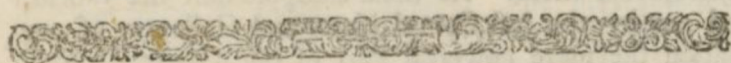


fence. At the same time I shall not think my self obliged, by this Promise, to conceal any false Protestations which I observe made by Glances in publick Assemblies; but endeavour to make both Sexes appear in their Conduct what they are in their Hearts. By this means, Love, during the Time of my Speculations, shall be carried on with the same Sincerity as any other Affairs of less Consideration. As this is the greatest Concern, Men shall be from henceforth liable to the greatest Reproach for Misbehaviour in it. Falshood in Love shall hereafter bear a blacker Aspect, than Infidelity in Friendship, or Villany in Business. For this great and good End, all Breaches against that noble Passion, the Cement of Society, shall be severely examined. But this, and all other Matters loosely hinted at now, and in my former Papers, shall have their proper Place in my following Discourses: The present Writing is only to admonish the World, that they shall not find me an idle but a busy Spectator. R



N^o 5. Tuesday, March 6.

Spectatum admissi risum teneatis? — Hor.

AN Opera may be allowed to be extravagantly lavish in its Decorations, as its only Design is to gratify the Senses, and keep up an indolent Attention in the Audience. Common Sense however requires, that there should be nothing in the Scenes and Machines which may appear Childish and Absurd. How would the Wits of King Charles's Time have laughed to have seen *Nicolini* exposed to a Tempest in Robes of Ermin, and sailing in an open Boat upon a Sea of Paste-board? What a Field of Raillery would they have been let into, had they been entertained with painted Dragons spitting Wild-fire, enchanted Chariots drawn by *Flanders* Mares, and real Cascades in artificial Land-skips? A little Skill in Criticism would inform us, that
Sha-

Shadows and Realities ought not to be mixed together in the same Piece; and that the Scenes which are designed as the Representations of Nature, should be filled with Resemblances, and not with the Things themselves. If one would represent a wide Champian Country filled with Herds and Flocks, it would be ridiculous to draw the Country only upon the Scenes, and to crowd several Parts of the Stage with Sheep and Oxen. This is joining together Inconsistences, and making the Decoration partly real and partly imaginary. I would recommend what I have here said, to the Directors, as well as to the Admirers of our Modern Opera.

AS I was walking in the Streets about a Fortnight ago, I saw an ordinary Fellow carrying a Cage full of little Birds upon his Shoulder; and, as I was wondering with my self what Use he would put them to, he was met very luckily by an Acquaintance, who had the same Curiosity. Upon his asking him what he had upon his Shoulder, he told him, that he had been buying Sparrows for the Opera. Sparrows for the Opera, says his Friend, licking his Lips, what, are they to be roasted? No, no, says the other, they are to enter towards the End of the first Act, and to fly about the Stage.

THIS strange Dialogue awakened my Curiosity so far, that I immediately bought the Opera, by which means I perceived that the Sparrows were to act the part of Singing-Birds in a delightful Grove; though upon a nearer Inquiry I found the Sparrows put the same Trick upon the Audience, that Sir *Martin Mar-all* practised upon his Mistress; for though they flew in Sight, the Musick proceeded from a Consort of Flagelets and Bird-calls which were planted behind the Scenes. At the same Time I made this Discovery, I found by the Discourse of the Actors, that there were great Designs on foot for the Improvement of the Opera; that it had been proposed to break down a part of the Wall, and to surprize the Audience with a Party of an hundred Horse, and that there was actually a Project of bringing the *New-River* into the House, to be employed in Jettaus and Water-works. This Project, as I have since heard, is postponed 'till the Summer-Season; when it is thought the Coolness that proceeds from Fountains and Cascades will be more acceptable

ceptable and refreshing to People of Quality. In the mean time, to find out a more agreeable Entertainment for the Winter-Season, the Opera of *Rinaldo* is filled with Thunder and Lightning, Illuminations and Fire-works; which the Audience may look upon without catching Cold, and indeed without much Danger of being burnt; for there are several Engines filled with Water, and ready to play at a Minute's warning, in case any such Accident should happen. However, as I have a very great Friendship for the Owner of this Theatre, I hope that he has been wise enough to *insure* his House before he would let this Opera be acted in it.

IT is no wonder, that those Scenes should be very surprising, which were contrived by two Poets of different Nations, and raised by two Magicians of different Sexes. *Armida* (as we are told in the Argument) was an *Amazonian* Enchantress, and poor Signior *Cassani* (as we learn from the *Persons represented*) a Christian Conjuror (*Mago Cristiano*). I must confess I am very much puzzled to find how an *Amazon* should be versed in the Black Art, or how a good Christian, for such is the Part of the Magician, should deal with the Devil.

TO consider the Poets after the Conjurors, I shall give you a Taste of the *Italian*, from the first Lines of his Preface. *Eccoti, benigno Lettore, un Parto di poche Sere, che se ben nato di Notte, non è però aborto di Tenebre, mà si farà conoscere Figlio d' Apollo con qualche Ragno di Parnasso.* Behold, gentle Reader, the Birth of a few Evenings, which, tho' it be the Offspring of the Night, is not the Abortive of Darkness, but will make it self known to be the Son of Apollo, with a certain Ray of Parnassus. He afterwards proceeds to call Mynheer *Hendel* the *Orpheus* of our Age, and to acquaint us, in the same Sublimity of Style, that he composed this Opera in a Fortnight. Such are the Wits, to whose Tastes we so ambitiously conform our selves. The Truth of it is, the finest Writers among the Modern *Italians*, express themselves in such a florid Form of Words, and such tedious Circumlocutions, as are used by none but Pedants in our own Country; and at the same time fill their Writings with such poor Imaginations and Conceits, as our Youths are ashamed of before they have been

been two Years at the Univerfity. Some may be apt to think that it is the Difference of Genius which produces this Difference in the Works of the two Nations; but to fhew there is nothing in this, if we look into the Writings of the old *Italians*, fuch as *Cicero* and *Virgil*, we fhall find that the *Engliſh* Writers in their way of thinking and expreffing themſelves, reſemble thoſe Authors much more than the Modern *Italians* pretend to do. And as for the Poet himſelf, from whom the Dreams of this Opera are taken, I muſt intirely agree with Monſieur *Boileau*, that one Verſe in *Virgil* is worth all the *Clicant* or Tinfel of *Taſſo*.

BUT to return to the Sparrows; there have been ſo many Flights of them let looſe in this Opera, that it is feared the Houſe will never get rid of them; and that in other Plays they may make their Entrance in very wrong and improper Scenes, ſo as to be ſeen flying in a Lady's Bed-Chamber, or pearching upon a King's Throne; beſides the Inconveniencies which the Heads of the Audience may ſometimes ſuffer from them. I am credibly informed, that there was once a Deſign of caſting into an Opera the Story of *Whittington* and his Cat, and that in order to it, there had been got together a great Quantity of Mice; but Mr. *Rich*, the Proprietor of the Play-houſe, very prudently conſidered that it would be impoſſible for the Cat to kill them all, and that conſequently the Princes of the Stage might be as much infeſted with Mice, as the Prince of the Iſland was before the Cat's Arrival upon it; for which Reaſon he would not permit it to be Acted in his Houſe. And indeed I cannot blame him: For, as he ſaid very well upon that Occaſion, I do not hear that any of the Performers in our Opera pretend to equal the famous Pied Piper, who made all the Mice of a great Town in *Germany* follow his Muſick, and by that means cleared the Place of thoſe little noxious Animals.

BEFORE I diſmiſs this Paper, I muſt inform my Reader, that I hear there is a Treaty on foot with *London* and *Wiſe* (who will be appointed Gardeners of the Play-houſe) to furniſh the Opera of *Rinaldo* and *Armida* with an Orange-Grove; and that the next time it is Acted, the Singing-Birds will be Perſonated by Tom-

Tits: The Undertakers being resolved to spare neither Pains nor Money for the Gratification of the Audience. C



Nº 6. *Wednesday, March 7.*

*Credebant hoc grande Nefas, & Morte piumum,
Si Juvenis Vetulo non assurrexerat — Juv.*

I Know no Evil under the Sun so great as the Abuse of the Understanding, and yet there is no one Vice more common. It has diffused it self through both Sexes and all Qualities of Mankind, and there is hardly that Person to be found, who is not more concerned for the Reputation of Wit and Sense, than Honesty and Virtue. But this unhappy Affectation of being Wise rather than Honest, Witty than Good-natur'd, is the Source of most of the ill Habits of Life. Such false Impressions are owing to the abandoned Writings of Men of Wit, and the aukward Imitation of the rest of Mankind.

FOR this Reason Sir ROGER was saying last Night, That he was of opinion none but Men of fine Parts deserve to be hanged. The Reflexions of such Men are so delicate upon all Occurrences which they are concerned in, that they should be exposed to more than ordinary Infamy and Punishment for offending against such quick Admonitions as their own Souls give them, and blunting the fine Edge of their Minds in such a Manner, that they are no more shocked at Vice and Folly, than Men of slower Capacities. There is no greater Monster in Being, than a very ill Man of great Parts: He lives like a Man in a Palsy, with one Side of him dead. While perhaps he enjoys the Satisfaction of Luxury, of Wealth, of Ambition, he has lost the Taste of Good-will, of Friendship, of Innocence. *Scarecrow*, the Beggar in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*, who disabled himself in his Right Leg, and asks Alms all Day to get himself a warm Supper and a Trull at Night, is not half so despicable a Wretch as such a Man