mace;
Then set some careful damsel to look to't;
And still to stir away the bishop's-foot;
For if burnt milk shou'd to the bottom stick,
Like over-heated-zeal, 'twould make folks sick.
Into the Milk her flow'r she gently throws,
As valets now wou'd powder tender beaus:
The liquid forms in hasty mass unite,
Both equally delicious as they're white.
In mining dish the hasty mass is thrown,
And seems to want no graces but its own.
Yet still the housewife brings in fresh supplies,
To gratify the taste, and please the eyes.
She on the surface lumps of butter lays,
Which, melting with the heat, its beams displays;
From whence it causes wonder to behold
A silver soil bedeck'd with streams of gold!

[Footnote 1: The design of this work, was to ridicule Sir Hans Sloan's writings, in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal-Society; of which Dr. Sloan was secretary. This

work, of Dr. King's, which is now become very scarce, is one of the severest and merriest Satires that ever was written in Prose.]

* * * * *

THOMAS SPRAT (Bishop of ROCHESTER)

Was descended from a very worthy, though obscure family, being the son of a private country minister; but his great merit raised him to that eminent station in the church, wherein he long presided, and was deservedly accounted one of the most considerable prelates of his time. The Oxford antiquary informs us, that on the 16th of January 1654, he was entered in Wadham-College, where he pursued his studies with the closest application, and distinguished himself by his prudent and courteous behaviour.

Page 127

On the 3d of July 1669, Mr. Sprat took his master of arts degree, and the same day, commenced doctor in divinity. He had not long been in holy orders, till he was introduced at court, and by a happy power in conversation, so attracted the regard of Charles the IId. that he was considered as a man standing fair for preferment. In 1683, broke out the Rye-house Plot, a relation of the particulars of which, Charles the IId. commanded Dr. Sprat to draw up. This the Dr. in a letter to lord Dorset, informs us, he did with great unwillingness, and would have been impelled by no other consideration, than that of a royal command. The reason he executed these orders with so much reluctance, was, because many of the most popular men in the nation were either concerned themselves, or had some relations engaged, so that an account of a plot thus supported, must expose he writer to partial or popular resentments.

He requested the king, that he might be permitted to spare some names, and to represent the behaviour of others in as candid a light as possible, in which request his majesty indulged him; but notwithstanding all the candour he observed, and the most dispassionate representation of facts, yet his composing this relation, was brought against him as a crime, for which an opposite party endeavoured, and had almost effected his ruin. This work, tho' finished in the year 1683 was not published till 1685, when it came into the world, under the immediate direction of king James the IId. It was no doubt in consequence of this court service, that he was made dean of Westminster, Anno 1683; and bishop of Rochester the year following. Another step he took in the short reign of king James, likewise exposed him to the resentment of that power which took place at the revolution, which was his sitting in the ecclesiastical commission. By this he drew upon himself almost an universal censure, which he acknowledges to be just; as appears by a letter he wrote upon that occasion to the earl of Dorset, in the year 1689; which thus begins.

'My Lord,

I think I should be wanting to myself at this time, in my own necessary vindication, should I forbear any longer to give my friends a true account of my behaviour in the late ecclesiastical commission. Though I profess what I now say, I only intend as a reasonable mitigation of the offence I have given, not entirely to justify my sitting in that court; for which I acknowledge I have deservedly incurred the censure of many good men; and I wish I may ever be able to make a sufficient amends to my country for it.'

His crime in this particular was somewhat alleviated, by his renouncing the commission, when he perceived the illegal practices they were going to put in execution. His offences were strenuously urged against him, and had not the earl of Dorset warmly espoused his interest, he had probably been stript of his ecclesiastical preferments. His lordship charged the ill-conduct of both these affairs upon king James and his ministry; and thereby brought the bishop's opponents to a perfect reconciliation with him.

Page 128

Notwithstanding this accommodation, such was the inquietude of the times, that his lordship had not long enjoyed this tranquility, before there was hatched a most villainous contrivance; not only to take away his life, but, the lives of archbishop Sancroft, lord Marlborough, and several other persons of honour and distinction; by forging an instrument under their hands, setting forth, that they had an intent to restore king James, and to seize upon the person of the princess of Orange, dead or alive; to surprize the tower, to raise a mighty army; and to bring the city of London into subjection. This black conspiracy to murther so many innocent persons, was by the providence of God soon detested; and his lordship drew up, and published an account of it, under this title, A Relation of the Wicked Contrivance of Stephen Blackhead, and Robert Young, against the Lives of several Persons, by forging an Association under their Hands. In two parts. The first being a Relation of what passed at the three Examinations of his Lordship, by a Committee of Lords of the Privy-Council. The second, being an Account of the two Authors of the Forgery; printed in quarto, in the year 1692.

His lordship was honourably acquitted; and he ever after looked upon this escape, as one of the most remarkable blessings of his life. 'In such 'critical times (says he) how little evidence would have sufficed to ruin any man, that had been accused with the least probability of truth? I do therefore, most solemnly oblige myself, and all mine, to keep the grateful remembrance of my deliverance, perpetual and sacred.'

Hitherto, we have considered Dr. Sprat in his episcopal, and public character; in which if he fell into some errors, he has a right to our candour, as they seem rather to have proceeded from misinformation, and excess of good-nature, than any malevolent, or selfish principle: We shall now take a view of him as an author.

His first appearance in that sphere, was in the year 1659, when in concert with Mr. Waller, and Mr. Dryden, he printed a Pindarique Ode, to the Memory of the most renowned Prince, Oliver, Lord Protector, &c. printed in quarto, which he dedicated to the reverend Mr. Wilkin's, then warden of Wadham-College; by whose approbation and request, it was made public, as the author designed it only for a private amusement. This was an unfavourable circumstance for our author, as it more particularly shews the fickleness of his disposition in state-matters, and gave him less credit with those parties he afterwards espoused.

His next production in poetry, was an Ode on the Plague of Athens; which happened in the second year of the Pelopponesian war, first described by Thucydides, afterwards by Lucretius: This Mr. Sprat dedicated to his worthy and learned friend, Dr. Walter Pope. The performance stood the test of the severest critics; and in the opinion of the best judges, the manner of his great original was judiciously imitated. Soon after this, he proceeded to give the public a specimen of his abilities in another kind, and succeeded with the greatest applause; which was his Observations on Monsieur de Serbiere's

Voyage into England, written to Dr. Wren, professor of astronomy in Oxford; printed in octavo, in the year 1665.

Page 129

Mr. Sprat in the beginning of his letter acquaints the Dr. with the motives of his engaging with Monsieur Serbiere, 'Having now (says he) under my hands, the history of the Royal-Society, it will be in vain for me to try to represent its design to be advantageous to the glory of England, if my countrymen shall know, that one who calls himself a member of that society, has escaped unanswered in the public disgraces, which he has cast on our whole nation.'—In this performance Mr. Sprat has given an undeniable proof, that the strength and solidity of an English pen, is infinitely superior to the gallant air of a French author, who is sprightly without propriety, and positive without truth.

About two years after, 1667, our author published his incomparable History of the Royal Society of London, for the improvement of natural knowledge; a work which has acquired him very great reputation, and has ranked him with the most elegant and polite writers of that age. Soon after this, Mr. Sprat lost his amiable and much esteemed friend Mr. Abraham Cowley, who by his will recommended to the care of his reverend friend, the revising of all his works that were printed, and the collecting of those papers which he had designed for the press. This truth Mr. Sprat faithfully discharged, and to the new edition of Mr. Cowley's Works, he prefixed an account of his life and writings, addressed to Mr. Martin Clifford. Happy is it for a good man, when he has such a friend to close his eyes: This is a desire peculiar to all, and the portion of few to enjoy.

For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd;
Left the warm precincts of the chearful day,
Nor cast one longing lingring look behind.

On some warm breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb, the voice of nature cries,
Awake! and faithful to her wonted fires[1].

This life of Cowley, by Dr. Sprat has been esteemed one of the most elegant compositions in our language; there are several extracts from it in our account of the life of that amiable Poet.

These are the most material performances of Dr. Sprat: a man, who was early introduced into an elevated station in life, which he held not without enemies to his dying moments. Villiers duke of Buckingham was his first patron, who notwithstanding his fickleness, and inconsistent levity, never forsook him; a circumstance which has induced many to believe, that that nobleman owed much to the refinement of our author; and that his Rehearsal had never been so excellent, nor so pungent a satire, had it not first passed under Dr. Sprat's perusal.

This learned prelate died of an apoplexy, May the 20th, 1713, at his episcopal feat in Bromly in Kent, in the 79th year of his age; and was interred in the Abbey-Church of Westminster.

As he lived esteemed by all his acquaintance, as well as the clergy of his diocese, so he died regretted by them, and indeed by all men of taste; for it is the opinion of many, that he raised the English tongue to that purity and beauty, which former writers were wholly strangers to, and which those who have succeeded him, can but imitate[2].

Page 130

The benevolence of our author is very conspicuous in his last will, in favour of his widow and son; in which he commands them to extend that beneficence to his poor relations, which they always found from him; and not to suffer any of those to want, whose necessitous merit, had shared in all the external advantages he possessed. As he may be proposed (considered meerly as a writer) for an example worthy of imitation; so in the character of a dignified clergyman, he has likewise a claim to be copied in those retired and private virtues, in those acts of beneficence and humility, and that unaffected and primitive piety, for which he was justly distinguished.

[Footnote 1: Elegy in a Country Church-Yard, by Mr. Grey.]

[Footnote 2: Mr. Cooper, in his ingenious work entitled the Life of Socrates, speaks in a very different strain of the bishop's History of the Royal Society, which he calls a 'Fustian History!' and adds, that 'it was esteemed an excellent competition by the metaphor-hunting mob of silly writings in Charles II's reign.']

* * * * *

CHARLES MONTAGUE (Earl of HALLIFAX)

Was born the 16th of April 1661, and received the rudiments of his education at Westminster-school: From thence he was removed to Trinity-College in Cambridge, where by the brightness of his parts he was early distinguished; and coming to town soon after the death of king Charles the IId. he contracted an intimacy with the earl of Dorset, Sir Charles Sedley, and other wits of the age. After the accession of king William and queen Mary, having attached himself to the revolution interest, he was sworn one of the council: He served in parliament for the cities of Durham, and Westminster, at different times, and distinguished himself by his speeches in the House of Commons, on several important affairs. He was constituted one of the lords commissioners of the treasury, on the 21st of March 1691, and soon after sworn of the privy-council. In 1694 he was made chancellor and under treasurer of the exchequer.[1] In the year 1695, when the nation was distress'd, by the ill-state of the current coin of this kingdom, he projected the new coining of the silver money; and by his great prudence, and indefatigable industry brought it to bear. He likewise proposed the issuing exchequer bills, to supply the great scarcity of money, which has since been made use of to the great benefit of the nation. On the 16th of February, 1697.8, the House of Commons, came to a resolution, 'That it is the opinion of this house, that the honourable Charles Montague, Esq; chancellor of the exchequer, for his good services to this government, does deserve his majesty's favour.' His next concern, was the trade to the East-Indies; the settlement of which had been long depending, and was looked on as so nice, and difficult, that it had been referred to the king and council, and from them

Page 131

to the parliament; who on May the 26th, 1698, ordered a bill for settling the trade to that place: Mr. Montague transacted this whole affair; and by his industry and skill, in touching the affections of the people, raised two-millions, by only doubling the duties on paper, parchment, and salt; which to have done by any other means, was at that time matter of the utmost difficulty. These proofs of affection and zeal to his majesty's person and government, induced the king to declare him first: lord commissioner of the treasury; and on the 16th of July, 1698, appointed him one of the persons to whose fidelity, and honour, he reposed the trust of lords justices of England, for the administration of government during his absence. In the year 1700 his lordship resigned the place of first lord commissioner of the treasury, having obtained a grant of the office of auditor of the receipts of the exchequer, vacant by the death of Sir Robert Howard; and on the 4th of December, the same year, was advanced to the dignity of baron Hallifax, in the county of York.

On the accession of queen Anne, he was concerned in vindicating the memory of king William, and on all occasions shewed a disinterested zeal in the service of his country. He first projected the equivalent, which was given to the Scots, in order to promote the Union between the nations; and without which it had never been effected. And as his lordship first moved for appointing commissioners to treat of an Union between the two kingdoms; so he had not only a great share in that treaty, as one of the commissioners, but causing it to be ratified in parliament, and answered, with all the force of which he was master, the various objections made against it. And further, to strengthen the interest of the Whigs, which he thought was essentially connected with the protestant religion, his lordship proposed the bill for the naturalization of the illustrious house of Hanover, and for the better security of the succession of the crown in the protestant line; which being pass'd into an act, her majesty made choice of him to carry the news to our late sovereign; and to invest his son with the ensigns of the most noble order of the Garter. On his arrival at Hanover, he was received with extraordinary marks of distinction, and honour. During his residence there, the prince-royal of Prussia was married to his present majesty's sister; and soon aster that prince set out with his lordship for the confederate army. Hallifax then went to the Hague, where he laid the foundation of a stricter alliance between Great-Britain, and the United Provinces: On his return to England he was graciously received by the-queen, and continued in her favour till the change of the ministry, in the year 1710.

Page 132

On her majesty's death, our author was one of the regency nominated by king George the Ist. till his arrival; who was no sooner possessed of the crown, but he shewed him distinguishing marks of his favour, having so strenuously promoted his succession to the British throne. He had his majesty's leave to resign his poll of auditor of the exchequer, to his nephew the honourable George Montague; and after being made first lord commissioner of the Treasury, and sworn of the privy-council, he was advanced to the dignity of earl of Hallifax, and viscount Sunbury, by letters patent, bearing date the 26th of October, 1714; and before the end of that year, was installed one of the knights companions of the most noble order of the garter, and made lord lieutenant of the county of Surry.

Lord Hallifax died in the 54th year of his age, on the 19th of May 1715, and on the 26th of the same month, was interred in general Monk's vault in Westminster-Abbey: leaving no issue, his titles devolved on his nephew, George late earl of Hallifax.—Considered as a poet, his lordship makes a less considerable figure than the earl of Dorset; there is a languor in his verses, which seems to indicate that he was not born with a poetical genius. That he was a lover of the muses, there is not the lead doubt, as we find him patronizing the poets so warmly; but there is some difference between a propensity to poetry, and a power of excelling in it. His lordship has writ but few things, and those not of the utmost consequence.

Among others are the following, printed in Tonsen's Minor Poets.

1. Verses On the death of Charles the IId.

2. An Ode on the Marriage of the Princess Anne, and Prince George of Denmark.

3. The Man of Honour, occasioned by a Postscript to Penn's Letter.

4. An Epistle to Charles earl of Dorset; occasioned by King William's Victory in Ireland.

5. Verses written for the toasting Glasses of the Kit-Cat-Club, 1703; which consisted of persons of the first fashion, who were in the interest of the house of Hanover. These Verses are by far the compleatest of lord Hallifax's, and, indeed, genteel compliments to the radiant beauties, who were the chief toasts amongst the Whigs. I shall here present the reader with them.

Duchess of *Beaufort*.

Offspring of a tuneful fire,
Blest with more than mortal sire:
Likeness of a mother's face,
Blest with more than mortal grace:

You with double charms surprize,
With his wit, and with her eyes.

Lady Mary Churchill.

Fairest, latest of the beauteous race, Blest with your parents wit, and her first blooming face; Born with our liberties in William's reign, Your eyes alone that liberty restrain.

Duchess of *Richmond*.

Of two fair Richmonds diff'rent ages boast, Their's was the first, and our's the brighter toast; Th' adorers offspring prove who's most divine, They sacrific'd in water, we in wine.

Lady Sunderland.

Page 133

All nature's charms in Sunderland appear,
Bright as her eyes, and as her reason clear;
Yet still their force, to men not safely known,
Seems undiscover'd to herself alone.

MADAMOISELLE SPANHEIME.

Admir'd in Germany, ador'd in France,
Your charms to brighter glory, here advance;
The stubborn Britons own your beauty's claim,
And with their native toasts enroll your name.

[Footnote 1: Collins's Peerage. See Article Hallifax.]

* * * * *

William wycherley, Esq;

This Gentleman was son of Daniel Wycherley, of Cleve in Shropshire, Esq; and was born (says Wood) in the year 1640.

When he was about fifteen years of age, he was sent to France, in the western parts of which he resided upon the banks of the Charante; where he was often admitted to the conversation of the most accomplished ladies of the court of France, particularly madam de Montaufieur, celebrated by mons. Voiture in his letters[1].

A little before the restoration of Charles the IId, he became a gentleman commoner of queen's college in Oxford, and lived in the provost's lodgings; and was entered in the public library, under the title of philosophiae studiosus, in July 1660. He quitted the university without being matriculated, having, according to the Oxford antiquary, been reconciled to the protestant religion, which he had renounced during his travels, probably by the person of those gay ladies, with whom he conversed in France. This circumstance shews how dangerous it is to engage in a debate with a female antagonist, especially, if that antagonist joins beauty with understanding.

Mr. Wycherley afterwards entered himself in the Middle-Temple; but making his first appearance in town, in a reign when wit and gaiety were the favourite distinctions, he relinguished the study of the law, and engaged in pursuits more agreeable to his own genius, and the gallant spirit of the times.

Upon writing his first Play, entitled Love in a Wood, or St. James's Park; and acted at the Theatre-royal, in 1672, he became acquainted with several of the most celebrated wits, both of the court and town; and likewise with the duchess of Cleveland. Mr. Dennis, in his Letters quoted above, has given a particular relation of the beginning of his acquaintance with this celebrated beauty of the times, which is singular enough.—-

One day Mr. Wycherley riding in his chariot through St. James's Park, he was met by the duchess, whose chariot jostled with his, upon which she looked out of her chariot, and spoke very audibly, "You Wycherley, you are a son of a whore," and then burst into a fit of laughter. Mr. Wycherley at first was very much surprized at this, but he soon recovered himself enough to recollect, that it was spoke in allusion to the latter end of a Song in his Love in a Wood;

When parents are slaves,
Their brats cannot be any other;
Great wits, and great braves,
Have always a punk for their mother.

Page 134

During Mr. Wycherley's surprize, the chariots drove different ways, they were soon at a considerable distance from each other; when Mr. Wycherley recollecting, ordered his coachman to drive back, and overtake the lady. As soon as he got over against her, he said to her, "Madam, you was pleased to bestow a title upon me, which generally belongs to the fortunate. Will your ladyship be at the play to night? Well, she replied, what if I should be there? Why then, answered he, I will be there to wait on your ladyship, though I disappoint a fine woman, who has made me an assignation. So, said she, you are sure to disappoint a woman who has favoured you, for one who has not. Yes, he replied, if she who has not favoured me is the finer woman of the two: But he who will be constant to your ladyship, till he can find a finer woman, is sure to die your captive."

The duchess of Cleveland, in consequence of Mr. Wycherley's compliment, was that night, in the first row of the king's box in Drury-Lane, and Mr. Wycherley in the pit under her, where he entertained her during the whole play; and this was the beginning of a correspondence between these two persons, which afterwards made a great noise in the town.

This accident, was the occasion of bringing Mr. Wycherley into favour with George duke of Buckingham, who was passionately in love with that lady, but was ill-treated by her, and who believed that Mr. Wycherley was his happy rival. The duke had long sollicited her, without obtaining any favour: Whether the relation between them shocked her, for she was his cousin-german; or, whether she apprehended that an intrigue with a person of his rank and character, must necessarily in a short time come to the king's ears; whatever was the cause, she refused so long to admit his visits, that at last indignation, rage, and disdain took place of love; and he resolved to ruin her. When he took this resolution, he had her so narrowly watched by his spies, that he soon discovered those whom he had reason to believe were his rivals; and after he knew them, he never failed to name them aloud, in order to expose the lady to all those who visited her; and among others, he never failed to mention Mr. Wycherley. As soon as it came to the knowledge of the latter, who had all his expectations from court, he apprehended the consequences of such a report, if it should reach the King; and applied himself therefore to Wilmot earl of Rochester, and Sir Charles Sedley, entreating them to remonstrate to the duke of Buckingham, the mischief he was about to do to one who had not the honour to know him, and who had not offended him. Upon opening the matter to the duke, he cried out immediately, that he did not blame Wycherley, he only accused his cousin. 'Ay, but they replied, by rendering him suspected of such an intrigue, you are about to ruin him; that is, your grace is about to ruin a man, whose conversation you would be pleased with above all things.'

Page 135

Upon this occasion, they said so much of the shining qualities of Mr. Wycherley, and the charms of his conversation, that the duke, who was as much in love with wit, as he was with his cousin, was impatient, till he was brought to sup with him, which was in two or three nights. After supper, Mr. Wycherley, who was then in the height of his vigour, both in body and mind, thought himself obliged to exert his talents, and the duke was charmed to that degree, that he cried out with transport, and with an oath, 'My cousin's in the right of it.' and from that very moment made a friend of a man he before thought his rival.

In the year 1673 a comedy of his called the Gentleman Dancing-Master, was acted at the duke's Theatre, and in 1678 his Plain Dealer was acted with general applause. In 1683 his Country Wife was performed at the same Theatre. These Plays raised him so high in the esteem of the world, and so recommended him to the favour of the duke of Buckingham, that as he was master of the horse, and colonel of a regiment, he bestowed two places on Wycherley: As master of the horse, he made him one of his equeries; and as colonel of a regiment, a captain lieutenant of his own company. King Charles likewise gave our author the most distinguishing marks of favour, perhaps beyond what any sovereign prince had shewn before to an author, who was only a private gentleman: Mr. Wycherley happened to be ill of a fever, at his lodgings in Bow-Street, Covent-Garden; during his sickness, the king did him the honour of a visit; when finding his fever indeed abated, but his body extremely weakened, and his spirits miserably shattered, he commanded him to take a journey to the south of France, believing that nothing could contribute more to the restoring his former state of health, than the gentle air of Montpelier, during the winter season: at the same time, the king assured him, that as soon as he was able to undertake that journey, he would order five-hundred pounds to be paid him, to defray the expences of it.

Mr. Wycherley accordingly went to France, and returned to England the latter end of the spring following, with his health entirely restored. The king received him with the utmost marks of esteem, and shortly after told him, he had a son, whom he resolved should be educated like the son of a king, and that he could make choice of no man so proper to be his governor as Mr. Wycherley; and, that for this service, he should have fifteen-hundred pounds a year allotted him; the King also added, that when the time came, that his office should cease, he would take care to make such a provision for him, as should set him above the malice of the world and fortune. These were golden prospects for Mr. Wycherley, but they were soon by a cross accident dashed to pieces.

Page 136

Soon after this promise of his majesty's, Mr. Dennis tells us, that Mr. Wycherley went down to Tunbridge, to take either the benefit of the waters, or the diversions of the place; when walking one day upon the wells-walk, with his friend Mr. Fairbeard of Grey's-Inn, just as he came up to the bookseller's, the countess of Drogheda, a young widow, rich, noble and beautiful, came to the bookseller, and enquired for the Plain Dealer. 'Madam, says Mr. Fairbeard, since you are for the Plain Dealer, there he is for you,' pushing Mr. Wycherley towards her. 'Yes, says Mr. Wycherley, this lady can bear plain dealing, for she appears to be so accomplished, that what would be a compliment to others, when said to her, would be plain dealing.—No truly Sir, said the lady, I am not without my faults more than the rest of my sex; and yet, notwithstanding all my faults, I love plain dealing, and never am more fond of it, then when it tells me of a fault:' Then madam, says Mr. Fairbeard, you and the plain dealer seem designed by heaven for each other. In short, Mr. Wycherley accompanied her upon the walks, waited upon her home, visited her daily at her lodgings whilst she stayed at Tunbridge; and after she went to London, at her lodgings in Hatton-Garden: where in a little time he obtained her consent to marry her. This he did by his father's command, without acquainting the king; for it was reasonably supposed that the lady having a great independent estate, and noble and powerful relations, the acquainting the king with the intended match, would be the likeliest way to prevent it. As soon as the news was known at court, it was looked upon as an affront to the king, and a contempt of his majesty's orders; and Mr. Wycherley's conduct after marriage, made the resentment fall heavier upon him: For being conscious he had given offence, and seldom going near the court, his absence was construed into ingratitude.

The countess, though a splendid wife, was not formed to make a husband happy; she was in her nature extremely jealous, and indulged it to such a degree, that she could not endure her husband should be one moment out of her sight. Their lodgings were in Bow-street, Covent Garden, over against the Cock Tavern; whither if Mr. Wycherley at any time went, he was obliged to leave the windows open, that his lady might see there was no woman in the company.

This was the cause of Mr. Wycherley's disgrace with the King, whose favour and affection he had before possessed in so distinguished a degree. The countess settled all her estate upon him, but his title being disputed after her death, the expence of the law, and other incumbrances, so far reduced him, that he was not able to satisfy the impatience of his creditors, who threw him at last into prison; so that he, who but a few years before was flourishing in all the gaiety of life, flushed with prospects of court preferment, and happy in the most extensive reputation for wit and parts, was condemned to suffer all the rigours

Page 137

of want: for his father did not think proper to support him. In this severe extremity, he fell upon an expedient, which, no doubt, was dictated by his distress, of applying to his Bookseller, who had got considerably by his Plain Dealer, in order to borrow 20 l. but he applied in vain; the Bookseller refused to lend him a shilling; and in that distress he languished for seven years: nor was he released ’till one day King James going to see his Plain-Dealer performed, was so charmed with it, that he gave immediate orders for the payment of the author’s debts, adding to that bounty a pension of 200 1. per annum, while he continued in England. But the generous intention of that Prince to him, had not the designed effect, purely through his modesty; he being ashamed to tell the earl of Mulgrave, whom the King had sent to demand it, a full state of his debts. He laboured under the weight of these difficulties ’till his father died, and then the estate that descended to him, was left under very uneasy limitations, he being only a tenant for life, and not being allowed to raise money for the payment of his debts: yet, as he had a power to make a jointure, he married, almost at the eve of his days, a young gentlewoman of 1500 l. fortune, part of which being applied to the uses he wanted it for, he died eleven days after the celebration of his nuptials in December 1715, and was interred in the vault of Covent Garden church.

Besides the plays already mentioned, he published a volume of poems 1704, which met with no great success; for, like Congreve, his strength lay only in the drama, and, unless on the stage, he was but a second rate poet. In 1728 his posthumous works in prose and verse were published by Mr. Lewis Theobald at London in 8vo.

Mr. Dennis, in a few words, has summed up this gentleman’s character; ’he was admired by the men for his parts, in wit and learning; and he was admired by the women for those parts of which they were more competent judges.’ Mr. Wycherley was a man of great sprightliness, and vivacity of genius, he was said to have been handsome, formed for gallantry, and was certainly an idol with the ladies, a felicity which even his wit might not have procured, without exterior advantages.

As a poet and a dramatist, I cannot better exhibit his character than in the words of George lord Lansdowne; he observes, ’that the earl of Rochester, in imitation of one of Horace’s epistles, thus mentions our author;

Of all our modern wits none seem to me,
Once to have touch’d upon true comedy
But hasty Shadwel, and slow Wycherley.
Shadwel’s unfinish’d works do yet impart
Great proofs of nature’s force; tho’ none of art.
’But Wycherley earns hard whate’er he gains,
He wants no judgment, and he spares no pains.’

Page 138

’Lord Lansdowne is persuaded, that the earl fell into this part of the character (of a laborious writer) merely for the sake of the verse; if hasty, says he, would have stood as an epithet for Wycherley, and slow, for Shadwel, they would in all probability have been so applied, but the verse would have been spoiled, and to that it was necessary to submit. Those, who would form their judgments only upon Mr. Wycherley’s writings, without any personal acquaintance with him, might indeed be apt to conclude, that such a diversity of images and characters, such strict enquiries into nature, such close observations on the several humours, manners, and affections of all ranks and degrees of men, and, as it were, so true and perfect a dissection of humankind, delivered with so much pointed wit, and force of expression, could be no other than the work of extraordinary diligence, labour, and application; but in truth, we owe the pleasure and advantage of having been so well entertained, and instructed by him, to his facility of doing it; if it had been a trouble to him to write, I am much mistaken if he would not have spared that trouble. What he has performed, would have been difficult for another; but a club, which a man of an ordinary size could not lift, was a walking staff for Hercules. To judge by the sharpness, and spirit of his satires, you might be led into another mistake, and imagine him an ill-natur’d man, but what my lord Rochester said of lord Dorset, is applicable to him, the best good man with the worst natured muse. As pointed, and severe as he is in his writings, in his temper he had all the softness of the tenderest disposition; gentle and inoffensive to every man in his particular character; he only attacks vice as a public enemy, compassionating the wound he is under a necessity to probe, or grieving, like a good natured conqueror, at the occasions which provoke him to make such havock. King Charles *ii*. a nice discerner of men, and himself a man of wit, often chose him for a companion at his leisure hours, as Augustus did Horace, and had very advantageous views for him, but unluckily an amorous inclination interfered; the lover got the better of the courtier, and ambition fell a sacrifice to love, the predominant passion of the noblest mind. Many object to his versification; it is certain he is no master of numbers, but a Diamond is not less a Diamond for not being polished.’

Mr. Pope, when very young, made his court to Mr. Wycherley, when very old; and the latter was so well pleased with the former, and had such an opinion of his rising genius, that he entered into an intimate correspondence with him, and submitted his works to Mr. Pope’s correction. See the letters between Pope and Wycherley, printed in Pope’s works.

[Footnote 1: Dennis’s Letters, vol. i. p. 213.]

* * * * *

NAHUM TATE

Page 139

Was born about the middle of the reign of Charles *ii*. in the kingdom of Ireland, and there received his education. He was a man of learning, courteous, and candid, but was thought to possess no great genius, as being deficient in what is its first characteristic, namely, invention. He was made poet laureat to King William, upon the death of Shadwell, and held that place ’till the accession of King George I, on whom he lived to write the first Birth-Day Ode, which is executed with unusual spirit. Mr. Tate being a man of extreme modesty, was never able to make his fortune, or to raise himself above necessity; he was obliged to have recourse to the patronage of the earl of Dorset, to screen him from the persecution of his creditors. Besides several other poetical performances, which will be afterwards enumerated and a Version of the Psalms, in conjunction with Dr. Brady, Mr. Tate has been the author of nine plays, of which the following is the list;

1. Brutus of Alba, a Tragedy; acted at the Duke’s Theatre 1678, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset. This play is founded on Virgil’s AEneid, b. iv, and was finished under the name of Dido and AEneas, but by the advice of some friends, was transformed to the dress it now wears.

2. The Loyal General, a Tragedy; acted at the Duke’s Theatre 1680.

3. Richard *ii*. revived, and altered from Shakespear, under the title of the Sicilian Usurper; a Tragedy, with a Prefatory Epistle, in Vindication of the Author, occasioned by the Prohibition of this Play on the Stage. The scene is in England.

4. The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth, or the Fall of Caius Marius Coriolanus; this was printed in 4to. 1682, and dedicated to the Marquis of Worcester; it is founded on Shakespear’s Coriolanus.

5. Cuckold’s Haven, or an Alderman no Conjuror; a Farce; acted at the Queen’s Theatre in the Dorset-Garden 1685. Part of the plot of this piece seems to be taken from Ben. Johnson’s Eastward Hoe or the Devil is an Ass.

6. A Duke, and No Duke, a Farce, acted 1684. The plot from Trappolin supposed a Prince.

7. The Island Princess, a Tragi-Comedy; acted at the Theatre Royal 1687, dedicated to Henry Lord Waldegrave. This is the Island Princess of Fletcher revived, with alterations.

8. Lear King of England, and his Three Daughters, an Historical Play, acted at the Duke s Theatre 1687. It is one of Shakespear’s most moving tragedies revived, with alterations.

9. Injured Love, or the Cruel Husband, a Tragedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal 1707.

His other works are chiefly these,

The Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel. Mr. Dryden, author of the first, assisted in this, he being himself pressed to write it, but declined the task, and encouraged Mr. Tate in the performance.

The Rise and Progress of Priestcraft.

Syphilis, or a Poetical History of the French Disease.

Page 140

Jephtha's Vow.

In Memory of his Grace the Illustrious Duke of Ormond, 1688.

On the Death of the Countess of Dorset.

The Characters of Virtue and Vice described, in the Person of the Wise Man and the Hypocrite; attempted in Verse, from a Treatise of Jos. Hall, Bishop of Exeter.

A Poem upon Tea.

The Triumph, or Warriors Welcome; a Poem on the glorious Success of the last Year, with the Ode for New-Year's-Day, 1705.

Thoughts on Human Life.

The Kentish Worthies.

The Monitor, intended for the promoting Religion and Virtue, and suppressing Vice and Immorality; containing forty one Poems on several Subjects, in pursuance of her Majesty's most gracious directions, performed by Mr. Tate, Mr. Smith, and others. This paper was published on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in the years 1712, and 1713.

The Triumph of Peace, a Poem on the Magnificent, Public Entry of his Grace the Duke of Shrewsbury, Ambassador from the Queen of Great Britain to the Most Christian King, and the Magnificent Entry of his Excellency the illustrious Duke D'Aumont, Ambassador from his Most Christian Majesty to the Queen of Great Britain, with the Prospect of the Glorious Procession for a General Thanksgiving at St. Paul's.

The Windsor Muse's Address, presaging the taking of Lisle; presented to her Majesty at the Court's departure from the Castle, September 28, 1708, 4to.

The Muses Memorial of the Right Hon. the Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain, 1713. Funeral Poems on Queen Mary, Archbishop of Canterbury, &c. 8vo. 1700.

A Poem occasioned by the late Discontents, and Disturbances in the State; with Reflections upon the Rise and Progress of Priestcraft.

An Elegy on the much esteemed, and truly worthy Ralph Marshall, Esq; one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, &c. fol. 1700.

Comitia Lyrica, five carmen Panegyricum, in quo, ad exornandas Magni Godolphini laudes, omnes omnium Odarum modi ab Horatio delegantur (per Ludovicum Maidvellium) Paraphrased in English, fol. 1707.

On the Sacred Memory of our late Sovereign; with a Congratulation to his present Majesty, fol. 1685, second edition.

Mausoleum, a Funeral Poem on our late Gracious Sovereign Queen Mary, of blessed memory.

An Elegy on the most Rev. Father in God, his Grace John, late Archbishop of Canterbury; written in the year 1693.

A Poem in Memory of his Grace the illustrious Duke of Ormond, and of the Right Hon. the Earl of Offory; written in the year 1688.

An Elegy in Memory of that most excellent Lady, the late Countess of Dorset; written in the year 1691.

A Consolatory Poem to the Right Hon. John Lord Cutts, upon the Death of his most accomplished Lady.

A Poem on the last Promotion of several eminent Persons in Church and State; written in the year 1694, fol. dedicated in Verse to the Right Hon. Charles Earl of Middlesex, &c. These are all printed under the title of Funeral Poems on her late Majesty of blessed memory, &c. 8vo, 1700.

Page 141

Miscellanea Sacra; or Poems on Divine and Moral Subjects, collected by Mr. Tate. He also gave the public a great many translations from Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, Virgil.

His song on his Majesty's birth-day has the following stanza,

When Kings that make the public good their care
Advance in dignity and state,
Their rise no envy can create;
Their subjects in the princely grandeur share:
For, like the sun, the higher they ascend,
The farther their indulgent beams extend.

Yet long before our royal sun
His destin'd course has run,
We're bless'd to see a glorious heir,
That shall the mighty loss repair;
When he that blazes now shall this low sphere resign
In a sublimer orb eternally to shine.

A Cynthia too, adorn'd with every grace
Of person and of mind;
And happy in a starry race,
Of that auspicious kind,
As joyfully presage,
No want of royal heirs in any future age.

Chorus.

Honour'd with the best of Kings,
And a set of lovely springs,
From the royal fountain flowing,
Lovely streams, and ever growing,
Happy Britain past expressing,
Only learn to prize thy blessing.

We shall give some further account of the translation of the Psalms in the life of Dr. Brady. This author died in the Mint 1716, was interred in St. George's church, Southwark, and was succeeded in the laurel by Mr. Eusden.

* * * * *

Sir *Samuel Garth*.

This gentleman was descended from a good family in Yorkshire; after he had passed through his school education, he was removed to Peter-house in Cambridge, where he is said to have continued till he was created Dr. of Physic July 7, 1691[1].

In 1696 Dr. Garth zealously promoted the erecting the Dispensary, being an apartment, in the college for the relief of the sick poor, by giving them advice gratis, and dispensing medicines to them at low rates. This work of charity having exposed him, and many other of the most eminent Physicians to the envy and resentment of several persons of the same faculty, as well as Apothecaries, he ridiculed them with peculiar spirit, and vivacity, in his poem called the Dispensary in 6 Cantos; which, though it first stole into the world a little hastily, and incorrect, in the year 1669, yet bore in a few months three impressions, and was afterwards printed several times, with a dedication to Anthony Henley, esquire. This poem, gained our author great reputation; it is of the burlesque species, and executed with a degree of humour, hardly equal'd, unless in the Rape of the Lock.

Page 142

Our author's poetical character, joined with his skill in his profession, his agreeable conversation, and unaffected good nature, procured him vast practice, introduced him to the acquaintance, and established him in the esteem of most of the nobility and gentry. Much about the same time he gave a distinguishing instance of his profound knowledge in his profession, his perfect acquaintance with antiquity, and correct taste in Roman eloquence by a Latin oration, pronounced before the Faculty in Warwick-Lane, September 17, 1697, to the great satisfaction of the audience, and the raising his own reputation, as the college register testifies. Pieces of this kind are often composed with peculiar attention to the phrase, the sound of the periods in speaking, and their effect upon the ear; these advantages were by no means neglected in Dr. Garth's performance, but the sentiments, the spirit, and stile appeared to still greater advantage in the reading; and the applause with which it was received by its hearers, was echoed by those who perused it; this instance is the more singular, as few have been distinguished both as orators and poets.

Cicero, who was not heard by his cotemporaries with greater applause, than his works are now read with admiration, attempted poetry without success; reputation in that kind of writing the Roman orator much desired, but never could compose a line to please himself, or any of his friends.

Upon the death of Dryden in May 1701, by a very strange accident his burial[2] came to depend on the piety of Dr. Garth, who caused the body to be brought to the College of Physicians, proposed and encouraged by his generous example a subscription for defraying the expence of the funeral, and after pronouncing over the corpse a suitable oration, he attended the solemnity to Westminster-Abbey, where at last the remains of that great man were interred in Chaucer's grave. For this memorable act of tenderness and generosity, those who loved the person, or who honoured the parts of that excellent poet, expressed much gratitude to Dr. Garth. He was one of the most eminent members of a famous society called the Kit-Kat Club, which consisted of above thirty noblemen and gentlemen, distinguished by their zealous affection to the Protestant succession in the House of Hanover[3]. October 3, 1702 he was elected one of the Censors of the College of Physicians. In respect to his political principles, he was open and warm, and which was still more to be valued, he was steady and sincere. In the time of lord Godolphin's administration, nobody was better received of his rank than Dr. Garth; and nobody seemed to have a higher opinion of that minister's integrity, and abilities in which he had, however, the satisfaction of thinking with the public.

Page 143

In 1710, when the Whig ministry was discarded, and his lordship had an opportunity of distinguishing his own friends, from those which were only the friends of his power, it could not fail of giving him sensible pleasure to find Dr. Garth early declaring for him, and amongst the first who bestowed upon him the tribute of his muse, at a time when that nobleman's interest sunk: A situation which would have struck a flatterer dumb. There were some to whom this testimony of gratitude was by no means pleasing, and therefore the Dr's. lines were severely criticised by the examiner, a paper engaged in the defence of the new ministry; but instead of sinking the credit either of the author, or the verses, they added to the honour of both, by exciting Mr. Addison to draw his pen in their defence. In order to form a judgment both of the Criticism, and the Defence, it will be necessary first of all to read the poem to which they refer, more especially as it is very short, and may be supposed to have been written suddenly, and, at least, as much from the author's gratitude to his noble patron, as a desire of adding to his reputation.

To the *earl* of *Godolphin*.

While weeping Europe bends beneath her ills,
And where the sword destroys not, famine kills;
Our isle enjoys by your successful care,
The pomp of peace amidst the woes of war.
So much the public to your prudence owes,
You think no labours long, for our repose.
Such conduct, such integrity are shewn,
There are no coffers empty, but your own.
From mean dependence, merit you retrieve;
Unask'd you offer, and unseen you give.
Your favour, like the Nile, increase bestows;
And yet conceals the source from whence it flows.
So poiz'd your passions are, we find no frown,
If funds oppress not, and if commerce run,
Taxes diminish'd, liberty entire,
These are the grants your services require.
Thus far the State Machine wants no repair,
But moves in matchless order by your care.
Free from confusion, settled, and serene;
And like the universe by springs unseen.

But now some star, sinister to our pray'rs;
Contrives new schemes, and calls you from affairs.

No anguish in your looks, nor cares appear,
But how to teach th' unpractic'd crew to steer.
Thus like some victim no constraint; you need,
To expiate their offence, by whom you bleed.

Ingratitude's a weed in every clime;
It thrives too fast at first, but fades in time.
The god of day, and your own lot's the same;
The vapours you have rais'd obscure your flame
But tho' you suffer, and awhile retreat,
Your globe of light looks larger as you set.

Page 144

These verses, however they may express the gratitude, and candour of the author, and may contain no more than truth of the personage to whom they are addressed, yet, every reader of taste will perceive, that the verses are by no means equal to the rest of Dr. Garth's poetical writings. Remarks upon these verses were published in a Letter to the Examiner, September 7, 1710. The author observes, 'That there does not appear either poetry, grammar, or design in the composition of this poem; the whole (says he) seems to be, as the sixth edition of the Dispensary, happily expresses it, a strong, unlaboured, impotence of thought. I freely examine it by the new test of good poetry, which the Dr. himself has established. Pleasing at first sight: Has this piece the least title even to that? or if we compare it to the only pattern, as he thinks, of just writing in this kind, Ovid; is there any thing in De Tristibus so wild, so childish, so flat? what can the ingenious Dr. mean, or at what time could he write these verses? half of the poem is a panegyric on a Lord Treasurer in being, and the rest a compliment of condolance to an Earl that has lost the Staff. In thirty lines his patron is a river, the primum mobile, a pilot, a victim, the sun, any thing and nothing. He bestows increase, conceals his source, makes the machine move, teaches to steer, expiates our offences, raises vapours, and looks larger as he sets; nor is the choice of his expression less exquisite, than that of his similies. For commerce to run[4], passions to be poized, merit to be received from dependence, and a machine to be serene, is perfectly new. The Dr. has a happy talent at invention, and has had the glory of enriching our language by his phrases, as much as he has improved medicine by his bills.' The critic then proceeds to consider the poem more minutely, and to expose it by enumerating particulars. Mr. Addison in a Whig Examiner published September 14, 1710, takes occasion to rally the fierce over-bearing spirit of the Tory Examiner, which, he says, has a better title to the name of the executioner. He then enters into the defence of the Dr's. poem, and observes, 'that the phrase of passions being poized, and retrieving merit from dependence, cavilled at by the critics, are beautiful and poetical; it is the same cavilling spirit, says he, that finds fault with that expression of the Pomp of Peace, among Woes of War, as well as of Offering unasked.' This general piece of raillery which he passes on the Dr's. considering the treasurer in several different views, is that which might fall upon any poem in Waller, or any other writer who has diversity of thoughts and allusions, and though it may appear a pleasant ridicule to an ignorant reader, is wholly groundless and unjust.

Mr. Addison's Answer is, however, upon the whole, rather a palliation, than a defence. All the skill of that writer could never make that poetical, or a fine panegyric, which is in its own nature removed from the very appearance of poetry; but friendship, good nature, or a coincidence of party, will sometimes engage the greatest men to combat in defence of trifles, and even against their own judgment, as Dryden finely expresses it in his Address to Congreve, "Vindicate a friend."

Page 145

In 1711 Dr. Garth wrote a dedication for an intended edition of Lucretius, addressed to his late Majesty, then Elector of Brunswick, which has been admired as one of the purest compositions in the Latin tongue that our times have produced.

On the accession of that King to the throne, he had the honour of knighthood conferred upon him by his Majesty, with the duke of Marlborough's sword[5]. He was likewise made Physician in ordinary to the King, and Physician General to the army. As his known services procured him a great interest with those in power, so his humanity and good nature inclined him to make use of that interest, rather for the support, and encouragement of men of letters who had merit, than for the advancement of his private fortune; his views in that respect having been always very moderate. He lived with the great in that degree of esteem and independency, and with all that freedom which became a man possessed of superior genius, and the most shining and valuable talents. His poem entitled Claremont, addressed to the duke of Newcastle, printed in the 6th volume of Dryden's Miscellanies, met with great approbation. A warm admirer of the Doctor's, speaking of Claremont, thus expresses himself; 'It will survive, says he, the noble structure it celebrates, 'and will remain a perpetual monument of its author's learning, taste, and great capacity as a poet; since, in that short work, there are innumerable beauties, and a vast variety of sentiments easily and happily interwoven; the most lively strokes of satire being intermixed with the most courtly panegyric, at the same time that there appears the true spirit of enthusiasm, which distinguishes the works of one born a poet, from those of a witty, or learned man, that has arrived at no higher art, than that of making verse[6].' His knowledge in philosophy, his correct taste in criticism, and his thorough acquaintance in classical literature, with all the advantages that can be derived from an exact, but concealed method, an accurate, though flowing stile, and a language pure, natural, and full of vivacity, appear, says the same panegyrist in the preface he prefixed to a translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, which would have been sufficient to have raised him an immortal reputation, if it had been the only product of his pen.

Dr. Garth is said to have been a man of the most extensive benevolence; that his hand and heart went always together: A circumstance more valuable than all the lustre which genius can confer. We cannot however, speak of his works with so much warmth, as the author just quoted seems to indulge. His works will scarce make a moderate volume, and though they contain many things excellent, judicious, and humorous, yet they will not justify the writer, who dwells upon them in the same rapturous strain of admiration, with which we speak of a Horace, a Milton, or a Pope. He had the happiness of an early acquaintance with some of the most powerful, wisest, and wittiest men of the age in which he lived; he attached himself to a party, which at last obtained the ascendant, and he was equally successful in his fortune as his friends: Persons in these circumstances are seldom praised, or censured with moderation.

Page 146

We have already seen how warmly Addison espoused the Dr's. writings, when they were attacked upon a principle of party, and there are many of the greatest wits of his time who pay him compliments; amongst the rest is lord Lansdowne, who wrote some verses upon his illness; but as the lines do no great honour either to his lordship, or the Dr. we forbear to insert them.

The following passage is taken from one of Pope's Letters, written upon the death of Dr. Garth, which, we dare say, will be more acceptable. 'The best natured of men (says he) Sir Samuel Garth has left me in the truest concern for his loss. His death was very heroical, and yet unaffected enough to have made a saint, or a philosopher famous. But ill tongues, and worse hearts have branded his last moments, as wrongfully as they did his life, with irreligion: you must have heard many tales upon this subject; but if ever there was a good christian, without knowing himself to be so, it was Dr. Garth.'

Our author was censured for his love of pleasure, in which perhaps it would be easier to excuse than defend him; but upon the whole, his character appears to have been very amiable, particularly, that of his bearing a tide of prosperity with so much, evenness of temper; and his universal benevolence, which seems not to have been cramped with party principles; as appears from his piety towards the remains of Dryden.

He died after a short illness, January 18, 1718-19, and was buried the 22d of the same month in the church of Harrow on the Hill, in the county of Middlesex, in a vault he caused to be built for himself and his family[7], leaving behind him an only daughter married to the honourable colonel William Boyle, a younger son of colonel Henry Boyle, who was brother to the late, and uncle to the present, earl of Burlington[8]. His estates in Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire, are now possessed by his grandson, Henry Boyle, Esq; whose amiable qualities endear him to all who have the happiness of his acquaintance. His works are collected, and printed in one volume, published by Tonson.

[Footnote 1: Biog. Brit, p. 2129.]

[Footnote 2: See Dryden's Life.]

[Footnote 3: History of the Stewarts, vol. ii. p. 479.]

[Footnote 4: The line here referred to, was omitted in the later editions of these verses.]

[Footnote 5: Chronol. Diary for A.D. 1714-15.]

[Footnote 6: Biog. Britan, p, 2135.]

[Footnote 7: Chronol. Diary, A.D. 1719.]

[Footnote 8: Collins's Peerage, vol. iv. p. 259.]

* * * * *

Nicholas Rowe, Esq;

This excellent poet was descended from an ancient family in Devonshire, which had for many ages made a very good figure in that county, and was known by the name of the Rowes of Lambertowne. Mr. Rowe could trace his ancestors in a direct line up to the times of the holy war, in which one of them so distinguished himself, that at his return he had the arms given him, which the family has born ever since, that being in those days all the reward of military virtue, or of blood spilt in those expeditions.

Page 147

From that time downward to Mr. Rowe's father, the family betook themselves to the frugal management of a private fortune, and the innocent pleasures of a country life. Having a handsome estate, they lived beyond the fear of want, or reach of envy. In all the changes of government, they are said to have ever leaned towards the side of public liberty, and in that retired situation of life, nave beheld with grief and concern the many encroachments that have been made in it from time to time.

Our author was born at Little Berkford in Bedfordshire, at the house of Jasper Edwards, Esq; his mother's father, in the year 1673[1]. He began his education at a private grammar-school in Highgate; but the taste he there acquired of the classic authors, was improved, and finished under the care of the famous Dr. Busby of Westminster school; where, about the age of 12 years, he was chosen one of the King's scholars. Besides his skill in the Latin and Greek languages, he had made a tolerable proficiency in the Hebrew; but poetry was his early bent, and darling study. He composed, at different times, several copies of verses upon various subjects both in Greek and Latin, and some in English, which were much admired, and the more so, because they were produced with so much facility, and seemed to flow from his imagination, as fast as from his pen.

His father, who was a Serjeant at Law, designing him for his own profession, took him from that school when he was about sixteen years of age, and entered him a student in the Middle Temple, whereof himself was a member, that he might have him under his immediate care and instruction. Being capable of any part knowledge, to which he thought proper to apply, he made very remarkable advances in the study of the Law, and was not content to know it, as a collection of statutes, or customs only, but as a system founded upon right reason, and calculated for the good of mankind. Being afterwards called to the bar, he promised as fair to make a figure in that profession, as any of his cotemporaries, if the love of the Belles Lettres, and that of poetry in particular, had not stopped him in his career. To him there appeared more charms in Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschilus, than in all the records of antiquity, and when he came to discern the beauties of Shakespear and Milton, his soul was captivated beyond recovery, and he began to think with contempt of all other excellences, when put in the balance with the enchantments of poetry and genius. Mr. Rowe had the best opportunities of rising to eminence in the Law, by means of the patronage of Sir George Treby, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, who was fond of him to a very great degree, and had it in his power to promote him; but being overcome by his propension to poetry, and his first tragedy, called the Ambitious Step-mother, meeting with universal applause, he laid aside all thoughts of the Law. The Ambitious Step-mother was our author's first attempt in the drama, written by him in the 25th year of his age, and dedicated to the earl of Jersey. 'The purity of the language (says Mr. Welwood) the justness of his characters, the noble elevation of the sentiments, were all of them admirably adapted to the plan of the play.'

Page 148

The Ambitious Step-mother, being the first, is conducted with less judgment than any other of Rowe's tragedies; it has an infinite deal of fire in it, the business is precipitate, and the characters active, and what is somewhat remarkable, the author never after wrote a play with so much elevation. Critics have complained of the sameness of his poetry; that he makes all his characters speak equally elegant, and has not attended sufficiently to the manners. This uniformity of versification, in the opinion of some, has spoiled our modern tragedies, as poetry is made to supply nature, and declamation characters. Whether this observation is well founded, we shall not at present examine, only remark, that if any poet has a right to be forgiven for this error, Mr. Rowe certainly has, as his cadence is the sweetest in the world, his sentiments chaste, and his language elegant. Our author wrote several other Tragedies, but that which he valued himself most upon, says Welwood, was his Tamerlane; acted at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, and dedicated to the marquis of Hartington.

In this play, continues Welwood, 'He aimed at a parallel between the late king William and Tamerlane, and also Bajazet, and a monarch who is since dead. That glorious ambition in Tamerlane, to break the chains of enslaved nations, and set mankind free from the encroachments of lawless power, are painted in the most lively, as well as the most amiable colours. On the other side, his manner of introducing on the stage a prince, whose chief aim is to perpetuate his name to posterity, by that havock and ruin he scatters through the world, are all drawn with that pomp of horror, and detestation, which such monstrous actions deserve. And, since nothing could be more calculated for raising in the minds of the audience a true passion for liberty, and a just abhorrence of slavery, how this play came to be discouraged, next to a prohibition, in the latter end of queen Anne's reign, I leave it to others to give a reason.'

Thus far Dr. Welwood, who has endeavoured to point out the similiarity of the character of Tamerlane, to that of king William. Though it is certainly true, that the Tamerlane of Rowe contains grander sentiments than any of his other plays; yet, it may be a matter of dispute whether Tamerlane ought to give name to the play; for Tamerlane is victorious, and Bajazet the sufferer. Besides the fate of these two monarchs, there is likewise contained in it, the Episode of Moneses, and Arpasia, which is of itself sufficiently distressful to make the subject of a tragedy. The attention is diverted from the fall of Bajazet, which ought to have been the main design, and bewildered in the fortunes of Moneses, and Arpasia, Axalla and Selima: There are in short, in this play, events enough for four; and in the variety and importance of them, Tamerlane and Bajazet must be too much neglected. All the characters of a play should be subordinate to the leading one, and their business in the drama subservient to promote his fate; but this performance is not the tragedy of Bajazet, or Tamerlane only; but likewise the tragedies of Moneses and Arpasia, Axala and Selima. It is now performed annually, on the 4th and 5th of November, in commemoration of the Gun-powder Treason, and the landing of king William in this realm, when an occasional prologue is spoken.

Page 149

Another tragedy of Mr. Rowe's is the Fair Penitent, acted at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields; and dedicated to the duchess of Ormond: This is one of the most finished performances of our author. The character of Sciolto the father is strongly marked; Horatio's the most amiable of all characters, and is so sustained as to strike an audience very forcibly. In this, as in the former play, Mr. Rowe is guilty of a mis-nomer; for his Calista has not the least claim to be called the Fair Penitent, which would be better changed to the Fair Wanton; for she discovers not one pang of remorse till the last act, and that seems to arise more from the external distress to which she is then exposed, than to any compunctions of conscience. She still loves and doats on her base betrayer, though a most insignificant creature. In this character, Rowe has been true to the sex, in drawing a woman, as she generally is, fond of her seducer; but he has not drawn drawn a Penitent. The character of Altamont is one of those which the present players observe, is the hardest to represent of any in the drama; there is a kind of meanness in him, joined with an unsuspecting honest heart, and a doating fondness for the false fair one, that is very difficult to illustrate: This part has of late been generally given to performers of but very moderate abilities; by which the play suffers prodigiously, and Altamont, who is really one of the most important persons in the drama, is beheld with neglect, or perhaps with contempt; but seldom with pity. Altamont, in the hands of a good actor, would draw the eyes of the audience, notwithstanding the blustering Lothario, and the superior dignity of Horatio; for there is something in Altamont, to create our pity, and work upon our compassion.

So many players failing of late, in the this character, leaves it a matter of doubt, whether the actor is more mistaken in his performance; or the manager in the distribution of parts.

The next tragedy Mr. Rowe wrote was his Ulysses, acted at the queen's Theatre, in the Hay Market, and dedicated to the earl of Godolphin. This play is not at present in possession of the stage, though it deserves highly to be so, as the character of Penelope, is an excellent example of conjugal fidelity: Who, though her lord had been ten years absent from her, and various accounts had been given of his death, yet, notwithstanding this, and the addresses of many royal suitors, she preserved her heart for her Ulysses, who at last triumphed over his enemies, and rescued his faithful queen from the persecution of her wooers.—This play has business, passion, and tragic propriety to recommend it.—.

The next play Mr. Rowe brought upon the stage, was his Royal Convert, acted at the queen's Theatre, in the Haymarket, and dedicated to the earl of Hallifax.

Page 150

His next was the Tragedy of Jane Shore, written in imitation of Shakespear's stile; acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, and dedicated to the duke of Queensberry and Dover. How Mr. Rowe could imagine that this play is written at all in imitation of Shakespear's stile, we cannot conceive; for so far as we are able to judge, it bears not the least resemblance to that of Shakespear. The conduct of the design is regular, and in that sense it partakes not of Shakespear's wildness; the poetry is uniform, which marks it to be Rowe's, but in that it is very different from Shakespear, whose excellency does not consist merely in the beauty of soft language, or nightingale descriptions; but in the general power of his drama, the boldness of the images, and the force of his characters.

Our author afterwards brought upon the stage his Lady Jane Grey, dedicated to the earl of Warwick; this play is justly in posession of the stage likewise. Mr. Edmund Smith, of Christ's-Church, author of Phaedra and Hyppolitus, designed writing a Tragedy on this subject; and at his death left some loose hints of sentiments, and short sketches of scenes. From the last of these, Mr. Rowe acknowledges he borrowed part of one, and inserted it in his third act, *viz*. that between lord Guilford, and lady Jane. It is not much to be regretted, that Mr. Smith did not live to finish this, since it fell into the hands of one so much above him, as a dramatist; for if we may judge of Mr. Smith's abilities of writing for the stage, by his Phaedra and Hyppolitus, it would not have been so well executed as by Rowe. Phaedra and Hyppolitus, is a play without passion, though of inimitable versification; and in the words of a living poet, we may say of it, that not the character, but poet speaks.

It may be justly said of all Rowe's Tragedies, that never poet painted virtue, religion, and all the relative and social duties of life, in a more alluring dress, on the stage; nor were ever vice or impiety, better exposed to contempt and abhorrence.

The same principles of liberty he had early imbibed himself, seemed a part of his constitution, and appeared in every thing he wrote; and he took all occasions that fell in his way, to make his talents subservient to them: His Muse was so religiously chaste, that I do not remember, says Dr. Welwood, one word in any of his plays or writings, that might admit of a double meaning in any point of decency, or morals. There is nothing to be found in them, to flatter a depraved populace, or humour a fashionable folly.

Mr. Rowe's Plays were written from the heart. He practised the virtue he admired, and he never, in his gayest moments, suffered himself to talk loosely or lightly upon religious or moral subjects; or to turn any thing sacred, or which good men reverenced as such, into ridicule.

Page 151

Our author wrote a comedy of three acts, called the Biter. It was performed at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields; but without success, for Rowe's genius did not lie towards Comedy.—In a conversation he had with Mr. Pope, that great poet advised him to rescue the queen of Scots, from the hands of Banks; and to make that lady to shine on the stage, with a lustre equal to her character. Mr. Rowe observed in answer to this, that he was a great admirer of queen Elizabeth; and as he could not well plan a play upon the queen of Scots's story, without introducing his favourite princess, who in that particular makes but an indifferent figure, he chose to decline it: Besides, he knew that if he favoured the northern lady, there was a strong party concerned to crush it; and if he should make her appear less great than she was, and throw a shade over her real endowments, he should violate truth, and incur the displeasure of a faction, which though by far the minority, he knew would be yet too powerful for a poet to combat with.

The late duke of Queensberry, when secretary of state, made Mr. Rowe secretary for public affairs; and when that nobleman came to know him well, he was never more delighted than when in his company: After the duke's death, all avenues were stopt to his preferment; and during the rest of queen Anne's reign, he passed his time with the Muses and his books, and sometimes with the conversation of his friends.

While Mr. Rowe was thus without a patron, he went one day to pay his court to the earl of Oxford, lord high treasurer of England, then at the head of the Tory faction, who asked him if he understood Spanish well? He answered no: but imagining that his lordship might intend to send him into Spain on some honourable commission, he presently added, that in a short time he did not doubt but he should presently be able, both to understand it, and speak it. The earl approving of what he said, Mr. Rowe took his leave, and immediately retired out of town to a private country farm; where, within a few months, he learned the Spanish tongue, and then waited again on the earl to give him an account of his diligence. His lordship asking him, if he was sure he understood it thoroughly, and Mr. Rowe answering in the affirmative, the earl burst into an exclamation; 'How happy are you Mr. Rowe, that you can enjoy the pleasure of reading, and understanding Don Quixote in the original!'

This wanton cruelty inflicted by his lordship, of raising expectations in the mind, that he never intended to gratify, needs only be told to excite indignation. Upon the accession of king George the 1st. to the throne, Mr. Rowe was made Poet-Laureat, and one of the surveyors of the customs, in the port of London. The prince of Wales conferred on him, the place of clerk of his council, and the lord chancellor Parker, made him his secretary for the presentations, the very day he received the seals, and without his asking it.

Page 152

He was twice married, first to a daughter of Mr. auditor Parsons; and afterwards to a daughter of Mr. Devenish of a good family in Dorsetshire. By his first wife, he had a son, and by his second a daughter.

Mr. Rowe died the 6th of December 1718, in the 45th year of his age, like a christian and a philosopher, and with an unfeigned resignation to the will of God: He preferred an evenness of temper to the last, and took leave of his wife, and friends, immediately before his last agony, with the same tranquility of mind, as if he had been taking but a short journey.

He was interred in Westminster-Abbey, over against Chaucer; his body being attended with a vast number of friends, and the dean and chapter officiating at the funeral. A tomb was afterwards erected to his memory, by his wife, for which Mr. Pope wrote an epitaph, which we shall here insert; not one word of which is hyperbolical, or more than he deserves. Epitaph on *Rowe*, by Mr. *Pope*.

Thy reliques, Rowe! to this sad shrine we trust,
And near thy Shakespear place thy honour'd bust,
Oh next him skill'd, to draw the tender tear,
For never heart felt passion more sincere:
To nobler sentiment to fire the brave.
For never Briton more disdain'd a slave!
Peace to thy gentle shade, and endless rest,
Blest in thy genius, in thy love too blest!
And blest, that timely from our scene remov'd
Thy soul enjoys the liberty it lov'd.

To these, so mourn'd in death, so lov'd in life!
The childless parent and the widow'd wife
With tears inscribes this monumental stone,
That holds their ashes and expects her own

Mr. Rowe, as to his person, was graceful and well made, his face regular and of a manly beauty; he had a quick, and fruitful invention, a deep penetration, and a large compass of thought, with a singular dexterity, and easiness in communicating his opinions. He was master of most parts of polite learning, especially the Classic Authors, both Greek and Latin; he understood the French, Italian and Spanish languages. He had likewise read most of the Greek and Roman histories in their original languages; and most that are written in English, French, Italian and Spanish: He had a good taste in philosophy, and having a firm impression of religion upon his mind, he took delight in divinity, and ecclesiastical history, in both which he made great advances in the times he retired to the country, which were frequent. He expressed upon all occasions, his full perswasion of the truth of revealed religion; and being a sincere member of the established church himself, he pitied, but condemned not, those who departed from him; he abhorred the

principle of persecuting men on account of religious opinions, and being strict in his own, he took it not upon him to censure those of another persuasion. His conversation was pleasant, witty, and learned, without the least tincture of

Page 153

affectation or pedantry; and his inimitable manner of diverting, or enlivening the company, made it impossible for any one to be out of humour when he was in it: Envy and detraction, seemed to be entirely foreign to his constitution; and whatever provocation he met with at any time, he passed them over, without the least thought of resentment or revenge. There were not wanting some malevolent people, and some pretenders to poetry too, that would sometimes bark at his best performances; but he was too much conscious of his own genius, and had so much good-nature as to forgive them, nor could however be tempted to return them an answer.'

This is the amiable character of Mr. Rowe, drawn by Mr. Welwood, to which we shall add the words of Mr. Pope, in a letter to Edward Blount, Esq; dated February the 10th, 1715.

'There was a vivacity and gaiety of disposition almost peculiar to Mr. Rowe, which made it impossible to part with him, without that uneasiness, which generally succeeds all our pleasures.'

It would perhaps be injurious to the memory of Rowe, to dismiss his life, without taking notice of his translations of Lucan, and Quillet's Callipaedia; the versification in both is musical, and well adapted to the subject; nor is there any reason to doubt but that the true meaning of the original, is faithfully preserved throughout the whole. These translations, however, with Mr. Rowe's Occasional Poems, and Birth-Day Odes, are but little read, and he is only distinguished as a dramatist; for which we shall not pretend to assign a reason; but we may observe, that a Muse capable of producing so many excellent dramatic pieces, cannot be supposed to have executed any plan indifferently; however, it may charm a reader less than that kind of composition, which is set off on the Theatre, with so many advantages.

He published likewise an edition of the works of Shakespear, and prefixed the life of that great man, from materials which he had been industrious to collect, in the county where Shakespear was born, and to which, after he had filled the world with admiration of his genius, he retired.

We deem it unnecessary to give any specimen of Mr. Rowe's poetry; the most celebrated speeches in his plays, which are beautifully harmonious; are repeated by every body who reads poetry, or attends plays; and to suppose the reader ignorant of them, would be to degrade him from that rank of intelligence, without which he can be little illuminated by perusing the *Lives of the Poets*.

[Footnote 1: Welwood's preface to Rowe's Lucan]

* * * * *

John Sheffield, Duke of *Buckingham*.

Page 154

This nobleman, who made a very great figure in the last age, as an author, a statesman, and a soldier; was born about the year 1650. He lost his father when he was about nine years of age, and his mother soon after marrying lord Ossulton; the care of his education was left entirely to a governor, who though a man of letters, did not much improve him in his studies [1]. Having parted with his governor, with whom he travelled into France; he soon found by conversing with men of genius, that he was much deficient in many parts of literature, and that while he acquired the graces of a gentleman, he was yet wanting in those higher excellencies; without which politeness makes but an indifferent figure, and can never raise a man to eminence.

He possessed an ample fortune, but for a while laid a restraint upon his appetites, and passions, and dedicated for some time a certain number of hours every day to his studies, by which means he acquired a degree of learning, that entitled him to the character of a fine scholar. But not content with that acquisition, our noble author extended his views yet farther, and restless in the pursuit of distinction, we find him at a very early age entering himself a volunteer in the second Dutch war; and accordingly was in that famous naval engagement, where the duke of York commanded as admiral, on which occasion his lordship behaved himself so gallantly, that he was appointed commander of the royal Katherine, a second rate man of war.

His lordship in his own Memoirs, tells us, that when he entered himself a volunteer under his royal highness the duke of York, he was then deeply engaged, and under the soft influence of love: He says, he never shall forget the tenderness of parting from his mistress. On this account double honour is due to him:—To enter the bustle of war, without any other call, but that of honour, at an age when most young noblemen are under the tuition of a dancing master, argued a generous intrepid nature; but to leave the arms of his mistress, to tear himself from her he doated on, in order to serve his country, carries in it yet a higher degree of merit, and ought to put all young men of fortune to the blush, who would rather meanly riot in luxurious ease at home, than do honour to themselves and their country, by endeavouring to serve it.

His lordship acknowledges in the above-mentioned Memoirs, that the duke of York did wonders in the engagement; and that he was as intrepid in his nature, as some of his enemies supposed him to be of an opposite character; though, says he, alluding to what afterwards happened, misfortunes, age, and other accidents, will make a great man differ from himself. We find our young nobleman while he was aboard a ship, amidst the noise of the crew, could yet indulge his genius for poetry. One would imagine that the ocean is too boisterous an element for the Muses, whose darling wish is for ease and retirement; yet, we find him amidst the roaring of winds and waves, open his Poem with these soothing lines.

Page 155

Within the silent shades of soft repose,
Where fancy's boundless stream for ever flows;
Where the enfranchis'd soul, at ease can play,
Tir'd with the toilsome bus'ness of the day,
Where princes gladly rest their weary heads,
And change uneasy thrones for downy beds:
Where seeming joys delude despairing minds,
And where even jealousy some quiet finds;
There I, and sorrow, for a while could part,
Sleep clos'd my eyes, and eas'd a sighing heart.

Our author afterwards made a campaign in the French service.

As Tangier was in danger of being taken by the Moors, he offered to head the forces which were to defend it; and accordingly he was appointed commander of them. He was then earl of Mulgrave, and one of the lords of the bed-chamber to king Charles the IId. In May 28, 1674, he was installed knight of the Garter.

As he now began to be eminent at court, it was impossible but he must have enemies, and these enemies being mean enough to hint stories to his prejudice, in regard to some ladies, with whom the king was not unconcerned; his lordship's command was not made so agreeable as it otherwise would have been. The particulars of this affair have been disputed by historians, some have imagined it to refer to some celebrated courtezan, whose affections his lordship weaned from the king, and drew them to himself; but Mrs. Manly, in her new Atalantis, and Boyer, in his History of queen Anne, assign a very different cause. They say, that before the lady Anne was married to prince George of Denmark, she encouraged the addresses which the earl of Mulgrave was bold enough to make her; and that he was sent to Tangier to break off the correspondence.

Mrs. Manly in her Atalantis, says many unhandsome things of his lordship, under the title of count Orgueil. Orgueil. Boyer says, some years before the queen was married to prince George of Denmark, the earl of Mulgrave, a nobleman of Singular accomplishments, both of mind and person, aspired so high as to attempt to marry the lady Anne; but though his addresses to her were checked, as soon as discovered, yet the princess had ever an esteem for him.

This account is more probably true, than the former; when it is considered, that by sending the earl to Tangier[2], a scheme was laid for destroying him, and all the crew aboard the same vessel. For the ship which was appointed to carry the general of the forces, was in such a condition, that the captain of her declared, he was afraid to make the voyage. Upon this representation, lord Mulgrave applied both to the lord admiral, and the king himself: The first said, the ship was safe enough, and no other could be then procured. The king answered him coldly, that he hoped it would do, and that he

should give himself no trouble about it. His lordship was reduced to the extremity either of going in a leaky ship, or absolutely refusing; which he knew his enemies

Page 156

would impute to cowardice, and as he abhorred the imputation, he resolved, in opposition to the advice of his friends, to hazard all; but at the same time advised several volunteers of quality, not to accompany him in the expedition, as their honour was not so much engaged as his; some of whom wisely took his advice, but the earl of Plymouth, natural son of the king, piqued himself in running the same danger with a man who went to serve his father, and yet was used so strangely by the ill-offices of his ministers.

Providence, however defeated the ministerial scheme of assassination, by giving them the finest weather during the voyage, which held three weeks, and by pumping all the time, they landed safe at last at Tangier, where they met with admiral Herbert, afterwards earl of Torrington, who could not but express his admiration, at their having performed such a voyage in a ship he had sent home as unfit for service; but such was the undisturbed tranquility and native firmness of the earl of Mulgrave's mind, that in this hazardous voyage, he composed the Poem, part of which we have quoted.

Had the earl of Mulgrave been guilty of any offence, capital, or otherwise, the ministry might have called him to account for it; but their contriving, and the king's consenting to so bloody a purpose, is methinks such a stain upon them, as can never be wiped off; and had that nobleman and the ship's crew perished, they would have added actual murther, to concerted baseness.

Upon the approach of his lordship's forces, the Moors retired, and the result of this expedition was, the blowing up of Tangier. Some time after the king was appeased, the earl forgot the ill offices, that had been done him; and enjoyed his majesty's favour to the last. He continued in several great ports during the short reign of king James the IId, till that prince abdicated the throne. As the earl constantly and zealously advised him against several imprudent measures, which were taken by the court, the king, some months before the revolution, began to grow cooler towards him; but yet was so equitable as not to remove him from his preferments: And after the king lost his crown, he had the inward satisfaction, to be conscious, that his councils had not contributed to that prince's misfortunes; and that himself, in any manner, had not forfeited his honour and integrity.

That his lordship was no violent friend to, or promoter of, the revolution, seems to appear from his conduct during that remarkable aera: and particularly from the unfinished relation he left concerning it, which was suppressed some years ago, by order of the government.

Page 157

In a passage in his lordship's writings, it appears he was unwilling that king James should leave England[3]. Just as the king was stepping into bed the night before his going away, the earl of Mulgrave came into the bed-chamber, which, being at so late an hour, might possibly give the king some apprehensions of that lord's suspecting his design, with which he was resolved not to trust him, nor any protestant: He therefore stopped short, and turned about to whisper him in the ear, that his commissioners had newly sent him a very hopeful account of some accommodation with the Prince of Orange; to which that lord only replied with a question, asking him if the Prince's army halted, or approached nearer to London? the King owned they still marched on; at which the earl shook his head, and said no more, only made him a low bow, with a dejected countenance, humbly to make him understand that he gave no credit to what the King's hard circumstances at that time obliged him to dissemble. It also appears that the earl of Mulgrave was one of those lords, who, immediately after the King's departure, sent letters to the fleet, to the abandoned army of King James, and to all the considerable garrisons in England, which kept them in order and subjection, not only to the present authority, but that which should be settled afterwards.

To his lordship's humanity was owing the protection King James obtained from the Lords in London, upon his being seized, and insulted by the populace at Feversham in Kent; before which time, says he, 'the Peers sat daily in the council chamber in Whitehall, where the lord Mulgrave one morning happened to be advertised privately that the King had been seized by the angry rabble at Feversham, and had sent a poor countryman with the news, in order to procure his rescue, which was like to come too late, since the messenger had waited long at the council door, without any body's being willing to take notice of him. This sad account moved him with great compassion at so extraordinary an instance of worldly uncertainty; and no cautions of offending the prevailing party were able to restrain him from shewing a little indignation at so mean a proceeding in the council; upon which, their new president, the marquis of Hallifax, would have adjourned it hastily, in order to prevent him. But the lord Mulgrave earnestly conjured them all to sit down again, that he might acquaint them with a matter that admitted no delay, and was of the highest importance imaginable.

Accordingly the Lords, who knew nothing of the business, could not but hearken to it; and those few that guessed it, and saw the consequence, yet wanted time enough for concerting together about so nice, and very important a matter, as saving, or losing a King's life. The Lords then sat down again, and he represented to them what barbarity it would be, for such an assembly's conniving at the rabble's tearing to pieces, even any private gentleman, much more a great Prince, who, with all his popery, was still their Sovereign; so that mere shame obliged them to suspend their politics awhile, and call in the messenger, who told them with tears, how the King had engaged him to deliver a letter from him to any persons he could find willing to save him from so imminent a danger. The letter had no superscription, and was to this effect;

Page 158

’To acquaint the reader of it, that he had been discovered in his retreat by some fishermen of Kent, and secured at first there by the gentry, who were afterwards forced to resign him into the hands of an insolent rabble.

Upon so pressing an occasion, and now so very publickly made known, the council was surprized, and under some difficulty, for as there was danger of displeasing by doing their duty, so there was no less by omitting it, since the Law makes it highly criminal in such an extremity; besides that most of them as yet unacquainted with the Prince of Orange, imagined him prudent, and consequently capable of punishing so base a desertion, either out of generosity, or policy. These found afterwards their caution needless, but at present it influenced the council to send 200 of the life guards under their captain the earl of Feversham; first to rescue the King from all danger of the common people, and afterwards to attend him toward the sea side; if he continued his resolution of retiring, which they thought it more decent to connive at, than to detain him here by force.’

Whoever has the least spark of generosity in his nature, cannot but highly applaud this tender conduct of his lordship’s, towards his Sovereign in distress; and look with contempt upon the slowness of the council in dispatching a force to his relief, especially when we find it was only out of dread, lest they should displease the Prince of Orange, that they sent any: this shewed a meanness of spirit, a want of true honour, to such a degree, that the Prince of Orange himself could not, consistently with good policy, trust those worshippers of power, who could hear, unconcerned, that their late Sovereign was in the hands of a vile rabble, and intreating them in vain for rescue.

The earl of Mulgrave made no mean compliances to King William, immediately after the revolution, but when he went to pay his addresses to him, he was well received; yet did he not accept of a post in the government till some years after.

May 10, in the 6th year of William and Mary, he was created marquis of Normanby, in the county of Lincoln. When it was debated in Parliament, whether the Prince of Orange should be proclaimed King, or the Princess his wife reign solely in her own right, he voted and spoke for the former, and gave these reasons for it. That he thought the title of either person was equal; and since the Parliament was to decide the matter, he judged it would much better please that Prince, who was now become their Protector, and was also in itself a thing more becoming so good a Princess, as Queen Mary, to partake with her husband a crown so obtained, than to possess it entirely as her own. After long debates in Parliament, the crown at last was settled upon William and Mary. Burnet lord bishop of Salisbury, whose affection for the revolution none I believe can doubt, freely acknowledges that the King was resolved not to hold the government by right of his wife; ’he would not think of holding any thing by apron strings:’ he was jealous of the friends of his wife, and never, forgave them; and, last of all, he threatened to leave them in the lurch, that is, to retire to Holland, with his Dutch army; so restless, says Mulgrave in another place, is ambition, in its highest scenes of success.

Page 159

During the reign of King William however, he enjoyed some considerable posts, and was generally pretty well in his favour, and confidence. April 21, 1702, he was sworn Lord Privy Seal, and the same year appointed one of the commissioners to treat of an union between England and Scotland, and was made Lord Lieutenant, and Custos Rotulorum for the North Riding of Yorkshire, and one of the governors of the Charterhouse.

March 9, 1703, he was created duke of Normanby, having been made marquis of Normanby by King William, and on the 19th of the same month duke of Buckingham. In 1711 he was made Steward of her Majesty's Houshold, and President of the Council; and on her decease, was one of the Lords Justices in Great Britain, 'till King George arrived from Hanover.

In 1710 the Whig ministry began to lose ground, and Mr. Harley, since earl of Oxford, and the Lord Treasurer made the proper use of those circumstances, yet wanting some assistance, applied to the duke of Buckingham. The duke, who was not then on good terms with Mr. Harley, at first slighted his proposal, but afterwards joined with him and others, which produced a revolution in the ministry, and shook the power of the duke and duchess of Marlborough, while Mr. Harley, the earl of Shrewsbury, lord Bolingbroke, &c. came into the administration. The duke was attached to Tory principles. Her Majesty offered to make him chancellor, which he thought proper to refuse. He was out of employment for some time, during which, he did not so much as pay his compliments at court, 'till he married his third wife, and then went to kiss her Majesty's hand.

The duke of Buckingham, though reckoned haughty, and ill natured, was yet of a tender, compassionate disposition; but as the best characters have generally some allay, he is allowed to have been very passionate; but after his warmth subsided, he endeavoured to atone for it by acts of kindness and beneficence to those upon whom his passion had vented itself. Several years before his grace died, he was well known to have expressed some concern for the libertinism of his youth, especially regarding the fair sex, in which he had indulged himself himself very freely. He was survived only by one legitimate son, but left several natural children;

Our noble author has been charged by some of his enemies, with the sordid vice of covetousness, but without foundation; for, as a strong indication that he was not avaritious, he lost a considerable part of his fortune, merely by not taking the pains to visit, during the space of 40 years, his estates at some distance from London; and whoever is acquainted with human nature knows, that indolence and covetousness are incompatible.

His grace died the 24th of February 1720, in the 75th year of his age, and after lying in state for some days at Buckingham-House, was carried from thence with great funeral solemnity, and interred in Westminster-Abbey, where a monument is erected to his

memory, upon which the following epitaph is engraved, by his own direction, as appears from a passage in his will.

Page 160

’Since something is usually written on monuments, I direct that the following lines shall be put on mine, *viz*.

’In one place.

Pro Rege saepe, pro Republica semper.

’In another.

Dubius, sed non improbus vixi.
Incertus morior, sed inturbatus.
Humanum est nescire & errare.
Christum adveneror, Deo confido
Omnipotenti, benevolentissimo.
Ens Entium miserere mihi.’

The words Christum adveneror are omitted at the desire of the late bishop Atterbury, who thought them not strong enough in regard to Christ; under the whole are the following words,

Catharina Buckinghamicae: Ducissa
Maerens extrui curavit Anno MDCCXXI.

Edmund, the duke’s eldest son, already mentioned, was snatched away in his bloom; a youth from whom the greatest things might have been expected, as he was untainted with the vices of the age: he was very remarkable for his modesty, which vulgar minds imputed to want of powers, but those who knew him best, have given a different testimony concerning him, and have represented him as possessed of all the genius of his father, with more strict and inviolable morals. With this young nobleman the titles of the Sheffield family expired.

The duke, his father, informs us of a duel he was to have fought with the witty earl of Rochester, which he thus relates; after telling us that the cause of the quarrel happened between the first and second Dutch war.

’I was inform’d (says his grace) that the earl of Rochester had said something very malicious of me; I therefore sent colonel Aston, a very mettled friend of mine, to call him to account for it; he denied the words, and indeed I was soon convinced he had never said them. But a mere report, though I found it to be false, obliged me (as I then foolishly thought) to go on with the quarrel; and the next day was appointed for us to fight on horseback: a way in England a little unusual, but it was his part to chuse. Accordingly I and my second lay the night before at Knightsbridge privately, to avoid being secured at London on any suspicion, which we found ourselves more in danger of there, because we had all the appearance of highwaymen, that had a mind to lye

skulking in an odd inn for one night. In the morning we met the lord Rochester at the place appointed, who, instead of James Porter, whom he assured Aston he would make his second, brought an errant life-guard-man, whom nobody knew. To this Mr. 'Aston took exception, as being no suitable adversary, especially considering how extremely well he was mounted, whereas we had only a couple of pads; upon which we all agreed to fight on foot. But as my lord Rochester and I were riding into the next field in order to it, he told me that he had at first chosen to fight on horseback, because he was so weak with a certain distemper, that he found himself unfit to fight at all any way, much less a foot. I

Page 161

was extremely surprized, because no man at that time had a better reputation for courage; and my anger against him being quite subsided, I took the liberty to represent to him what a ridiculous story it would make, should we return without fighting; and told him, that I must in my own defence be obliged to lay the fault on him, by telling the truth of the matter. His answer was, that he submitted to it, and hoped I would not take the advantage in having to do with any man in so weak a condition: I replied, that by such an argument he had sufficiently tied my hands, upon condition, I might call our seconds to be witnesses of the whole business, which he consented to, and so we parted. Upon our return to London, we found it full of this quarrel, upon our being absent so long; and therefore Mr. Aston thought fit to write down every word and circumstance of this whole matter, in order to spread every where the true reason of our returning without having fought; which being not in the least contradicted, or resented by the lord Rochester, entirely ruined his reputation for courage, though nobody had still a greater as to wit, which supported him pretty well in the world, notwithstanding some more accidents of the same kind, that never fail to succeed one another, when once people know a man's weakness.' The duke of Buckingham's works speak him a beautiful prose writer, and a very considerable poet, which is proved by the testimony of some of the best writers, his cotemporaries.

His prose works consist chiefly of

Historical Memoirs, Speeches in Parliament, Characters, Dialogues, Critical Observations, Speeches and Essays, which, with his poetical compositions, were printed by Alderman Barber in 1723. in two splendid 4to volumes. The first volume containing pieces in most species of poetry, the epic excepted, and also imitations from other authors. His Grace wrote some Epigrams, a great number of lyric pieces, some in the elegiac strain, and others in the dramatic. Amongst his poems, an Essay on Poetry, which contains excellent instructions to form the poet, is by far the most distinguished. He wrote a play called Julius Caesar and another called Brutus: or rather altered them from Shakespear.

His grace was a great lover of the polite arts in general, as appears from the fondness he expresses for them in several parts of his works; particularly Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture; of the two former he made several curious collections, and his house, built under his direction in St. James's Park, speaks him not unacquainted with the latter. It would be superfluous to enumerate all the writers who have given testimony in his grace's favour as an author. Dryden in several of his Dedications, while he expresses the warmth of his gratitude, fails not to convey the most amiable idea of his lordship, and represents him as a noble writer. He lived in friendship with that great poet, who has raised indelible monuments to his memory. I shall add but one other testimony of his merit, which if some should think unnecessary, yet it is pleasing; the lines are delightfully sweet and flowing. In his Miscellanies thus speaks Mr. Pope;

Page 162

’Muse ’tis enough, at length thy labour ends,
And thou shalt live; for Buckingham commends.
Let crowds of critics now my verse assail,
Let Dennis write, and nameless numbers rail.
This more than pays whole years of thankless pain,
Time, health, and fortune, are not lost in vain.
Sheffield approves: conferring Phoebus bends;
And I, and malice, from this hour are friends.’

The two plays of Julius Caesar, which he altered from Shakespear, are both with Chorusses, after the manner of the Ancients: These plays were to have been performed in the year 1729, and all the Chorusses were set to music by that great master in composition, Signor Bononcini; but English voices being few, the Italians were applied to, who demanded more for their nightly performance, than the receipts of the house could amount to at the usual raised prices, and on that account the design was dropt.

It appears that our noble author had conceived a great regard for Mr. Pope, on his earliest appearance in the literary world; and was among the first to acknowledge the young bard’s merit, in commendatory verses upon his excellence in poetry. The following compliment from the duke is prefixed to the first volume of Mr. Pope’s works.

On Mr. *Pope*, and his POEMs, by his Grace *John Sheffield*, Duke of *Buckingham*.

With age decay’d, with courts and bus’ness tir’d,
Caring for nothing, but what ease requir’d;
Too dully serious for the muses sport,
And from the critics safe arriv’d in port;
I little thought of launching forth agen,
Amidst advent’rous rovers of the pen;
And after so much undeserv’d success,
Thus hazarding at last to make it less.
Encomiums suit not this censorious time,
Itself a subject for satyric rhime;
Ignorance honour’d, wit and mirth defam’d,
Folly triumphant, and ev’n Homer blam’d!
But to this genius, join’d with so much art,
Such various learning mix’d in ev’ry part,
Poets are bound a loud applause to pay;
Apollo bids it, and they must obey.
And yet so wonderful, sublime a thing,
As the great *Iliad*, scarce cou’d make me sing;
Except I justly cou’d at once commend
A good companion, and as firm a friend.

One moral, or a mere well-natur'd deed
Can all desert in sciences exceed.
'Tis great delight to laugh at some men's ways,
But a much greater to give merit praise.

[Footnote 1: Character of the Duke of Buckingham, p. 2. London, 1739.]

[Footnote 2: General Dictionary. See Article Sheffield.]

[Footnote 3: Vol, ii, p. 106.]

* * * * *

Charles Cotton, Esq;

This ingenious gentleman lived in the reigns of Charles and James *ii*. He resided for a great part of his life at Beresford in the county of Stafford. He had some reputation for lyric poetry, but was particularly famous for burlesque verse. He translated from the French Monsieur Corneille's Horace, printed in 4to. London 1671, and dedicated to his dear sister Mrs. Stanhope Hutchinson. This play was first finished in 1665, but in his prefatory epistle he tells us,

Page 163

’that neither at that time, nor for several years after, was it intended for the public view, it being written for the private divertisement of a fair young lady, and, ever since it had the honour first to kiss her hands, was so entirely hers, that the author did not reserve so much as the Brouillon to himself; however, she being prevailed upon, though with some difficulty, it was printed in 8vo. 1670.’

As to the merit of this play in the original, it is sufficient to observe, that the critics have allowed it to be the best tragedy of Corneille, and the author himself is of the same opinion, provided the three last acts had been equal to the two first. As to the translation by Mr. Cotton, we have very considerable authority to pronounce it better than that of Mrs. Katherine Philips, who could not number versification among her qualities. The plot of this play, so far as history is concerned, may be read in Livy, Florus, Dionysius Halicarnasseus, &c. Our stage has lately had a play founded upon this story, added to the many it has received, called the Roman Father, by Mr. W. Whitehead.

Besides this translation, Mr. Cotton is author of many other works, such as his poem called the Wonders of the Peak, printed in 8vo. London 168; [1] His burlesque Poem, called Scarronides, or Virgil Travestie, a mock Poem, on the first and fourth Books of Virgil’s AEneid, printed in 8vo. London 1678. Though the title seems to imply as if his poem was in imitation of Scarron, who has translated eight books of Virgil in the same manner, yet they who will compare both these pieces, will possibly find, that he has not only exceeded the French, but all those who have made any attempts on that kind of poetry, the incomparable author of Hudibras excepted. Mr. Cotton likewise translated several of Lucian’s Dialogues into burlesque verse, printed in 8vo. London 1675, under the title of the Scoffer Scoff’d. In 1689 a volume of poems, with Mr. Cotton’s name prefixed, was published in London: on these poems colonel Lovelace, Sir Alton Cockaine, Robert Harrick, esq; and Mr. Alexander Brome, complimented the author by copies of verses prefixed; but Mr. Langbain observes, that the truest picture of Mr. Cotton’s mind is to be seen in a little piece published at the end of these poems called Retirement; but the chief of Mr. Cotton’s production, seems to be his translation of Montaigne’s Essays, dedicated to George Lord Saville, Marquis of Hallifax; his lordship in a letter to him, thus express his esteem for the translator, and admiration of his performance. This letter is printed amongst the other pieces of the marquis’s in a thin 12mo.

Page 164

’Sir, I have too long delayed my thanks to you for giving me such an obliging evidence of your remembrance: that alone would have been a welcome present, but when joined with the book in the world I am the best entertained with, it raiseth a strong desire in me to be better known, where I am sure to be much pleased. I have, ’till now, thought wit could not be translated, and do still retain so much of that opinion, that I believe it impossible, except by one, whose genius cometh up to the author. You have so kept the original strength of his thought, that it almost tempts a man to believe the transmigration of souls. He hath by your means mended his first edition. To transplant and make him ours, is not only a valuable acquisition to us, but a just censure of the critical impertinence of those French scriblers, who have taken pains to make little cavils and exceptions, to lessen the reputation of this great man, whom nature hath made too big to confine himself to the exactness of a studied stile. He let his mind have its full flight, and shewed by a generous kind of negligence, that he did not write for praise, but to give to the world a true picture of himself, and of mankind. He scorned affected periods to please the mistaken reader with an empty chime of words; he hath no affectation to set himself out, and dependeth wholly upon the natural force of what is his own, and the excellent application of what he borroweth.’You see, sir, I have kindness enough for Monsieur de Montaigne to be your rival, but nobody can pretend to be in equal competition with you. I do willingly yield, which is no small matter for a man to do to a more prosperous lover, and if you will repay this piece of justice with another, pray believe, that he who can translate such an author without doing him wrong, must not only make me glad, but proud of being his

most humble servant,’
* * *.

Thus far the testimony of the marquis of Hallifax in favour of our author’s performance, and we have good reason to conclude, that the translation, is not without great merit, when so accomplished a judge has praised it.

We cannot be certain in what year our author died, but it was probably some time about the revolution. He appears to have been a man of very considerable genius, to have had an extraordinary natural vein of humour, and an uncommon flow of pleasantry: he was certainly born a poet, and wrote his verses easily, but rather too loosely; his numbers being frequently harsh, and his stile negligent, and unpolished. The cause of his Life being inserted out of chronological order, was an accident, the particulars of which are not of importance enough to be mentioned.

[Footnote 1: M. Cotton’s works are printed together in one volume, 12mo. The thirteenth edition is dated 1751.]

* * * * *

The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq;

Page 165

This elegant writer, to whom the world owes so many obligations, was born at Milton near Ambrosbury in the county of Wilts (of which place his father, Mr. Lancelot Addison, was then rector) on the 6th of May 1672; and being not thought likely to live, was baptized on the same day, as appears from the church register. When he grew up to an age fit for going to school, he was put under the care of the rev. Mr. Naish at Ambrosbury. He afterwards removed to a school at Salisbury, taught by the rev. Mr. Taylor, thence to the Charter-house, where he was under the tuition of the learned Dr. Ellis, and where he contracted an intimacy with Mr. Steel, afterwards Sir Richard, which continued as long as Mr. Addison lived. He was not above fifteen years old when he was entered of Queen's College, Oxford, in which his father had been placed: where he applied himself so closely to the study of classical learning, that in a very short time he became master of a very elegant Latin stile, even before he arrived at that age when ordinary scholars begin to write good English.

In the year 1687 a copy of his verses in that tongue fell into the hands of Dr. Lancaster dean of Magdalen College, who was so pleased with them, that he immediately procured their author's election into that house [1]; where he took the degrees of bachelor, and matter of arts. In the course of a few years his Latin poetry was justly admired at both the universities, and procured him great reputation there, before his name was so much as known in London. When he was in the 22d year of his age, he published a copy of verses addressed to Mr. Dryden, which soon procured him the notice of some of the poetical judges in that age. The verses are not without their elegance, but if they are much removed above common rhimes, they fall infinitely short of the character Mr. Addison's friends bestowed upon them. Some little space intervening, he sent into the world a translation of the 4th Georgic of Virgil, of which we need not say any more, than that it was commended by Mr. Dryden. He wrote also that discourse on the Georgics, prefixed to them by way of preface in Mr. Dryden's translation, and chose to withhold his name from that judicious composition, because it contained an untried strain of criticism, which bore hard upon the old professors of that art, and therefore was not so fit for a young man to take upon himself; and Mr. Dryden, who was above the meanness of fathering any one's work, owns the Essay on the Georgics to have come from a friend, whose name is not mentioned, because he desired to have it concealed.

Page 166

The next year Mr. Addison wrote several poems of different kinds; amongst the rest, one addressed to Henry Sacheverel, who became afterwards so exceedingly famous. The following year he wrote a poem to King William on one of his Campaigns, addressed to the Lord Keeper (Sir John Somers.) That excellent statesman received this mark of a young author's attachment with great humanity, admitted Mr. Addison into the number of his friends, and gave him on all occasions distinguishing proofs of a sincere esteem [2]. While he was at the university, he had been pressingly sollicited to enter into holy orders, which he seemed once resolved on, probably in obedience to his father's authority; but being conscious of the importance of the undertaking, and deterred by his extreme modesty, he relinquished, says Mr. Tickell, all views that way; but Sir Richard Steel in his letter to Mr. Congreve prefixed to the Drummer, who had a quarrel with Tickell, on account of an injurious treatment of him, says, that those were not the reasons which made Mr. Addison turn his thoughts to the civil world, 'and as you were the inducement (says he) of his becoming acquainted with my lord Hallifax, I doubt not but you remember the warm instances that noble lord made to the head of the college, not to insist on Mr. Addison's going into orders; his arguments were founded on the general pravity and corruption of men of business, who wanted liberal education; and I remember, as if I had read the letter yesterday, that my lord ended with a compliment, that however he might be represented as no friend to the church, he would never do it any other injury than by keeping Mr. Addison out of it.'

Mr. Addison having discovered an inclination to travel, the abovementioned patron, out of zeal, as well to his country, as our author, procured him from the crown an annual pension of 300 l. which enabled him to make a tour to Italy the latter end of 1699. His Latin poems dedicated to Mr. Montague, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, were printed before his departure, in the Musaae Anglicanae, and were as much esteemed in foreign countries, as at home, particularly by that noble wit of France, Boileau. It is from Mr. Tickell we learn this circumstance in relation to Boileau, and we shall present it to the reader in his own words; 'his country owes it to Mr. Addison, that the famous Monsieur Boileau first conceived an opinion of the English genius for poetry, by perusing the present he made him of the Musae Anglicanae. It has been currently reported, that this famous French poet, among the civilities he shewed Mr. Addison on that occasion, affirmed, that he would not have written against Perrault, had he before seen such excellent pieces by a modern hand. The compliment he meant, was, that these books had given him a very new idea of the English politeness, and that he did not question, but there were excellent compositions in the native language of a country, which possessed the Roman genius in so eminent a degree.'

Page 167

In 1701 Mr. Addison wrote an epistolary poem from Italy to lord Hallifax, which is much admired as a finished piece in its kind, and indeed some have pronounced it the best of Mr. Addison's performances. It was translated by the Abbot Antonio Mario Salvini, Greek Professor at Florence into Italian verse, which translation is printed with the original in Mr. Tickell's 4to. edition of Mr. Addison's works. This poem is in the highest esteem in Italy, because there are in it the best turned compliments on that country, that, perhaps, are to be found any where: and the Italians, on account of their familiarity with the objects it describes, must have a higher relish of it. This poem likewise shews his gratitude to lord Hallifax, who had been that year impeached by the Commons in Parliament, for procuring exorbitant grants from the crown to his own use; and further charged with cutting down, and wasting the timber in his Majesty's forests, and with holding several offices in his Majesty's Exchequer, that were inconsistent, and designed as checks upon each other: The Commons had likewise addressed the King to remove him from his councils, and presence for ever. These were the causes of his retiring, and Mr. Addison's address at this time, was a noble instance of his fidelity, and stedfastness to his friends. On his return to England, he published an account of his travels, dedicated to lord Somers; he would have returned earlier than he did, had not he been thought of as a proper person to attend prince Eugene, who then commanded for the emperor in Italy, which employment would much have pleased him; but the death of king William intervening caused a cessation of his pension and his hopes.

For a considerable space of time he remained at home, and as his friends were out of the ministry, he had no opportunity to display his abilities, or to meet a competent regard for the honour his works had already done his country. He owed both to an accident: In the year 1704 lord treasurer Godolphin happened to complain to the lord Hallifax, that the duke of Marlborough's victory at Blenheim, had not been celebrated in verse, in the manner it deserved, and told him, that he would take it kind, if his lordship, who was the patron of the poets, would name a gentleman capable of writing upon so elevated a subject. Lord Hallifax replied with some quickness, that he was well acquainted with such a person, but that he would not name him; and observed, that he had long seen with indignation, men of little or no merit, maintained in pomp and luxury, at the expence of the public, while persons of too much modesty, with great abilities, languished in obscurity. The treasurer answered, very coolly, that he was sorry his lordship had occasion to make such an observation; but that in the mean time, he would engage his honour, that whoever his lordship should name, might venture upon this theme, without fear of losing his time. Lord Hallifax thereupon named Mr. Addison, but insisted the treasurer

Page 168

should send to him himself, which he promised. Accordingly he prevailed upon Mr. Boyle, then chancellor of the exchequer, to go in his name to Mr. Addison, and communicate to him the business, which he did in so obliging a manner, that he readily entered upon the task [3]. The lord treasurer saw the Poem before it was finished, when the author had written no farther than the celebrated simile of the Angel, and was so much pleased with it, that he immediately made him commissioner of appeals, in the room of Mr. Locke, who was promoted to be one of the lords commissioners for trade, &c.

His Poem, entitled the Campaign, was received with loud and general applause: It is addressed to the duke of Marlborough, and contains a short view of the military transactions in the year 1704, and a very particular description of the two great actions at Schellemberg and Blenheim.

In 1705 Mr. Addison attended the lord Hallifax to Hanover; and in the succeeding year he was made choice of for under-secretary to Sir Charles Hedges, then appointed secretary of state. In the month of December, in the same year, the earl of Sunderland, who succeeded Sir Charles in that office, continued Mr. Addison in the post of under secretary.

Operas being now much in fashion, many people of distinction and true taste, importuned him to make a trial, whether sense and sound were really so incompatible, as some admirers of the Italian pieces would represent them. He was at last prevailed upon to comply with their request, and composed his Rosamond: This piece was inscribed to the duchess of Marlborough, and met with but indifferent success on the stage. Many looked upon it as not properly an Opera; for considering what numbers of miserable productions had born that title, they were scarce satisfied that so superior a piece should appear under the same denomination About this time our author assisted Sir Richard Steel, in a play called the Tender Husband; to which he wrote a humorous Prologue. Sir Richard, whose gratitude was as warm and ready as his wit, surprized him with a dedication, which may be considered as one of the few monuments of praise, not unworthy the great person to whose honour it was raised.

In 1709 he went over to Ireland, as secretary to the marquis of Wharton, appointed lord lieutenant of that kingdom. Her majesty also, was pleased, as a mark of her peculiar favour, to augment the salary annexed to the keeper of the records in that nation, and bestow it upon him. While he was in Ireland, his friend Sir Richard Steel published the Tatler, which appeared for the first time, on the 12th of April 1709: Mr. Addison (says Tickell) discovered the author by an observation on Virgil he had communicated to him. This discovery led him to afford farther assistance, insomuch, that as the author of the Tatler well exprest it, he fared by this means, like a distrest prince, who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid: that is, he was undone by his auxiliary.

Page 169

The superiority of Mr. Addison's papers in that work is universally admitted; and being more at leisure upon the change of the ministry, he continued assisting in the Tatler till 1711, when it was dropt.

No sooner was the Tatler laid down, but Sir Richard Steel, in concert with Mr. Addison, formed the plan of the Spectator. The first paper appeared on the first of March 1711, and in the course of that great work, Mr. Addison furnished all the papers marked with any Letters of the Muse *Clio*; and which were generally most admired. Tickell, who had no kindness for Sir Richard Steel, meanly supposes that he marked his paper out of precaution against Sir Richard; which was an ill-natur'd insinuation; for in the conclusion of the Spectators, he acknowledges to Mr. Addison, all he had a right to; and in his letter to Congreve, he declares that Addison's papers were marked by him, out of tenderness to his friend, and a warm zeal for his fame. Steel was a generous grateful friend; it therefore ill became Mr. Tickell in the defence of Mr. Addison's honour, which needed no such stratagem, to depreciate one of his dearest friends; and at the expence of truth, and his reputation, raise the character of his Hero. Sir Richard had opposed Mr. Addison, in the choice of Mr. Tickell as his secretary; which it seems he could never forget nor forgive.

In the Spectators, Sir Roger de Coverly was Mr. Addison's favourite character; and so tender was he of it, that he went to Sir Richard, upon his publishing a Spectator, in which he made Sir Roger pick up a woman in the temple cloisters, and would not part with his friend, until he promised to meddle with the old knight's character no more. However, Mr. Addison to make sure, and to prevent any absurdities the writers of the subsequent Spectators might fall into, resolved to remove that character out of the way; or, as he pleasantly expressed it to an intimate friend, killed Sir Roger, that no body else might murther him. When the old Spectator was finished, a new one appeared; but, though written by men of wit and genius, it did not succeed, and they were wise enough not to push the attempt too far. Posterity must have a high idea of the taste and good sense of the British nation, when they are informed, that twenty-thousand of these papers were sometimes sold in a day. [4]

The Guardian, a paper of the same tendency, entertained the town in the years 1713 and 1714, in which Mr. Addison had likewise a very large share; he also wrote two papers in the Lover.

In the year 1713 appeared his famous Cato. He entered into a design of writing a Tragedy on that subject, when he was very young; and when he was on his travels he actually wrote four acts of it: However, he retouched it on his return, without any design of bringing it on the stage; but some friends of his imagining it might be of service to the cause of liberty, he was prevailed upon to finish it for the theatre, which he accordingly did. When this

Page 170

play appeared, it was received with boundless admiration; and during the representation on the first night, on which its fate depended, it is said that Mr. Addison discovered uncommon timidity; he was agitated between hope and fear, and while he remained retired in the green-room, he kept a person continually going backwards and forwards, from the stage to the place where he was, to inform him how it succeeded, and till the whole was over, and the success confirmed, he never ventured to move.

When it was published, it was recommended by many Copies of Verses prefixed to it, amongst which the sincerity of Mr. Steele, and the genius of Eusden, deserve to be distinguished: But, as I would not omit any particulars relative to this renowned play, and its great author, I shall insert a letter of Mr. Pope's to Sir William Turnbull, dated the 30th of April 1713, in which are some circumstances that merit commemoration.

Sir,

'As to poetical affairs, I am content at present to be a bare looker on, and from a practitioner turn an admirer; which as the world goes, is not very usual. Cato was not so much the wonder of Rome in his Days, as he is of Britain in ours; and though all the foolish industry possible had been used to make it thought a party play, yet what the author once said of another, may the most properly in the world be applied to him on this occasion.

Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
And factions strive who shall applaud him most.

The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party, on the one side of the theatre, were ecchoed back by the Tories on the other; while the author sweated behind the scenes, with concern to find their applause proceeding more from the hand than the head. This was the case too with the Prologue writer, who was clapp'd into a staunch Whig at the end of every two lines. I believe you have heard, that after all the applauses of the opposite faction, my lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into the box, between one of the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas, in acknowledgment as he expressed it, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, and therefore design a present to the same Cato very speedily; in the mean time, they are getting ready as good a sentence as the former on their side, so betwixt them it is probable, that Cato (as Dr. Garth exprest it) may have something to live upon after he dies.'

Immediately after the publication of this Tragedy, there came abroad a pamphlet, entitled, Observations on Cato; written by the ingenious Dr. Sewel: The design of this piece was to show that the applause this Tragedy met with was founded on merit. It is a

very accurate and entertaining criticism, and tends to secure the poet the hearts of his readers, as well as of his audience.

Page 171

Our author was not however without enemies, amongst whom was Mr. Dennis, who attacked it, first in a pamphlet, and then in a subsequent work, in which he employed seven letters in pulling it to pieces: In some of his remarks he is candid, and judicious enough, in others he is trifling and ill natur'd, and I think it is pretty plain he was agitated by envy; for as the intent of that play was to promote the Whig interest, of which Mr. Dennis was a zealous abettor, he could not therefore disesteem it from party principles.

Another gentleman, who called himself a scholar at Oxford, considered the play in a very different light; and endeavoured to serve his party by turning the cannon upon the enemy. The title of this pamphlet is, Mr. Addison turned Tory: It is written with great spirit and vivacity. Cato was speedily translated into French by Mr. Boyer, but with no spirit: It was translated likewise into Italian.

Voltaire has commended, and condemned Mr. Addison by turns, and in respect to Cato, he admires, and censures it extravagantly. The principal character he allows superior to any before brought upon the stage, but says, that all the love-scenes are absolutely insipid: He might have added unnecessary, as to the plot; and the only reason that can be assigned for the poet's introducing them was, the prevalence of custom; but it must be acknowledged, that his lovers are the most sensible, and address each other in the best language, that is to be found in any love dialogues of the British stage: It will be difficult to find a more striking line, or more picturesque of a lover's passion. than this pathetic exclamation;

A lover does not live by vulgar time.

Queen Anne was not the last in doing justice to our author and his performance; she was pleased to signify an inclination of having it dedicated to her, but as he intended that compliment to another, it came into the world without any dedication.

If in the subsequent part of his life, his leisure had been greater, we are told, he would probably have written another tragedy on the death of Socrates; but the honours accruing from what he had already performed deprived posterity of that production.

This subject was still drier, and less susceptible of poetical ornament than the former, but in the hands of so great a writer, there is no doubt but genius would have supplied what was wanting in the real story, and have covered by shining sentiments, and noble language, the simplicity of the plot, and deficiency in business.

Upon the death of the Queen, the Lords Justices appointed Mr. Addison their secretary. This diverted him from the design he had formed of composing an English Dictionary upon the plan of a famous Italian one: that the world has much suffered by this promotion I am ready to believe, and cannot but regret that our language yet wants the assistance of so great a master, in fixing its standard, settling its purity, and illustrating its copiousness, or elegance.

Page 172

In 1716 our author married the countess of Warwick; and about that time published the Freeholder, which is a kind of political Spectator. This work Mr. Addison conducted without any assistance, upon a plan of his own forming; he did it in consequence of his principles, out of a desire to remove prejudices, and contribute all he could to make his country happy; however it produced his own promotion, in 1717, to be one of the principal secretaries of state. His health, which had been before impaired by an asthmatic disorder, suffered exceedingly by an advancement so much to his honour, but attended with such great fatigue: Finding, that he was not able to manage so much business as his station led him to, he resigned, and in his leisure hours began a work of a religious nature, upon the Evidence of the Christian religion; which he lived not to finish. He likewise intended a Paraphrase on some of the Psalms of David: but a long and painful relapse broke all his designs, and deprived the world of one of its brightest ornaments, June 17, 1719, when he was entering the 54th year of his age. He died at Holland-house near Kensington, and left behind him an only daughter by the countess of Warwick.

After his decease, Mr. Tickell, by the authority and direction of the author, collected and published his works, in four volumes 4to. In this edition there are several pieces, as yet unmentioned, which I shall here give account of in order; the first is a Dissertation upon Medals, which, though not published ’till after his death; was begun in 1702, when he was at Vienna.

In 1707 there came abroad a pamphlet, under the title of The Present State of the War, and the Necessity of an Augmentation Considered. The Whig Examiner came out September 14 1710, for the first time: there were five papers in all attributed to Mr. Addison; these are by much the tartest things he ever wrote; Dr. Sacheverel, Mr. Prior, and many other persons are severely treated. The Examiner had done the same thing on the part of the Tories, and the avowed design of this paper was to make reprisals.

In the year 1713 was published a little pamphlet, called The Late Trial, and Conviction of Count Tariff; it was intended to expose the Tory ministry on the head of the French Commerce Bill: This is also a severe piece.

The following have likewise been ascribed to our author;

Dissertatio de insignioribus Romanorum Poetis, i. e. A Dissertation upon the most Eminent Roman Poets: This is supposed to have been written about 1692.

A Discourse on Ancient and Modern Learning; the time when it was written is uncertain, but probably as early as the former. It was preserved amongst the manuscripts of lord Somers, which, after the death of Sir Joseph Jekyl, being publickly sold, this little piece came to be printed 1739, and was well received. To these we must add the Old Whig, No. 1 and 2. Pamphlets written in Defence of the Peerage Bill:

Page 173

The scope of the Bill was this, that in place of 16 Peers sitting in Parliament, as Representatives of the Peerage of Scotland, there were for the future to be twenty five hereditary Peers, by the junction of nine out of the body of the Scotch nobility, to the then 16 sitting Peers; that six English Peers should be added, and the peerage then remain fixed; the crown being restrained from making any new lords, but upon the extinction of families. This gave a great alarm to the nation, and many papers were wrote with spirit against it; amongst the rest, one called the Plebeian, now known to have been Sir Richard Steele's. In answer to this came out the Old Whig N deg.. 1. on the State of the Peerage, with some Remarks on the Plebeian. This controversy was carried on between the two friends, Addison and Steele, at first without any knowledge of one another, but before it was ended, it appears, from several expressions, that the author of the Old Whig was acquainted with his antagonist.

Thus we have gone through the most remarkable passages of the life of this great man, in admiration of whom, it is but natural to be an Enthusiast, and whose very enemies expressed their dislike with diffidence; nor indeed were his enemies, Mr. Pope excepted, (if it be proper to reckon Mr. Pope Mr. Addison's enemy) in one particular case, of any consequence. It is a true, and an old observation, that the greatest men have sometimes failings, that, of all other human weaknesses, one would not suspect them to be subject to. It is said of Mr. Addison, that he was a slave to flattery, that he was jealous, and suspicious in his temper, and, as Pope keenly expresses it,

Bore, like the Turk, no rival near the
throne.

That he was jealous of the fame of Pope, many have believed, and perhaps not altogether without ground. He preferred Tickel's translation of the first Book of Homer, to Pope's. His words are,

'the other has more of Homer',

when, at the same time, in a letter to Pope, he strenuously advises him to undertake it, and tells him, there is none but he equal to it; which circumstance has made some people conjecture, that Addison was himself the author of the translation, imputed to Mr. Tickell: Be this as it may, it is unpleasing to dwell upon the failings, and quarrels of great men; let us rather draw a veil over all their errors, and only admire their virtues, and their genius; of both which the author, the incidents of whose life we have now been tracing, had a large possession. He added much to the purity of the English stile in prose; his rhime is not so flowing, nervous, or manly as some of his cotemporaries, but his prose has an original excellence, a smoothness and dignity peculiar to it. His poetry, as well as sentiments, in Cato, cannot be praised enough.

Mr. Addison was stedfast to his principles, faithful to his friends, a zealous patriot, honourable in public stations, amiable in private life, and as he lived, he died, a good man, and a pious Christian.

Page 174

[Footnote 1: Tickell's Preface to Addison's works.]

[Footnote 2: Tickell. Ubi supra.]

[Footnote 3: Budgel's Memoirs of the Boyles.]

[Footnote 4: Tickell's Preface.]

* * * * *

Anne, Countess of *Winchelsea*.

This lady, deservedly celebrated for her poetic genius, was daughter of Sir William Kingsmill of Sidmonton, in the county of Southampton. She was Maid of Honour to the Duchess of York, second wife to King James *ii*. and was afterwards married to Heneage earl of Winchelsea, who was in his father's life-time Gentleman of the Bed-chamber to the Duke of York.

One of the most considerable of this lady's poems, is that upon the Spleen, published by Mr. Charles Gildon, 1701, in 8vo. That poem occasioned another of Mr. Nicholas Rowe's, entitled an Epistle to Flavia, on the sight of two Pindaric Odes on the Spleen and Vanity, written by a Lady to her Friend. This poem of the Spleen is written in stanzas, after the manner of Cowley, and contains many thoughts naturally expressed, and poetically conceived; there is seldom to be found any thing more excellently picturesque than this poem, and it justly entitles the amiable countess to hold a very high station amongst the inspired tribe. Nothing can be more happily imagined than the following description of the pretended influence of Spleen upon surly Husbands, and gay Coquetes.

Patron thou art of every gross abuse;
The sullen husband's feign'd excuse,
When the ill humours with his wife he spends,
And bears recruited wit, and spirits to his friends
The son of Bacchus pleads thy pow'r
  As to the glass he still repairs
  Pretends but to remove thy cares,
Snatch from thy shades, one gay, and smiling hour,
And drown thy kingdom in a purple show'r.
When the coquette (whom ev'ry fool admires)
  Would in variety be fair;
  And changing hastily the scene,
  From light, impertinent, and vain,
  Assumes a soft, a melancholy air
And of her eyes rebates the wand'ring fires,

The careless posture, and the head reclin'd
(Proclaiming the withdrawn, the absent mind)
  Allows the fop more liberty to gaze;
  Who gently for the tender cause enquires;
The cause indeed is a defect of sense,
Yet is the Spleen alledged, and still the dull pretence.

The influence which Spleen has over religious minds, is admirably painted in the next stanza.

  By spleen, religion, all we know;
  That should enlighten here below,
Is veiled in darkness, and perplext
With anxious doubts, with endless scruples vext
And some restraint imply'd from each perverted text;
Whilst touch not, taste not what is freely given,
Is but thy niggard voice disgracing bounteous Heaven.
From speech restrain'd, by the deceits abus'd,
To desarts banish'd; or in cells reclus'd,
Mistaken vot'ries, to the powers divine,
Whilst they a purer sacrifice design,
Do but the spleen obey, and worship at thy shrine.

Page 175

A collection of this lady's poems was published at London 1713 in 8vo. containing likewise a Tragedy never acted, entitled Aristomenes, or the Royal Shepherd. The general scenes are in Aristomenes's camp, near the walls of Phaerea, sometimes the plains among the Shepherds. A great number of our authoress's poems still continue unpublished, in the hands of the rev. Mr. Creake, and some were in possession of the right hon. the countess of Hertford.

The countess of Winchelsea died August 9, 1720, without issue. She was happy in the friendship of Mr. Pope, who addresses a copy of verses to her, occasioned by eight lines in the Rape of the Lock: they contain a very elegant compliment.

In vain you boast poetic names of yore,
And cite those Saphoes we admire no more:
Fate doom'd the fall of ev'ry female wit,
But doom'd it then, when first Ardelia writ.
Of all examples by the world confest,
I knew Ardelia could not quote the best,
Who like her mistress on Britannia's throne
Fights and subdues in quarrels not her own.
To write their praise, you but in vain essay;
E'en while you write, you take that praise away:
Light to the stars, the sun does thus restore,
And shines himself 'till they are seen no more.

The answer which the countess makes to the above, is rather more exquisite than the lines of Mr. Pope; he is foil'd at his own weapons, and outdone in the elegance of compliment.

Disarm'd with so genteel an air,
  The contest I give o'er;
Yet Alexander have a care,
  And shock the sex no more.
We rule the world our life's whole race,
  Men but assume that right;
First slaves to ev'ry tempting face,
  Then martyrs to our spite.
You of one Orpheus sure have read,
  Who would like you have writ
Had he in London-town been bred,
  And polish'd too his wit;
But he poor soul, thought all was well
  And great should be his fame,
When he had left his wife in hell
  And birds, and beasts could tame.

Yet venturing then with scoffing rhimes
  The women to incense,
Resenting heroines of those times
  Soon punished his offence.
And as the Hebrus roll'd his skull,
  And Harp besmeared with blood,
They clashing as the waves grew full
  Still harmoniz'd the flood.
But you our follies gently treat,
  And spin so fine the thread,
You need not fear his awkward fate,
  The lock won't cost the head.
Our admiration you command
  For all that's gone before;
What next we look for at your hand
  Can only raise it more.
Yet sooth the ladies, I advise
  (As me too pride has wrought)
We're born to wit, but to be wise
  By admonitions taught.

The other pieces of this lady are,

An Epilogue to Jane Shore, to be spoken by Mrs. Oldfield the night before the Poet's day.

Page 176

To the Countess of Hertford with her Volume of Poems.

The Prodigy, a Poem, written at Tunbridge-Wells 1706, on the Admiration that many expressed on a Gentleman's being in love, and their Endeavours to dissuade him from it, with some Advice to the young Ladies how to maintain their natural Prerogative. If all her other poetical compositions are executed with as much spirit and elegance as these, the lovers of poetry have some reason to be sorry that her station was such, as to exempt her from the necessity of more frequently exercising a genius so furnished by nature, to have made a great figure in that divine art.

* * * * *

CHARLES GILDON.

This gentleman was born at Gillingham near Shaftsbury, in the county of Dorset. His parents, and family were all of the Romish persuasion, but they could not instil their principles into our author, who, as soon as he began to reason, was able to discover the errors, and foppery of that church. His father was a member of the society of Grays-Inn, and suffered much for the Royal cause. The first rudiments of learning Mr. Gildon had at the place of his nativity; thence his relations sent him to the English college of secular priests at Doway in Hainault, with a design of making him a priest; but after five years study there, he found his inclination direct him to a quite different course of life. When he was nineteen years old he returned to England, and as soon as he was of age, and capable of enjoying the pleasures of gaiety, he came to London, where he spent the greatest part of his paternal estate. At about the age of twenty-three, to crown his other imprudences, he married, without improving his reduced circumstances thereby.

During the reign of King James *ii*. he dedicated his time to the study of the prevailing controversies, and he somewhere declares, it cost him above seven years close application to books, before he could entirely overcome the prejudices of his education. He never believed the absurd tenets of the church of Rome; nor could he embrace the ridiculous doctrine of her infallibility: But as he had been taught an early reverence to the priesthood, and a submissive obedience to their authority, it was a long while before he assumed courage to think freely for himself, or declare what he thought.

His first attempt in the drama, was not till he had arrived at his 32d year; and he himself in his essays tells us, that necessity (the general inducement) was his first motive of venturing to be an author.

He is the author of three plays, *viz*.

1. The Roman Bride's Revenge, a Tragedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal 1697. This play was written in a month, and had the usual success of hasty productions, though the first

and second acts are well written, and the catastrophe beautiful; the moral being to give us an example, in the punishment of Martian, that no consideration ought to make us delay the service of our country.

Page 177

2. Phaeton, or the Fatal Divorce; a Tragedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal 1698, dedicated to Charles Montague, Esq; This play is written in imitation of the ancients, with some reflexions on a book called a Short View of the Immorality of the English Stage, written by Mr. Collier, a Non-juring Clergyman, who combated in the cause of virtue, with success, against Dryden, Congreve, Dennis, and our author. The plot of this play, and a great many of the beauties, Mr. Gildon owns in his preface, he has taken from the Medea of Euripides.

3. Love's. Victim, or the Queen of Wales; a Tragedy, acted at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

He introduced the Play called the Younger Brother, or the Amorous Jilt; written by Mrs. Behn, but not brought upon the stage 'till after her decease. He made very little alteration in it. Our author's plays have not his name to them; and his fault lies generally in the stile, which is too near an imitation of Lee's.

He wrote a piece called the New Rehearsal, or Bays the Younger; containing an Examen of the Ambitious Step-mother, Tamerlane, The Biter, Fair Penitent, The Royal Convert, Ulysses, and Jane Shore, all written by Mr. Rowe; also a Word or Two on Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock, to which is prefixed a Preface concerning Criticism in general, by the Earl of Shaftsbury, Author of the Characteristics, 8vo. 1714. Scene the Rose Tavern. The freedom he used with Mr. Pope in remarking upon the Rape of the Lock, it seems was sufficient to raise that gentleman's resentment, who was never celebrated for forgiving. Many years after, Mr. Pope took his revenge, by stigmatizing him as a dunce, in his usual keen spirit of satire: There had arisen some quarrel between Gildon and Dennis, upon which, Mr. Pope in his Dunciad, B. iii. has the following lines,

Ah Dennis! Gildon ah! what ill-starr'd rage
Divides a friendship long confirm'd by age?
Blockheads with reason wicked wits abhor,
But fool with fool is barb'rous civil war.
Embrace; embrace my sons! be foes no more,
Nor glad vile poets with true critics gore.

This author's other works are chiefly these,

The Post-Boy Robb'd of his Mail, or the Packet Broke Open; consisting of Five Hundred Letters to several Persons of Quality, &c. 1692.

He published the Miscellaneous Works of Charles Blount, Esq; to which he prefixed the Life of the Author, and an Account, and Vindication of his Death, in 12mo. 1695. In this volume are several of the publisher's own letters.

Likewise Letters, and Essays, on several Subjects, philosophical, historical, critical, amorous, &c. in Prose and Verse, to John Dryden, Esq; George Granville, Esq; Walter Moyle, Esq; Mr. Congreve, Mr. Dennis, and other ingenious gentlemen of the age.

Miscellaneous Poems, on several Occasions, and Translations from Horace, Persius, Petronius Arbiter, &c. with an Essay upon Satire, by the famous M. Dacier, 8vo. 1692.

Page 178

A Review of Her Royal Highness Princess Sophia's Letters to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, and that of Sir Rowland Gwynn's, to the Right Hon. the Earl of Stamford, 8vo. 1706.

Canons, or the Vision; a Poem, addressed to the Right Hon. James Earl of Carnarvon, &c. 1717.

The Laws of Poetry, as laid down by the Duke of Buckingham in his Essay on Poetry, by the Earl of Roscommon in his Essay upon Translated Verse; and by Lord Lansdown on Unnatural Flights in Poetry, explained and illustrated, &c. 8vo. 1721.

A Continuation of Langbain's Lives of the Poets.

Mr. Coxeter has imputed to him a piece called Measure for Measure, or Beauty the best Advocate; altered from Shakespear, and performed at the Theatre in Lincoln's Inn-Fields 1700, with the addition of several Entertainments of Music. Prologue and Epilogue by Mr. Oldmixon.

The Deist's Manual, or Rational Enquiry into the Christian Religion, with some Animadversions on Hobbs, Spinosa, the Oracles of Reason, Second Thoughts, &c. to which is prefixed a Letter from the Author of the Method with the Deists, 1705.

Complete Art of Poetry.

Mr. Gildon died on the 12th of January 1723, and in the words of Boyer's Political State, vol. xxvii. p. 102. we shall sum up his character.

'On Sunday, January 12, died Mr. Charles Gildon, a person of great literature, but a mean genius; who having attempted several kinds of writing, never gained much reputation in any. Among other treatises, he wrote the English Art of Poetry, which he had practised himself very unsuccessfully in his dramatic performances. He also wrote an English Grammar, but what he seemed to build his chief hopes of fame upon, was, his late Critical Commentary on the Duke of Buckingham's Essay on Poetry, which last piece was perused, and highly approved, by his grace.'

* * * * *

THOMAS D'URFEY,

Was born in the county of Devon, and was first bred to the law; but we have not heard from what family he was descended, nor in what year he was born. He has written upwards of thirty plays, with various success, but had a genius better turned to a ballad, and little irregular odes, than for dramatic poetry. He soon forsook the profession of the law, and threw himself upon the public, by writing for the stage.——That D'Urfey was a

man of some abilities, and, enjoyed the esteem and friendship of men of the greatest parts in his time, appears from the favourable testimony of the author of the Guardian: And as the design of this work is to collect, and throw into one view, whatever may be found concerning any poet of eminence in various books, and literary records, we shall make no scruple of transcribing what that ingenious writer has humorously said concerning our author.

Page 179

In Numb. 29. Vol. I. speaking of the advantages of laughing, he thus mentions D'Urfey. 'A judicious author, some years since published a collection of Sonnets, which he very successfully called Laugh and be Fat; or Pills to purge Melancholy: I cannot sufficiently admire the facetious title of these volumes, and must censure the world of ingratitude, while they are so negligent in rewarding the jocose labours of my friend Mr. D'Urfey, who was so large a contributor to this Treatise, and to whose humorous productions, so many rural squires in the remotest parts of this island are obliged, for the dignity and state which corpulency gives them. It is my opinion, that the above pills would be extremely proper to be taken with Asses milk, and might contribute towards the renewing and restoring decayed lungs.'

Numb. 67. He thus speaks of his old friend.—'It has been remarked, by curious observers, that poets are generally long lived, and run beyond the usual age of man, if not cut off by some accident, or excess, as Anacreon, in the midst of a very merry old age, was choaked with a grape stone. The same redundancy of spirits that produces the poetical flame, keeps up the vital warmth, and administers uncommon fuel to life. I question not but several instances will occur to my reader's memory, from Homer down to Mr. Dryden; I shall only take notice of two who have excelled in Lyrics, the one an antient, the other a modern. The first gained an immortal reputation by celebrating several jockeys in the Olympic Games; the last has signalized himself on the same occasion, by the Ode that begins with——To horse brave boys, to New-market, to horse. The reader will by this time know, that the two poets I have mentioned are Pindar, and Mr. D'Urfey. The former of these is long since laid in his urn, after having many years together endeared himself to all Greece, by his tuneful compositions. Our countryman is still living, and in a blooming old age, that still promises many musical productions; for if I am not mistaken our British Swan will sing to the last. The best judges, who have perused his last Song on the moderate Man, do not discover any decay in his parts; but think it deserves a place among the finest of those works, with which he obliged the world in his more early years.

'I am led into this subject, by a visit which I lately received from my good old friend and cotemporary. As we both flourished together in king Charles the IId's reign, we diverted ourselves with the remembrance of several particulars that pass'd in the world, before the greatest part of my readers were born; and could not but smile to think how insensibly we were grown into a couple of venerable old gentlemen. Tom observed to me, that after having written more Odes than Horace, and about four times as many Comedies as Terence; he was reduced to great difficulties, by the importunities of a set of men, who of late years had furnished him with the accommodations of life,

Page 180

and would not, as we say, be paid with a song. In order to extricate my old friend, I immediately sent for the three directors of the Play-house, and desired they would in their turn, do a good office for a man, who in Shakespear's phrase, often filled their mouths; I mean with pleasantry and popular conceits. They very generously listened to my proposal, and agreed to act the Plotting Sisters (a very taking play of my old friends composing) on the 15th of next month, for the benefit of the author.

'My kindness to the agreeable Mr. D'Urfey, will be imperfect, if, after having engaged the players in his favour, I do not get the town to come into it. I must therefore heartily recommend to all the young ladies my disciples, the case of my old friend, who has often made their grand-mothers merry; and whose Sonnets have perhaps lulled asleep many a present toast, when she lay in her cradle. The gentleman I am speaking of, has laid obligations on so many of his countrymen, that I hope they will think this but a just return to the good service of a veteran Poet.

'I myself, remember king Charles the IId. leaning on Tom D'Urfey's shoulder more than once, and humming over a song with him. It is certain, that monarch was not a little supported, by joy to great Caesar; which gave the Whigs such a blow, as they were not able to recover that whole reign. My friend afterwards attacked Popery, with the same success, having exposed Beliarmine, and Portocarero, more than once, in short satirical compositions, which have been in every body's mouth. He made use of Italian Tunes and Sonato's, for promoting the Protestant interest; and turned a considerable part of the Pope's music against himself. In short, he has obliged the court with political Sonnets; the country with Dialogues, and Pastorals; the city with Descriptions of a lord Mayor's Feast; not to mention his little Ode upon Stool-Ball; with many others of the like nature.

'Should the very individuals he has celebrated, make their appearance together, they would be sufficient to fill the play-house. Pretty Peg of Windsor, Gilian of Croydon; with Dolly and Molly; and Tommy and Johny; with many others to be met with in the musical Miscellanies, would make a great benefit.

'As my friend, after the manner of the old Lyrics, accompanies his works with his own voice; he has been the delight of the most polite companies and conversions, from the beginning of king Charles the IId's reign, to our own times: Many an honest gentleman has got a reputation in his country, by pretending to have been in company with Tom D'Urfey.

'I might here mention several other merits in my friend, as his enriching our language with a multitude of rhimes, and bringing words together, that without his good offices, would never have been acquainted with one another, so long as it had been a tongue; but I must not omit that my old friend angled for a trout, the best of any man in England.

Page 181

’After what I have said, and much more that I might say, on this subject, I question not but the world will think that my old friend ought not to pass the remainder of his life in a cage, like a singing bird; but enjoy all that Pindaric liberty, which is suitable to a man of his genius. He has made the world merry, and I hope they will make him easy, as long as he stays amongst us. This I will take upon me to say, they cannot do a kindness, to a more diverting companion, or a more chearful, honest, good-natur’d man.’——

The same author, Numb. 82. puts his readers in mind when D’Urfey’s benefit came on, of some other circumstances favourable to him. ’The Plotting Sisters, says he, is this day to be acted for the benefit of the author, my old friend Mr. D’Urfey. This comedy was honoured with the presence of King Charles *ii*. three of the first five nights. My friend has in this work shewn himself a master, and made not only the characters of the play, but also the furniture of the house contribute to the main design. He has made excellent use of a table with a carpet, and the key of a closet; with these two implements, which would perhaps have been over-looked by an ordinary writer, he contrives the most natural perplexities (allowing only the use of these houshold goods in poetry) that ever were represented on a stage. He also made good advantage of the knowledge of the stage itself; for in the nick of being surprized, the lovers are let down, and escape at a trap door. In a word, any who have the curiosity to observe what pleased in the last generation, and does not go to a comedy with a resolution to be grave, will find this evening ample food for mirth. Johnson, who understands what he does as well as any man, exposes the impertinence of an old fellow who has lost his senses, still pursuing pleasures with great mastery. The ingenious Mr. Pinkethman is a bashful rake, and is sheepish, without having modesty with great success. Mr. Bullock succeeds Nokes in the part of Bubble, and, in my opinion, is not much below him, for he does excellently that kind of folly we call absurdity, which is the very contrary of wit; but next to that is, of all things, properest to excite mirth. What is foolish is the object of pity, but absurdity often proceeds from an opinion of sufficiency, and consequently is an honest occasion for laughter. These characters in this play, cannot but make it a very pleasant entertainment, and the decorations of singing and dancing, will more than repay the good-nature of those, who make an honest man a visit of two merry hours, to make his following year unpainful.’

These are the testimonies of friendship and esteem, which this great author has given in favour of D’Urfey, and however his genius may be turned for the Sing-song, or Ballad, which is certainly the lowest species of poetry, yet that man cannot be termed contemptible, who was thus loved, and, though in jocular terms, praised by Mr. Addison.

Page 182

There are few, or no particulars relating to the life of this poet preserved. He was attached to the Tory interest, and in the latter part of Queen Anne's reign frequently had the honour of diverting her with witty catches, and songs of humour suited to the spirit of the times. He died, according to Mr. Coxeter, February 26, 1723, in a good old age, and was buried in the Church-yard of St. James's, Westminster. His dramatic works are,

1. The Siege of Memphis, or the Ambitious Queen; a Tragedy acted at the Theatre-royal, printed in quarto 1676. Mr. Langbain says that this play is full of bombast and fustian, and observes, 'That there goes more to the making a poet, than copying verses, or tagging rhimes, and recommends to the modern poetasters, the following lines from a Prologue to a Play called the Atheist.'

'Rhimsters get wit, e're ye pretend to shew it,
Nor think a game at Crambo makes a poet.'

2. Madam Fickle, or the Witty False One; acted at the duke of York's Theatre, printed in quarto, 1677, dedicated to the duke of Ormond. This play is compiled from several other Comedies; the scene is laid in Covent-Garden.

3. Trick for Trick, or the Debauched Hypocrite; a Comedy acted at the Theatre-Royal 1678: This is the only one of Fletcher's plays, called Monsieur Thomas revived.

4. The Fool turn'd Critic; acted at the Theatre-Royal, 1678. Several of the characters of this play are borrowed; as Old-wine-love, Trim and Small-wit, seem to be taken from Senio Asotus, and Ballio, in Randolph's Jealous Lovers.

5. Fond Husband, or the Plotting Sisters, a Comedy. Of this we have already given some account, in the words of Mr. Addison.

6. Squire Old-Sap, or the Night-Adventures; a Comedy; acted at the duke's Theatre, printed in quarto, 1679. Several incidents in this play are taken from Francion's Comic. Hist. Boccace's Novels, les Contes de M. de la Fontaine.

7. The Virtuous Wife, or Good-Luck at last; a Comedy acted at the duke's Theatre 1680. Several hints are taken from the Town, Marriage A-la-mode, &c. the Scene Chelsea.

8. Sir Barnaby Whig, or no Wit like a Woman's; a Comedy acted at the Theatre-Royal 1681. Dedicated to the right honourable George Earl of Berkley. The plot of this play is taken from a Play of Marmion's, called the Fine Companion; and part from the Double Cuckold, a Novel, written by M. St. Evremond. Scene London.

9. The Royalist, a Comedy; acted at the Duke's Theatre 1682. This play, which is collected chiefly from novels, succeeded on the stage; printed in 4to. 1644.

10. The Injured Princess, or the Fatal Wager; a Tragi-Comedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal 1682. The foundation of this play is taken from Shakespear's Cymbeline.

11. A Common-wealth of Women, a Tragi-Comedy; acted at the Theatre Royal 1686, dedicated to Christopher Duke of Albemarle. This play is chiefly borrowed from Fletcher's Sea Voyage. The scene is in Covent Garden.

Page 183

12. The Banditti, or a Lady's Distress; a Comedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal 1688. This play met with great opposition during the performance, which was disturbed by the Catcalls. This occasioned the author to take his revenge upon the town, by dedicating it to a certain Knight, under the title of Sir Critic Cat-call. The chief plot of this play is founded on a Romance written by Don Francisco de las Coveras, called Don Fenise, translated into English in 8vo. See the History of Don Antonio, b. iv. p. 250. The design of Don Diego's turning Banditti, and joining with them to rob his supposed father, resembles that of Pipperollo in Shirley's play called the Sisters. Scene Madrid.

13. A Fool's Preferment, or the Three Dukes of Dunstable; a Comedy; acted at the Queen's Theatre in Dorset-Garden 1688, dedicated to Charles Lord Morpeth, in as familiar a way as if the Author was a man of Quality. The whole play is little more than a transcript of Fletcher's Noble Gentlemen, except one scene, which is taken from a Novel called The Humours of Basset. Scene the Court, in the time of Henry *iv*. The songs in this play were all composed by the celebrated Musician Mr. Henry Purcell.

14. Bussy D'Amboise, or the Husband's Revenge; a Tragedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal, 4to. 1691, addressed to Edward Earl of Carlisle. This is a play of Mr. Chapman's revis'd, and the character of Tamyra, Mr. D'Urfey tells us, he has altered for the better. The scene Paris.

15. Love for Money, or the Boarding School; a Comedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal 1691, dedicated to Charles Lord Viscount Lansdown, Count of the Sacred Roman Empire, &c. This play met with opposition in the first day's representation, but afterwards succeeded pretty well. The scene Chelsea.

16. The Richmond Heiress, or a Woman once in the Right; a Comedy, acted at the Theatre-Royal 1693.

17. The Marriage-Hater Matched, a Comedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal 1693, addressed to James Duke of Ormond. Mr. Charles Gildon, in an epistle prefixed to the play, tells us, that this is much the best of our author's performances. Mr. Dogget was first taken notice of as an excellent actor, from the admirable performance of his part in this play. Scene the Park, near Kensington.

18. The Comical History of Don Quixot, Part the First; acted at the Queen's Theatre in Dorset-Garden 1694, dedicated to the Duchess of Ormond. This play was acted with great applause; it is wholly taken from the Spanish Romance of that name. Scene Mancha in Spain.

19. The Comical History of Don Quixot, Part the Second; acted at the Queen's Theatre 1694, dedicated by an Epistle, in heroic Verse, to Charles Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, &c. This play was likewise acted with applause.

20. Don Quixot, Part the Third, with the Marriage of Mary the Buxom, 1669; this met with no success.

Page 184

21. The Intrigues at Versailles, or A Jilt in all Humours; a Comedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields 1697, dedicated to Sir Charles Sedley the Elder, Bart. and to his much honoured Friend Sir Charles Sedley, his Son. Scene Versailles. The author complains of the want of success in this play, when he asserts, the town had applauded some pieces of his of less merit. He has borrowed very liberally from a play of Mrs. Behn's called The Amorous Jilt.

22. Cynthia and Endymion, or The Lover of the Deities, a Dramatic Opera; acted at the Theatre-Royal 1697, dedicated to Henry Earl of Romney; this was acted with applause; and the author tells us, that King William's Queen Mary intended to have it represented at Court. 'There are many lines (says Jacob) in this play, above the genius which generally appears in the other works of this author; but he has perverted the characters of Ovid, in making Daphne, the chaste favourite of Diana, a whore, and a jilt; and fair Syrene to lose her reputation, in the unknown ignominy of an envious, mercenary, infamous woman.' Scene Ionia.

23. The Campaigners, or The Pleasant Adventures at Brussels; a Comedy; with a familiar Preface upon a late Reformer of the Stage, ending with a Satirical Fable of the Dog, and the Otter, 1698. This play is dedicated to Thomas Lord Wharton, and part of it is borrowed from a Novel called Female Falsehood. Scene Brussels. 24. Massanello, or a Fisherman Prince, in two Parts; acted at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields 1700.

25. The Modern Prophets, or New Wit for a Husband; a Comedy.

26. The Old Mode and the New, or Country Miss with her Furbelo; a Comedy. Scene Coventry.

27. Wonders in the Sun, or The Kingdom of Birds; a Comic Opera; performed at the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Market.

28. Bath, or The Western Lass; a Comedy; dedicated to John Duke of Argyle.

29. The Two Queens of Brentford, or Bays no Poetaster; a Musical Farce, or Comical Opera; being the Sequel of the Rehearsal, written by the Duke of Buckingham; it has five Acts. Scene Inside of the Playhouse.

30. The Grecian Heroine, or The Fate of Tyranny; a Tragedy; written 1718. Scene Corinth.

31. Ariadne, or The Triumph of Bacchus; the Scene Naxos, an Island in the Archipelago. These last were published with a Collection of Poems 1721.

These are the dramatic performances of D'Urfey, by which his incessant labours for the stage are to be seen; though not one of his numerous issue is now in possession of it. He was author of many poems, and songs, which we need not here enumerate. Mr.

Coxeter takes particular notice of a piece of his called Gloriana, a Funeral Pindarique Poem to the memory of Queen Mary, 4to. 1695.

The Trophies, or Augusta's Glory; a triumphant Ode, made in honour of the City, and upon the Trophies taken from the French at the Battle of Ramillies, May 25, 1706, by the Duke of Marlborough, and fixed in Guildhall, London, dedicated to the Lord Mayor, and Court of Aldermen and Sheriffs, and also to the President. and Court of Managers for the united Trade to the East Indies.

Page 185

Honor & Opes, or The British Merchant's Glory; a Poem Congratulatory, on the happy Decision, and Conclusion of all Difficulties between the Old and New Company in the Trade to the East Indies. As a specimen of his poetry take the following lines.

Verses Congratulatory, to the Honourable *William Bromley*, Esq; on his being chosen *Speaker* of this present Parliament.

As when Hyperion with victorious light
Expels invading Pow'rs of gloomy night,
And vernal nature youthful dress'd and gay,
Salutes the radiant power that forms the day;
The mounting Lark exalts her joyful note,
And strains with harmony her warbling throat:
So now my muse that hopes to see the day,
When cloudy faction, that do's Britain sway,
Shall be o'ercome by reason's dazling ray;
Applauding senates for their prudent choice,
The will of Heaven by the Peoples voice,
First greets you Sir, then gladly do's prepare,
In tuneful verse, your welcome to the chair.
  Awful th' assembly is, august the Queen,
In whose each day of life are wonders seen:
The nation too, this greatest of all years,
Who watch to see blest turns in their affairs,
Slighting the tempest on the Gallic shore,
Hope from the senate much, but from you more:
Whose happy temper judgment cultivates,
And forms so fit to aid our three estates.
  The change of ministry late ordered here,
Was fated sure for this auspicious year;
That you predestin'd at a glorious hour,
To be chief judge of legislative power,
Might by your skill that Royal right asserts,
Like Heaven, reconcile the jarring parts.
  Nor shines your influence, Sir, here alone,
The Church must your unequall'd prudence own,
Firm to support the cause, but rough to none.
Eusebia's sons, in laws divine possest,
Can learn from you how truth should be exprest;
Whether in modest terms, like balm, to heal;
Or raving notions, falsly counted zeal.
Our holy writ no rule like that allows,
No people an enrag'd apostle chose,
Nor taught Our Saviour, or St. Paul, like those.

Reason was mild, and calmly did proceed,
Which harsh might fail to make transgressors heed;
This saint your rhet'ric best knows how to prove,
Whose gracious method can inform, and move;
Direct the elders that such errors make,
And shew both how to preach, and how to speak.
  Oh! sacred gift! in public matters great,
But in religious tracts divinely sweet;
Since to this grace they only have pretence
Whose happy learning join with a caelestial sense.
  That Sir, you share both these, the muse forgive,
If I presume to write what all believe,
Your candour too, and charming courtesy,
Rever'd by them is justly so by me,
Let me not then offend your modesty,

Page 186

If now my genius to a height I raise,
Such parts, and such humanity to praise.
  This ancient [1]Baginton can witness well,
And the rich [2]library before it fell;
The precious hours amongst wise authors past,
Your Soul with their unvalued wealth possest;
And well may he to heights of knowledge come,
Who that Panthaeon always kept at home.
  Thus once, Sir, you were blest, and sure the fiend
That first entail'd a curse on human-kind,
And afterwards contriv'd this fatal cross,
Design'd the public, by your private loss.
  Oh! who had seen that love to learning bore,
The matchless authors of the days of yore;
The fathers, prelates, poets, books where arts
Renown'd explain'd the men of rarest parts,
Shrink up their shrivell'd bindings, lose their names,
And yield immortal worth to temporary flames,
That would not sigh to see the ruins there,
Or wish to quench 'em with a flowing tear.
  But as in story, where we wonders view,
As there were flames, there was a Phoenix too;
An excellence from the burnt pile did rise,
That still aton'd for past calamities;
So my prophetic genius in its height,
Viewing your merit, Sir, foretels your fate.
Your valiant [3]ancestors, that bravely fought,
And from the foe the Royal standard got;
Which nobly now adorn your houshold coat,
Denotes the former grandeur of your race;
Your present worth fits you for present grace.
  The Sovereign must esteem what all admire,
Bromley and Baginton shall both raise higher,
Fate oft contrives magnificence by fire.

[Footnote 1: The ancient seat of the Bromleys in Warwickshire.]

[Footnote 2: A famous Library burnt there.]

[Footnote 3: Vide History of Warwickshire.]

* * * * *

Elkanah settle, Son of Joseph Settle of Dunstable in Bedfordshire, was born there; and in the 18th year of his age, 1666, was entered commoner of Trinity College, Oxon, and put under the tuition of Mr. Abraham Champion, fellow of that house; but he quitted the university without taking any degree, and came to London[1], where he addicted himself to the study of poetry, in which he lived to make no inconsiderable figure. Finding the nation divided between the opinions of Whig and Tory, and being sensible that a man of parts could not make any considerable figure, unless he attached himself to one of these parties; Settle thought proper, on his first setting out in life, to join the Whigs, who were then, though the minor, yet a powerful party, and to support whose interest he employed his talents.

Page 187

About the year 1680, when the debates ran high concerning the exclusion of the Duke of York from the succession, on account of his religious principles, our author wrote a piece called the Character of a Popish Successor, and what may be expected from such an one, humbly offered to the consideration of both the Houses of Parliament appointed to meet at Oxon, on March 21, 1681. This essay it seems was thought of consequence enough to merit an answer, as at that time the Exclusion Bill employed the general conversation. The answer to it was entitled The Character of a Rebellion, and what England may expect from One; printed 1682. The author of this last piece, is very severe on the character of Settle; he represents him as an errant knave, a despicable coward, and a prophane Atheist, and seems amazed that any party should make choice of a champion, whose morals were so tainted; but as this is only the language of party violence, no great credit is to be given to it.

The author of this pamphlet carries his zeal, and ill manners still farther, and informs the world of the meanness of our author's birth, and education, 'most of his relations (says he) are Barbers, and of the baseness, falseness, and mutability of his nature, too many evidences may be brought. He closed with the Whigs, contrary to the principles he formerly professed, at a time when they took occasion to push their cause, upon the breaking out of Oates's plot, and was ready to fall off from, and return to them, for his own advantage.'

To the abovementioned pamphlet, written by Settle, various other answers were published, some by writers of distinction, of which Sir Roger L'Estrange was one; and to this performance of Sir Roger's, which was entitled The Character of a Papist in Masquerade, supported by Authority and Experience, Mr. Settle made a Reply, entitled The Character of a Popish Successor Compleat; this, in the opinion of the critics, is the smartest piece ever written upon the subject of the Exclusion Bill, and yet Sir Roger, his antagonist, 'calls it a pompous, wordy thing, made up of shifts, and suppositions, without so much as an argument, either offered, or answered in stress of the question, &c.' Mr. Settle's cause was so much better than that of his antagonist's, that if he had not possessed half the powers he really did, he must have come off the conqueror, for, who does not see the immediate danger, the fatal chances, to which a Protestant people are exposed, who have the misfortune to be governed by a Popish Prince. As the King is naturally powerful, he can easily dispose of the places of importance, and trust, so as to have them filled with creatures of his own, who will engage in any enterprise, or pervert any law, to serve the purposes of the reigning Monarch. Had not the nation an instance of this, during the short reign of the very Popish Prince, against whom Settle contended? Did not judge Jeffries, a name justly devoted to everlasting

Page 188

infamy, corrupt the streams of justice, and by the most audacious cruelty, pervert the forms of law, that the blood of innocent persons might be shed, to gratify the appetite of a suspicious master? Besides, there is always a danger that the religion which the King professes, will imperceptibly diffuse itself over a nation, though no violence is used to promote it. The King, as he is the fountain of honour, so is he the fountain of fashion, and as many people, who surround a throne, are of no religion in consequence of conviction; it is but natural to suppose, that fashion would influence them to embrace the religion of the Prince, and in James II's reign, this observation was verified; for the people of fashion embraced the Popish religion so very fast, in order to please the King, that a witty knight, who then lived, and who was by his education, and principles, a Papist, being asked by a nobleman what news? he made answer, I hear no news my lord, only, God's Papists can get no preferment, because the King's Papists swarm so thick. This was a sententious, and witty observation, and it will always hold true, that the religion of the King will become the religion of people of fashion, and the lower stations ape their superiors.

Upon the coronation of King James *ii*. the two Parts of the Character of a Popish Successor, were, with the Exclusion Bill, on the 23d of April, 1685, burnt by the sub-wardens, and fellows of Merton College, Oxon, in a public bonfire, made in the middle of their great quadrangle. During these contentions, Mr. Settle also published a piece called The Medal Revers'd, published 1681; this was an answer to a poem of Dryden's called The Medal, occasioned by the bill against the earl of Shaftsbury being found ignoramus at the Old Baily, upon which the Whig party made bonfires, and ordered a medal to be struck in commemoration of that event. Shaftsbury, who was by his principles a Whig, and who could not but foresee the miseries which afterwards happened under a Popish Prince, opposed the succession with all his power; he was a man of very great endowments, and being of a bustling tumultuous disposition, was admirably fitted to be the head of a party. He was the leading man against the succession of the Duke of York, and argued in the House of Lords with great force against him, and what was more remarkable, sometimes in the Duke's presence. It is related, that at the Council-table, when his Majesty, and his Royal Brother were both present, something concerning the succession was canvassed, when Shaftsbury, not in the least intimidated, spoke his opinion with great vehemence against the Duke, and was answered with equal heat, but with less force, by the then lord chamberlain. During this debate, the Duke took occasion to whisper the King, that his Majesty had a villain of a chancellor, to which the King merrily replied, oddsfish, York, what a fool you have of a chamberlain: by which it appears, his Majesty was convinced that Shaftsbury's arguments were the strongest.

Page 189

In consequence of Shaftsbury's violent opposition to the Duke, and the court party, there was a Bill of Indictment of High Treason, read before his Majesty's Commissioners of Oyer and Terminer in the Sessions-House at the Old Bailey, but the Jury found it Ignoramus; upon which, all the party rejoiced at the deliverance of their head. These disturbances gave Mr. Settle an opportunity to display his abilities, which he did not neglect to improve, by which means he procured so formidable an antagonist as Mr. Dryden, who was obliged by his place of laureat, to speak, and write for the court. Dryden had formerly joined Mr. Settle, in order to reduce the growing reputation of Shadwell, but their interest being now so opposite, they became poetical enemies, in which Settle was, no doubt, over-matched. He wrote a poem, however, called Azaria and Hushai, in five sheets, 4to. designed as an answer to Mr. Dryden's poem called Absalom and Achitophel.

Soon after this, if we may credit the Oxford Antiquary, Settle changed sides, and turned Tory, with as much violence as he had formerly espoused the interest of the Whigs. He published in 1683, in eight meets in folio, a Narrative; the first part of which is concerning himself, as being of the Tory side; the second to shew the inconsistency, and contradiction of Titus Oates's Narrative of the Plot of the Popish Party, against the Life of King Charles *ii*. at the time when that Monarch intended to alter his ministry, to have consented to the exclusion of his brother, and taken measures to support the Protestant interest. This Oates was in the reign of James *ii*. tried, and convidled of perjury, upon the evidence chiefly of Papists, and had a severe sentence pronounced, and inflicted upon him, *viz*. Imprisonmehd for life, twice every year to stand on the pillory, and twice to be severely whipt; but he received a pardon from King William, after suffering his whippings, and two years imprisonment, with amazing fortitude, but was never allowed again to be an evidence. While Settle was engaged in the Tory party, he is said, by Wood, to have been author of Animadversions on the Last Speech and Confession of William Lord Russel, who fell a sacrifice to the Duke of York, and whose story, as related by Burnet, never fails to move the reader to tears. Also Remarks on Algernon Sidney's Paper, delivered to the Sheriffs at his Execution, London, 1683, in one sheet, published the latter end of December the same year. Algernon Sidney was likewise murdered by the same kind of violence, which popish bigotry had lifted up against the lives of some other British worthies.

He also wrote a heroic poem on the Coronation of the High and Mighty Monarch James *ii*. London 1685, and then commenced a journalist for the Court, and published weekly an Essay in behalf of the Administration. If Settle was capable of these mean compliances of writing for, or against a party, as he was hired, he must have possessed a very sordid mind, and been totally devoid of all principles of honour; but as there is no other authority for it than Wood, who is enthusiastic in his temper, and often writes of things, not as they were, but as he would wish them to be, the reader may give what credit he pleases to the report.

Page 190

Our author's dramatic works are

1. The Empress of Morocco, a Tragedy; acted at the Duke of York's Theatre. This play was likewise acted at court, as appears by the two Prologues prefixed, which were both spoken by the Lady Elizabeth Howard; the first Prologue was written by the Earl of Mulgrave, the other by Lord Rochester; when it was performed at court, the Lords and Ladies of the Bed-chamber played in it. Mr. Dryden, Mr. Shadwell, and Mr. Crowne, wrote against it, which began a famous controversy betwixt the wits of the town, wherein, says Jacob, Mr. Dryden was roughly handled, particularly by the lord Rochester, and the duke of Buckingham, and Settle got the laugh upon his side.

2. Love and Revenge, a Tragedy; acted at the Duke of York's Theatre, 4to. 1675, dedicated to William Duke of Newcastle.

3. Cambyses King of Persia, a Tragedy; acted at the Duke's Theatre, dedicated to Anne Duchess of Monmouth. This tragedy is written in heroic verse; the plot from Justin, lib. i. c. 9. Herodotus, &c. The Scene is in Suza, and Cambyses's camp near the walls of Suza.

4. The Conquest of China by the Tartars, a Tragedy; acted at the Duke's Theatre, 4to. 1676, dedicated to the Right Hon. the Lord Howard of Castle-rising. This play is likewise written in heroic verse, and founded on history.

5. Ibrahim, the Illustrious Bassa, a Tragedy in heroic verse; acted at the Duke's Theatre 1677, dedicated to the Duchess of Albemarle. Plot from the Illustrious Bassa, a Romance, by Scuddery. The Scene Solyman's Seraglio.

6. Pastor Fido, or The Faithful Shepherd; a Pastoral; acted at the Duke of York's Theatre. This is Sir Richard Fanshaw's translation from the Italian of Guarini Improved. Scene Arcadia.

7. Fatal Love, or The Forced Inconstancy; a Tragedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal, 1680, dedicated to Sir Robert Owen.

8. The Female Prelate, being the History of the Life and Death of Pope Joan; a Tragedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal, 4to. 1680, dedicated to Anthony Earl of Shaftsbury.

9. The Heir of Morocco, with the Death of Gyland, a Tragedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal 1682.

10. Distressed Innocence, or the Princess of Persia; a Tragedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal, dedicated to John Lord Cutts. This play was acted with applause; the author acknowledges his obligations to Betterton, for some valuable hints in this play, and that Mr. Mountford wrote the last scene of it.

11. The Ambitious Slave, or a Generous Revenge; a Tragedy; acted at the Theatre Royal, 4to. 1694. This play met with ill success.

12. The World in the Moon, a Dramatic, Comic Opera; performed at the Theatre in Dorset-Garden, by his Majesty's Servants, 1698.

13. City Rambler, or The Playhouse Wedding; a Comedy; acted at the Theatre-Royal.

14. The Virgin Prophetess, or The Fate of Troy; an Opera; performed 1701.

Page 191

15. The Ladies Triumph, a Comic Opera; presented at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, by Subscription, 1710.

Our poet possessed a pension from the City Magistrates, for an annual Panegyric to celebrate the Festival of the Lord Mayor, and in consequence wrote various poems, which he calls Triumphs for the Inauguration of the Lord Mayors, which are preserved in his works, and which it would be needless to enumerate. Besides his dramatic pieces, he published many occasional poems, addressed to his patrons, and some funeral elegies on the deaths of his friends. It is certain Settle did not want learning, and, in the opinion of some critics, in the early part of his life, sometimes excelled Dryden; but that was certainly owing more to a power he had of keeping his temper unruffled, than any effort of genius; for between Dryden and Settle, there is as great difference, as between our modern versifiers, and Pope.

Whatever was the success of his poetry, he was the best contriver of machinery in England, and for many years of the latter part of his life received an annual salary from Mrs. Minns, and her daughter Mrs. Leigh, for writing Drolls for Bartholomew, and Southwark Fairs, with proper decorations, which were generally so well contrived, that they exceeded those of their opponents in the same profession.

Our author died in the Charterhouse 1724; some months before his decease, he offered a play to the managers of the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, but he lived not to introduce it on the stage; it was called The Expulsion of the Danes from Britain.

End of the Third Volume.

[Footnote 1: Wood's Athen. Oxon. vol, ii. p. 1076.]