

N^o 334. *Monday, March 24.*

— *Voluisti, in suo Genere, unumquemque nostrum quasi quendam esse Roscium, dixisti; non tam ea quæ recta essent probari, quàm quæ prava sunt fastidiis ad- hærescere.*

Cicero de Gestu.

IT is very natural to take for our whole Lives a light Impression of a thing which at first fell into Contempt with us for want of Consideration. The real Use of a certain Qualification (which the wiser Part of Mankind look upon as at best an indifferent thing, and generally a frivolous Circumstance) shews the ill Consequence of such Prepossessions. What I mean, is the Art, Skill, Accomplishment, or whatever you will call it, of Dancing. I knew a Gentleman of great Abilities, who bewail'd the Want of this Part of his Education to the end of a very honourable Life. He observ'd that there was not occasion for the common use of great Talents; that they are but seldom in demand; and that these very great Talents were often render'd useless to a Man for want of small Attainments. A good Mien (a becoming Motion, Gesture and Aspect) is natural to some Men; but even these would be highly more graceful in their Carriage, if what they do from the Force of Nature were confirm'd and heightned from the Force of Reason. To one who has not at all considered it, to mention the Force of Reason on such a Subject, will appear fantastical; but when you have a little attended to it, an Assembly of Men will have quite another View: and they will tell you, it is evident from plain and infallible Rules, why this Man with those beautiful Features, and well fashion'd Person, is not so agreeable as he who sits by him, without any of those Advantages. When we read, we do it without any exerted Act of Memory that presents the Shape of the Letters; but Habit makes us do it mechanically, without staying, like Children, to recollect and join those Letters. A Man who has not had the Regard of his

Gesture in any part of his Education, will find himself unable to act with Freedom before new Company, as a Child that is but now learning would be to read without Hesitation. It is for the Advancement of the Pleasure we receive in being agreeable to each other in ordinary Life, that one would wish Dancing were generally understood as conducive as it really is to a proper Deportment in Matters that appear the most remote from it. A Man of Learning and Sense is distinguished from others as he is such, tho' he never runs upon Points too difficult for the rest of the World; in like manner the reaching out of the Arm, and the most ordinary Motion, discovers whether a Man ever learnt to know what is the true Harmony and Composure of his Limbs and Countenance. Whoever has seen *Booth* in the Character of *Pyrrhus*, march to his Throne to receive *Orestes*, is convinced that majestic and great Conceptions are expressed in the very Step; but perhaps, tho' no other Man could perform that Incident as well as he does, he himself would do it with a yet greater Elevation, were he a Dancer. This is so dangerous a Subject to treat with Gravity, that I shall not at present enter into it any further; but the Author of the following Letter has treated it in the Essay he speaks of in such a manner, that I am beholden to him for a Resolution, that I will never hereafter think meanly of any thing, till I have heard what they who have another Opinion of it have to say in its defence.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

SINCE there are scarce any of the Arts or Sciences that have not been recommended to the World by the Pens of some of the Professors, Masters, or Lovers of them, whereby the Usefulness, Excellence, and Benefit arising from them, both as to the speculative and practical Part, have been made publick, to the great Advantage and Improvement of such Arts and Sciences; why should Dancing, an Art celebrated by the Ancients in so extraordinary a manner, be totally neglected by the Moderns, and left destitute of any Pen to recommend its various Excellencies and substantial Merit to Mankind?

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‘ THE low Ebb to which Dancing is now fallen, is altogether owing to this Silence. The Art is esteem’d only as an amusing Trifle ; it lies altogether uncultivated, and is unhappily fallen under the Imputation of illiterate and mechanick : And as *Terence*, in one of his Prologues, complains of the Rope-dancers drawing all the Spectators from his Play, so may we well say, that Capering and Tumbling is now preferred to, and supplies the Place of just and regular Dancing on our Theatres. It is therefore, in my Opinion, high time that some one should come to its assistance, and relieve it from the many gross and growing Errors that have crept into it, and over-cast its real Beauties ; and to set Dancing in its true light, would shew the Usefulness and Elegancy of it, with the Pleasure and Instruction produc’d from it ; and also lay down some fundamental Rules, that might so tend to the Improvement of its Professors, and Information of the Spectators, that the first might be the better enabled to perform, and the latter render’d more capable of judging, what is (if there be any thing) valuable in this Art.

‘ TO encourage therefore some ingenious Pen capable of so generous an Undertaking, and in some measure to relieve Dancing from the Disadvantages it at present lies under, I, who teach to dance, have attempted a small Treatise as an Essay towards an History of Dancing ; in which I have inquired into its Antiquity, Original, and Use, and shewn what Esteem the Ancients had for it : I have likewise considered the Nature and Perfection of all its several Parts, and how beneficial and delightful it is, both as a Qualification and an Exercise ; and endeavoured to answer all Objections that have been maliciously rais’d against it. I have proceeded to give an Account of the particular Dances of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, whether religious, warlike, or civil ; and taken particular notice of that Part of Dancing relating to the ancient Stage, and in which the *Pantomimes* had so great a share : Nor have I been wanting in giving an historical Account of some particular Masters excellent in that surprising Art. After which, I have advanced some Observations on the modern Dancing, both as to the Stage, and that Part of it, so absolutely necessary for the Qualification of Gentlemen

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and Ladies; and have concluded with some short Remarks on the Origin and Progress of the Character by which Dances are writ down, and communicated to one Master from another. If some great Genius after this would arise, and advance this Art to that Perfection it seems capable of receiving, what might not be expected from it? For if we consider the Origin of Arts and Sciences, we shall find that some of them took rise from Beginnings so mean and unpromising, that it is very wonderful to think that ever such surprizing Structures should have been raised upon such ordinary Foundations. But what cannot a great Genius effect? Who would have thought that the clangorous Noise of a Smith's Hammers should have given the first rise to Musick? Yet *Macrobius* in his second Book relates, that *Pythagoras*, in passing by a Smith's Shop, found that the Sounds proceeding from the Hammers were either more grave or acute, according to the different Weights of the Hammers. The Philosopher, to improve this Hint, suspends different Weights by Strings of the same Bigness, and found in like manner that the Sounds answered to the Weights. This being discover'd, he finds out those Numbers which produc'd Sounds that were Consonants: As, that two Strings of the same Substance and Tension, the one being double the Length of the other, give that Interval which is called *Diapason*, or an Eighth; the same was also effected from two Strings of the same Length and Size, the one having four times the Tension of the other. By these Steps, from so mean a Beginning, did this great Man reduce, what was only before Noise, to one of the most delightful Sciences, by marrying it to the Mathematicks; and by that means caused it to be one of the most abstract and demonstrative of Sciences. Who knows therefore but Motion, whether Decorous or Representative, may not (as it seems highly probable it may) be taken into consideration by some Person capable of reducing it into a regular Science, tho' not so demonstrative as that proceeding from Sounds, yet sufficient to entitle it to a Place among the magnify'd Arts.

NOW, Mr. SPECTATOR, as you have declared your self Visitor of Dancing-Schools, and this being an Undertaking which more immediately respects them, I think