

N<sup>o</sup> 338. Friday, March 28.

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— Nil fuit unquam  
Tam dispar sibi —

Hor.

I Find the Tragedy of the *Distress'd Mother* is publish'd to-day: The Author of the Prologue, I suppose, pleads an old Excuse I have read somewhere, of *being dull with Design*; and the Gentleman who writ the Epilogue, has, to my knowledge, so much of greater moment to value himself upon, that he will easily forgive me for publishing the Exceptions made against Gaiety at the end of serious Entertainments, in the following Letter: I should be more unwilling to pardon him than any body, a Practice which cannot have any ill Consequence, but from the Abilities of the Person who is guilty of it.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

I Had the Happiness the other Night of sitting very near you, and your worthy Friend Sir ROGER, at the acting of the new Tragedy, which you have in a late Paper or two so justly recommended. I was highly pleased with the advantageous Situation Fortune had given me in placing me so near two Gentlemen, from one of which I was sure to hear such Reflexions on the several Incidents of the Play, as pure Nature suggested, and from the other such as flowed from the exactest Art and Judgment: Tho' I must confess that my Curiosity led me so much to observe the Knight's Reflexions, that I was not so well at leisure to improve my self by yours. Nature, I found, play'd her Part in the Knight pretty well, till at the last concluding Lines she intirely forsook him. You must know, Sir, that it is always my Custom, when I have been well entertained at a new Tragedy, to make my Retreat before the facetious Epilogue enters; not but that those Pieces are often very well writ, but having paid down my

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Half Crown, and made a fair Purchase of as much of the pleasing Melancholy as the Poet's Art can afford me, or my own Nature admit of, I am willing to carry some of it home with me; and can't endure to be at once trick'd out of all, tho' by the wittiest Dexterity in the World. However, I kept my Seat t'other Night, in hopes of finding my own Sentiments of this Matter favour'd by your Friend's; when, to my great Surprise, I found the Knight entering with equal Pleasure into both Parts, and as much satisfied with Mrs. *Oldfield's* Gaiety, as he had been before with *Andromache's* Greatness. Whether this were no other than an Effect of the Knight's peculiar Humanity, pleas'd to find at last, that after all the tragical Doings every thing was safe and well, I don't know. But for my own part, I must confess I was so dissatisfied, that I was sorry the Poet had saved *Andromache*, and could heartily have wished that he had left her stone-dead upon the Stage. For you cannot imagine, Mr. SPECTATOR, the Mischief she was reserv'd to do me. I found my Soul, during the Action, gradually work'd up to the highest Pitch; and felt the exalted Passion which all generous Minds conceive at the Sight of Virtue in Distress. The Impression, believe me, Sir, was so strong upon me, that I am perswaded, if I had not been let alone in it, I could at an Extremity have ventured to defend your self and Sir ROGER against half a Score of the fiercest *Mobbs*: But the ludicrous Epilogue in the Close extinguish'd all my Ardour, and made me look upon all such noble Atchievements as downright silly and romantick. What the rest of the Audience felt, I can't so well tell: For my self I must declare, that at the end of the Play I found my Soul uniform, and all of a Piece; but at the end of the Epilogue it was so jumbled together, and divided between Jest and Earnest, that if you will forgive me an extravagant Fancy, I will here set it down. I could not but fancy, if my Soul had at that Moment quitted my Body, and descended to the poetical Shades in the Posture it was then in, what a strange Figure it would have made among them. They would not have known what to have made of my motley Spectre, half Comick and half Tragick, all over resembling



‘ bling a ridiculous Face, that at the same time laughs on  
‘ one side and cries o’ t’other. The only Defence, I  
‘ think I have ever heard made for this, as it seems to  
‘ me, the most unnatural Tack of the Comick Tail to the  
‘ Tragick Head, is this, that the Minds of the Audience  
‘ must be refreshed, and Gentlemen and Ladies not sent  
‘ away to their own Homes with too dismal and me-  
‘ lancholy Thoughts about them : For who knows the  
‘ Consequence of this ? We are much obliged indeed to  
‘ the Poets for the great Tenderness they express for the  
‘ Safety of our Persons, and heartily thank them for it.  
‘ But if that be all, pray, good Sir, assure them, that we  
‘ are none of us like to come to any great Harm ; and  
‘ that, let them do their best, we shall in all probability  
‘ live out the Length of our Days, and frequent the  
‘ Theatres more than ever. What makes me more de-  
‘ sirous to have some Reformation of this matter, is be-  
‘ cause of an ill Consequence or two attending it : For a  
‘ great many of our Church-Musicians being related to the  
‘ Theatre, they have, in Imitation of these Epilogues, in-  
‘ troduced in their farewell Voluntaries a sort of Musick  
‘ quite foreign to the Design of Church-Services, to the  
‘ great Prejudice of well-disposed People. Those finger-  
‘ ing Gentlemen should be informed, that they ought to  
‘ suit their Airs to the Place, and Business ; and that the  
‘ Musician is obliged to keep to the Text as much as the  
‘ Preacher. For want of this, I have found by Expe-  
‘ rience a great deal of Mischief : For when the Preacher  
‘ has often, with great Piety and Art enough, handled  
‘ his Subject, and the judicious Clerk has with utmost  
‘ Diligence culled out two Staves proper to the Discourse,  
‘ and I have found in my self and in the rest of the Pew  
‘ good Thoughts and Dispositions, they have been all in a  
‘ moment dissipated by a merry Jig from the Organ-Loft.  
‘ One knows not what further ill Effects the Epilogues I  
‘ have been speaking of may in time produce. But this I  
‘ am credibly inform’d of, that *Paul Lorrain* has resolv’d  
‘ upon a very sudden Reformation in his tragical Dramas ;  
‘ and that at the next monthly Performance, he designs,  
‘ instead of a Penitential Psalm, to dismiss his Audience  
‘ with an excellent new Ballad of his own composing.

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Pray