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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

Epilogue to Tamerlane

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EPILOGUE to TAMERLANE,

On the Suppression of the REBELLION.

Spoken by Mrs. PRITCHARD, in the Character of the COMIC MUSE,
November 4, 1746.

BRITONS, once more in annual joy we meet
This genial night in freedom's fav'rite seat:
And o'er the * two great empires still I reign
Of Covent-garden, and of Drury-lane.
But ah! what clouds o'er all our realms impended!
Our ruin artless prodigies portended.
Chains, real chains, our heroes had in view,
And scenes of mimic dungeons chang'd to true.
An equal fate the Stage and Britain dreaded,
Had Rome's young missionary spark succeeded.
But laws and liberties are trifling treasures;
He threaten'd that grave property, your pleasures.

For me, an idle muse, I ne'er diffembled
My fears; but e'en my tragic sister trembled.
O'er all her sons she cast her mournful eyes,
And heav'd her breast more than dramatic sighs:
To eyes well-tutor'd in the trade of grief
She rais'd a small and well-lac'd handkerchief;

* The two great empires of the world I know, This of Peru, and that of Mexico.

INDIAN EMPEROR.

VOL. I.

E

And

And then with decent pause—and accent broke,
 Her buskin'd progeny the dame bespoke:
 " Ah! sons, * our dawn is over-cast, and all
 " Theatric glories nodding to their fall.
 " From foreign realms a bloody chief is come,
 " Big with the work of slav'ry and of Rome.
 " A general ruin on his sword he wears,
 " Fatal alike to audience and to play'rs.
 " For ah! my sons, what freedom for the stage,
 " When bigotry with sense shall battle wage?
 " When monkish laureats only wear the bays,
 " † Inquisitors lord chamberlains of plays?
 " Plays shall be damn'd that 'scap'd the critic's rage,
 " For priests are still worse tyrants to the stage.
 " Cato, receiv'd by audiences so gracious,
 " Shall find ten Cæsars in one St. Ignatius:
 " And godlike Brutus here shall meet again
 " His evil genius in a capuchin.
 " For heresy the fav'rites of the pit
 " Must burn, and excommunicated wit;
 " And at one stake we shall behold expire
 " My Anna Bullen, and the Spanish Fryar.

" Ev'n ‡ Tamerlane, whose fainter name appears
 " Red-letter'd in the calendar of play'rs,
 " Oft as these festal rites attend the morn
 " Of liberty restor'd, and WILLIAM born—
 " But at that name what transports flood my eyes!
 " What golden vision's this I see arise!
 " What § youth is he with comeliest conquest crown'd,
 " His warlike brow with full-blown laurels bound?
 " What wreaths are these that vict'ry dares to join,
 " And blend with trophies of my fav'rite Boyne?

* The dawn is over-cast, the morning lours,
 And heavily in clouds brings on the day,
 The great, th' important day, big with the fate
 Of Cato and of Rome. CATO.

† Tamerlane is always acted on the 4th and
 5th of November, the anniversaries of king Wil-
 liam's birth and landing.
 § William duke of Cumberland.

‡ Cibber preside lord chancellor of plays. POPE.

" Oh! if the muse can happy aught preface,
 " Of new deliv'rance to the state and stage;
 " If not untaught the characters to spell
 " Of all who bravely fight or conquer well;
 " * Thou shalt be WILLIAM—like the last design'd
 " The tyrant's scourge, and blessing of mankind;
 " Born civil tumult and blind zeal to quell,
 " That teaches happy subjects to rebel.
 " Nassau himself but half our vows shall share,
 " Divide our incense and divide our pray'r:
 " And oft as Tamerlane shall lend his fame
 " To shadow *his*, thy rival star shall claim
 " † Th' ambiguous laurel and the doubtful name."

* Tu Marcellus eris.

VIRGIL.

† Conditor Iliados cantabitur, atque Maronis
 Altisoni dubiam facientia carmina palmam. Juv.