

recently acquired power of expulsion; and it is not very likely, in the second place, that the boys should be willing to obey implicitly in this country, when the very reason for their education in this manner is—that they are to exercise such unlimited authority in India: the extent of their absolute powers civil, military, and judicial, often over a whole district, are disclosed in the early part of this pamphlet. In the seventh section, regarding the truth of the accusations against the College, Mr. Malthus is not so scrupulous as might be supposed in setting an example of temper: his language is sometimes very coarse, and he falls foul of Mr. Hume, Mr. Randle, Jackson, and others, in a way not the most conducive to his purpose, if it be that of convincing. He tells the former gentleman, that, until his speech at the India House, he (Mr. M.) thought him “a man of sense, a man of the world, and a friend to the good government of India.” The inference therefore is, that since that time, he has changed his opinion, and now holds him to be a man of no sense, of no knowledge of the world, and an enemy to the good government of India. Mr. Jackson is treated soon more roughly, and the editor of one of our most respectable daily papers noticed in terms of gross scurrility. It is not a little amusing to see how Mr. Malthus shies all the main accusations of disturbances, riots, and disorganization of the worst kind; he does not deny it however, and that is sufficient. Our concluding extract shall be the winding up of the pamphlet, which the reader will perceive is a joint attack upon those who have complained of the College, and those who are educated in it—a charge of a sort of conspiracy between some Members of the Court of Proprietors, and all the Students at Hertford.

“How is it possible to answer for the conduct of young men, under such powerful excitements from without? For my own part, I am only astonished that the college has been able to get on at all, under these overwhelming obstacles; and that it has got on, and done great good too, (which I boldly assert it has,) is no common proof of its internal vigour, and its capacity to answer its object.”

“The present virulent attack upon the college has been meditated some time; and it could hardly fail to be known to the students that a disturbance this autumn would have been hailed by many of the Court Proprietors as the happiest omen of success. Under these circumstances, the orderly conduct of the students for the last year does them the highest honour. And it is not a little discreditable to the character of the present attack, and the motives

which have dictated it, that it was brought forward, not at a time when an unhappy act of violence might have given some plausible ground for it, but after a period of great quiet and order, and at the conclusion of a term eminently distinguished for great industry, and successful literary exertion.” (p. 104—105.)

THE DRAMA.

ART. IX.—*An Impartial Review of the Stage from the days of Garrick and Rich to the present period: of the causes of its degenerated and declining state, and shewing the necessity of a Reform in the System as the only means of giving stability to the present property of the Winter Theatres.* By DRAMATICUS. London, for C. Chapple, 1816.

THE whole of the subjects enumerated above have been comprehended in twenty-six widely printed pages, so that he who looks no further than the title page, must feel pretty well assured, either that the author treats the topics in a very unsatisfactory and superficial manner, or that he possesses a considerable portion of that pithiness and brevity of style recommended by the writer who contended that all branches of human knowledge were included in the word *have*. After reading the first page or two, it will no longer remain a question which of the two suppositions is correct; and, on a further perusal, it will be found that the points on which the writer has most dwelt, are those of the least comparative importance.

For instance upon the great topic, the root indeed of nearly all the complaints lately made regarding our theatres, their enormous size, he has said little, and less directly to the point: on one account, perhaps he was in the right; because, though with a view to the success of the drama, it is a matter of the last importance, it is a defect least capable of a remedy: in previous numbers, we have slightly and incidentally alluded to its inconvenience and impolicy, and we now propose entering a little more at large into the question.

We set out then with this proposition—that the present enormous size of our theatres is destructive of the English drama, and is injurious to the interests of authors, proprietors, auditors, and actors. We will not follow the example of the author of the pamphlet on our table, for we will endeavour to be methodical.

First, with respect to the threatened and partially effected destruction of the legitimate English drama. We appreciate.

hend, that it is scarcely necessary for us to explain what we mean by the legitimate English drama: of course, we neither mean pantomimes, nor *Emisumimes*, (or half-pantomimes, to use a solecism,) including the whole fungus race of melodramas, nor even tragedy and comedy, as they have been produced since the restoration, but dramatic productions as they existed in the time of Shakespeare, and his contemporaries, which we hold to be as much the legitimate drama of England, (however expelled by usurpation,) as King James the First was the legitimate king of England, when in him was restored to the throne the blood of our Saxon sovereigns. In this respect, England, of modern nations, stands alone; it is a pre-eminence, which the most learned and tasteful foreigners have acknowledged; and Professor Schlegel, as many of our readers have probably seen by the translation of his German lectures, places it unquestionably above the Roman, and, probably, above the Grecian drama: it has been approached by Spain, but rivalled by no nation of the world.

This excellence is attributed to many causes, on which we need not now enter. It is enough for our purpose to say, that it was mainly promoted by the small size, and even by the ill furniture, (or, more technically speaking, the deficient properties,) of our theatres, in the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. At a time, when the open roof admitted light from the sky; when mere benches, or no seats at all were provided even for the wealthiest spectators, when an old blanket was the curtain, and the scenes were represented by rude inscriptions of what they were to be supposed—when the dresses of the players were the cast-clothes of the retainers of noblemen—when a crown was of pasteboard, and a sceptre of lath, it was a matter of consequence to give the audience something to occupy their minds, since, to gratify their senses, was impossible. It was this which brought poetry upon our stage, and certainly retained it there; and, for proof of the fact, we need only go back as far as the days of Sir W. Davenant, to be convinced that the gradual adoption of finery and mechanism, was the gradual expulsion of poetry and good sense. The signature of Charles II. of the patent to the author of *Gondibert*, was the signature of the death-warrant of dramatic poetry, which already, for ten years, had endured a melancholy imprisonment, under sentence of gloomy and misguided fanatics. Even before the interdiction finally procured by these infuriated zealots, the stage had begun

to languish under their evil eye, and men of wit and worth ceased, in a degree, to encourage a profession, denounced by the prevailing party as detestable and impious. The generation of great poets had almost passed away, and none were encouraged to succeed; and in 1696, Heywood, one of the last, thus laments over the decline of its dignity, and desert. He first refers to the superiority of our dramatic productions in the early part of his life, to those of any other country.*

“The Roman and Athenian dramas far
Differ from ours; and those that frequent are
In Italy, in France, even in these days
Compar'd with ours, are rather jigs than plays—
They do not build their projects on that ground
Nor have their phrases half the weight and sound
Our labour'd scenes have had; and yet our nation
(Already too much tax'd for imitation
In seeking to ape others) cannot quit
Some of our poets who have sinned in it;
For where before great patriots, dukes, and kings,
(Presented for some high facinorous things)
Were the stage-subject, now we strive to fly
In their low pitch who never could soar high:
For now the common argument entreats
Of puling lovers, crafty bawds, and clients:
Nor blame I their quick fancies who can sit
These queasy times with humours flash'd in wit,
Whose art I both encourage and commend;
I only wish that they sometimes would bend
To memorize the valour of such men
Whose very names might dignify the pen,
And that our once-applauded Roscian strain
In acting such might be revived again:
Which you to countenance would the stage make proud
And poets strive to key their stings more loud.
Prod. to Challenge for Beauty.”

It has often been remarked with surprise of the old dramatists, that in their plays they enter into all the minutiae of

* Shirley's *Doubtful Heir* was not printed till 1653, but probably it was written some years earlier. In the prologue, he censures severely the introduction of shows, dances, &c. upon the stage, to the exclusion of dramatic poetry. He says, that in his plays will be found

“No shows, no dance, and what you most delight in
Grave understanders! here's no target fighting
Upon the stage, all work for castles' barr'd
No bawdry, nor no ballets—this goes hard:
But language clean, and what affects you not,
Without impossibilities the plot, &c.”

passion, into all the finer and more delicate impulses; that this was most especially the case with Shakspeare all can bear witness: the writings of our ancient masters are a most perfect contrast to those that succeeded, by the Drydens, the Davenants, and the Lees, in which only the most vulgar, obtrusive, and violent passions are represented. The reason why these refinements, these nicer shades, were introduced, we have before given—it was because the audience could see and distinguish them: the theatres were small, without any thing to distract the attention from the actor when he was delivering passages of poetry, or portraying the inward workings of the mind; both these gratifications are now lost to the spectator (we can scarcely call him auditor) at our theatres as at present constructed; and we may venture to assert, that the greater number of those parts of the plays of our great dramatist, which, by violent action and sudden transition of voice, are now made most effective, were formerly the least prominent parts of the performance. We could appeal to the judgment of any person of taste, whether the passages in Hamlet, for instance, which cut the greatest figure in the acting at Drury-Lane or Covent Garden, are not in truth the worst portions of the play. In illustration of this subject, we beg to make a very happy quotation from an article in the Reflector, an almost unknown periodical work published in the year 1811: the essay from which we make the extract is entitled *Theatralia*, and was written by a gentleman whom we know well, and admire more.*

"It is common for people to talk of Shakspeare's plays being so natural; that every body can understand him. They are natural indeed, they are grounded deep in nature, so deep that the depth of them lies out of the reach of most of us. You shall hear the same persons say that George Barnwell is very natural, and Othello is very natural, that they are both very deep; and to them they are the same kind of thing. At the one they sit and shed tears, because a good sort of young man is tempted by a naughty woman to commit a trifling peccadillo, the murder of an uncle or so,† that is all, and

* Not Mr. Leigh Hunt, who principally conducted the work.

† "If this note could hope to meet the eye of any of the Managers, I would intreat and beg of them, in the name of both the Galleries, that this insult upon the morality of the common people of London should cease to be eternally repeated in the holiday weeks. Why are the 'prentices of this famous and well-governed city, instead of an amusement, to be treated over and over again with a nauseous sermon of George Barnwell? Why at the end of their ristoers are we to place the gallews? Were I an uncle, I should not much like a nephew of mine to have such an example placed before his eyes. It is really

so comes to an untimely end, which is so moving; and at the other, because a blackamoor in a fit of jealousy kills his innocent white wife: and the odds are that ninety-nine out of a hundred would willingly behold the same catastrophe happen to both heroes, and have thought the rope more due to Othello than to Barnwell. For of the texture of Othello's mind, the inward construction marvelously laid open with all its strengths and weaknesses, its heroic confidences and its human misgivings, its agonies of hate springing from the depths of love, they see no more than the spectators at a cheaper rate, who pay their pennies a-piece to look through the man's telescope in Leicester-fields, see into the inward plot and topography of the moon. Some dim thing or other they see, they see an actor personating a passion, of grief, or anger, for instance, and they recognize it as a copy of the usual external effects of such passions; or at least as being true to that symbol of the emotion which passes current at the theatre for it, for it is often no more than that: but of the grounds of the passion, its correspondence to a great or heroic nature, which is the only worthy object of tragedy,—that common auditors know any thing of this, or can have any such notions dinned into them by the mere strength of an actor's lungs,—that apprehensions foreign to them should be thus infused into them by storm, I can neither believe, nor understand how it can be possible." (p. 303—304.)

We think it may be taken for granted therefore, without dwelling longer on this part of the subject, that by the magnitude of our theatres we have lost nearly all discrimination of character, all the more exquisite touches, all display of the motives of action in the workings of mind; and our dramatic compositions have become like the gaudy scenes painted to aid them, mere coarse, unfinished, undetailed representations; and our *dramatis personæ* are the caricatures of human beings, as the daubed canvas is the caricature of natural objects. We need not discuss more particularly what we have gained instead, it is sufficient for us to point out what we have lost.

When we say, in the second place, that the extreme magnitude of our theatres is injurious to the interests of authors, we must not be supposed to have in view merely a sordid calculation of pounds, shillings, and pence, though, were we driven even to this, we should not despair of convincing any man, that dramatic authorship is now a much

making uncle-murder too trivial to exhibit it as done upon such slight motives;—it is attributing too much to such characters as *Millwood*; it is putting things into the heads of good young men, which they would never otherwise have dreamed of. Uncles that think any thing of their lives, should fairly petition the Chamberlain against it."

worse trade than at the period to which we before alluded. Some of those who are of our opinion, comparing the successful works of this age with those of two centuries ago, say that it is now so easy to write for the stage; but this we apprehend is a mistake; it is by no means an easy thing for a man of education and mind (especially if he have a gift of poetry, and consequently an admiration of the nobler productions in this kind) to write for the stage—for he will not, or cannot, write badly enough; and in confirmation of our assertion we might appeal to any collection of plays brought out within the last twenty years, by which it would be found, that those which had been condemned had infinitely more talent engaged in their composition than those which had been successful—we would ask for no better test of the truth of what we have advanced. Besides this, let us consider for a moment who have been the popular authors in our day—numerous they certainly are; Reynolds, Morton, Dibdin, Hooke, Dimond, &c. &c. and put in the opposite scale those whose names we need not bring forward, whose dramatic compositions have been hooted from the boards, at a period too when all classes, from improved education, are better able to appreciate merit, had the proportion of our theatres enabled them to exercise their understandings, and to employ their knowledge. Many people have wondered that in this age of poets, none of them have ventured upon a drama: why has not Lord Byron, Mr. Walter Scott, or Mr. Southey, written a tragedy? is a question often put, and the answer is obvious—they are too prudent, and their minds, and the minds of other living poets, have taken a different turn, unconsciously perhaps, because it was impossible that any thing really excellent should succeed on the stage. An author is now a most insignificant personage, a thing almost to be dispensed with in a theatre, compared with those important appendages, the scene-painter, the dress-maker, and the mechanist.

On this account we say that large theatres are injurious to the interests of authors, considering them as a body, and including in those interests not so much present emolument as posthumous fame, and connecting their interests with those of literature in general. No tragedy, within the last ten or twenty years, has been so successful as *Pizarro*, and when we reflect upon the stuff of which it is composed, of the violent opposition of its characters—a bloody tyrant, a generous hero, a whining lover, and a ranting heroine—and of the fustian of the inflated dialogue, and speeches, we

may set it down as the model upon which tragedy must now be written to be successful. Well might the lamented author, or rather translator of it, say in reference to the long run it experienced—"It is better than any thing in Shakespeare—I mean for the managers."

BIBLIOTHECA ANTIQUA.

For out of the olde felles, as men saith,
Cometh all this new corne, fro yere to yere;
And out of old booke, in good faeth,
Cometh all this newe science that men lere.

Chaucer's Assen. of Houles, st. 4.

JAMES SHIRLEY.

ART. X.—*The Triumph of Peace, a Masque; presented by the Four Honourable Houses, or Inns of Court. Before the King and Queenes Majesties, in the Banqueting-house at Whitehall, February the third, 1633. Invented and Written by JAMES SHIRLEY, of Grayes Inn, Gent. The Third Impression. "Primum hunc Arcthusa mihi." London, printed by John Norton, for William Cooke, and are to be sold at his shop, neere Furnival's-Inn-Gate, in Tolborne. 1633.*

HAVING in our last article given specimens of the powers of Shirley in the departments of the drama to which Tragedy and Comedy belong, it will be our business now to speak of his *Masques, Dramatic Entertainments, Pastorals, and Miscellaneous Poems*, and to introduce such additional quotations as will enable our readers to form a fair estimate of the value of the forth-coming edition of his works by Mr. Gifford, independently of the labours of the very able and shrewd commentator.

The whole number of the dramatic pieces attributed, with tolerable certainty, to Shirley is 39: they were all printed within the space of thirty years, and display a cur-

* Five others are given to him by some biographers: they are called—*The Duke, Look to the Lady, St. Albans, The General, and Rosania*. There appears to be little or no authority for this, more particularly the two last. Rosania is undoubtedly the same play as the *Doubtful Her*, under a different name. In the catalogue of the British Museum another piece, printed in 1602, is stated to have been from the pen of Shirley, who was born only in 1594: this error arises from the ignorance of some person who has written on the title page of the entertainment, (called "the Contentment between Liberalitie and Prodigalitie.") the name of James Shirley.