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N^o 122.. Thursday, January 19. 1709.

Cur in Theatrum Cato severe venisti?

Mart.

From my own Apartment, January 18.

I Find it is thought necessary, that I (who have taken upon me to censure the Irregularities of the age) should give an account of my Actions when they appear doubtful, or subject to misconstruction. My appearing at the Play on * *Monday* last, is looked upon as a step in my conduct, which I ought to explain, that others may not be misled by my Example. It is true in matter of fact, I was present at the ingenious entertainment of that day, and placed myself in a box which was prepared for me with great civility and distinction. It is said of *Virgil*, when he entered a *Roman* Theatre, where there were many thousands of spectators present, that the whole assembly Rose up to do him honour; a respect which was never before paid to any but the Emperor. I must confess, that universal Clap, and other testimonies of applause, with which I was received at my first appearance in the Theatre of *Great Britain*, gave me as sensible a delight, as the above-mentioned reception could give to that immortal Poet. I should be ungrateful at the same time, if I did not take this opportunity of acknowledging the great civilities that were shown me by Mr. *Thomas Dogget*, who made his compliments to me between the Acts after a most ingenuous and discreet manner; and at the same time communicated to me, that the Company of Upholders desired to receive me at their door at the end of the *Haymarket*, and to light me home to my lodgings. That part of the ceremony I forbade, and took particular care during the whole Play to observe the Conduct of the *Drama*, and give no offence by my own behaviour. Here I think it will not be foreign to my character, to lay down the proper duties of an Audience, and what is incumbent upon each individual Spectator in publick diversions of this nature. Every one should on these occasions show his Attention, Understanding, and Virtue. I would undertake to find

* N. B. A Person dressed for Isaac Bickerstaffe did appear at the Play-house on this occasion.

find out all the persons of sense and breeding by the effect of a single sentence, and to distinguish a Gentleman as much by his Laugh as his Bow. When we see the Footman and his Lord diverted by the same Jest, it very much turns to the diminution of the one, or the honour of the other. But though a man's Quality may appear in his Understanding and Taste, the regard to Virtue ought to be the same in all ranks and conditions of Men, however they make a profession of it under the name of Honour, Religion, or Morality. When therefore we see any thing divert an Audience, either in Tragedy or Comedy, that strikes at the Duties of Civil Life, or exposes what the best men in all ages have looked upon as sacred and inviolable, it is the certain sign of a Profligate race of men, who are fallen from the virtue of their Forefathers, and will be contemptible in the eyes of their Posterity. For this reason I took great delight in seeing the generous and disinterested passion of the Lovers in this Comedy (which stood so many trials, and was proved by such a variety of diverting incidents) received with an universal Approbation. This brings to my mind a passage in *Cicero*, which I could never read without being in love with the virtue of a *Roman* audience. He there describes the shouts and applauses which the people gave to the persons who acted the parts of *Pylades* and *Orestes*, in the noblest occasion that a Poet could invent to show Friendship in perfection. One of them had forfeited his life by an action which he had committed; and as they stood in judgment before the Tyrant, each of them strove who should be the Criminal, that he might save the life of his friend. Amidst the vehemence of each asserting himself to be the Offender, the *Roman* Audience gave a thunder of applause, and by that means, as the Author hints, approved in others what they would have done themselves on the like occasion. Methinks, a people of so much virtue were deservedly placed at the head of mankind: But, alas! pleasures of this nature are not frequently to be met with on the *English* Stage.

The *Athenians*, at a time when they were the most Polite, as well as the most Powerful government in the world, made the care of the Stage one of the chief parts of the Administration: And I must confess, I am astonish'd at the Spirit of Virtue which appeared in that people upon some expressions in a Scene of a famous Tragedy; an account of which we have in one of *Seneca's* Epistles. A covetous Person is represented speaking the common sentiments of all who are possessed with that vice in the following Soliloquy, which I have translated literally.

M m 2

Let

Let me be called a Base man, so I am called a Rich one. If a man is Rich, who asks if he is Good? The question is, How much we Have; not from Whence, or by what Means, we have it. Every one has so much Merit as he has Wealth. For my own part, let me be Rich, Oh ye Gods! or let me Die. The man dies Happily, who dies increasing his Treasure. There is more pleasure in the Possession of Wealth, than in that of Parents, Children, Wife, or Friends.

The Audience were very much provoked by the first words of this speech; but when the Actor came to the close of it, they could bear no longer. In short, the whole Assembly rose up at once in the greatest fury, with a design to pluck him off the Stage, and brand the work it self with infamy. In the midst of the tumult, the Author came out from behind the Scenes, begging the Audience to be compos'd for a little while, and they should see the Tragical End which this wretch should come to immediately. The promise of Punishment appeas'd the people, who sat with great attention and pleasure to see an example made of so odious a Criminal. It is with shame and concern that I speak it; but I very much question, whether it is possible to make a Speech so impious, as to raise such a laudable horror and indignation in a Modern Audience.

It is very natural for an Author to make ostentation of his reading, as it is for an Old man to tell stories; for which reason I must beg the Reader will excuse me, if I for once indulge my self in both these inclinations. We see the attention, judgment, and virtue of a whole Audience, in the foregoing instances. If we would imitate the behaviour of a single Spectator, let us reflect upon that of *Socrates*, in a particular which gives me as great an Idea of that extraordinary Man, as any circumstance of his life; or, what is more, of his death. This venerable person often frequented the Theatre, which brought a great many thither, out of a desire to see him. On which occasion it is recorded of him, That he sometimes stood to make himself the more conspicuous, and to satisfy the curiosity of the beholders. He was one day present at the first representation of a Tragedy of *Euripides*, who was his intimate friend, and whom he is said to have assisted in several of his Plays. In the midst of the Tragedy, which had met with very great success, there chanc'd to be a line that seem'd to encourage vice and immorality.

This was no sooner spoken, but *Socrates* rose from his seat, and without any regard to his affection for his friend, or to the success of the play, showed himself displeas'd at what was said, and walked out of the assembly. I question not but the reader will be curious to know what

what the line was that gave this divine Heathen so much offence. If my memory fails me not, it was in the part of *Hippolitus*, who when he is pressed by an oath, which he had taken to keep silence, returned for answer, That he had taken the Oath with his Tongue, but not with his Heart. Had a person of a vicious character made such a Speech, it might have been allowed as a proper representation of the Baseness of his thoughts: But such an expression out of the mouth of the virtuous *Hippolitus*, was giving a sanction to falshood, and establishing perjury by a maxim.

Having got over all interruptions, I have set apart to morrow for the closing of my Vision.

N^o 123. Saturday, January 21. 1709.

*Audire atque togam jubeo componere, quisquis
Ambitione mala, aut argenti pallet amore.*

Hor.

From my own Apartment, January 20.

A Continuation of the Vision.

WITH much labour and difficulty I passed through the first part of my Vision, and recovered the centre of the wood, from whence I had the prospect of the three great Roads. I here joined my self to the middle-aged party of mankind, who marched behind the Standard of Ambition. The great Road lay in a direct line, and was terminated by the *Temple of Virtue*. It was planted on each side with Lawrels, which were intermixed with marble Trophies, carved Pillars, and Statues of Lawgivers, Heroes, Statesmen, Philosophers, and Poets. The persons who travelled up this great Path, were such whose thoughts were bent upon doing eminent services to mankind, or promoting the good of their country. On each side of this great Road were several Paths, that were also laid out in straight lines, and ran parallel with it. These were most of them Covered walks, and received into them men of Retired virtue, who proposed to themselves the same end.