

dian language. But farther; when a play has any degree of unity in action, time, and place; when the several scenes, the characters lead on to, and terminate in one grand design, or event; I will venture to say, if it be tolerably well acted, that a *foreigner*, tho' he does not understand the language, will be able to tell you what the general drift and design of the play was: Let a Spaniard, or Frenchman, who is ignorant of the English tongue, be present at the representation of *Othello*, *Lear*, *Richard*, *The Journey to London*, or *The Bold Stroke for a Wife*, and I am certain he will give a just account of all he saw: he will tell you, that *one* murdered his wife for jealousy; that the *other* went mad for the ingratitude of his daughters; that conscious guilt filled the *third*, though no coward spirit, with all the horrors of remorse.

WHEN I went first to the Spanish comedy, it was the season for acting the *Autos*, that is to say, plays in support of the Catholic faith; for *Auto de Fe* is in their language *an act of faith*. I found at my first entrance a good theatre, as to size and shape, but rather dirty, and ill lighted; and what made it worse was an equal mixture of day-light and candles. The *prompter's* head appeared thro' a little trap-door above the level of the stage, and I first took him for a ghost, or devil, just ready to ascend to these upper regions: But I was soon undeceived, when he began to read the play loud enough for the actors and the boxes too, who were near him. The *pit* was an odd sight, and made a motley, comical appearance; many standing in their night-caps and cloaks; officers and soldiers interspersed among the dirtiest mob, seemed rather strange. That which answered to our *two-shilling-gallery*, was filled with women only, all in the same uniform, a dark petticoat, and a white woollen veil. The side and front-boxes were occupied by people well dressed, and some of the first fashion.

WHEN the play began, the actors appeared much better attired, that is, in richer clothes, than those in England; and these they change perpetually, in order to let you see the expensive variety of their wardrobe. After some scenes had passed, which were tedious and insipid, there came on an interlude of humour and drollery, designed, I suppose, for the entertainment of the pit. One

of these comedians appeared tempting, with a bag of money, a lady who sung to him very prettily, and did not seem altogether averse to grant him some favours: in the mean while to my great surprize a man brought in three *barbers blocks* upon the stage: after these three said barbers blocks were placed upon the stage, the same man returned and dressed them first in *mens clothes*, and undressed them again, and then dressed them once more in *womens clothes*. Now, Sir, to tell you the truth, it was for the sake of such scenes as these that I placed those lines of HORACE at the head of this account; because I am persuaded the author attempted this excellent piece of humour, for the reason there given, for the sake of his friends in the pit, and this without violating the decorum due to the national gravity of his countrymen.

HOWEVER, I should not forget to tell you, that when these block ladies were properly attired, there came in three men, who had a fancy to tempt these three ladies likewise; but they were inflexibly coy, and I think it was not long before their gallants discovered the mistake. But to quit this interlude, and return to the play again: In process of time, and after some scenes had passed, which were long, tiresome, uninteresting, and full of fustian and bombast; the grand scene approached; an actor, dressed in a long purple robe, appeared in the character of JESUS CHRIST, or the *Nuestro Senor*, as they call him; immediately he was blindfolded, buffeted, spit upon, bound, scourged, crowned with thorns, and compelled to bear his cross, when he knelt down and cried, *Padre mi! Padre mi!* "My Father! my Father! why hast thou forsaken me?" After this he placed himself against the wall, with his hands extended, as if on the cross, and there imitated the expiring agonies of his dying Lord. And what think you, my friend, was the conclusion of this awful and solemn scene? why, really, one every way suitable to the dignity and seriousness of the occasion: one of the actresses immediately unbound Christ, divested him of his crown and scarlet robes; and when he had put on his wig and coat again, he immediately joined the rest of the actors, and danced a *sequedillas*.

Speſtatum admiſſi, riſum teneatis, amici?

As

As to the *seguedillas*, or dance, it is little better upon the Spanish stage, than gently walking round one another; tho' when danced in its true spirit, in private houses, it much resembles the *English Hay*. After this one of the actresses, in a very long speech, explained the nature, end, and design of the *sacraments*; you must know also, that the Spaniards admit a great number of soliloquies, full of tiresome, and uninteresting declamation, into their plays. In the last scene, Christ appeared in a ship triumphant; and thus the play concluded. I forgot to tell you, that Christ, before his passion, preached to the four quarters of the world, in their proper dresses, upon the stage: *Europe* and *America* heard him gladly, and received the faith; but *Asia* and *Africa* remained incorrigible.

SOME time after I had seen this *Auto* (for, to say the truth, my curiosity was a little abated with regard to the Spanish stage, from this specimen of it) I went to see a regular comedy; there were two English gentlemen in the box with me at the same time. We understood very little of the design of the first act; we saw a king, queen, an enchantress, and many other pretty, delightful sights: but the *interlude*, with which that act concluded, is, I think, not to be equalled either by ROME or GREECE; neither FARQUHAR, CIBBER, or any of our lowest farce-writers, have ever produced any thing comparable to it. The scene was intended for the inside of a *Spanish Posada* (or *inn*) in the night; there were three feather-beds, and as many blankets brought upon the stage; the queen and her maids of honour personated the mistress of the *Posada* and her maids; and accordingly fell to making the beds. After this there came in six men to lie there, who paid three quarts a piece; one of them being a miser, had rolled up his money in twenty or thirty pieces of paper. Then they undressed before the ladies, by pulling off six or seven pair of breeches, and as many coats and waistcoats, and got into bed two by two: When behold, the jest was, to see them all kick the clothes off one another, and then fight, as the spectator is to suppose, in the dark. The absurdity of this scene, and the incomprehensible ridiculousness of it, made us laugh immoderately. The sight of the feather-beds, the men kicking and sprawling, the peals of applause, that echoed through the house, were truly inconceivable; tho', I believe, our

neighbours in the next box thought we laughed at the wit and humour of the author. It was a scene that beggars all possible description, and I defy any theatre in EUROPE, but that of MADRID, to produce such another. SHUTER's favourite *Beggars Bush*, with all its low ribaldry, is by no means a match for it. But to return once more to the play: When this *interlude* was finished, there succeeded some other scenes, between the king, queen, enchantress, and the rest of the actors; such as five or six of them drawing their swords upon the enchantress all at once, who parries them with her wand, and retires into her cell unhurt. They are surpris'd to find that their swords made no impression, and so put them up into their scabbards for a better occasion, crying, *Muy grande maravilla!* that is, "It is a very great wonder!" At other times the enchantress kills with one look, and makes alive with a second. Once she came in, fell down upon the stage, broke her nose, got up again, went out, and returned with a black patch. Then we had another *interlude*, in which some husbands pursued their wives in great anger, and with clubs something like Goliath's staff, or a weaver's beam, in order to beat their brains out; but, by the friendly interposition of some kind neighbours, they were prevented from that rude species of divorce. In revenge for this insult, the wives in the *interlude* that followed at the end of the next act, dressed themselves up like amazons, with arms and armour, and pursued their husbands, who in their turn now submitted to the conquerors. I remember nothing very remarkable that pass'd after this, excepting that the enchantress renounces the devil, and all his works, and in conclusion embraces the catholic faith, and declares she will adhere to that only.

THIS, I hope, will serve at present for a short sketch of the *Spanish Stage*. Indeed, I had almost forgot to tell you, that TERESA, one of the actresses, was this winter imprisoned by the King's order, for being too free of her charms to some of the grandees; it was said she would be condemned to the workhouse for life. However that be, she remains in prison still, and, as far as I can learn, is like to remain so for some time longer.

CALDERONI is at present, and has been the favourite author upon their stage for some years.

LETTER VII. PART I.

Description of the BULL-FEAST, exhibited in the
Plaza Mayor at *Madrid*, upon occasion of His Ca-
tholic Majesty's Public Entry into his Capital, on
July 15, 1760.

WE arrived at the balcony of the English Ambassador in the
Plaza Mayor about half an hour after three in the after-
noon, and were at once struck with the chearfullest, gayest sight
imaginable. The *square*, which is large, was thronged with people;
the *balconies* all ornamented with different coloured silks, and crowd-
ed from the top to the bottom of the houses; the avenues to the
square were built up into balconies, and a sort of sloping scaffold-
ing was placed round for the common people, elevated above the
ground, or pit, if I may so call it, about eight or nine feet, with
openings in proper places, and wooden doors.

FIRST came in the coaches of the *cavaliers*, four in number, of
an antique and singular make, with glasses at the ends, and quite
open at the sides: The cavaliers were placed at the doors of their
coaches, from whence they bowed to the people, and the balcon-
ies, as they passed round the square; and they were accompanied
by their sponsors, the Dukes of OSSUNA, of BANOS, of ARCOS,

and MEDINA CÆLI. Before the royal family came a company of *halberdiers*, after which the king's coaches in great state, I believe about seven or eight in number, preceding his *Carosse de Respect*, which was extremely rich, with red and gold ornaments, and beautiful painted pannels: Then a coach with some of the great officers, who go always immediately before the king; next came the KING and QUEEN in a very sumptuous coach of blue, with all the ornaments of massive silver, and the crown at the top; the trappings of the horses were likewise silver, with large white plumes. These were followed by the coaches of the Prince of ASTURIAS, the two infantas, and Don LUIS, with their attendants.

THEIR Majesties were placed opposite to us, in a gilt balcony, with a canopy and curtains of scarlet and gold; the queen on that occasion taking the right hand. On the right hand of the king's balcony were placed the rest of the royal family: and on the left were ranged the gentlemen of the bed-chamber in a row; all dressed in a very fine uniform of blue and red, richly embroidered with gold. The *halberdiers* marched from the king's balcony, which was in the center on one side, and forming themselves into two lines, fronting different ways, instantly cleared the square of the croud, who retired into the scaffolding, erected for them round it. Next the halberdiers formed themselves in a line before the scaffold, under the king's balcony. Then appeared *two companies of boys*, dressed in an uniform with caps, and red taffeta jackets, ranged against the right and left hand side of the square, who carrying buckets of water in their hands, watered the stage as they crossed over to the side opposite to them. This being performed, the six chief *Alguazils* of the town, mounted upon fine horses, covered with trappings, and dressed in the old Spanish habits, black with slashed sleeves, great white flowing wigs, and hats with plumes of different-coloured feathers, advanced towards the king's balcony, under which they were obliged to stay the whole time, to receive his orders; except when they were frightened away by the bulls, when they were obliged to ride for it, being absolutely unarmed and defenceless.

HAVING

HAVING obtained the king's permission for the *bull-feast*, the troops belonging to the *knights* entered upon the stage in four large companies, dressed in liveries of *Moorish habits* of silk, richly and elegantly ornamented with lace and embroidery: These marched first to make their bow to the king's balcony, and then in procession round the square: and from the elegance, singularity, and variety of their uniforms, made one of the most delightful scenes that can be conceived. After them came the *four knights*, habited in the old Spanish dress, with plumes in their hats, and mounted upon the most beautiful horses: each carried in his hand a slender lance, and was attended by two men on foot, dressed in light silk, of the colour of his livery, with a sort of cloaks or mantles of the same; these never forsake his side, and are indeed his principal defence. After the *cavaliers* had done their homage to the King, their companies retired, and there remained with them only, besides those who walked by their side, a few dressed with mantles in the same manner, who dispersed themselves over the stage. The cavaliers then disposed themselves for the encounter; the first placing himself opposite to the door of the place where the bulls are kept, the other at some distance behind him, and so on.

THE KING then making the *signal* for the doors to be opened, the bull appeared, to the sound of martial music, and the loud acclamations of the people: and seeing one of the attendants of the first cavalier spreading his cloak before him, aimed directly at him; but the man easily evaded him, and gave his master an opportunity of breaking his spear in the bull's neck. In the same manner the bull was tempted to engage the other cavaliers, and always with the same success: till having received the honourable wounds from their lances, he was encountered by the other men on foot: who, after playing with him, with an incredible agility, as long as they think proper, easily put an end to him, by thrusting a sword either into his neck or side, which brings him to the ground; and then they finish him at once, *by striking a dagger, or the point of a sword, behind his horns into the spine, which is always immediate death**. After this the bull is instantly hurried off by mules, finely adorned, and decked with trappings for the occasion.

* This was the way the *Numidians* used to kill the elephants, when they became unruly: see LIVY, lib. xxvii. cap. 49. The words are, *Rectores eorum scalprum cum malleo habebant*;

My apprehensions were at first principally for the men *on foot*; but I soon perceived they were in no sort of danger: their cloaks are a certain security to them, as the bull always aims at it, and they can therefore easily evade the blow. Besides this, there are so many to assist each other, that they can always lead the bull which way they please, and even in the worst case they can preserve themselves by leaping into the scaffold, as they frequently did.

THE *knights* are in much more danger; their horses being too full of fire to be exactly directed; they cannot therefore so well evade the aim, and are liable every moment to be overthrown with their horses, if the attendants by their side did not assist them. Two beautiful horses nevertheless we saw gored; one of which was overthrown with his rider, but fortunately the man escaped any mischief from his fall. The courage of these horses is so great, that they have been often known to advance towards the bull, when their bowels were trailing upon the ground.

AFTER the knights had sufficiently tired themselves with these exploits, the king gave them leave to retire and repose. We had then bulls let out (one at a time always) from another door, of a more furious nature; these were encountered entirely by the men on foot, who were so far from fearing their rage, that the whole business was to irritate them more, by throwing upon their necks, and other parts, little barbed darts, ornamented with bunches of paper, like the *Bacchanalian Thyasus*, some of which were filled with gunpowder, and burst in the manner of a squib or serpent, as soon as they were fastened to the bull. Nothing can be imagined more tormenting than these darts, which stick about him, and never lose their hold. But the courage and amazing dexterity, with which they are thrown, takes off your attention from the cruelty of it. Another method they have of diverting themselves with the fury of the bull, is by dressing up *goat-skins*, blown up with wind, into figures, and placing them before him, which makes a very ridiculous part of the entertainment. Many

id, ubi scire belluæ, & ruere in suos cæpe aut, magister inter aures positum, ipso in articulo, quo jungitur capiti cervix (in the spine) quanto maximo poterat icu adigebat. Ea celerrima via mortis in tantæ molis belluâ inventa erat, ubi regendi spem vicissent. Primusque id Asdrubal instituerat.