



N^o 35. Tuesday, April 10.

Risu inepto res ineptior nulla est.

Mart.

AMONG all kinds of Writing, there is none in which Authors are more apt to miscarry than in Works of Humour, as there is none in which they are more ambitious to excel. It is not an Imagination that teems with Monsters, an Head that is filled with extravagant Conceptions, which is capable of furnishing the World with Diversions of this nature; and yet if we look into the Productions of several Writers, who set up for Men of Humour, what wild irregular Fancies, what unnatural Distortions of Thought, do we meet with? If they speak Nonsense, they believe they are talking Humour; and when they have drawn together a Scheme of absurd inconsistent Ideas, they are not able to read it over to themselves without laughing. These poor Gentlemen endeavour to gain themselves the Reputation of Wits and Humourists, by such monstrous Conceits as almost qualify them for *Bedlam*; not considering that Humour should always lie under the Check of Reason, and that it requires the Direction of the nicest Judgment, by so much the more as it indulges it self in the most boundless Freedoms. There is a kind of Nature that is to be observed in this sort of Compositions, as well as in all other; and a certain Regularity of Thought which must discover the Writer to be a Man of Sense, at the same time that he appears altogether given up to Caprice. For my part, when I read the delirious Mirth of an unskilful Author, I cannot be so barbarous as to divert my self with it, but am rather apt to pity the Man, than to laugh at any thing he writes.

THE deceased Mr. *Shadwell*, who had himself a great deal of the Talent which I am treating of, represents an empty Rake, in one of his Plays, as very much surpris'd to hear one say that breaking of Windows was not Humour:

mour; and I question not but several *English* Readers will be as much startled to hear me affirm, that many of those raving incoherent Pieces, which are often spread among us, under odd Chimerical Titles, are rather the Offsprings of a Distempered Brain, than Works of Humour.

IT is indeed much easier to describe what is not Humour, than what is; and very difficult to define it otherwise than, as *Cowley* has done Wit, by Negatives. Were I to give my own Notions of it, I would deliver them after *Plato's* manner, in a kind of Allegory, and by supposing Humour to be a Person, deduce to him all his Qualifications, according to the following Genealogy. TRUTH was the Founder of the Family, and the Father of GOOD SENSE. GOOD SENSE was the Father of WIT, who married a Lady of a Collateral Line called MIRTH, by whom he had Issue HUMOUR. HUMOUR therefore being the youngest of this Illustrious Family, and descended from Parents of such different Dispositions, is very various and unequal in his Temper; sometimes you see him putting on grave Looks and a solemn Habit, sometimes airy in his Behaviour and fantastick in his Dress: Infomuch that at different times he appears as serious as a Judge, and as jocular as a *Merry-Andrew*. But as he has a great deal of the Mother in his Constitution, whatever Mood he is in, he never fails to make his Company laugh.

BUT since there is an Impostor abroad, who takes upon him the Name of this young Gentleman, and would willingly pass for him in the World; to the end that well-meaning Persons may not be imposed upon by Cheats, I would desire my Readers, when they meet with this Pretender, to look into his Parentage, and to examine him strictly, whether or no he be remotely allied to TRUTH, and lineally descended from GOOD SENSE; if not, they may conclude him a Counterfeit. They may likewise distinguish him by a loud and excessive Laughter, in which he seldom gets his Company to join with him. For as TRUE HUMOUR generally looks serious, while every Body laughs about him; FALSE HUMOUR is always laughing, whilst every Body about him looks serious. I shall only add, if he has not in him a Mixture of both Parents, that is, if he would pass for the
Offspring

Offspring of WIT without MIRTH, or MIRTH without WIT, you may conclude him to be altogether Spurious, and a Cheat.

THE Impostor of whom I am speaking, descends Originally from FALSEHOOD, who was the Mother of NONSENSE, who was brought to Bed of a Son called FRENZY, who married one of the Daughters of FOLLY, commonly known by the Name of LAUGHTER, on whom he begot that Monstrous Infant of which I have been here speaking. I shall set down at length the Genealogical Table of FALSE HUMOUR, and, at the same time, place under it the Genealogy of TRUE HUMOUR, that the Reader may at one View behold their different Pedigrees and Relations.

FALSEHOOD.

NONSENSE.

FRENZY. ——— LAUGHTER.

FALSE HUMOUR.

TRUTH.

GOOD SENSE.

WIT. ——— MIRTH.

HUMOUR.

I might extend the Allegory, by mentioning several of the Children of FALSE HUMOUR, who are more in Number than the Sands of the Sea, and might in particular enumerate the many Sons and Daughters which he has begot in this Island. But as this would be a very invidious Task, I shall only observe in general, that FALSE HUMOUR differs from the TRUE, as a Monkey does from a Man.

First of all, HE is exceedingly given to little Apish Tricks and Buffooneries.

Secondly, HE so much delights in Mimickry, that it is all one to him whether he exposes by it Vice and Folly, Luxury and Avarice; or on the contrary, Virtue and Wisdom, Pain and Poverty.

Thirdly, HE is wonderfully unlucky, insomuch that he will bite the Hand that feeds him, and endeavour to ridicule both Friends and Foes indifferently. For having
but

but small Talents, he must be merry where he *can*, not where he *should*.

Fourthly, BEING intirely void of Reason, he pursues no Point either of Morality or Instruction, but is Ludicrous only for the sake of being so.

Fifthly, BEING incapable of having any thing but Mock-Representations, his Ridicule is always Personal, and aimed at the vicious Man, or the Writer; not at the Vice, or at the Writing.

I have here only pointed at the whole Species of False Humourists; but as one of my principal Designs in this Paper is to beat down that malignant Spirit, which discovers it self in the Writings of the present Age, I shall not scruple, for the future, to single out any of the small Wits, that infest the World with such Compositions as are ill-natured, immoral, and absurd. This is the only Exception which I shall make to the general Rule I have prescribed my self, of *attacking Multitudes*: Since every honest Man ought to look upon himself as in a natural State of War with the Libeller and Lamponer, and to annoy them where-ever they fall in his way. This is but retaliating upon them, and treating them as they treat others.

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N^o 36. *Wednesday, April 11.*

————— *Immania monstra*
Perferimus —————

Virg.

I Shall not put my self to any farther Pains for this Day's Entertainment, than barely to publish the Letters and Titles of Petitions from the Play-house, with the Minutes I have made upon the Latter for my Conduct in relation to them.

Drury-lane, April the 9th.

‘ UPON reading the Project which is set forth in
‘ one of your late Papers, of making an Alliance
‘ between all the Bulls, Bears, Elephants, and Lions,
‘ which