

N<sup>o</sup> 466. Monday, August 25.

— Vera incessu patuit Dea.

Virg.

WHEN *Aeneas*, the Hero of *Virgil*, is lost in the Wood, and a perfect Stranger in the Place on which he is landed, he is accosted by a Lady in an Habit for the Chase. She inquires of him, Whether he has seen pass by that Way any young Woman dressed as she was? Whether she were following the Sport in the Wood, or any other way employed, according to the Custom of Huntresses? The Hero answers with the Respect due to the beautiful Appearance she made, tells her, He saw no such Person as she inquir'd for; but intimates, that he knows her to be of the Deities, and desires she would conduct a Stranger. Her Form from her first Appearance manifested she was more than mortal; but tho' she was certainly a Goddess, the Poet does not make her known to be the Goddess of *Beauty* 'till she moved: All the Charms of an agreeable Person are then in their highest Exertion, every Limb and Feature appears with its respective Grace. It is from this Observation, that I cannot help being so passionate an Admirer as I am of good Dancing. As all Art is an Imitation of Nature, this is an Imitation of Nature in its highest Excellence, and at a Time when she is most agreeable. The Business of Dancing is to display Beauty, and for that Reason all Distortions and Mimickries, as such, are what raise Aversion instead of Pleasure: But Things that are in themselves excellent, are ever attended with Imposture and false Imitation. Thus, as in Poetry there are laborious Fools who write Anagrams and Acrosticks, there are Pretenders in Dancing, who think merely to do what others cannot, is to excel. Such Creatures should be rewarded like him who had acquired a Knack of throwing a Grain of Corn through the Eye of a Needle, with a Bushel to keep his Hand in Use. The Dancers on our Stages are very faulty in this Kind; and what they mean by writhing them-

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selves into such Postures, as it would be a Pain for any of the Spectators to stand in, and yet hope to please those Spectators, is unintelligible. Mr. *Prince* has a Genius, if he were encouraged, would prompt them to better things. In all the Dances he invents, you see he keeps close to the Characters he represents. He does not hope to please by making his Performers move in a manner in which no one else ever did, but by Motions proper to the Characters he represents. He gives to Clowns and Lubbards clumsy Graces, that is, he makes them practise what they would think Graces: And I have seen Dances of his, which might give Hints that would be useful to a Comick Writer. These Performances have pleas'd the Taste of such as have not Reflexion enough to know their Excellence, because they are in Nature; and the distorted Motions of others have offended those, who could not form Reasons to themselves for their Displeasure, from their being a Contradiction to Nature.

WHEN one considers the inexpressible Advantage there is in arriving at some Excellence in this Art, it is monstrous to behold it so much neglected. The following Letter has in it something very natural on this Subject.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

I am a Widower with but one Daughter; she was by Nature much inclined to be a Romp, and I had no way of educating her, but commanding a young Woman, whom I entertained to take care of her, to be very watchful in her Care and Attendance about her. I am a Man of Business, and obliged to be much abroad. The Neighbours have told me, that in my Absence our Maid has let in the spruce Servants in the Neighbourhood to Junketings, while my Girl play'd and romped even in the Street. To tell you the plain Truth, I caught her once, at eleven Years old, at Chuck-Farthing among the Boys. This put me upon new Thoughts about my Child, and I determin'd to place her at a Boarding-School, and at the same time gave a very discreet young Gentlewoman her Maintenance at the same Place and Rate, to be her Companion. I took little notice of my Girl from time to time,

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but saw her now and then in good Health, out of Harm's way, and was satisfied. But by much Impor- tunity, I was lately prevail'd with to go to one of their Balls. I cannot express to you the Anxiety my silly Heart was in, when I saw my Romp now fifteen, taken out: I never felt the Pangs of a Father upon me so strongly in my whole Life before; and I could not have suffered more, had my whole Fortune been at Stake. My Girl came on with the most becoming Modesty I had ever seen, and casting a respectful Eye, as if she feared me more than all the Audience, I gave a Nod, which I think gave her all the Spirit she assumed upon it, but she rose properly to that Dignity of Aspect. My Romp, now the most graceful Person of her Sex, assumed a Majesty which commanded the highest Respect; and when she turned to me, and saw my Face in Rapture, she fell into the prettiest Smile, and I saw in all her Motion that she exulted in her Father's Satisfaction. You, Mr. SPECTATOR, will, better than I can tell you, imagine to your self all the different Beauties and Changes of Aspect in an accomplished young Woman, setting forth all her Beauties with a Design to please no one so much as her Father. My Girl's Lover can never know half the Satisfaction that I did in her that Day. I could not possibly have imagined, that so great Improvement could have been wrought by an Art that I always held in it self ridiculous and contemptible. There is, I am convinced, no Method like this, to give young Women a Sense of their own Value and Dignity; and I am sure there can be none so expeditious to communicate that Value to others. As for the flippant insipidly Gay and wantonly Forward, whom you behold among Dancers, that Carriage is more to be attributed to the perverse Genius of the Performers, than imputed to the Art it self. For my part, my Child has danced her self into my Esteem, and I have as great an Honour for her as ever I had for her Mother, from whom she derived those latent good Qualities which appeared in her Countenance when she was dancing; for my Girl, tho' I say it my self, shewed in one Quarter of an Hour the innate Principles of a modest Virgin, a tender Wife, a generous Friend, a kind Mother, and an indulgent Mistress.

‘ I’ll strain hard but I will purchase for her an Husband  
 ‘ suitable to her Merit. I am your Convert in the Admi-  
 ‘ ration of what I thought you jested when you recom-  
 ‘ mended ; and if you please to be at my House on *Thurs-*  
 ‘ *day* next, I make a Ball for my Daughter, and you shall  
 ‘ see her dance, or, if you will do her that Honour, dance  
 ‘ with her.

*I am, S I R,*

*Your most humble Servant,*

PHILIPATER.

I have some time ago spoken of a Treatise written by Mr. *Weaver* on this Subject, which is now, I understand, ready to be published. This Work sets this Matter in a very plain and advantageous Light ; and I am convinced from it, that if the Art was under proper Regulations, it would be a mechanick way of implanting insensibly in Minds, not capable of receiving it so well by any other Rules, a Sense of Good-breeding and Virtue.

WERE any one to see *Mariamne* dance, let him be never so sensual a Brute, I defy him to entertain any Thoughts but of the highest Respect and Esteem towards her. I was shewed last Week a Picture in a Lady’s Closet, for which she had an hundred different Dresses, that she could clap on round the Face, on purpose to demonstrate the Force of Habits in the Diversity of the same Countenance. Motion, and Change of Posture and Aspect, has an Effect no less surprising on the Person of *Mariamne* when she dances.

CHLOE is extremely pretty, and as silly as she is pretty. This Idiot has a very good Ear, and a most agreeable Shape ; but the Folly of the Thing is such, that it Smiles so impertinently, and affects to please so fillily, that while she Dances you see the Simpleton from Head to Foot. For you must know (as trivial as this Art is thought to be) no one ever was a good Dancer, that had not a good Understanding. If this be a Truth, I shall leave the Reader to judge from that Maxim, what Esteem they ought to have for such Impertinents as fly, hop, caper, tumble, twirl, turn round, and jump over their Heads, and in a word, play a thousand Pranks which many Animals can do better than a Man, instead of performing to Perfection what the human Figure only is capable of performing.

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