

morning of the third day, we were obliged to cut our cables and put to sea, and never saw the Bay any more. In company with our consort we arrived at Canton river on the 16th of September, at the usual rendezvous for India ships, about seven leagues below the great city of Canton, and failed

from thence the 16th of December following; had a fine passage to St. Helena, at which place we stayed three days to water our ship, from thence made the best of our way to London, where we arrived, by the help of God, May 8, 1789.

Observations on the modern Drama.

[Addressed to the Printer of the BATH CHRONICLE.]

S I R,

IT is one character, and I think the privilege of old age, to hate the present times, and to complain of degeneracy; in this character I present myself to you, and I hope you will so far indulge my foible as to allow a small corner in your Miscellany for my complaint.

It is now above sixty years since I first began to frequent the Bath waters, and enjoy the salutary pleasures of this famous place. I have drunk with Quin, chatted with Nash, and played whist with Chesterfield; I now find wonderful changes, not wholly for the better. I shall confine my complaint, at present, to one article. I have always been a warm admirer of our best dramatic entertainments, and my acquaintances have esteemed me as a critic of some note in that line. I entertain a fixed opinion, that, in England, true dramatic genius mostly *existed* and *expired* in one age,—I mean in the age of Shakespeare, Johnson, Beaumont, and Fletcher; this was a prevailing opinion since the Rehearsal checked the miserable course of false taste, till of late years, when that excellent satire seems forgotten, and false taste again triumphs among our writers and our auditors. In our tragedies, siltian passes for the sublime, and in our comedies,—a strange sort of quaintness for wit and humour; our plots are improbable, our characters are

not drawn from life, but from plays or romances, and our songs have no sense at all. Shakespeare's censure of bad dramatic writings in his time, is applicable to our modern drama—

"Extremely strain'd and conn'd with cruel pain."

Our writers compose *in vitro* *Minnerva*, and the character given of bad plays in the Rehearsal is still more applicable in our time, that they are "dull and fantastical;"—a strange composition! The "old plain way of wit" is now no longer in vogue, yet every season produces new tragedies, comedies, and numberless comick operas, which are recommended by critics, and acted with astonishing applause. For my part, (and I know I am not altogether singular) I damn them all, with a very few exceptions.

I now come to my special matter of complaint; I have resided in Bath for two months past, yet I have not seen one of the old plays announced for performance; in former times we had no comick operas, excepting Milton's *Comus*, undeformed by Garrick's alterations, and the *Beggar's Opera*, exquisite entertainments. The old plays (also unadulterated by our vile modern alterations) were frequently exhibited and well acted.

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,
AN OLD CUSTOMER.
Bath, May 9, 1789.

Post-

Postscript. I must fairly confess that I do include under my censure the favoured comedies of two illustrious Generals; and I admit of no pro-

per exceptions but the Douglas in tragedy, and in comedy a few of Foote's careless, imperfect pieces, and the writings of Mr Sheridan.

To the Publisher.

S I R,

SOMEWHAT more than a year ago, I was very forcibly struck by a very bold speculation upon Light, advanced by an ingenious and popular lecturer on Natural Philosophy. Immediately, upon getting home, I committed what I had heard to paper, and can answer fully for the accuracy of the meaning, though I by no means pretend to give it in the same elegant and flowery diction in which it was delivered. I meant, at the time, to have transmitted some observations upon the subject to your Magazine, but delayed for some time, in hopes that one better fitted for the task might have taken the same ground; afterwards, constant professional engagements made me to forget the matter altogether until this day, that, turning over my common-place book in search of something else, the entry accidentally occurred.

Having premised, with several very excellent observations, upon the nature of light in general, and shewn that it was subjected to the same laws of nature which regulate other matter, he concluded, and, in my humble opinion, very justly, that 'light was material.' He next explained the phenomena of Phosphori, or of bodies which, when exposed to the sun's rays; continue, after being suddenly removed into a dark place, to emit the light they had before imbibed, for a longer or shorter time, in proportion to their several phosphorescent powers. What peculiarly impressed itself upon my imagination was nearly as follows:

"I have often amused myself with the following idea, that the sun and fixed stars, which are undoubtedly suns to other planetary systems, may be phosphoric bodies, possessed of that power in a highly eminent degree; and that they may have imbibed the light they now emit immediately from the bright effulgence of the Almighty; who, at the creation, unvailing his full splendour directly upon them, thus endowed these bodies, originally dark in their own nature, with the power of emitting the light they then imbibed, so as to supply the universe until light shall be no longer necessary."

Numbers of the auditors around me declared, in enraptured whispers, the idea to be grand and sublime, but I am thoroughly convinced, that neither they nor the learned gentleman who uttered the above sentiment, were at all aware of the dangerous consequences which must necessarily flow from these positions taken as premises in a syllogism. For, if light be material, and that of the sun and stars be immediately derived by emanation, or emission, from the resplendent light of the unveiled person of God, no reasoning being can hesitate a moment to affirm that God himself must be material, at least in part, so far as light is concerned.

The above idea was illustrated by a quotation from *Paradise Lost*, B. vii. ver. 354, & seq. where the sentiment is, in my opinion, fully as philosophical, equally sublime, and beautifully