

PROLOGUE

To the Squire of Alsatia. Spoken by Mr. Mountfort.

How have we in the space of one poor Age,
Beheld the Rise and Downfall of the Stage !
When, with our King restor'd, it first arose,
They did each day some good old Play expose ;
And then it flourisb'd : Till, with Manna tir'd,
For wholesome Food ye nauseous Trash desir'd.
Then rose the whiffling Scribblers of those days,
Who since have liv'd to bury all their Plays ;
And had their issue full as num'rous been
As Priams, they the Fate of all had seen.
With what prodigious scarcity of Wit
Did the new Authors starve the hungry Pit ?
Infected by the French, you must have Rhime,
Which long, to please the Ladies ears, did chime.
Soon after this came Ranting Fustian in,
And none but Plays upon the fret were seen :
Such Roaring Bombast stuff, which Fops would praise,
Tore our best Actors Lungs, cut short their days.
Some in small time did this distemper kill,
And had the savage Authors gone on still, }
Fustian had been a new Disease i'th' Bill.
When Time, which all things trys, had laid Rhime dead,
The vile Usurper Farce reign'd in its stead.
Then came Mackines, brought from a Neighbour Nation,
Oh how we suffer'd under Decoration !
If all this stuff has not quite spoyl'd your taste,
Pray let a Comedy once more be grac'd :
Which does not Monsters represent, but Men,
Conforming to the Rules of Master Ben.
Our Author, ever having him in view,
At humble distance would his steps pursue.
He to correct, and to inform did write :
If Poets aim at nought but to delight, }
Fiddlers have to the Bays an equal right.
Our Poet found your gentle Fathers kind,
And now some of his works your favour find.
He'll treat you still with somewhat that is new,
But whether good or bad, he leaves to you.
Baudy the nicest Ladies need not fear,
The quickest fancy shall extract none here.
We will not make 'em blush, by which is shwon
How much their bought Red differs from their own.
No Fop no Beau shall just exceptions make,
None but abandon'd Knaves offence shall take :
Such Knaves as he industriously offends,
And shoud be very loth to have his Friends.
For you who bring good humour to the Play,
We'll do our best to make you laugh to day.

E P I.

