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The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl Of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

Prologue and Epilogues.

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PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUES.

PROLOGUE TO THE MYSTERIOUS MOTHER.

FROM no French model breathes the muse to-night;
 The scene she draws is horrid, not polite.
 She dips her pen in terror. Will ye shrink?
 Shall foreign critics teach you how to think?
 Had Shakespear's magic dignified the stage,
 If timid laws had school'd th' insipid age?
 Had Hamlet's spectre trod the midnight round?
 Or Banquo's issue been in vision crown'd?
 Free as your country, Britons, be your scene!
 Be Nature now, and now Invention, queen!
 Be Vice alone corrected and restrain'd.
 Can crimes be punish'd by a bard enchain'd?
 Shall the bold censor back be sent to school,
 And told, This is not nice; That is not rule?
 The French no crimes of magnitude admit;
 They seldom startle, just alarm the pit.
 At most, when dire necessity ordains
 That death should sluice some king's or lover's veins,
 A tedious confident appears, to tell
 What dismal woes behind the scenes befell.

Chill'd

Chill'd with the drowsy tale, his audience fret,
While the star'd piece concludes like a gazette.

The tragic Greeks with nobler licence wrote;
Nor veil'd the eye, but pluck'd away the mote.
Whatever passion prompted, was their game;
Not delicate, while chastisement their aim.
Electra now a parent's blood demands;
Now parricide distains the Theban's hands,
And love incestuous knots his nuptial bands.
Such is our scene; from real life it rose;
Tremendous picture of domestic woes.
If terror shake you, or soft pity move,
If dreadful pangs o'ertake unbridled love;
Excuse the bard, who from your feelings draws
All the reward he aims at, your applause.

EPILOGUE, to be spoken by Mrs. CLIVE.

OUR bard, whose head is fill'd with Gothic fancies,
And teems with ghosts and giants and romances,
Intended to have kept your passions up,
And sent you crying out your eyes, to sup.
Would you believe it—though *mine* all the vogue,
He meant his nun should speak the epilogue.
His nun! so pious, pliant and demure—
Lord! you have had enough of her, I'm sure!
I storm'd—for, when my honour is at stake,
I make the pillars of the green-room shake.
Heroes half-drest, and goddesses half-lac'd,
Avoid my wrath, and from my thunders haste.
I vow'd by all the gods of Rome and Greece,
'Twas I would finish his too doleful piece.

I, flush'd

I, flush'd with comic roguery—said I,
 Will make 'em laugh, more than you make 'em cry.
 Bless me! said he—among the Greeks, dear Kat'rinc,
 Of smutty epilogues I know no pattern.
 Smutty! said I—and then I stamp'd the stage
 With all a turkey-cock's majestic rage—
 When did you know in public—or in private,
 Doubles entendres my strict virtue drive at?
 Your muses, sir, are not more free from ill
 On mount Parnassus—or on Strawb'rry-hill.
 And though with her repentance you may hum one,
 I would not play your countess—to become one.
 So *very* guilty, and so *very* good,
 An angel, with such errant flesh and blood!
 Such sinning, praying, preaching—I'll be kift,
 If I don't think she was a methodist!

Saints are the produce of a vicious age:
 Crimes must abound, ere sectaries can rage.
 His mask no canting confessor assumes;
 With acted zeal no flaming bigot fumes;
 Till the rich harvest nods with swelling grain,
 And the sharp sickle can assure his gain.
 But soon shall hypocrites their flights deplore,
 Nor grim enthusiasts vex Britannia more.
 Virtue shall guard her daughters from their arts,
 Shine in their eyes, and blossom in their hearts.
 They need no lectures in fanatic tone;
 Their lesson lives before them—on the throne.

EPILOGUE,

E P I L O G U E,

Spoken by Mrs. CLIVE, on her quitting the Stage,

April 24, 1709.

WITH glory fatiate, from the bustling stage,
 Still in his prime—and much about my age—
 Imperial Charles (if Robertson says true),
 Retiring, bid the jarring world adieu!

Thus I, long honour'd with your partial praise,
 A debt my swelling heart with tears repays,
 —Scarce can I speak—forgive the grateful pause—
 Relinquish the noblest triumph, your applause.
 Content with humble means, yet proud to own
 I owe my pittance to your smiles alone;
 To private shades I bear the glorious prize,
 The meed of favour in a nation's eyes;
 A nation brave, and sensible, and free—
 Poor Charles! how little, when compar'd to me!
 His mad ambition had disturb'd the globe,
 And sanguine, which he quitted, was the robe.

Too blest, could he have dar'd to tell mankind,
 When Pow'r's full goblet he forbore to quaff,
 That, conscious of benevolence of mind,
 For thirty years he had but made them laugh.

Ill was that mind with sweet retirement pleas'd:
 The very cloister that he sought, he teas'd;

And

And sick at once both of himself and peace,
He died a martyr to unwelcome ease.

Here ends the parallel—My generous friends,
My exit no such tragic fate attends;
I will not die—let no vain panic seize you—
If I repent—I'll come again and please you.

INSCRIPTION under a VASE erected in the Garden of
the Villa of Mrs. CATHERINE CLIVE, near Twickenham.

YE Smiles and Jests, still hover round!
This is Mirth's consecrated ground.
Here liv'd the laughter-loving dame,
A matchless actress, Clive her name.
The Comic Muse with her retir'd,
And shed a tear when she expir'd.

EPILOGUE to BRAGANZA, written in February 1775.

IS it permitted, in this age severe,
For female softness to demand a tear?
Is it allowed, in such censorious days,
For female virtue to solicit praise?
Dares manly sense, beneath a tender form,
Presume to dictate, and aspire to warm?

May

May so unnatural a being venture
As a true heroine on the stage to enter?
No, says a wit¹, made up of French grimaces,
Yet self-ordain'd the high-priest of the Graces:
Women are playthings for our idle hours,
Their souls unfinish'd, and confin'd their pow'rs;
Loquacious, vain, by slight attentions won,
By flattery gain'd, and by untruths undone.
Or should some grave great plan engage their minds,
The first caprice can give it to the winds;
And the chief stateswoman of all the sex
Grows nervous, if a fop or pimple vex.

Injurious slanders!—In Louifa's air
Behold th' exemplar of a perfect fair;
Just, though aspiring; merciful, though brave;
Sincere, though politic; though fond, no slave;
In danger calm, and smiling in success,
But as securing ampler means to bless.

Nor think, as Zeuxis, for a faultless piece,
Cull'd various charms from various nymphs of Greece,
Our bard has centred in one beautiful whole
The rays that gleam through many a separate soul.
On Britain's and Ierne's shores he saw
The models of the fair he dar'd to draw:
True virtue in these isles has fix'd her throne,
And many a bright Louifa is our own.

¹ Lord Chesterfield.

EPILOGUE to The TIMES, a Comedy, by Mrs. GRIFFITH,
October 1779.

A WIFE so very bad—and yet so chaste!
So easily reform'd—though drunk with taste!
Her spouse so fashionable—yet so tender
That he had rather starve himself, than mend her!
An old rich knight, as upright as a steeple,
Yet melting for the woes of younger people!
—Strange times, good folks!—and whence our author drew,
I'll take my oath I know no more—than you.

It could not be from this dear town, where vice
If with one virtue stain'd will bear no price.
Loose as the buxom air, the youth from College
Comes fraught with all Newmarket's solid knowledge;
Pants to have lost th' estate—not yet his own—
And, ere his beard is grown, be quite undone.
Then when to foreign climes he spreads the fail,
'Tis not t' enlarge his mind, but 'scape a jail.

Our sex—but shall I load the weaker kind?
Or can the fail to fray, whose guide is blind?
Let men reform themselves; let holy truth
And orient honour stamp each glowing youth:
Let sage oeconomy restrain his waste,
Discretion rule his pleasures, sense his taste:
Let him the gamester like the coward shun,
Nor hug a Jew, though to avoid a dun:
Be he to England's cause and freedom's true,
Nor, fashion-led, with like indifference view
The venal many, and the virtuous few. :

Then will soft woman, easy mould, receive
Each just impression he shall deign to give;

Will

Will aim by correspondent arts to gain
 The virtuous heart in which she sighs to reign;
 And, taught by no domestic faults to roam,
 Shall find, and fix, enjoyment all at home.

EPIGRAMS.

On the new Archbishop of CANTERBURY. March 1758.

THE bench hath oft 'posed us, and set us a-coffing,
 By signing Will. London, John Sarum, John Roffen.;
 But *this* head of the church no expounder will want,
 For his grace signs his own proper name, Thomas *Cant.*

Left on the Duchefs of QUEENSBERRY'S Toilet, the Author
 finding her from Home.

TO many a Kitty, Love his car
 Would for a day engage;
 But Prior's Kitty, ever fair,
 Retains it for an age.