MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE

ABATE METASTASIO.

IN WHICH ARE INCORPORATED,

TRANSLATIONS

OF HIS

PRINCIPAL LETTERS.

BY CHARLES BURNEY, MUS. D. F. R. S.

Omniaque ejus non ſolum ſacta, ſed etiam dicta meminiſſet.
CIC. SOMN. SCIP.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE ABATE

PIETRO METASTASIO.

SECTION I.

ABOUT the time that Signor Mattei opened a correſpondence with our bard, he had many letters to write of mere compliment to authors who ſent him their works, and of civility to others who had praiſed his own. Except the letters to the *Romanina* and his brother, thoſe to *Farinelli*, *Saverio Mattei*, and his old friend Sig. *Filipponi* of Turin, are the moſt confidential. However, there are frequently paſſages in his letters to others, which merit preſervation, either for their wit, ingenuity, politeneſs, or, for the ſentiments they contain on ſubjects of literature; and of theſe we ſhall ſelect a few,

 previous

previous to resuming his correspondence with his more particular friends.

In 1766, the Abate *Vincenzo Camillo Alberti* began a correspondence with our poet, which continued till 1773; of which correspondence near thirty letters have been inserted in the printed collection. But as they are short, and contain little more than expressions of thanks and politeness for his offers of friendship and presents of his works, but little can be extracted from them, that can either amuse or interest an English reader; particularly, when deprived of the fascinating elegance with which they are expressed in their native language.

The first letter from Sig. *Alberti* to which the answer of Metastasio is preserved, inclosed a Cantata—" I cannot but be much flattered and obliged by your voluntary offer of friendship, with such partial expressions in my favour; and as a demonstration of its value, you communicate to me a Cantata of your own writing, which is truly happy, affecting, and graceful. But how can a man at my time of life, tired with his indispensible occupations, support a regular correspondence? Unless you could remove a number of Olympiads from my shoulders, and give

give me a little of your own leiſure, I ſhould certainly merit only your compaſſion for my inability to avail myſelf of the honour which you ſo generouſly offer me."

When Sig. *Alberti* ſent Metaſtaſio a Sonnet which he had written with an intention of prefixing it as a dedication of his Cantatas to the poet, he ſays: "I am extremely grateful for your affectionate partiality, and congratulate you on the production of ſo beautiful a Sonnet; but at the ſame time, muſt entreat you moſt earneſtly, to relinquiſh your obliging deſign: as ſuch incenſe has ever, from time immemorial, been devoted to the favourites of fortune, not to us poor inhabitants of Parnaſſus. And this reaſon has, hitherto, ſufficed in defending me from others who have had a ſimilar deſign: and I promiſe to myſelf the ſame complacence from you, which I ſhall regard as a proof of your friendſhip, and a ſtimulus to the continuance of that eſteem with which I have the honour to be, &c."

This Abate ſeems, with great friendſhip and zeal, to have complained to Metaſtaſio of the liberties then taking by ſome opera botchers with his dramas; to which the poet replies: "Spare your virtuous indignation, my moſt obliging Sig. Alberti, for occaſions

more worthy of your wrath, than the alterations of ſome of my dramas. If the corrections are juſt, I ought to be grateful to thoſe who ſhall enlighten me; and if otherwiſe, I ſhall not be ſorry that the public, occupied with the faults of others, ſhall have the leſs leiſure for reflecting upon mine. Let not my averſion to the writing long letters diminiſh your eſteem: on the contrary, believe me ever, in ſpite of this infirmity, invariably yours."

Metaſtaſio having, in ſport, told the Abate, that he ſhould be unable to write for ſome time, as he was ordered by his imperial miſtreſs to take a journey to Parnaſſus; Signor Alberti, not underſtanding that the poet meant to ſhut out all interruption, and devote his whole time to the muſes, broke in upon him with an unexpected letter, to which he pleaſantly makes the following reply. "Long life to my moſt officious Sig. Alberti! who for the ſake of his friends, in imitation of Hercules and Theſeus, does not decline having a commerce with the other world. Upon my having told you that I had made my laſt voyage to the Elyſian fields, you went thither by letter to ſeek me: ſolicitous to know the truth from myſelf. For once, I have the pleaſure to thank you from

Vienna.

Vienna. But if I had been found in that remote region, I know not whether my anſwer would have come ſo ſoon. However, after this convincing proof, I am ſure that the inexorable fates may rob me of what they pleaſe; but they will never place me beyond the power of your compaſs."

The following extract from a letter to the Abate *Alberti* will communicate to the reader Metaſtaſio's opinion of blank verſe.

"I am much obliged to you for the new poetical compoſition which you were ſo kind as to incloſe in your laſt letter, and which I ſhould rather call an epiſtle, than a poem. It appears to me learned, the thoughts ſeem noble and well digeſted, and the ſtyle as poetical and harmonious as is poſſible in our endicaſyllable meaſure, ſtript of rhyme. Whether from reaſon or habit, I know not; but my ear cannot eaſily accommodate itſelf to this convenient liberty, which perhaps, idleneſs has recommended to ſome of our illuſtrious Italian bards. It is true, that rhyme ſometimes tyrannically impedes the expreſſion of our thoughts: but it is likewiſe true, that it often ſuggeſts to us ideas that are more luminous and ſublime, to which our minds would never have ſoared, but for the violent efforts to which this troubleſome

ſtimulatrix has obliged us to have recourſe in our diſtreſs. And it is certain, that there is as much difference in the force of the ſame thought happily expreſſed in rhyme and in blank verſe, as in that of a ſtone thrown with the hand, and with a ſling. Not that I diſapprove of this liberty in the epiſtolary or didactic ſtyle. In theſe, it ſeems as if the poet may diſpenſe a little with this muſic, which is always eſſential to true poetry."

"I know not what can poſſibly have ſeduced the worthy Counteſs Bianchi in my favour. I am ſo proud of ſuch an enviable partiality, that I pray to heaven ſhe may never be undeceived. Pray preſent her my moſt humble thanks, and try to keep her in this miſtake."——

Speaking of the Emperor's Tour through Italy, incognito, in 1769, he ſays: "we know nothing more of the auguſt pilgrim here, than that he quitted Vienna the 3d of this inſtant March, in the evening; that there is no doubt but that he intends to viſit Rome in this manner to avoid ceremony, of which he is an irreconcileable enemy; and that he propoſes to paſs unknown wherever he goes; but his ſtar is thought too luminous to be concealed

concealed by any cloud which he can get behind."——

"My moſt obliging Sig. Alberti, ever eager to confer favours on me, has been the firſt to inform me of the happy delivery of the little niece of my dear Gemello: pray accept of my beſt thanks for the courteous diligence with which you have quieted my ſolicitude*."

Metaſtaſio's correſpondent, the Abate Alberti, had been long confined to his bed by a broken ancle. When he ſent him ſome works which he had produced during that ſtate—The Imperial Laureat ſays: "I ſhall read the book whenever I can get time for that gratification; but, at preſent, I have hardly leiſure ſufficient to thank you for it. I have, however, peruſed the little Cantata that was incloſed in your letter, by which I find, that though lame, you have either been able to clamber mount Parnaſſus, or are ſo well with the muſes, that they ſcruple not to viſit you in bed. Get up, for heaven's ſake, that you may no longer oblige them to

* This was the little fractious homely child, of which Farinelli was ſo fond, when I viſited him at Bologna, in 1770.

ſuch practices as, to thoſe who envy you, may appear ſcandalous."——

"In your laſt letter, you wiſh me to be diffuſe in my anſwer, and point out an opportunity for me to diſcuſs certain queſtions in the Aſiatic manner. Ah, my dear Abate, you ſuppoſe me young, robuſt, and idle. Would to heaven you were not miſtaken! But, for my misfortune, neither youth, ſtrength, nor leiſure, are allowed me. The mere duties of my office are now a grievous burthen to me: think then how unfit I muſt be, to ſcrawl whole ſheets, merely to ſhew my eloquence and genius: I leave all this to you, who are in the prime of life *."——

"The laſt Sonnet with which you have been pleaſed to favour me, leaves all the other poetical compoſitions which the muſes have hitherto dictated to you, far behind. I congratulate you upon it: but am unable to comprehend how, in your painful ſituation, it is poſſible for you to have an inclination to tune the lyre. Though I can plead no ſuch painful impediment, yet I can never bruſh the duſt off mine, unleſs from abſolute neceſſity. In the enſuing nuptial celebration

* Metaſtaſio was now ſeventy-four.

there

there will be no theatrical exhibition. I obtained not this information, till I had almoſt finiſhed a drama which I was ordered to write: ſo that I have not been ſpared, as I might have been, a labour which is now become heavy and ungrateful *.——

"Your ſonnet ſhall be enjoyed by the few palates that are able to taſte it."——

"I know not whether I ought to congratulate you on the huge purchaſe you have made of Italian dramas. You will find, as formerly happened to myſelf, in an immenſe quantity of ſtraw, but very little grain, and that of a bad quality. *Siface* will not compenſate for the bad harveſt. I am extremely grateful to you for the obliging offer of it, which you make me; but having, ſome years ago, met with a copy of this old opera, I gave it a peruſal, and am by no means tempted to acknowledge it as my legitimate offspring. It is a drama compoſed againſt my will: the idea was to reform an old opera at the requeſt of *Porpora*: and in reforming, it was entirely changed; as the original materials

* This drama (*Ruggiero*) was, however, completed, ſet to muſic by Haſſe, and proformed at Milan, in 1771, upon the marriage of the Arch-duke Ferdinand, with the princeſs of Modena.

were

were ſo totally different from the additional, and ſo diſcordant, as to form a contraſt that was inſupportable and monſtrous. And yet, it is not mine, though I believe there remains not one verſe as it was written by the firſt author. In order to be truly mine, the firſt deſign ſhould have been of my invention; but my intention was merely to rectify ſome particular parts; and though I have left none untouched, I have never regarded them as members of a whole fabric of my conſtruction. Therefore the connexion muſt neceſſarily remain imperfect. Make, however, what uſe you pleaſe of *Siface*; only do not let it paſs for a child of mine, as I cannot conſcientiouſly regard it as ſuch.

Writing is always an inconvenient buſineſs to me; but to-day, on account of the exceſſive heat, which diſſolves me, it is inſupportable, ſo that being totally unable to lengthen my letter, I haly conclude."

Vienna, June 29, 1772.

There are two more ſhort letters to the *Abate Alberti* in the collection; but they contain nothing very piquant or intereſting. It had been reported about this time, all over Europe,

Europe, that the poet had been appointed Imperial Librarian, in the room of Baron *Van Swieten* deceaſed; and upon being congratulated by the Abate Alberti on this promotion, he ſays, "the report is entirely without foundation; nor do I imagine that my auguſt ſovereigns ever thought of me, when the vacancy happened. Indeed if, from exceſs of clemency, they had, I ſhould have been obliged to implore their diſpenſation from a weight ſuperior to my phyſical force, which would not have enabled me to perform the duties of ſuch an appointment."—

In the laſt letter to the Abate, he thanks him for a neat and elegant edition of his Italian poetry. He denies the writing a Canzonetta in praiſe of the immortal Mareſhal Daun, which Alberti had aſcribed to him: "take care not to defraud the real author of thoſe praiſes which are his due—Pray return with my reſpects, due thanks to the moſt obliging Lord Huntingdon for the courteous remonſtrances with which he honours me."

Vienna, April 29, 1773.

A correſpondence ſeems to have been begun about the year 1767, between our poet and

the Abate FABRONI, afterwards Bishop of Pisa; a person of literary abilities, for whom Metastasio manifests great respect. His Lives and Eloges of illustrious men of his own country, which he began to publish at this time in decades, seem undertaken with a patriotic view, during the disputes between the French and Italians for literary and scientific pre-eminence. The title of his biographical work is certainly the same as that of *Perrault*, in the last century (*a*); but then the Italians have to boast of many works on the same plan, and under the same title, which are much more ancient than that of Perrault. Signor Fabroni having expressed an intention to write the life of Metastasio, in order to insert it among his lives of eminent men, the following letter contains the poet's modest dissuasion from that enterprize.

(*a*) *Eloges des Hommes illustres de ce Siecle* (the xvii.) *Elogi d'alcuni illustri Italiani.*

LET-

LETTER I.

TO THE ABATE FABRONI, AT FLORENCE.

WITHOUT framing excuſes for the ſlow arrival of my anſwer to your very obliging letter of the 9th of laſt May, the well-known confuſion in which we have been thrown, by the loſs of a moſt amiable Empreſs; by our fears of being deprived of our maternal and revered Sovereign; and, at preſent, the univerſal, and tumultuous joy, for having miraculouſly preſerved her, will have already made my defence, and procured your pardon. Therefore, after rendering the ſincere and due thanks which I ought, for your moſt conſtant voluntary partiality, I congratulate your royal Sovereign, who, in having promoted you, has given ſuch an indubitable teſtimony of his enlightened mind, and generous heart; always ready to ſee merit and reward it.

But, notwithſtanding your partiality, I perceive, that you have a deſign to injure me very ſeriouſly. The perſiſting in your idea of writing my life, is an evident proof, that my repugnance, in conſenting to it, has been regarded by you as a kind of female modeſty, which

which a little entreaty would overcome. No, my dear Abate, you are very much deceived. Whether from reaſon, or weakneſs, I cannot think of any one writing my life, without the utmoſt diſquietude. From this ſincere and candid confeſſion, I hope that you will have the friendly condeſcenſion to relinquiſh the enterprize; a favour which I moſt earneſtly ſupplicate, and ſhall receive with all due gratitude.

Vienna, June 11, 1767.

This requeſt was complied with, during the poet's life; but two years after his deceaſe, his eloge, by this author, appeared, with thoſe of *Galileo Galilei*, *Mich. Angelo Giacomelli*, *Tommaſo Perelli*, *Card. Leopoldo de' Medici*, and *Carlo Innocenzio Frugoni*. Piſa. 1754.

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

FROM your obliging letter, reverend Sir, dated July 6th. I was induced to hope, that I ſhould ſoon receive the firſt decade, of your *Lives of Illuſtrious Italians*, which I have expected

pected with the utmoſt impatience. Occupied at preſent in the exerciſe of my employment, it was my intention to defer anſwering your kind letter, till the arrival of the gift. But as it has not yet reached my hands (by one of thoſe innumerable accidents which uſually diſturb the courſe of ſimilar preſentations) I ſhall not ſuffer a longer ſilence, now my inevitable duties are fulfilled, to injure me in your good opinion. Know then, moſt reverend Prior, that in the peruſal of your letters, my mind is filled with all the gratitude, confuſion, and affection, which are due to your friendly and unſolicited partiality, for one who has neither the opportunity, nor the power, of meriting it. But being in poſſeſſion of this ineſtimable acquiſition, I am, and ever ſhall remain, extremely proud of it.

But why, with ſuch diſpoſitions in my favour, do you imbitter my ſatisfaction, by publiſhing ſuch frivolous letters as theſe, written without the leaſt reflection, in the full confidence that they would never ſee the light? Good God! You eſtimate the public indulgence by your own, and are deceived. The public is a moſt ſevere judge; and if it made the father of Roman eloquence trem-

ble

ble (which he was not aſhamed to confeſs) at a time when he had fully prepared himſelf for its tribunal, with what conſcience can it be called exceſs of modeſty in me, to dread preſenting myſelf before it, with four miſerable little letters, written in haſte to confidential friends, without ever peruſing them? No, moſt reverend Prior, I have not the courage, or rather arrogance, requiſite for ſuch an exhibition. And whether my fears are reaſonable, as I really think them, or conſtitutional errors, I have no hopes of ever vanquiſhing them. If you ſtill regard them as infirmities, the pardoning ſmall defects is one of the moſt ſacred duties of friendſhip. Treat them, therefore, as ſuch, moſt worthy Prior, and indulge me in this petition, as you obligingly did, in renouncing the deſign of writing my life. The literary world abounds with ſubjects much more worthy of your pen, and I have, in my former letter, honeſtly confeſſed how much I am diſturbed by the mere idea of uſurping ſuch incenſe as is by no means my due.

Vienna, September 24, 1767.

LET-

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

THE first volume of the lives of illustrious men, of which you have been pleased, most reverend Sir, to make me a present, has been obligingly delivered to me, by Count *Strafoldo*. The names of persons with whom, during childhood and adolescence, I lived, or at least was acquainted, and who compose the chief part of this first decade, stimulated immediate perusal; and the insinuating flow and elegance of style, would not suffer me to lay the book down, till I was arrived at the last page, and had perused the additional commentary on the life of my dear fellow student, Count *Dandini*. Having now gratified the first hasty curiosity, I shall give the work a second and more deliberate perusal; not passing by, as was the case before, the two lives written by *Morgagni*, which treating of persons with whom I have but little acquaintance, had not excited the same curiosity as the rest. The rapidity of my perusal, however, did not prevent my seeing the merits of the writer; besides the style, which manifests long study and experience,

the laborious task of collecting materials so dispersed and obscure, the prudent and laudable dexterity of uniting truth with discretion, and the various and deep learning and science, necessary for the accurate display of whatever faculties the subject presented, justly entitle the author of so solid a work, to the praise and gratitude of the public.

Vienna, October 8, 1767.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

You wish me, Sir, to give you my opini of the dramatic works of my predecef APOSTOLO ZENO, as if your own judgm were not less likely to be warped by pr dice, than that of a man who has run same career, and who seduced by tha common and vicious emulation, som even without knowing it, to which *Figulo* is very seldom favourabl my own part, I am far from certai should be able in a minute exami these dramas to steer with safety the rocks of envy and affectation; if no other poetical merit were

Apoſtolo Zeno, it muſt be granted that he ſucceſsfully demonſtrated, that our melodrama is not incompatible with reaſon (as was long thought by the public and the poets whom he found in poſſeſſion of the theatre when he began to write) that it was not exempt from the laws of probability, that it could ſubſiſt without the wild and bombaſt ſtile which then reigned; and, laſtly, that the buſkin might be freed from the comic ſcurrility of the ſock, with which it was miſerably mixed and polluted; theſe are merits fully ſufficient to entitle him to our gratitude, and the eſteem of poſterity.

Vienna, December 7, 1767.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

THE ſtudying to be uſeful to our fellow creatures, and ſeconding the zeal of a worthy and partial friend, like yourſelf, are duties which procure blame if neglected, yet have little right to praiſe if performed. Hence thoſe with which you have entruſted me, moſt reverend Sir, reflect more honour on the

goodneſs of your own heart, ever eager to fulfil the duties of humanity, than on mine.

I very much wiſh that our traveller may continue to enjoy that attention and politeneſs, during his reſidence in Poland, which our recommendation had procured him on his arrival: where, according to the accounts which I have received, his reception was extremely flattering; but that kingdom, at preſent convulſed by Confederations, is all arms and tumult: circumſtances very unfavourable to the fine arts. But a ſtate of ſuch violence cannot be durable. The humours, decompounded, muſt find their equilibrium, and that tranquillity return which is ſo indiſpenſibly neceſſary to national as well as individual happineſs.

The well-merited teſtimonies of eſteem with which you have been honoured by the amiable Queen of Naples, manifeſt the mature judgment of that incomparable princeſs, at ſo early an age. Hence, I have a double reaſon for exultation.

Materials for the *Index* which you deſire are wanting (*b*). The manuſcripts which remain, are ſuch as have been already pub-

(*b*) Sig. Fabroni had requeſted of Metaſtaſio, a complete liſt of all the inedited works of his patron Gravina.

liſhed,

liſhed, or ſketches and fragments of tracts, begun for amuſement, and chiefly left unfiniſhed; the author himſelf having judged them unequal to the public expectations excited by his high reputation. There may have been works of more importance; but ſoon after his deceaſe, all his writings were demanded, and retained for ſome time, by thoſe who had legitimate authority for ſo doing; and were afterwards returned in the exact number and ſtate in which they now remain. So that it ſeems as if this article ſhould be wholly omitted in your work.

Permit me to enjoy that enviable place which you have been pleaſed to aſſign me in your good heart, and believe me to be always unalterably with due reſpect, &c.

Vienna, June 13, 1768.

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

At length the cuſtom-houſe officers, after condemning and rejecting all my demands and enquiries, have produced the little parcel with the dialogues of Phocion ſo long detained; and convicted of their irregularity

and negligence, have ſent it to my houſe when I deſpaired of ever receiving it; but accompanied with ſuch childiſh excuſes, as were much worſe than the fault.

I indulged my impatience by the immediate peruſal of the book, and have ran over five of the dialogues and the greateſt part of the notes. I would not poſtpone writing till I had finiſhed reading the whole work, becauſe I was unwilling to let a poſt depart ere I had acknowledged the receipt of your valuable preſent, in order to prevent you from kindly beſtowing upon me another copy, on the ſuppoſition that the firſt was loſt. I ſhall not now enter on the merit of the original (*c*); I muſt confeſs that the great truths which theſe dialogues enforce are well known; but beſides their being ſuch as cannot be too often repeated, elegance and learning give them the graces of novelty, I cannot help admiring the excellent diſpoſition of the happy tranſlator's mind and heart, who though able to produce architypes of his own, tranſported by the love of hu-

(*c*) *Entretiens de Phocion ſur le rapport de la morale avec la politique*, publiſhed by the Abbé Mably, 1763, in which work, though not written by PHOCION, the ſentiments of this illuſtrious Greek are well ſupported.

manity,

manity, could not refrain from undertaking a labour ſo much below his faculties, for the love of truth, and the deſire of communicating it. I congratulate you on the accompliſhment of this work, and full of that affection which you ſtudy to propagate among mankind, I remain reſpectfully, &c.

Vienna, June 23, 1768.

LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

I PERCEIVE, moſt reverend Sir, from the effects of your laſt letter, which announces to me the honour which the members of the academy *della Cruſca* have deigned to confer upon me, by admitting me of their body, how little I knew myſelf, and that my former power of ſuppreſſing all ambitious views had loſt its efficacy. It ſeems now, that inſtead of contracting my wiſhes and hopes, that I may venture to extend them; finding myſelf fortunately decked with the participation of that ſplendor, with which this illuſtrious inſtitution has not only dignified its members, but all Italy. Having had the power, by the force of your friendſhip and affection

unſolicited to procure me this diſtinguiſhed honour, I muſt entreat you to paint to my venerated colleagues, in all the warm colouring of your native eloquence, not only my joy on this occaſion, but my moſt ſincere ſentiments of reſpect and gratitude: nor muſt you forget to repreſent to yourſelf how much my debts of gratitude to you are encreaſed by this recent and moſt obliging manifeſtation of your friendly zeal.

To judge with chriſtian charity of our neighbour, as it is my duty and intereſt to do, I have the pleaſure to believe, that the frequent calls for my laſt production are ſymptoms of affection and partiality; but if I ſhould derive this eagerneſs from a leſs flattering ſource, I ſhould ſtill have the ſatiſfaction of aſcribing it to that friendſhip with which I am honoured, and have authority to boaſt.

Vienna, September 19, 1768.

There are ſeveral other letters to Monſignor Fabroni after he was Biſhop of Piſa, which though full of that urbanity and politeneſs with which the poet treated men of letters in general with whom he correſponded; yet,

as

as they contain no ſentiments or criticiſm of importance to literature, their inſertion here ſeems unneceſſary.

The following correſpondence was obtruded upon our bard, by a perſon whoſe name ſeems never to have reached his eyes or ears, before the arrival of the letter which produced the ſubſequent reply.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE ABATE D. GIUSEPPE AURELIO MORANI.

BEING perfectly ignorant of the ſituation of the perſon with whom I correſpond, he is intreated to aſſure himſelf, that it will not be from diſreſpect, but want of information, if I ſhould omit any of the *formala* due to his rank and circumſtances.

After the peruſal of Sig. *Giuſeppe Aurelio Morani*'s moſt elegant letter, I cannot be miſtaken in regarding him as a young man of great application, genius, and learning; and poſſeſſed of that knowledge in the Greek and Roman claſſics, at which few arrive in riper years. I congratulate my delightful Parthenope (Naples) in the having given you birth:

birth: an honour in which by the right of long residence, and a thousand ties of gratitude, I take a part. But the courteous D. Giuseppe is extremely mistaken in the too partial opinion which he has conceived of me. My talents are much more limited than he imagines: never having arrived at such profound learning or merit of other kinds as to be able to entertain *convivas cultores*, or claim a place *in lauto hospitio*. With respect to genius, father Apollo has treated me with a generosity not above the common, and, in other respects, has not distinguished me from my brethern. Sensible, however, of the merit of D. Giuseppe, I gratefully thank him for his obliging wishes for my prosperity, and am with true esteem, &c.

Vienna, 1766.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

As your first letter inspired me with ideas of your genius and cultivated talents, the second, which I now answer, convinces me of the candour, moderation, and other uncommon virtues with which your heart is furnished:

furnished: internal qualities which I regard as more worthy of being honoured, than the splendor of external circumstances, which are the mere capricious gifts of fortune. If I had not in common your ideal parent *(Penia)* I should give you very different proofs of my esteem, than these vain officious expressions. And as you think you have not exaggerated this metaphorical consanguinity, I wish you to reflect, that the *wretched man* is he to whom the necessary supports of life are wanting, *quibus doleat natura negatis*. The *poor*, he who procures these necessaries from the generosity of others. He who possesses a *competency*, is able to provide for his own wants. And he whose means exceed that power, is *opulent*. If you wish to find my place, it must be in the second of these four classes, where I should suffer with still greater resignation the rigourous justice which providence renders to moderate abilities, if I did not frequently feel the privation of the greatest pleasure granted to mortals, the power of conferring benefits on the worthy. Add to this, that living in a climate where literature is not reckoned among the merchandise of society, my insufficiency is likewise

wiſe extended to thoſe kind offices, which elſewhere perhaps would not be uſeleſs.

With reſpect to my immortal maſter, Gravina, he publiſhed before his deceaſe, all thoſe works which he thought would contribute to his fame. The reſt were never deſigned for the preſs, though ſordid editors, have counteracted his intentions: ſo that inquiries after them are as vain, as the aſſaults of his detractors, from whoſe fangs he is as ſafe as every man muſt be, who like him is *totus teres, atque rotundus.*

Notwithſtanding the narrow limits of my ſituation, if you could ſuggeſt to me an opportunity of manifeſting my zeal for your ſervice, I ſhall do it with that ſincere and cordial eſteem with which I am, and ever ſhall continue, &c.

Vienna, September 24, 1766.

LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

You muſt not wonder, my dear Sig. *Morani*, at the tardineſs or brevity of my anſwer to your moſt obliging letter of laſt

December. A great number of indispensible letters, together with the capricious state of my health, oblige me to defer, and sometimes entirely deprive me of the pleasure I should have in corresponding with persons whom I esteem and love, and from whose forbearance I promise myself the greatest indulgence. But this involuntary negligence, especially when there is no business in question, ought not to diminish the credit of a perfect correspondence, with those who have a mutual affection for each other. Do me the justice to believe, in spite of circumstances, that impressed with a partiality for your talents and character, I shall ever remain invariably yours.

Metastasio begins every subsequent letter to this Abate, by an apology for not writing to him more frequently; which though reasonable, ingenious, and well-turned, in the original, would appear monotonous and insipid in another language. I shall therefore extract from these letters, the most interesting passages on other subjects than his own delinquency as an irregular correspondent.

In

In 1769, Sig. *Morani* wiſhed him to enter the liſts among the champions for Italian literature, in oppoſition to the French, who on all occaſions arrogantly claimed the ſupremacy. After excuſing himſelf for inability to keep up a regular correſpondence with his friends, he ſays—" from theſe involuntary omiſſions, you may judge whether I ſhould be able to apply myſelf to the parallel which you propoſe between the French and Italian literature: a work of great labour, for any one who ſhould not wiſh to decide impertinently, without furniſhing ſolid reaſons on both ſides. Nor am I more able to obey you, in tranſmitting the MSS. you requeſt, which being merely intended to aſſiſt my own memory, merit not tranſcription, or the honour of appearing before the public; nor will they ever ſee the light, though curioſity has been awakened by Sig. *Diodati* publiſhing the letter in which I inconſiderately mentioned them (*d*)."

In the next letter to the Abate *Morani*, in anſwer to a queſtion, whether a French tranſlation of Metaſtaſio's works was pub-

(*d*) See the letter to *Diodati* above, p. 306.

liſhed

lished at Vienna, he ſays: "It is not at Vienna but at Paris, that a tranſlation of my works in the French language has appeared; but having had an unfavourable account of this verſion by thoſe who have ſeen it, I have carefully avoided the peruſal, in order to ſhun the riſk of becoming ungrateful to him who has given ſuch a public proof of partiality to my writings by tranſlating them. It would by no means become me arrogantly to decide, as you wiſh me, whether *Corneille* or *Racine* has the primacy on the French theatre. The natives find all the grandeur of Sophocles in the firſt, and all the truth of Euripides in the ſecond. The one filling the mind of the ſpectator with the moſt magnificent ideas, and the other agitating the heart with the moſt tender affections: hence theſe two artiſts have arrived at equal excellence, but by different roads. However, *Corneille* cannot be denied the great merit of having pointed out the path which his rival purſued." 1770.

"If you would read without ſcruple, *Pope's Eſſay on Man*, I recommend to you the excellent tranſlation *in terza rima*, lately publiſhed by Count *Giuſ. Maria Ferrero di Lauriano.*

Lauriano. In the judicious, christian, and learned notes with which he has illustrated the work, you will see the innocence of the original evidently proved. You will find in Pope a great poet, and a deep philosopher; but not such axioms as are necessary to support his own system."

Though it has been said that Metastasio, unwilling to hear of death, permitted no one even to mention it before him; yet he frequently complains to his correspondents of his having too many Olympiads on his shoulders. And in a letter to the Abate *Morani*, in 1771, when he was in his 74th year, he says: "The state of my health, though not exactly what I wish it, is much better than I have a right to expect. As to my occupations, when the commands of my sovereign allow me to choose them, I, like your favourite Cicero, have recourse *ad Litterulas*; not with the hopes of fame or profit, but to keep off the *tædium vitæ*, and to march to the end of my journey as slow as possible."

In a subsequent letter to the same Abate, in answer to his enquiries concerning the poet's translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, he says: "Not only my translation in Italian verse

verſe of the Poetics of Horace, with the notes which ſeemed neceſſary, but an extract of that of Ariſtotle, with obſervations, which rendered the taſk more tedious and laborious, have been entirely finiſhed a conſiderable time. And I have exacted the premium of my fatiguing occupation in imagining, that there was ſome merit in having employed my leiſure without remorſe. However, it has never been my intention to trouble the public with theſe labours: and if even temptation ſhould take me by ſurpriſe, it would be neceſſary, ere they appeared, rigourouſly to examine what I have written: a work to me entremely diſagreeable. At preſent, both ſleep in my portfolio, ſecure, at leaſt, from inſult, while they are unknown. You ſee, that to comply with your requeſt, I muſt vanquiſh my irreſolute and perverſe diſpoſition; and you know that

Che cangiai di natura
E' impreſa troppo dura.

The taſk is hard for human creature
To change propenſities of nature.

"The tragedies of my immortal beneficent maſter, are ſufficient to prove what philoſophy and immenſe learning the writer

 poſſeſſed.

poſſeſſed. He has executed what he propoſed: that is, to give us an idea of the Greek theatre. If, in after-times, the enormous change of manners renders them inconſiſtent with the preſent reigning taſte, it cannot be aſcribed to him as a fault, becauſe to flatter it was not his intention."

The particular occaſion of the following letter does not appear; there ſeems, however, to be ſome degree of vaticination in it, which reminds us more of the preſent times, than of the period when it was written.

LETTER XI.

TO A ROMAN PRINCE. (PRINCE GHIGI.)

The ſtrange and univerſal ferment in which ſacred and profane things are now thrown, throughout the known world, affords little hope that the criſis of its termination is near at hand. The fire has long been burning in ſecret, but the fuel is weak, and the humours are too heterogeneous to produce an equilibrium. The object of thoſe who might give us repoſe, is innovation, not tranquillity. Hence, to regulate and reduce to order the enormous confuſion of ſo dark a

chaos,

chaos, ſeems to want nothing leſs than omnipotence, which needs only ſay, *fiat lux*, for light to appear. I hope theſe gloomy thoughts proceed from the vice of my own temperament, and a natural propenſity to deplore the preſent, and exalt the paſt. But it is very certain, that all great revolutions and changes of ancient ſyſtems, (even if it were certain that poſterity would be benefitted by them) are ever fatal to the unhappy mortals, who are condemned to be ſpectators of the conflict.

Vienna, 1767.

In the following letters, he deſcribes his diſtreſs at the imminent danger into which his Patroneſs, the Empreſs Queen, was thrown by the ſmall-pox, with which ſhe was ſeized at the ſame time as the Emperor Joſeph's firſt conſort, to whom the diſeaſe was fatal.

LETTER XII.

TO A FRIEND AT MILAN.

FROM the deſcription which I have given you of the premature death of this ſovereign,

and of the extreme danger into which my Patroness was thrown at the same time, you may conceive how pungent must have been my affliction, at these mournful events. It was easy to read in my countenance, the internal agitation of my mind; nor was there a single person from whom I could conceal it. My confusion, my tears, the being continually in the gallery of the imperial palace, and perpetually making enquiries of the physicians and ladies of the court, concerning the state of my Patroness's health, too plainly discovered to the crowd of courtiers, my confusion and excess of grief. I sincerely assure you, my dear friend, that among the many sad catastrophes to which I have been subject during sixty-nine years, this would have been the most terrible, if it had not pleased divine providence to hear the fervent prayers of her subjects.

Vienna, 1767.

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LETTER XIII.

TO PADRE PAZZONI, MAESTRO DI CAPELLA, IN SIENA.

THOUGH I cannot, without manifeſt ingratitude, doubt of your affection, yet every confirmation of it which you kindly give me, has all the grace and efficacy of novelty. I ſhould be totally inſenſible, not to be pleaſed with the peruſal of your laſt letter, in which is diſplayed at once, all the candour and openneſs of your good heart, and the honoured and enviable place which I occupy in it: a place of which I have great reaſon to be jealous and proud. With this confidence, not doubting of the ſimilarity of our ſentiments, I muſt entreat you to come to an explanation with this generous, and worthy lady, by whoſe partiality I am no leſs confuſed than pleaſed. Firſt begin by aſſerting my infinite gratitude and reſpect; and then proceed to implore her to ſpare me the mortification of ſeeing in print, as ſhe intends, any of my familiar letters. The public merits reſpect from all, and particularly from myſelf; nor can I have the

courage to expect from it that indulgence with which I am honoured by my friends. The major part of my letters having been written in haste, were never read by myself, and God knows how many repetitions, trivialities, and negligences, I should be condemned to blush for. I have sufficient motives to fear for my most laboured works; and I beg of her not to encrease the number of those fears unnecessarily. Unite, therefore, your friendly solicitations with my own, to prevail on this lady, my protectress, not to put her design in practice, — tell her that it would be an insult, not a favour, to oblige an honest man to quit his bed-room, and expose himself publicly, in his night-gown and slippers.

Adieu, my dear friend. I absolutely depend on your friendship, to prevent this dreaded publication. But at the same time, do not conceal the gratitude with which I am impressed by the obliging, and favourable, though ill-founded opinion, which has given birth to this idea.

Vienna, January 29, 1767.

There is no date to the following letter; but it seems to have been written about this time,

time, when the poet was oppreſſed by *forced loans* of his time and opinions, to authors, whoſe works

> "With ſad civility, he ſat, and read
> With honeſt anguiſh, and an aching head."—
> Beſet by wits, an undiſtinguiſh'd race,
> Who firſt his judgment aſk, and then a place."—
>
> POPE.

But the Italian bard more patient and leſs peeviſh than the Engliſh, bruſhes off his tormentors gently, and diſmiſſes them in good humour. His reputation, however, muſt ſometimes have ſuffered on the ſide of ſincerity, or good taſte, where his praiſes of obſcure authors, which were always inſtantly publiſhed by thoſe on whom they were beſtowed, bordered on hyperbole. Whether the ſonnets, mentioned in the following letter, deſerved the encomiums beſtowed upon them by the Imperial Laureat, we know not, as they, and even the name of their author, ſeem equally unknown in the literary world,

LETTER XIV.

TO THE CAVALIER ANTON-FILIPPO ADAMI.

I SHALL not dwell long on the exceſſive expreſſions of eſteem with which you honour me, in order to eſcape the diſagreeable taſk of defending myſelf from the aſſaults of vanity, which might inſiduouſly ſeduce me, coming from ſuch high authority. I am abaſhed by your too favourable opinion; yet I ſhall not attempt to undeceive you, fearing to ſhake the foundation of the friendſhip which you offer me, and which I wiſh to deſerve.

I have peruſed, and re-peruſed, the ſonnets which you have been pleaſed, Sir, to communicate to me, and always with juſt admiration. I have found in them all, force, dignity of ſtyle, deep learning, lively fancy, and above all, that unity, proportion, and correſpondence of the ſeveral parts, which diſtinguiſh an inhabitant of Parnaſſus from a paſſenger. Though I am pleaſed with them all, the ſonnets upon providence have ſtruck me the moſt. Perhaps the countenance of

theſe being leſs auſtere, diſtinguiſhes them, when compared with their companions. Your highly poliſhed productions, when ever you ſhall be pleaſed to communicate them to me, will always be received with pleaſure. And if you accompany them with any commands, you will greatly gratify my impatience to convince you of the reſpect and obedience with which you have inſpired me.

The following letters to an author, who forced the poet into a correſpondence, by preſenting to him his works without previous acquaintance or introduction, will perhaps make the reader wonder that he never heard of ſo accompliſhed a writer.

LETTER XV.

TO THE ABATE SILVIO BALBIS OF SALUZZO.

You muſt not imagine that the juſt tribute of praiſe which I ſincerely beſtow on the magnificent poetical epiſtle which you have been pleaſed to ſend me, is the effect of the gratitude due to you for your exceſſive partiality. Its own merit has no occaſion to be ſupported or exalted by the ſecret influence of my ſelf-love. Therefore, ſeparate

the

the debts of the one from the other, and assure yourself, that truth and justice oblige me to confess, what I could not without remorse deny, that I have not for a long time seen a composition which has given me equal pleasure. The clear, noble, harmonious felicity of style, and the connexion and choice of your thoughts, make me regard as portentous, the maturity of the productions of so young a writer. If your circumstances and situation, of which I am ignorant, allow you with prudence to chuse a study among the useful and glorious, unite yourself in the strict bonds of friendship with the muses, and I will be answerable for the distinguished and elevated rank at which you will soon arrive in Parnassus. Having afforded me so fair an occasion for admiring your talents, afford me likewise that of serving you, and believe me to be, with just esteem and acknowledgment, &c.

Vienna, March 12, 1761.

The subsequent letters to the same correspondent, contain further encomiums on his writings. Metastasio sent this Abate a copy of his several dramas, previous to general publication; and he seems to have

merited

merited this diſtinction, not only as his admirer, but champion; as the poet in one of his letters, "thanks him and the ladies and gentlemen of Saluzzo for defending his poor dramas from the injuries which they daily ſuffer in all the theatres of Europe, from thoſe ignorant and vain vocal heroes and heroines, who having ſubſtituted the imitation of flageolets and nightingales to human affections, render the Italian ſtage a national diſgrace, in the opinion of thoſe countries which have been obliged to us for all their knowledge of the art."

This alludes to the abridging and changing the ſcenes and airs of his dramas, to humour the caprice of ſingers, who diſregarding character, place, and propriety, not only in *Paſticcio* operas, but in every other, where no ſcruple is made to introduce an *Aria d'abilità*, or *di bravura*, which has been applauded in a former drama, without the leaſt attention to the preceding recitative, or buſineſs of the ſcene. Theſe airs taken out of their original niche, when tranſlated in the books of the opera, continue to incline the good people of England to imagine the words of an opera to be *all nonſenſe*; and that even the muſical dramas of Metaſtaſio are as ab-

ſurd

ſurd and ſubject to ridicule, as thoſe which Addiſon has deſcribed with ſo much pleaſantry, in the *Spectator*.

Reciprocation of compliments of the higheſt kind, ſeems, about this time, to have paſſed between the poet and Signor D. *Baldaſſarre Papadia*. Though we have never ſeen the letters of this correſpondent, we may judge of his reverence and partiality for Metaſtaſio, by the anſwers to them, which for elegance and urbanity, appear to merit tranſlation and inſertion, as much as any letters of the kind in the collection.

LETTER XVI.

TO SIGNOR D. BALDASSARRE PAPADIA.

It would be neceſſary to poſſeſs all the ſtoical inſenſibility of *Zeno* and *Cleanthes*, long to reſiſt the temptations of vanity, with which you aſſail the moderation which I ought to poſſeſs, in ſpeaking of my dear Parthenope. (Naples.) But you, Sir, by an obliging impulſe of affection, have endeavoured to give it a great ſhock. God forgive you. All that you deſcribe in your elegant letter, and all you imagine in your

ſublime Sonnet, not only exceed the narrow limits of my merit, but conſpire to deprive me of the true knowledge of myſelf. Heaven knows what will be the conſequence of ſuch ſeducing praiſes, addreſſed to a poet! However, amidſt all this danger, I cannot help congratulating myſelf for the good fortune which has procured me ſuch valuable friends; whoſe judgment, however partial, will help to ſupport my credit. I wiſh your great poetical vigour and noble imagination, which have appeared ſo manifeſt in the narrow compaſs of fourteen lines, materials more proportioned to their powers than the gratuitous praiſes beſtowed on me. And ſhall be anxious to ſecure your eſteem by the gratitude and reſpectful affection with which you have inſpired, your, &c.

Vienna, December 12, 1768.

LETTER XVII.

TO THE SAME.

THE juſtice which I render your poetical talents, does not deſerve the exceſſive gratitude which you have expreſſed in your laſt obliging letter. But it has ſerved to diſ-

cover

cover that laudable and uncommon moderation, which is more frequently found in those who have atchieved honourable and difficult enterprises, than in such as twang the useless lyre.

I am pleased at your having chosen a species of poetry which precisely requires that clear, harmonious sweetness, facility, and elegant simplicity, to which you were by nature at first, visibly inclined. I wish with solicitude for the arrival of the complete edition of your works; and am, in spite of the laconic brevity to which my laborious business of writing condemns me, &c.

Vienna, February 20, 1769.

LETTER XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

TRULY sensible of the partiality with which you honour me, by the communication of the two pastoral Eclogues which you have laudably undertaken to write on the illustrious model of the Sicilian and Mantuan bards, I beg your acceptance of my most grateful acknowledgments. But your obliging partiality exceeds all bounds, if you suppose me

to be ſufficiently qualified, or courageous, to aſſume the office of corrector. I am not ſo deplorably ignorant of myſelf; and if, unfortunately, I were, nature would oppoſe me in ſuch an ill-adviſed undertaking. If your virtuous modeſty requires criticiſm, and counſel, in your poetical labours, how can you ever fail to find them in your native city, the nurſe of ſo many rare and ſublime geniuſes, and in which the muſes have eſtabliſhed their favourite reſidence? I forgive, however, this courteous inſult, as it manifeſts your blindneſs to my inability.

Vienna, May 11, 1769.

Signor Papadia having ſolicited Metaſtaſio to confide to him ſome of his proſe writings, mentioned in his Letter to *Diodati*, particularly his extracts and remarks on the Poetics of Ariſtotle, he declines complying with this requeſt, on account of the confuſed and incorrect ſtate in which theſe papers had long remained. But in anſwer to another application from the ſame correſpondent, we have in the following letter, the diſcuſſion of a curious queſtion in ancient Mythology.

LET-

LETTER XIX.

TO SIG. PAPADIA.

After having consulted the oracle of our times, the learned Sig. *Martorelli*, to whom I have recourse myself, for the solution of literary difficulties, with what conscience could you expect from me, deep information concerning the sacrifices of the ancients to their divinity Cupid? Do you wish to tempt me to be guilty of temerity? If that was your motive, you committed a great mistake: as my ruling defect militates most powerfully against such seduction. After you have applied to my dear and much respected Sig. *Martorelli*, what can I do but repeat what he has said; that I remember no treatise *ex professo* on the subject proposed. If it be asked what were the offerings and sacrifices of the ancients to Venus; you must yourself recollect, that they were innumerable roses, myrtles, incense, fish, shells, doves, and I know not what. Nor can it have escaped you, that Lucian, in one of his meretricious dialogues, will have it, that a white female kid (of goat) was sacrificed

to

to the popular Venus; and to the celeſtial, a female calf; but if you aſk the ſame queſtion with regard to Cupid, it will be more difficult for me to anſwer. In that moſt abundant mythological prompter of *Natalis Comes*, where the flowers, trees, and animals dedicated to each particular deity of the Pagans, are carefully ſpecified, Cupid is omitted. But what is ſtill worſe, I am not ſure that this God, ſo univerſally adored, ever had a Temple in any place dedicated ſolely to his ſervice. I never remember to have heard or read that he had one in Rome; and *Nardini*, the moſt diligent inveſtigator and illuſtrator of the ſmalleſt ſtone in that city, gives us no information on this ſubject. We might indeed ſuſſpect, that there was one in Greece, in the city of *Theſpia*, as Pauſanias in *Bœoticis*, aſſerts, that Cupid was there adored with peculiar veneration; but he makes no mention of any particular edifice there that was conſecrated to him: nor where that wonderful work of *Praxitiles*, the celebrated marble ſtatue of Cupid, was placed, that *Cajus* cauſed to be tranſported from Theſpia to Rome, which *Claudius* ſent back to Greece; and which being laſtly reconducted to Rome by

order of Nero, perifhed there afterwards, in the flames. Perhaps fome of the hiftorians who treat of the actions of this Emperor may inform us where it was placed at Rome, and with what facred ceremonies the Romans had received it. But as fuch amorous refearches are more analogous to your time of life than mine, to you I fhall abandon the enterprife.

The prefent of your *Theocritus* which you kindly intend me, will be moft gratefully received; and I hope you will foon find a rapid conveyance for it, which will fecond my impatience. In the mean time, put my obedience to any teft you pleafe, within the limited fphere of my activity, and believe me conftantly, &c.

Vienna, March 12, 1770.

In a fubfequent letter to Sig. *Papadia*, Metaftafio acknowledges the receipt of his paftoral Eclogues; of which he fays: "I am highly pleafed to hear again the ancient fweet pipe of the amorous fhepherd of Siracufe, managed by your lips: and the facility with which you play upon it, thanks to the analogy between you, authorizes me

to

to hope, that you will not let it again long remain mute, dusty, and useless."

He afterwards speaks of other pastorals received from this author: "full of innocence, and yet noble, replete with smiling images, and nourished by the Bucolic genius of the Greeks and Romans, of which even the language is become familiar to you." This correspondence continued till the year 1781.

END OF THE FIRST SECTION.

SECTION II.

AMONG Metaſtaſio's correſpondents, to whom his letters are preſerved, there are many female writers, and women of talents; who ambitious of his counſel, or, at leaſt of his praiſe, ſent him their works. Though he did not ſeem to aſpire at theſe honours, yet he received them with due politeneſs and gallantry. We have already given ſpecimens of the tenderneſs with which he peruſed and reviſed the writings of Signora Accarigi (*e*).

The following letter to a lady who had ſent him a copy of verſes under the feigned academical name of *Iſidèa Egirena*, or challenge to a poetical intercourſe, is ſo polite, ſportive, and gallant, that it is difficult to imagine it to have been written, even by a poet, at the age of ſixty-nine.

(*e*) This alludes to a letter written in 1774; but the correſpondence continued to 1776.

LET-

LETTER I.

TO SIGNORA MARIA FORTUNA.

WHETHER the beautiful Stanzas addressed to me, and delivered by the common post, are the production of a shepherd or shepherdess, they will always excite my wonder and gratitude. They are so replete with good sense and candour, and supported by such a sweet, noble, clear and harmonious facility, that the writer has no occasion to mitigate critical rigour by the respect due to the fair sex. I profess myself infinitely obliged to whomever is the author. But if, as my self-love inclines me to believe, it is truly the production of a female pen, I beg the ingenious, obliging shepherdess, who has done me such honour, to forgive my doubts, and not to treat them with disdain, as they arise from that uncommon merit which exalts her above her peers.. Nor let her condemn my discourtesy, if I decline soliciting my jaded muse to furnish me with a reply—In the first place, she is not now so ready at the call of an old husband, as formerly, at that of a young lover. And besides

this, fate having placed me, though unworthy, at the foot of the Imperial throne, has procured me, and ſtill procures, ſuch frequent poetical challenges, that the duty of anſwering them, would have robbed me of the time neceſſary to my employment, if I had not from the beginning, though ſometimes unwillingly, declined reciprocation.— And if at preſent I were to change my ſyſtem, I ſhould incur the juſt indignation of all thoſe whom I have hitherto involuntarily neglected. Suffer me therefore, if not in the language of the Gods, at leaſt in one more familiar to truth, to aſſure you, that I have the honour to be, with the moſt grateful and perfect eſteem, &c.

Vienna, November , 1767.

LETTER II.

TO SIGNORA GIACINTA BETTI ONOFEI, AT BOLOGNA.

For many ſolid reaſons too long to be detailed here, it will not be in my power to ſecond your ardent wiſhes in the work you mention. Receive at leaſt kindly, my dear Signora Giacinta, the counſel that I ſhall

venture to give you. The merit of the ſubject which you have to celebrate in your native language, cannot be expreſſed with due energy by any one whoſe mind is not impreſſed with it in the lively manner which you ſeem to feel. Boldly, therefore, take your pen, and be aſſured, that your extraordinary talents, animated by that ardour which reigns throughout your letter, will ſuggeſt ideas to you; which can never preſent themſelves to the cold imagination, even of a great poet. Nothing is impoſſible to your abilities; and I feel myſelf already diſpoſed to admire them, even in this new enterpriſe.

Vienna, September 26, 1768.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

THE obliging manner in which you have informed me of the new ſtate into which you will have entered when this letter arrives, is an amiable inſtance of your regard. The laudable qualities, with which you are well acquainted, of the ſpouſe whom providence has deſtined for you, are the moſt certain means of tranſmuting your,

perhaps too lively quickſilver into gold, and to conſtitute all the felicity of which we are capable. This is not only what I wiſh, but boldly predict: certain that you will co-operate on your part in procuring it, and not draw on yourſelf all the blame of a failure.

A long letter would ill correſpond with your preſent gay occupations: aſſure yourſelf therefore of my ſincere wiſhes for your happineſs, and believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, February 2, 1769.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR acquaintance, moſt amiable Signora Giacinta, with my dear Gemello, the Cavalier Broſchi, is a new motive for the encreaſe of that eſteem which I have always had for you: as his excellent diſcernment aſſures me of the merit of thoſe perſons with whom he is in habits of intimacy. And I envy you both that mutual enjoyment of each other's company, at which I can never aſpire. Though *Dido* is my eldeſt daughter, I ſhall never pardon her for having been the occaſion

occasion of any danger to my beloved Cavalier Broschi (*f*). This undutiful daughter has but ill seconded the inclinations of her sire, by incommoding persons that are so dear to me. I flatter myself, however, by your account, that the accident had no serious consequences: and I beg you to be the bearer of my most affectionate wishes to this worthy friend.

March 30, 1771.

Metastasio's correspondence with this lady, who was a poetess, a musician, and an electrician, continued till the year 1779. But what still seems more to have contributed to her favour with the Imperial Laureat, was her residence at Bologna, and being in friendship with Farinelli; of whom he takes occasion to speak with the warmest and most cordial affection, in almost all the letters which he addressed to her.

"You have obliged me extremely (says he in 1771) my dear *Signora Giacinta*, by honouring me with the continuance of your correspondence, and assuring me of the af-

(*f*) Alluding to a fall at the opera-house in Bologna, at a rehearsal of *Didone abbandonata*.

fectionate remembrance which my dear and respected friend Sig. *Carlo Broschi* retains for me, which I return with a mutual and most constant reciprocation. I love and esteem him as much as it is possible for a man to be loved and esteemed, who has so far surpassed all his peers, not only by his excellence in the charming art which he professed, but by the uncommon virtuous qualities of his mind, which have rendered him amiable, and admirable, in every situation into which fortune has thrown him. Deliver to him in my name, I entreat you, my most affectionate compliments; and if the Doctor, your spouse (whom I devoutly reverence) has no objection to the commission, give him for me a thousand most cordial embraces."

In another letter to this lady, speaking of Farinelli's magnificent mansion (called a palace) at Bologna, he says: "my imagination has conveyed me to the habitation of my dear Gemello, where I have seen the splendid decorations of *Nitetti* (*g*) in all the perfection which he suggested to the ingenious artists he employed; and in spite of the

(*g*) This opera was performed in Farinelli's house, with the same decorations with which it was originally represented at the court of Spain.

distance,

diſtance, and without the aſſiſtance of a pencil, poetical fancy has preſented to me the amiable figure of *Signora Giacinta*, of which ſhe muſt doubtleſs be poſſeſſed, in order to bear any proportion with the ſerenity, grace, and vivacity of her mind. Figure to yourſelf the pleaſure I muſt have received from the ſalutations of my beloved friend, procured by your means. But I beg you to complete the work, and render him, in my ſtead, a modeſt but affectionate embrace. I have intereſted myſelf as I ought, in all the joys and ſorrows which you have been pleaſed to communicate to me; and I pray, and hope, that in future, fortune may not ſo frequently change from the firſt to the ſecond. Take care, my much reſpected Signora Giacinta, not to truſt too much to the falacious magic of poetry, when you wiſh to vanquiſh the chilneſs of philoſophy. The inchantments of Parnaſſus have ſome efficacy in the theatre, ſupported by the harmony of the lyre or trumpet; but are totally impotent when we dare to try their power beyond the limits of fiction. The magic which ſeldom fails, and which moſt infallibly governs the human heart, is that with which nature gratuitouſly furniſhes you females, who without poring over books,

with

with a ſmile, a glance, a word, a ſtudied negligence, perform daily ſuch wonders, as the graſs-hoppers of Helicon never have nor never will atchieve. Seek, therefore, among the veſſels of your own diſpenſary, and you will certainly find a ſpecific adapted to your wants."

Such politeneſs and gallantry from a man in his eightieth year, to a female whom he had never ſeen, and at a period of time ſo near the total extinction of all *chivalry*, will ſurpriſe the preſent age, and perhaps offend the next.

This lady, a ſmatterer in natural philoſophy and electricity, in a letter to Metaſtaſio, having expreſſed her terrors at a ſlight ſhock of an earthquake at Bologna, in ſtrong and violent terms, and her tranſports of joy on the opportunity which it had afforded for electrical experiments to illuſtrate the ſyſtem which aſcribes to that power this tremendous effect; the poet ſays: "I know not whether I ought to condole or congratulate you on this event. In chriſtian charity, I ought to pray againſt earthquakes, but am afraid of offending you by wiſhing to deprive you of the pleaſure of making experiments to demonſtrate your favourite ſyſtem. It would

would be a curious problem, that by its solution should prove, how your happiness could depend on earthquakes; but then we must have recourse to philosophy: a name which you proscribe, abhor, and detest. So that in this dilemma, I perceive with what caution my form of prayer must be made, when, at the same time, I implore the extirpation of earthquakes, and the solid and daily encrease of that electrical power to which you declare yourself indebted for all your felicity."

The next literary female correspondent who sought the oracular opinion of the poet, in his old age, concerning her works, found him still more auspicious to her talents, or, at least, her vanity, than to those of any one of the Sappho family already mentioned, as the following letters will manifest.

LETTER V.

TO SIGNORA DONNA ELEONORA DI FONSECA PIMENTEL.

THE poetical essays, particularly the epithalamium, of which you have obligingly favoured me with a copy, for the noble and harmonious facility of the versification, the lively

lively images which animate and colour them, as well as for the abundant hiſtorical and mythological alluſions with which they are enriched, would be extremely worthy of praiſe in themſelves, apart from all other conſiderations; but when we reflect on theſe being the firſt productions of a lady who has ſcarcely begun her fourth luſtre (26th year) their merit is encreaſed to ſuch a degree, as to become marvellous. You have very wiſely foreſeen, that ſuch a uſurpation of the rights of our ſex, at my age, might perhaps have excited in me ſome degree of jealouſy; but with equal ingenuity and courteſy, you have adminiſtered the antidote, by aſſuring me, that you owe all the fermentation of your native poetical fire, to the aſſiduous peruſal of my writings. I readily give credit, without examination, to this obliging aſſertion; being extremely glad to unite to the duty of that juſtice which I render you, the intereſt of ſelf-love. Continue to be the honour and envy of your ſex, by advancing in a way correſpondent to theſe wonderful beginnings, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, October 9, 1770.

Two

Two years after, this young lady ſends him more of her poetical compoſitions, which are praiſed by the veteran Laureat with equal warmth and gallantry. Indeed he adds to his encomiums the encouraging aſſurance, that ſhe has greatly ſurpaſſed his expectations.

This correſpondence continued till the year 1776; and he not only perſeveres in praiſing her productions, but, at her earneſt requeſt, reviſes, and corrects ſmall grammatical errors and poetical inaccuracies; a taſk to which he had always great repugnance, well knowing how much eaſier it is to praiſe a bad poem, than correct it.

But this lady not only conſulted the bard, as the oracle of Apollo, with reſpect to her poetical compoſitions, but as the oracle of Delphos, in other important concerns; particularly on the ſubject of travelling, which is big with ſuch inconvenience and danger to females, that ſhe ſeems in the letter, to which the following is an anſwer, to have wiſhed herſelf of the other ſex.

LETTER VI.

TO SIGNORA PIMENTEL.

At the first sight of your last most obliging letter, I wished (in spite of my pacific disposition) for a good dose of Archilochean bile, to furnish me with a torrent of venemous Iambics against that evil genius, which having so long exercised his wicked power over the innocent hand of the gentle *Donna Eleonora*, has maliciously defrauded me of the pleasure of her correspondence. But upon a second perusal, and maturely considering this very lively letter, I find it abound with such excellent ideas, and seducing expressions, which, being unable in conscience to apply to myself, I am obliged to ascribe my happiness to that inconvenient and painful accident *, which like the banks of a river, had doubled the force of your usual eloquence. This true induction, indeed narrows the limits of my vanity, but not of my gratitude; of which the partiality of a courteous inhabitant

* The lady had hurt her hand by a fall, which had occasioned her long silence.

of

of Parnaſſus, who chuſes me for the object of her poetical flights, exacts a very large portion. But remember, moſt amiable *Donna Eleonora*, that it is not always ſafe to truſt to the light ſuggeſtions of fancy in your poetical paroxiſms. What an unjuſt and ungrateful cenſure has it dictated againſt the poor innocent gown (female garb, petticoat) which inveſts the fair-ſex with ſuch convenience, pre-eminence, ornament and decorum! and what are its crimes and defects! Becauſe it is an impediment to travelling? and whither would you go? and what to ſee? would you fly from the warm *Sebeto* (*b*) to the frozen *Danube*, merely to have a near view of a miſerable Roman ruin, placed there by accident, and with which, notwithſtanding its diſtance, you are already ſufficiently acquainted; or would you traverſe Aſia and Africa, as far as the icy regions of Lapland, in order, philoſophically, to combine the various inclinations and cuſtoms of the earth's inhabitants: and thus making a minute analyſis of humanity, enable yourſelf (as you vainly hope) to form, in the Carteſian manner, a clear and diſtinct idea of it? Both theſe

(*b*) A river in the neighbourhood of Naples.

enterprises are equally useless; since the mouldering ruins, which excite in you such curiosity, are certainly not worth the trouble of so long a journey; on the contrary, they would be of infinitely less value to you, when seen, than at a distance: as your imagination has the happy power of embellishing, unseen, whatever presents itself to your mind. And the undertaking to qualify yourself, accurately to define that strange compound of contradiction, called *man*, should be ranked in the number of impossibilities. As I hold it for certain, that there exists not an individual of the species, who does not every instant differ from himself; and we may inform ourselves of those peculiarities, which are universally allowed, without quitting our country; for though the cornice may be infinitely varied, the building is always the same. In every corner of the earth, men are equally the sport of their own passions. A taste for pleasure every where prevails: hence the indispensible want of society; yet every one is conspiring against those restraints, without which society cannot subsist. All regard reason as the necessary attribute of human nature; and all take her for their guide in the transactions of life; but each moulds her to his own fancy

and

and convenience. So that I advise you, my much respected *Donna Eleonora*, to make peace with your gown, detaching your thoughts wholly from voyages so useless, and big with hardships and misfortunes; and to encourage no other wish or ambition, than that of distinguishing yourself among your peers, in the manner you have so happily begun. Cultivate your dramatic talents, and from the specimens which you have already given of your abilities, I not only hope, but venture to predict, your complete success.

Vienna, March 8, 1776.

Metastasio having unfolded and displayed in his dramas all the affections of the human heart, seems in his letters to female authors, to have exhausted the language of courtesy and politeness. The following letter, the only one in the collection to the same lady, seems in a different key, and higher pitch of of respect and elegance, than any of those to his other female correspondents, already inserted.

LETTER VII.

TO SIGNORA DONNA CATTERINA MAGGI DE CALVI.

If the beneficent ſeducer, who has been able to inſpire you, madam, with ſo much partiality in my favour, were known to me, I certainly ſhould moſt devoutly addreſs every ſpecies of prayer and ſupplication, to engage him to eſtabliſh me in the poſſeſſion of a bleſſing, which I have great reaſon to fear I ſhall be unable to preſerve. The eſteem of a perſon who voluntarily adds to ſo many excellent qualities of her ſex, merely as accompliſhments, thoſe ſtudies and laborious occupations which are our duties, is an acquiſition, which, however uſurped, might tempt the moſt mature philoſophical moderation with vanity.

I have great reaſon to ſuſpect that Signor *Hippolito*, your moſt worthy conſort, has been guilty of the whole, or the chief part, of this ſeduction—I know not whether it would be for my advantage to expreſs my ſentiments of gratitude and devotion in perſon; but am certain, that in ſpite of the riſk I ſhould run of

undeceiv-

undeceiving you, I cannot help wiſhing it moſt ardently. Continue to honour me with this favourable propenſity, thus voluntarily beſtowed: afford me an opportunity of meriting it, and believe me always, with due reſpect and eſteem, &c.

Vienna, December 9, 1772.

In order to finiſh the poet's correſpondence with literary Ladies, and Females of talents, we ſhall deviate a little from regular chronology. The following letters, like the preceding to females of this claſs, were extorted from him by perſons whom he never ſaw, or by their friends. He ſeems, however, to have received all theſe applications, not only with patience, but to have anſwered them with good breeding, and even kindneſs; and if the correſpondence is continued, his philanthropy viſibly matures into friendſhip.

LETTER VIII.

TO SIGNORA MARIA ROSA COCCIA.

A FORTNIGHT ago, I received a courteous letter from Monſignor RATTI, in which

Signora MARIA ROSA COCCIA was recommended to me. I anſwered this prelate, that when I knew in what way I could be of uſe to the perſon recommended, I ſhould not fail ſeconding the wiſh of ſuch a mediator. A few days after I had ſent my anſwer to the poſt, a parcel was announced to me from the cuſtom-houſe; which, when examined, was found to contain, not only a very elegant letter from the ſaid Signora MARIA ROSA, but three excellent pieces of her muſical compoſition, which I ſaw, and reſpected; but was not able to judge of their worth. I therefore inſtantly called a perſon extremely ſkillful in the art, who, after carefully examining them in my preſence, and with great pleaſure, aſſured me, that they were written, not only in a correct, but maſterly, manner. I rejoiced at this, and was flattered to find, that my dear country produced young ladies of ſuch uncommon abilities. But I was mortified, at finding myſelf unable to procure ſuch rewards, as are due to their merit. The princes of this court having, many years ſince, made a rule, never to receive a preſent, or dedication of any book, eſpecially of poetry, or muſic; to ſave themſelves from the indiſcreet torrent of ſuch homages as they were

formerly

formerly inundated with. Here music is, at present, in the last stage of decline; and in order to know the merit of such a composition as yours, such knowledge is necessary as is possessed by very few people: hence all, but particularly those who may assume the character of Mecænas, can only appreciate musical merit by the report of professors; who being likewise men, and subject to human passions, do not alway deliver their opinions with sincerity. So that not knowing what use I can ultimately make of the elegant copies of your harmonical labours, I shall carefully preserve them till I have your instructions. I beg you will not regard my inability, (at which on this occasion I feel infinite concern) as a crime; but believe me to be, with sincere wishes for more success in the execution of your future commands, yours, &c.

Vienna, December 29, 1777.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR former letters, most respected Signora ROSA, have informed me of your extrordi-

nary abilities in muſic; but the laſt has convinced me of the uncommon goodneſs of your heart: full of docility, modeſty, and propriety: virtues which ſeldom abound in perſons who, like you, can afford ſuch pleaſure by the laudable fruits of their application. With theſe wonderful talents, with ſuch enviable, and rare diſpoſitions of the mind, and with the fervor which animates your exertions, you will encreaſe the glory of our country; of which, as a fellow citizen, I ſhall imagine myſelf entitled to a ſhare. The generous gift with which you have favoured me, of your neat manuſcript, for which I am very grateful, ſhall be kept ſacred for the pleaſure of communicating it to ſuch only as may know its true value; and at all times ſhall be carefully preſerved, and ready for reſtoration, whenever an opportunity may occur of making a better uſe of it. Your partiality towards me, I regard as a precious acquiſition; and long for an opportunity of meriting it, by the execution of your commands.

Vienna, February 12, 1778.

The chief ſubject of the next letter to this lady, (1779) is the poet's favourite cenſure of

of the *compliments of the ſeaſon*, which he denounces to almoſt all his correſpondents.

In 1780, Signora COCCIA ſent him a print engraved from her picture, for which the following letter contains his acknowledgments.

LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR obliging attention, in furniſhing me with an impreſſion of the engraving made from your picture, has given me infinite pleaſure; as it has helped me to form an idea of a perſon ſo eſtimable, in ſpite of the liberality of the engraver, who has beſtowed upon you more years than really belong to you. I can, however, conſole myſelf for this defect, by the other moſt faithful intellectual pictures which you have ſent me, in your wonderful muſical eſſays, by which you have ſo far outſtript your peers. I regard my verſes with the more partiality, for having incited you to make ſo laudable a uſe of your talents. I am very glad that you have been informed of the juſtice which I render you at Vienna, and you would have had more

frequent confirmations of it in my own letters, if my age did not make the buſineſs of writing ſo inconvenient to me. Furniſh me, however, occaſions for doing it with more effect.

Vienna, February 14, 1780.

LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR commands, moſt obliging Signora ROSA, convince me how erroneous an opinion you have formed of me and my way of life, in believing me alert and robuſt, and in the practice of frequenting the court and perſons of high rank. It is a long while ſince my great age and infirmities have permitted me to quit the aſylum of my own houſe, except to perform the duties of religion, and even that, not conſtantly. I have ſmall hopes of ſeeing the Grand Duke and Dutcheſs of Muſcovy, who are expected here. But if by an accident, hardly poſſible, ſuch an event ſhould happen, and I had the preſumption, unſolicited, to propoſe to them an account of the ſingular merit of my admirable country-woman, how is it poſſible to hope, that after the million of

objects

objects which will have taken possession of the mind of this prince and princess in their long voyage; among the innumerable homages that will be rendered them at Rome; amidst the feasts with which their presence will be celebrated, and the curiosity which they shall have excited, they should ever find the least trace in their memories, of an humble petition made to them in passing through Vienna? Your wish should have been seconded at Rome, by persons dextrous in such matters, who know how to avail themselves of daily circumstances. I wish most ardently, that your fortune were equal to your merit; and am extremely afflicted to be able at present to offer nothing better, than useless, though cordial, wishes, for your prosperity.

Vienna, September 6, 1781.

We must now resume the correspondence with his old friend Signor Filipponi, in which we had only advanced to the end of 1767.

The poet had such frequent applications from booksellers, who were perpetually multiplying editions of his works in all the great cities of Italy, particularly Turin, that he seems

ſeems to have treated Sig. *Rabj* with a little leſs politeneſs in the following letter, than, when a young author, he had beſtowed on *Bettinelli.*

LETTER XII.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

Our Sig. *Rabj* does his duty in thinking of his own intereſt: but he is much miſtaken, if he imagines that I am unmindful of mine. It is my buſineſs to judge of the reſpect and delicacy due from me to princes and princeſſes, who have rewarded my labours with ſuch ſplendid magnificence. The oracles and examples produced, are not ſufficient to authorize me to diſpoſe of things that are not my own; hence, my dear Sig. Filipponi, adviſe him to imitate my reſignation.

I participate ſincerely in your affliction, at the unexpected reſolution which your exemplary ſon has taken; but who knows, whether in his new ſtate of perfection, he will not afford you ſuch cauſe to rejoice, as will repay you for your preſent grief with intereſt? I both wiſh and hope it ſincerely,

The

The Gazettes muſt have informed you of our earthquake and inundations. The firſt, which happened in Vienna, was only tremendous threats, without the leaſt fatal effect; but in the neighbourhood of the city of *Neuſtadt*, the conſequences have been very ſerious. Yet the furious over-flowing of the Danube, thanks to the paternal goodneſs of our moſt auguſt ſovereign, who with hand and heart has aſſiſted the wretched inhabitants of the deluged ſuburbs, has not produced thoſe tragical effects which were juſtly apprehended: ſo that the evil has been infinitely leſs than the fright, from which we have not yet recovered. Adieu, my dear friend; take care of your health, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, March 7, 1768.

LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

You have done wiſely, my dear Sig. *Filipponi*, to ſpare yourſelf in writing. I ſhall venture to take the ſame liberty, as I feel too plainly, that though ours is the beſt time of life for prating, it is very unfavourable to writing; but, in this country, an Italian ama-

amanuenſis, to whom a man can ſafely dictate, who wiſhes that his letters may not diſgrace him, is a fiſh very difficult to catch; ſo that I prefer ſhort letters, or ſilence, to the greater evil of loſing my credit or my patience.

My poor Pegaſus has trotted and galloped ſo much, that being now full of ſpavins, he ought to eat his corn in quiet. My moſt indulgent patroneſs will, I hope, conſider his crippled ſtate, and not ſoon oblige him to crawl up the mountain. At preſent, I have no orders to obey; and I have reaſon to rejoice at my eſcape.

I had almoſt inadvertently let my pen be guilty of wiſhing you a happy new year; ſuch is the force of bad habits; but thank heaven, I ſtopt juſt at the inſtant I was going to ſlip. So that I ſhall not only avoid this ſtale and injurious formality, but am certain, that you will forgive me for the averſion I have to ſo ſilly and troubleſome a cuſtom.

Count *Canale*, with all his ample and flouriſhing family, have received your teſtimonies of eſteem, with the higheſt pleaſure; and beg, reciprocally, to interchange good wiſhes; permit me likewiſe to offer up vows for every branch of your family, ſacred, and profane,

profane, whom I love, reverence, and honour, with all my ancient entire, and incorruptible affection.

Vienna, December 31, 1768.

LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME.

God forgive you! my dear friend, for predicting the necessity of my clambering again up mount Parnassus. After so many journeys, stumbles, and falls, does not it yet seem time for my poor jaded Pegasus to eat his last feed in peace? Instead of taking new steps (as you say) towards immortality, the progress already made on the road, is lost, when we dare to transcend the bounds which nature has prescribed to miserable humanity. I already, but too well, know this melancholy truth, and wish to profit from my knowledge; but how am I to resist the constant and benignant clemency, which overlooking my insufficiency, still wishes to confer benefits upon me.——

Vienna, July 3, 1769.

LETTER XV.

TO THE SAME.

I SHOULD not know how to account, my dearest friend, for the admiration with which you have honoured my letter concerning this Imperial family, if I did not reflect, that it contained nothing but plain truth, which, appears most beautiful, when the least imbellished (*i*); my vanity, therefore, will allow me to take to myself no part of the praises you bestow on this fortunate letter. They have, however, so far excited my curiosity, as to make me wish to see its contents. I therefore applied to a young man, who used to transcribe some of my letters previous to their departure, as an exercise in the Italian language, which he studies with great diligence; but it was not to be found in his bundle. Whether he

(*i*) Notwithstanding the democratic clamour against the tyranny of the House of Austria, in later times, the inhabitants of Vienna, during the life of the Empress Queen, *Maria Theresa*, who died 1780, seemed the happiest, and the most contented with their Sovereign and her government, of any people in Europe. For instances of this Princess's virtues and benevolence, see *Dict. Biogr.* art. MARIE.

omitted

omitted giving it a place there for want of time or inclination, I know not. I ſhould have the ſame temptation to juſtify your favourable reception of the trifle I wrote on the Engliſh Armonica (*k*); but it is moſt prudent not to enter too deeply into this uſeleſs and perilous examination. Indeed if you had convinced me (as you might too eaſily have done) that this little production, is unworthy of applauſe, I ſhould ſtill have reaſon for ſome conſolation; as the having already obtained it without deſert, would be a comforting proof of the numerous band of friends and defenders which my good fortune has procured me; and I am much more ſenſible of this enviable acquiſition, than of the choiceſt laurels of Parnaſſus.

Adieu, my dear Sig. *Filipponi*; I return you the compliments of the ſeaſon, in revenge; ſinging in pure ſpite, this ſtale and uſeleſs cant among real friends.

Vienna, November 16, 1769.

The talents of our two countrywomen, the Miſs Davis's, who reſided a conſiderable time at Vienna, in the ſame houſe as Haſſe and

(*k*) The *Glaſſes*, carried to Vienna, and performed upon by the eldeſt Miſs Davis.

Faustina *, have been celebrated by our bard; the eldest, for her performance on the *Glasses*, at that time a new instrument; and the youngest, for her vocal abilities. The Empress Queen had been so pleased by their several talents, that in the year 1769, on the marriage of the Infant Duke of Parma with the Arch-dutchess Maria Amelia, she desired Metastasio to write a Cantata, which was set by Hasse, in order to display their several talents. This Cantata has been published in late editions of the poet's works, under the title of *l'Armonica*, the name of the new instrument on which the eldest Miss Davis accompanied her sister, in the performance of the Cantata.

A letter written by the poet to the princess di Belmonte, at Naples, recommending these performers to her protection, will serve as a comment to the Cantata just mentioned.

LETTER XVI.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE.

THE bearers of this most reverential address, are two English young persons, travelling under the conduct of their worthy pa-

* See *Present State of Mus. in Germany*. &c, Art. Vienna.

rents,

rents, in order to give teſtimonies at Naples of their ſeveral abilities in muſic; their names are Miſs Mary, and Miſs Cecilia Davis: the firſt performs with admirable ſkill on an inſtrument of new invention, called the *Armonicá*. It is compoſed of glaſſes of different ſizes, revolving, by means of a pedal, on a ſpindle. Theſe glaſſes, forming a regular ſcale of tones and ſemi-tones, being delicately touched with wet fingers, during their revolution, produce the moſt uncommonly ſweet, and celeſtial tones, imaginable; particularly in pathetic ſtrains, for which the inſtrument is eminently calculated. The other ſiſter, who is poſſeſſed of a very pleaſing and flexible voice, ſings extremely well, with much art and natural expreſſion; and when accompanied by her ſiſter on the *Armonica*, ſhe has the power of uniting her voice with the inſtrument, and of imitating its tones, ſo exactly, that it is ſometimes impoſſible to diſtinguiſh one from the other. They have been here univerſally admired, and applauded: and my moſt auguſt Patroneſs, who has deigned to hear them frequently, has honoured them with munificent teſtimonies of imperial approbation.

Vienna, January 16, 1772.

Miſs Cecilia Davis performed in the theatre of San Carlo at Naples, the part of *Bradamante*, in Metaſtaſio's new opera of RUGGIERO.

LETTER XVII.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

YOUR letters, my moſt dear Sig. *Filipponi*, always afford me the greateſt comfort, in reviving the idea of our long, ſincere, and diſintereſted friendſhip, and of that honourable character, ſo worthy of yourſelf, which I have always found ſo irreproachable; and this certain knowledge renders every thing dear that comes from you, even to the inſult of a merry Chriſtmas; I therefore thank you for it, and in revenge, join the ſame wiſh for you, with others which ought not to be profaned by being coupled with ſuch ſtupid and vulgar companions.

I am overwhelmed with confuſion and gratitude, at the partial and generous diſpoſition of your obliging and learned friend, in wiſhing to honour me with the dedication of his *Luſiad* (*l*). I therefore beg of you to

(*l*) *Or the Diſcovery of India*, an epic poem, by LUIS DI CAMÖENS. It does not appear who was the tranſlator of this poem into Italian, who ſo much wiſhed to dedicate his verſion to Metaſtaſio.

expreſs

expreſs to him the lively and ſincere ſentiments of my grateful heart, and my impatience to ſee transfuſed into our language by a maſterly hand, a work which has juſtly merited univerſal approbation; but after this true and candid aſſurance, uſe all your eloquence, I entreat you, to convince him, that neither the nature of the gift, nor his own intereſt or mine, can permit me to accept of it. The oppulent ſons of fortune, among whom it has not pleaſed providence to rank me, have acquired a right by immemorable preſcription, to all dedications; and both the work and the author (by ſubſtituting to ſome great name, that of a poor inhabitant of Parnaſſus) would be deprived of the well founded hopes of thoſe ſolid advantages which he might promiſe himſelf from riches and power. An honour ſo little my due, would provoke the malevolent to examine my titles; and God defend me from ſuch a dangerous enquiry! In ſhort, having hitherto, for this invincible reaſon, always refuſed the acceptance of ſuch incenſe, I have loſt the power of compliance, if I would not moſt deſervedly incur the indignation of thoſe by whom it has heretofore been offered: Do you, my dear Sig.

Filipponi, endeavour to prevent this moſt reaſonable repugnance from diminiſhing the partiality of this worthy man of letters, which I would not loſe for the world.

Sig. *Canale* is very ſenſible of the intereſt you take in the recovery of his ſon-in-law; and has conſigned to me, on your account, a thouſand grateful and affectionate expreſſions. Contrive to let the venerable prieſteſs know how much I love, eſteem, and honour her, as well as your numerous offſpring, ſacred and prophane, *et nati natorum, et qui naſcentur ab illis*; and never ceaſe to believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, December 17, 1770.

LETTER XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

AMONG the many flattering receptions of my RUGGIERO in Italy (*m*), who was not

(*m*) The opera of RUGGIERO, the laſt of the poet's dramatic productions, was written by order of the Empreſs Queen, and publiſhed under his own eye, in a moſt correct and ſplendid edition in quarto, at Vienna. It was ſet by Haſſe, and performed at Milan, on the marriage of the Archduke Ferdinand of Auſtria, with Maria Beatrice of Eſte, Princeſs of Modena, 1771.

brought

brought up by his old ſire with very ſanguine hopes, yours, my dear Sig. *Filipponi*, has been the moſt grateful. I am pleaſed that you have ſtill found in this late production of my tired and exhauſted genius, ſome features of the old countenance of your friend; and I have reflected with the higheſt pleaſure, on the effect of this recognition upon your good heart. Theſe kind ſymptoms of ſincere friendſhip, have carried me back with infinite delight to our juvenile days, renovating the pleaſing beginnings of our affection, and its conſtant ſucceſſive progreſſion. My lively imagination has taken a new walk with you through the *ſtrada Giulia*, and the dark *Parraſio* upon the *Gianicolo*, at Rome; we have breathed together the chearful and ſalubrious air of the *Vomero*, at Naples; and it has repreſented to me our private feſtivities, innocent ſympoſiacs, and poetical confabulations. You ſee for how many gay ideas I am indebted to your letter; I now ought to be particularly grateful for them, as I have great occaſion for ſuch ſpecifics againſt the obſtinate perſecution of my hypochondriac complaints, which tinge with darkneſs every thought.

Without the leaſt ſhadow of affectation, I am truly grateful to thoſe who have had the partiality to wiſh to dedicate to me their works; but have never had the courage to accept of an incenſe which from time immemorial has appertained to the oppulent ſons of fortune. We poor inhabitants of Parnaſſus are born to offer, and not to receive it; and I ought not to be condemned for refuſing to become a uſurper. I entreat you to become my advocate, and to plead my gratitude and reaſonable ſelf-denial.

Vienna, December 26, 1771.

We quitted the poet's correſpondence with his beloved *Gemello*, Farinelli, July, 1768, after ſettling him at Bologna, and after ſeveral conſolatory letters, and admonitions to fortitude and reſignation (not very ſucceſsful indeed) had been ſent to him by our bard. We ſhall now reſume this correſpondence, and continue it, uninterruptedly, till May 1769; from which period there is a chaſm of ſeven years in the printed edition of Metaſtaſio's letters to this celebrated ſinger, without any reaſon being aſſigned by the editor.

LET-

LETTER XIX.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

THE kind care which my beloved *Carluccio* (*n*) took to acquaint me, in preference to so many others, of the new form which your domestic society takes, in consequence of your generosity, and the suggestions of your heart and benevolent mind, is a precious emanation of our affectionate and indissoluble Twinship. I cannot express to you the pleasure which this confidence has given me, nor sufficiently congratulate you on the occasion. In the first place, it is a great comfort to me to find in this action, the constant and admirable character of my dear Gemello, always like himself, and always determined to distinguish himself from common men by beneficence, which is one of the greatest attributes of the divinity. I hope, in the second place, or rather promise myself, that

(*n*) The diminutives and augmentatives of the Italian language are so delicate and numerous, that it is in vain to attempt finding equivalents for them all, in any other tongue. *Carlo*, for instance, is Charles; *Carlino*, little Charles; *Carluccio*, dear sweet Charles—*Carlone*, great Charles; *Carlaccio*, nasty filthy great Charles,

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the neceſſary and delightful occupations which the regulating this riſing generation furniſhes, will, by degrees, baniſh all thoſe gloomy and hypochondriac thoughts, which inceſſantly haunted and governed you, day and night; threatening your deſtruction, to the profound, but unavailing affliction of your friends, unable to afford you any aſſiſtance.

At preſent, inſtead of theſe melancholy imaginations, I cannot tell how many pleaſing and happy ideas croud into my mind. I ſee you healthy, ſerene, and making your whole happineſs conſiſt, as uſual, in procuring that of others: You are now full in my view, with your dear nephew at your ſide; I now ſee you at the harpſichord with your noble little niece. And very very often (only mind how the fancy of poets runs away with them) I ſeem to ſee you ſkipping round your flouriſhing beds of peas, beans, and other fortunate tender plants, which will certainly thrive in proportion to the care of ſo honeſt, prudent, and friendly a cultivator. Now, my beloved Gemello, there only remains for me to thank you, as I ſincerely do, for your particular attention to me; and to rejoice with you at your having diſcovered

a better

a better mode of reading my heart, where you have so long been an inhabitant, than I of explaining it, by scribbling or prating.—

Adieu, my dearest Gemello: may heaven render you happy in proportion to my wishes, and administer to you new motives of consolation.

Vienna September 1, 1768.

LETTER XX.

TO THE SAME.

SIGNOR *Mancini* (o) a few days ago, and Sig. *Tibaldi* yesterday, have faithfully consigned to me the affectionate remembrances of my beloved Gemello; and have patiently answered all my numerous interrogatories, concerning the present state of your humour, as well as health. Some of the information I have obtained has consoled me, particularly that which represents you so much satisfied with the new domestic

(o) A singer of the Bologna school, educated under the celebrated Bernacchi. His voice a *soprano*; but having quitted the stage, he was now engaged as singing-master to the Arch-dutchesses, which place he filled in 1772, when I saw him at Vienna. See *Germ. Tour*, vol. 1. *Art.* Vienna.

society

ſociety which you have acquired, and the pleaſing occupation which it affords you: but, on the contrary, the account which I have had of the obſtinate continuance of your impertinent tertian ague, afflicts me extremely. And finding that your niece is not exempt from this wearing malady, has made me reaſonably conclude, that ſome external cauſe, common to you both, has occaſioned your indiſpoſition. If this ſhould have been the caſe, it would not be be difficult to diſcover and remove it. My fond *twiniſm* has ſuggeſted to me, that you paſs the chief part of your time in the open air; that the autumnal exhalations, and the poiſonous vapours of a great part of our country, is not breathed with impunity; that the air of paved cities is much leſs impregnated with this poiſon, not only from the exhalations of the earth being impeded, but from the numerous and conſtant fires, as well as the motion of the inhabitants, which agitate and correct the air. And I beg that the neceſſary care of your health, may ſet you a thinking of theſe matters which friendſhip has ſuggeſted to me. Take them into conſideration, my dear Gemello, and examine my ſuſpicions: If you find them at all probable,

bable, avoid expoſing yourſelf, at leaſt during the perilous ſeaſon. I well know that your conduct has been ſuch hitherto, as to prove that you are in no want of tutors, and that I pretend to no ſuch employment; but this doubt torments me, and if I did not communicate it to you, I ſhould be ten times more tormented with remorſe.

I congratulate your amiable niece on her happy maternal ſtate, and her ſpouſe on the graduation of his paternal proximity. Recommend me to them both, and inſpire them with a proportion of your affection for me: as they are already extremely dear to me from the love which my Gemello bears them, whom I tenderly embrace, and of whom I ſhall ever be moſt faithfully, &c.

Vienna, November 30, 1768.

LETTER XXI.

TO THE SAME.

Our extreme cloſe attachment to each other is ſo public, that every one believes, if he is dear to one of us, that he is ſure to poſſeſs the friendſhip of both. Signora Marianna *Bianchi Tozzi* (*p*), who aſpires at

(*p*) A celebrated opera ſinger, who at this time ranked very high in the favour of the public, both in Italy and Germany.

the

the acquisition of your favour, which she has no doubt of obtaining, if I only assure you, that she is already in possession of mine: and I cannot refuse her the confession of this truth. When, not long ago, she represented in this theatre, the part of *Clelia* in my opera of that name, I was extremely pleased with her; not only on account of her excellent performance, and blameless conduct, but for her attention and indefatigable application to fulfil all her duties. She returns to Italy, at present, through Brunswick; where, according to my accounts, she has justly received universal applause. If you will but let her know that her supposition is not entirely unfounded, I shall be extremely grateful, provided she does not fail in executing punctually all the commissions to you, with which I have charged her. Adieu, my dear Gemello. I devoutly reverence all your amiable domestic committee, and am as usual, yours.

Vienna, December 14, 1768.

LET-

LETTER XXI*.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR laſt letter of the 9th inſtant, occaſions a mixture of pleaſure, anxiety, and affliction, which I am unable to deſcribe. The obſtinacy of your diabolical fever, the pathetic picture of the ſtate of your perhaps too good heart, and the affectionate thoughts which ſtimulated you to add new ties of friendſhip to thoſe which have hitherto ſo indiſſolubly united us, are ideas well worthy of the ſweet and bitter tumult with which I am by turns internally agitated. It was impoſſible for you to give me a ſtronger proof of your conſtant affection, than by inviting me to a ſacred alliance, in preference to ſo many diſtinguiſhed perſons to whom you might apply. You muſt therefore imagine how much I feel myſelf obliged; and how I am flattered by this new inſtance of the place I hold in your heart. But as there is no perfect happineſs in this valley of tears, the pleaſure of finding myſelf thus diſtinguiſhed by you from the croud of your

friends is disturbed by an invincible impediment, which opposes itself to the execution of your design. The never having represented the personage of whose office you kindly think me worthy, during my long life, would be a small obstacle in treating with my Gemello; but the misfortune is, that besides the number of persons to whom I have excused myself, it is not two months since I resisted the solicitations of a person much connected at court, and who would have a reasonable cause for being offended, if after refusing him, I complied with the request of another; and the resentment of this person would not only be unpleasant, but might be mischievous. Nor is it possible for me to flatter myself with keeping it a secret; the hoping to conceal any of our actions, who are as well known as the North star, would be a Platonic idea. So that your part, my dear Gemello, is not only to pardon, but pity me, the loss being wholly mine; and my part will be gratefully to remember, as long as I live, what you thought and wished.

In spite of the hurry with which I am obliged to write a heap of useless letters, I cannot forget to present my respects to the

fruitful

fruitful lady who honours me with her notice, and to aſſure her, that by anxiouſly attending to your health, ſhe will add to that of yours moſt faithfully.

Vienna, January 23, 1769.

LETTER XXII.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH your moſt welcome remembrance of the 12th of laſt February, was only an anſwer to my preceding prolix letter, I cannot poſtpone my reply to it, nor reſtrain my abuſe, which your inhumanity well merits, for the manner with which you have treated my ſolicitude. You know in what a ſtate of mind the account of your obſtinate fever muſt have left me; and without aſſuring me that you had at length ſent it to the devil, you content yourſelf with merely ſaying, that your health is capricious. But in ſpite of you, I find motives of conſolation in the ſteadineſs of your hand-writing; in your ſilence itſelf; and, above all, in the vivacity of your letter, which is not tinctured with a febrile humour. But it is not out of character for a marine

monſter to reduce a Gemello to conſole himſelf, by having recourſe to conjecture. Thank heaven, in theſe days of penitence (Lent) I remember, like a good chriſtian, that anger muſt be ſubdued, otherwiſe I ſhould not let you off ſo eaſily; but mind! and keep yourſelf well, if you wiſh my rage ſhould not be renewed.

If, at this time of our lives, you could doubt of my ſincerity, or I of yours, we ſhould be unpardonable. I have ſeen your invitation in no other light, than as a tender proof of your friendſhip; and you would be extremely unjuſt and ungrateful, if you could ſuppoſe I had any other latent reaſon for declining the offer, than that which I have candidly ſtated. So that you have not the leaſt occaſion to repent of the friendly eagerneſs with which you have ſo much obliged me; nor I to bluſh at my involuntary backwardneſs, in accepting of your twinly offer. Therefore, in ſpite of wild and unworthy conjectures, let me enjoy in peace, the pleaſure which this new proof of kindneſs has afforded me, of knowing how I ſtand in your good heart.

I envy Signora *Bianchi*, and Monſieur *Loſier*, who have ere now ſeen and embraced my

my dear Gemello. O that I could do the ſame! But though I cannot ſee the leaſt probability of it ever happening, I cannot relinquiſh the hope.

Vienna, March 2, 1769.

LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

Muger paridera, hija la primera (*q*) I therefore congratulate you, my dearest Gemello, on the ſafe and certain fecundity of your amiable niece, and of the proweſs with which ſhe has happily accompliſhed her firſt maternal expedition. Accuſtomed to live among the Graces and the Muſes, You ought to be pleaſed, that, under your auſpices, their chorus is going to be augmented, and that fortune has dextrouſly afforded you an apportunity of manifeſting your gratitude, by rendering them a due return for that education which you are ſo publicly known to have had from them. I entreat you to expreſs my ſincere joy to the mother, in the moſt ſignificant words which you can think

(*q*) The woman is a good breeder, who begins by bringing forth a girl. *Span. Prov.*

of; and my tender affection for the child, by a hundred kiſſes at leaſt: as this right which I claim from our twinſhip, cannot, at preſent, be ſuſceptible of any malignant interpretation.

A friend, well knowing, like all living mortals, my affectionate eagerneſs to be acquainted with every thing that concerns you, has anticipated your information, and obliged me extremely by his diligence; but that has not, however, inclined me to blame your delay. To inſiſt on a rigorous exactitude of ceremonial from a poor gentleman juſt brought to bed, would be unreaſonable to the laſt degree; particularly, from one whom, from long experience, I know to be poſſeſſed of ſuch a mind and heart, that it would be difficult to decide, during the throes of child-birth, whether the ſufferings of the niece, or thoſe of the uncle would be the greateſt. But now you have vanquiſhed the difficulty of this firſt apprenticeſhip, I hope you will have frequent occaſions for exerciſing your courage, with much greater eaſe: and am, as I have ever been, and ever ſhall be, your moſt faithful, &c.

Vienna, May 1, 1769.

LETTER XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

On Monday evening, the firſt of the preſent month, I ſent my ſervant Joſia to the poſt-houſe, with my letter of congratulation for your happy *labour*, when he brought me back, in exchange, a confirmation of the good tidings in your own hand-writing, dated 21ſt of laſt April; I found, after the pleaſure which the peruſal afforded me, another pleaſure, in perceiving, that your affectionate and impatient twinſhip had ſeduced you to take the pen, during the firſt myſterious days of your parturition: I am extremely grateful, for the juſtice which you have done my ſolicitude on your account; and accept, with all due gratitude, the enviable friendſhip, and patronage, of Signora *Maria, Carlotta, Anna, Tereſa, Petronilla,* to whom I beg of you to quintuple, on my account, in proportion to her names, the embraces, which I conſign to you for her uſe, by virtue of our moſt cloſe (becauſe elective) affinity: promiſing to reimburſe you in current coin, whenever it ſhall pleaſe

God to permit us to ſee each other; a hope, which notwithſtanding all the difficulties, I do not mean to renounce. There wanted but a little Ereſypulus to try your patience, which for a long time has certainly not been idle. O my poor Gemello!—but I recal this exclamation: ſuch mortals as you are in no want of compaſſion. Your virtue has afforded ſufficient proofs of your knowing, not only how to ſail before the wind, but how to tack in contrary winds, without looſing your ſteerage. And yet, though I will not degrade you by my pity, I cannot help praying for your tranquillity. I live in the greateſt intimacy with my moſt conſtant complaints: What would you have me do? It is keeping bad company, but I might have worſe. Preſent a million of kind compliments from me to your dear niece, but qualified with the reſpect due to her ſublime rank among matrons: and never ceaſe, on your own part, to return the affection of your, &c.

Vienna, May 4, 1769.

Though the poet's letters to the learned and worthy *Padre Martini*, contain nothing of

of importance to general literature; yet to lovers of Muſic and its hiſtory, nothing that concerns this venerable *Maeſtro di Capella*, can be indifferent. For ſuch, therefore, we ſhall give a tranſlation of the following ſhort letters; to whom they will probably afford ſome pleaſure, from the mere circumſtance of two ſuch men being in friendſhip, and correſpondence, with each other.

LETTER XXV.

TO PADRE MARTINI.

THE unexpected misfortune which has happened to the worthy Abate *del Monte*, which muſt already have arrived at your knowledge, is univerſally lamented; it has retarded many days the pleaſure of receiving your moſt obliging letter of the 7th of laſt January, which was delivered to me only laſt week. I ſent a ſervant to him immediately, with ſincere offers of my ſervices in any way in which it was poſſible for me to be uſeful; and he brings me back the comfortable news, that he was as well as it was poſſible for a perſon to be, with a

broken leg: which ſeems to ſay, that the cure will not be ſlow, nor be attended with any inconvenient conſequences. As ſoon as ever he is viſible, I ſhall viſit him in perſon, in ſpite of near two hundred ſteps, which it will be neceſſary to aſcend, in order to attain his aerial habitation.

I am extremely impatient, not only for the ſecond volume of your moſt learned *Hiſtory*, but for the *Duets* and *Trios*, which you make us hope: and I ſhould be extremely proud, if I were able to furniſh you with any thing inedited towards your laudable undertaking; but whatever I write, being by order and for the uſe of the court, is performed and printed immediately; or, if ſuſpended by ſome accident, the production is laid by for a future occaſion; and I am not at liberty to publiſh it.

Take care of yourſelf, for the honour of our dear Italy; and believe me always, with the moſt juſt and reſpectful eſteem.

Vienna, February 22, 1768.

LET-

LETTER XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

I FOUND on my table, a few days ago, the ſecond volume of the moſt learned work of my very worthy *Padre Martini*; and this morning, an admirable letter from him, without knowing who was the benevolent bearer. But as I could not be ignorant of the friendly and generous hand from which ſuch a precious gift, and ſuch an obliging letter, came, I haſten to acknowledge the inſtruction I receive from the one, and the pleaſure afforded me by the other. I ſhall profit from this work, as much as the narrow limits of my muſical knowledge extend; and ſhall procure that juſtice to be rendered to it, which is due to the oracle of harmony. After theſe effuſions of gratitude, my next buſineſs is to entreat the continuance of your partiality, as if I could ſtill doubt of it, after the teſtimonies which I have received. But it is my duty to aſſure the illuſtrious donor, of the high eſtimation in which I hold his gift, and of the lively

wiſh

wiſh with which I am impreſt, to merit, in ſome way or other, his obliging attentions.

Vienna, March 4, 1771.

LETTER XXVII.

TO THE SAME.

YESTERDAY was conſigned to me, by Signor *Antonio Baroni*, the new diſſertation *De uſu progreſſionis geometricæ in Muſica*; and with the utmoſt eagerneſs I inſtantly began the peruſal: but I ſoon ſaw that it was a kind of reading that I was not qualified to go through with, haſtily. With due attention, I hope, however, to acquire from it all the pleaſure and inſtruction of which my intelligence is capable. In the mean time, accept my moſt grateful thanks for the precious gift: wiſhing you, reverend and learned Sir, a long enjoyment of that life and health, which you ſo laudably employ in increaſing the luſtre of our country; believe me to be with affection, gratitude, and eſteem, &c.

It will probably afford ſome gratification to the lovers of Engliſh poetry, who are zealous for the honour of our countrymen, to be made acquainted with the effect which

a peruſal

a perusal of an Italian translation of Young's *Night Thoughts*, had on a man of Metastasio's exquisite taste and sound judgment. There is only one letter in the collection, addressed to the person to whom the poet confides his sentiments.

LETTER XXVIII.

TO DOCTOR GIUSEPPE BOTTONI.

I HAVE perused with avidity, and infinite pleasure, which I never expected to receive from excess of melancholy, the first six *Night Thoughts* of the celebrated poet Young, in your elegant version; and am extremely grateful to you for enabling me to have a knowledge of the English Muses, in spite of my involuntary ignorance of this excellent language. Thanks to your assistance, I have understood, and admired, these poems to such a degree, that they did not seem at all to have changed their dress. I have not observed in your translation, any of those uncertain and servile strokes of the pencil, which usually distinguish a copy from an original; and am persuaded, that if the sublime

lime author had ſung on the banks of the Arno, he would have expreſſed his thoughts in that flowing, clear, and noble manner; and with that conſtant and varied harmony, with which you have ſo wonderfully tranſlated and enriched him. I can eaſily comprehend what infinite pains ſuch a difficult taſk muſt have coſt you; but it ſeems well worthy of your labour. The extraordinary merit of this excellent writer appears, even in his defects; for notwithſtanding the want of order and connexion, his frequent repetitions, determined obſtinacy in always ſhewing the dark ſide of every object, and unwillingneſs to conduct us to virtue by any other way, than that of deſpair; in ſpite (I ſay) of theſe oppreſſive circumſtances, he ſeizes on the reader, and tranſports him juſt whither he pleaſes.

He always thinks for himſelf, profoundly, and with grandeur. His colouring is vivid, vigourous, and ſplendid; ſo that the abundance of his beauties, makes us overlook his imperfections; as we are too much dazzled by the magic of Reubens's colouring, to ſee the defects of his deſign.

May the favours of Apollo with which you have been bleſſed, continue during the

progreſs

progreſs of a work ſo admirably begun; and may I be ſtill indulged with your partiality.

Vienna, May 23, 1771.

To the following correſpondent of this period (1771) no more than one letter ſeems to have been preſerved; but as we obtain by it Metaſtaſio's opinion, on a ſubject as curious in politics, as that of the preceding letter in poetry, it ſeems well worthy of inſertion here.

LETTER XXIX.

TO SIGNOR D. GIACOMO MARTORELLI.

I never doubted, Sir, but that Baron *Van Swieten*, in his anſwer, would render you all due juſtice; but I am extremely pleaſed to ſee my expectations ſo fully verified in the copy tranſmitted to me, and to find in what high eſtimation your opinions and writings are held by ſo enlightened a judge: as you may place entire confidence in the approbation beſtowed upon you by a man ſo candid, frank, and of a temperament ſo entirely hoſtile to flattery.

I am extremely obliged, as you may well imagine, by the trouble which you have taken to ſend me the epigram lately come

from

from the Iſland of Barataria(*r*). Your civility to it inclines me to imagine, that you think it my own; it will not therefore be decent for me to paſs ſentence upon it, having not yet learned to ſwim or fiſh in the troubled waters of critical ſeas. A very learned adept in the imperial library, to whom I communicated the epigram, believes the author of it to have been a Greek and not a Roman: founding his opinion upon the error which, according to him, cannot be that of the ſtone-cutter, and upon ſome phraſes which ſeem to him tranſpoſed. I ſhall procure a copy of the literary journal of Florence, and without fear of being deceived, ſhall believe what is there determined concerning it.

With reſpect to this part of the world, literature of every kind is a merchandiſe for which there is no vent; and the phyſical reaſon for it is, the enormous and ruinous military ſyſtem, which obliges the ſovereigns, whether they will or no, in order to defend themſelves from each other, to impoveriſh both themſelves and their ſubjects. And as there is no other road by which individuals can expect advancement, ſo princes would be

(*r*) Alluding to the tranſlation of a Greek Epigram, which afterwards appeared among his poſthumous works.

thought

thought reprehenſible curators of the public ſecurity, if the leaſt part of that revenue were appropriated to the honour of Minerva, which is hardly ſufficient for the expences of Mars. And this too indiſputable truth, is the clear ſolution of innumerable problems, my dear Sig. Martorelli, which appear inexplicable.

Vienna, Auguſt 19. 1771. (s)

Of the many prints engraved of Metaſtaſio, I have never ſeen one that did juſtice, either to his features or expreſſion. And the Poet, in the following letter to a Roman painter, who applied to him for a print, or the copy of a picture, which reſembled him the moſt, ſeems to have thought himſelf little obliged to the artiſts who had made him the ſubject of their labours.

(s) The reader will recollect, by attending to this date, the ſituation of Germany at the time theſe reflexions were made: the long and ruinous war between Auſtria and Pruſſia, and the mutual jealouſy which thoſe powers entertained of each other, ſeem to have diſcouraged and baniſhed almoſt every art, but that of ſlaughter. But now, in greater danger from the arms and principles of France, than the fears or ambition of each other, though united among themſelves, their whole attention and reſources are neceſſarily pointed to the ſecurity, not only of the government, religion and laws of the ſeveral ſtates, but the poſſeſſions, liberty, and lives, of individuals, more important and ſolid bleſſings, than literature or the fine arts!

LET-

LETTER XXX.

TO SIGNOR FRANCESCO CARDINALI.

FAME, which blazons the merit of others, however conſtant and univerſal, is, however, but too frequently the mere effect of chance and good fortune: hence that which procures me the favour of your choice, may very probably be of this kind; but too rigorous an examination into motives, may not be for the advantage of my ſelf-love; and being indebted to good fortune for the acquiſition of your partiality, I ſhould not have ſufficient courage to take much pains, in analyzing and deſtroying it.

Impreſſed with a due ſenſe of my obligation to you, for the honour you do me, by wiſhing to give my portrait a place among the illuſtrious men whom you propoſe to copy, I cannot, in gratitude, help praying to heaven, that by thus exalting me, you may not diſgrace your own taſte and judgment.

It is moſt certain, that my picture in the obſervatory of the Arcades at Rome, was ſent thither by myſelf, from Vienna, at the requeſt of Prince D. *Sigiſmondo Ghigi*; and likewiſe that it was carefully copied from that which

was

was once thought to resemble me the most; but it seems as if I had no great reason to be proud of it. In that which I inclose, you will find the features of my peruke and band perfectly expressed; but not those of my face.

Yet it did not seem useless to send it, as external, but true circumstances, however trivial, frequently contribute to suggest the air of an absent countenance.

Vienna, December 9, 1771.

There are several short letters of civility in the collection, from the bard to this painter; who seems to have merited his esteem, by the modesty and respect with which he addressed him.

" The candour and modesty with which you express yourself, have not only confirmed, but considerably encreased my esteem for you: as these qualities have their intrinsic and real value, without the assistance of opinion or chance. I congratulate you on the possession of such qualities, and perhaps more on my own account than yours, as they have rendered the possession of your partiality a more valuable acquisition. "

The following letter of this period, will afford the reader an opportunity of knowing

Metaſtaſio's ideas of a perfect *Canzone*, or detached ſong of many ſtanzas.

LETTER XXXI.

TO THE MARQUIS CARLO VALENTI, *upon a Canzone written by P. Sanbonifacio, the Jeſuit, on the Empreſs Queen's birth-day.*

WHOEVER was the author of the Canzone which you have been pleaſed to ſend me, has great reaſon to be grateful to the muſes for the partial aſſiſtance which they have afforded him, in this pleaſing and ingenious production. It is at once poetical, clear, noble, harmonious, rich in imagery and ideas, and manifeſts, throughout, the effects of that art, which the writer ſo dexterouſly and perfectly has contrived to conceal. But what has afforded me the moſt pleaſure, is the author's exquiſite judgment, which diſcovers itſelf both in the choice of his ſubject, and in the ſkilful manner of arranging his materials; which he has diverſified without multiplying them, and formed into a whole, where nothing is wanting or ſuperabundant; I congratulate him on his ſucceſs; and while I render

you

you my beſt thanks for this new and obliging teſtimony of your remembrance, permit me to remind you of the conſtant and ancient reſpect, with which I have always been, and ever ſhall be, &c.

Vienna, June 10. 1771.

We ſhall now return to the Poet's correſpondence with Sig. Saverio Mattei of Naples, with whom he generally diſcuſſes literary ſubjects more amply, than with moſt of his other correſpondents.

LETTER. XXXII.

TO SIGNOR SAVERIO MATTEI.

THOUGH you always avail yourſelf of a period equal to the time which I have ſuffered to elapſe in anſwering your laſt letter, I ſubmit with patience, while I know you are fulfilling the duties of a parent and a philoſopher. And I rejoice extremely, that you have quitted the tireſome toils of the bar, which obliged you to exerciſe your talents at the expence of more luminous and fruitful employments; I hope theſe are the preludes to a ſeries of auſpicious events; and that, for once,

fortune will be obliged to unite with juſtice, in favouring merit.

I perceive the partiality of friendſhip in all you ſay of my *Ruggiero*; and the pleaſure which this diſcovery affords me, is a conſolation more flattering, than the conſciouſneſs of ſuperior merit could produce. But whatever my poor drama may be, its worth will certainly receive no encreaſe by the reſpect ſhewn to the Singers of the preſent times; reduced by their own fault to the rank of performers of *Intermezzi*, or buffoon interludes between the ſeveral dances, which are now become more intereſting than the acts of an opera. For the Dancers having uſurped the art of counterfeiting the affections, and of repreſenting human actions, have juſtly acquired the attention of the people, which the others have as juſtly loſt. For contenting themſelves with grating the ears of the audience with a vocal *Sonata*, which is called an Air, often very offenſive, they leave to the Dancers the taſk of occupying the mind and heart of the ſpectators, by which they have reduced our theatre to a ſhameful and intolerable jumble of incongruities.

Vienna, May 30. 1771.

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LETTER XXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH I am become callous, by long uſe, to the mangling of my poor dramas, yet your friendly compaſſion, in preventing monſtrous wens from ſpringing out of my *Ezio*, has obliged me extremely. The *Quartetto* which you have written, is decent, convenient, and happy; and if it is well treated by the compoſer and performers, I believe it will have a good effect in the repreſentation. Indeed it will render the ſecond act ſomewhat barren of airs, in which the two principal perſonages will have but one ſong a-piece: which would have been thought ſacrilege, when I wrote the opera; but at preſent, when the heroic Singers have ceded to the Dancers the precedency of repreſentation; and when, by virtue of this ceſſion, they are degraded to the performance of a kind of *act tunes* between the ſeveral Ballets, the more a drama is cut down, the leſs matter remains to exerciſe the patience of the ſpectators. On the other hand, it is a falſe ſuppoſition, that I ever wrote a *Quartet* for *Ezio*, or that I ever re-

queſted one; though it is moſt true, that I am, and ever ſhall be, &c. &c.

Vienna, September 18, 1771.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE already received advice, that a copy of the fourth volume of your Pſalms, directed to me, is on the road; and I feel the utmoſt impatience for enriching myſelf with the poſſeſſion of this new treaſure. Not doubting but this will ſurpaſs in merit its elder brothers: as the extraordinary vigour of your genius, is conſtantly on the increaſe, though its former efforts ſurpaſſed the common ſtandard.

I had hoped, that your friendly complacency would have ſeconded my well-known repugnance, (whether it proceeded from weakneſs or reaſon) to the publication of my private letters. But I ſee, that availing yourſelf rigorouſly of the rights which your merit gives you over my will, you have freely gone to work, and ſpared me the diſtreſs of doubtful deliberation. The worſt of it is, that by acting in this manner, you have manifeſted an opinion of my productions far above their value, for which I know not whether I ought to grieve or rejoice. Yet

I know

know extremely well, that whatever vexation it may have coſt me, my ſufferings are ſuperabundantly paid by the enviable friendſhip of one like you: wiſhing therefore for its continuance, I am, &c.

Vienna, March 15, 1772.

LETTER XXXV.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE run through the fourth volume of your admirable verſion of the Pſalms, which you have ſo obligingly ſent me, with avidity, attention, delight, and profit, from the title-page to the ſage and learned letter, which you have addreſſed to the *Abate Sparziani*; and find myſelf amply rewarded for the long impatience with which I was tormented, during the expectation of their arrival. All ſeem extremely worthy of the preceding volumes; nay, perhaps from the force of novelty, ſome of your reaſoning, as juſt as unexpected, has ſtruck and ſurpriſed me ſtill more effectually. In the 90th pſalm, (our 91ſt) for inſtance, not only the lively and bright colouring of the tranſlation, but the admirable diſſertation on the *Meridian Dæ-*

mon, (*t*) from whose insidious arts, in order to be able to defend myself sufficiently, I have learned from you even to doubt of my own existence: the happy apology with which you exonerate David (ps. 109th) from the odium of the atrocious imprecations which are usually attributed to him, so injuriously to his benign character (*u*): the noble

(*t*) "The sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day." ps. 91. v. 6. Signor Mattei, after giving the different opinions of the fathers and commentators on the *Meridian Dæmon*, seems chiefly to adhere to the opinion of Grotius, as the most simple solution of the difficulty; who supposed this *Dæmon* to imply the SUN, *qui itinerantibus in Palæstina maximè lethalis est*. This idea was very likely to strike an Italian, who dreads nothing more than *il Colpo del sole*: "the arrow that flyeth by day." (v. 5 of the same ps.) or more vulgarly, *the noontide devil*. The pestilence inflicted on the Greeks at the siege of Troy comes from the *Sun*:

The insulted sire (his God's peculiar care)
To *Phœbus* pray'd, and *Phœbus* heard the prayer:
A dreadful plague ensues; th' avenging *darts*
Incessant fly, and pierce the Grecian hearts.

POPE's Ill. b. 1. 494.

The *mall' aria della notte*, or "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," is likewise a figurative expression, that is very intelligible to the inhabitants of hot climates.

(*u*) This is done by assigning to the *Enemy* of David, the imprecations of this ps. from v. 5. to 18. instead of supposing them to come from the royal Psalmist himself; who

noble facility and features of the original *Etruſcan lamentation*, which you have had the dexterity to transfuſe into our language; the fine poetical fervor which reigns in the 82d pſalm; the clearneſs and connection which has been diſcovered in the 84th, 86th, 105th, and 113th pſalms; the variety and ſpirit of the imagery with which the repreſentations of nature are deſcribed in the 102d and 103d pſalms; the truly beautiful, as well as moral ſhort cantata, into which you have compreſſed the 99th pſalm; the drama which you have ſo ingeniouſly diſcovered and demonſtrated in the 117th pſalm, and (not to tire you with an account of the whole volume) in ſhort, every thing has ſurpriſed me to ſuch

who ſays, v. 3. "For the love that I had unto them, lo, they take now my contrary part: but I give myſelf unto prayer. Thus have they rewarded me evil for good: and hatred for my good will."-Then follow the maledictions of his enemy—after which, v. 19, he retorts the curſes of his foes on themſelves. "Let it thus happen from the Lord unto mine enemies," &c.—This ſolution is ſo eaſy and ſatisfactory, that it ſeems wonderful not to have been at all times the general opinion of divines and commentators; but the firſt time that I found this opinion ſupported, was by the late learned and Rev. Mr Keate, in a ſermon which he preached at Chelſea College Chapel, before either of us had ſeen Mattei's Pſalms, and when I had only diſcovered in this letter of Metaſtaſio, that an apology had been made for David, by Saverio Mattei, without knowing in what it conſiſted.

proofs

a degree, and furnifhed me with fuch new proofs of your enviable vigour, vaft learning, and numerous and wonderful talents, that I fhall very frequently repeat the perufal of this volume, being always certain of acquiring in it, new inftruction, and new pleafure.

I ought to beftow a word or two on the gratuitous praifes with which you fo generoufly honour me, in your printed letters, and in the courfe of this work.; but thefe certain proofs of your partiality are not able to appeafe my remorfe at fuch a ufurpation: fo that not to awaken it, I affure you of my ferious gratitude; but as laconically as poffible.

You have been pleafed, at all hazards, to enrol me among *Controvertifts*, by printing my letters concerning ancient mufic, which I had moft privately addreffed to you, in pure obedience. God forgive you! but for my own part, I cannot; nor fhall I ever diffemble my invincible repugnance to a bufinefs fo fuperior to my phyfical powers, as well as abhorrent to my difpofition and inclination. Confole me, Sir, at leaft, by the continuance of your affection, and judge of mine, by the refignation with which I am, &c.

Vienna, April 7th, 1773.

LET-

LETTER XXXVI.

TO THE SAME

I DIRECT my letter to Naples, whither I hope you are at length returned, after four months abſence; a time equally taken up by your books in travelling, which you ſent to me before your departure, but which only arrived here laſt week. Indulging my impatience, I began with your theatrical diſſertation, to which I gave the preference for a thouſand reaſons. It is a ſublime work, and worthy of you; nor is it admirable merely from the profound learning of the writer, but much more ſo from the marvellous knowledge of the moſt recondite myſteries of the ſtage, unknown to the majority even of thoſe who profeſs the art. But what flatters me the moſt, is the accidental coincidence of our notions concerning the ancient and modern drama. The ſpontaneous opinion of one like you, gives me courage, and renders me proud of my own: and I now regard thoſe learned, but moſt inexpert critics, who differ from us, as entirely confuted. If I were to undertake the pointing out all the paſſages of your diſſertation that

are

are worthy of praiſe, this letter would not only equal it, but ſurpaſs it, in ſize. The ſolid demonſtrations with which you have removed all the inſuperable difficulties in underſtanding the poetics of Ariſtotle and Horace, ſufficiently to render them uſeful in practice: the art with which you have expoſed the abſurdity of reducing the unity of place, to the narrow limits of a chamber or cloſet: the torrent of paſſages from Greek dramas, with which you juſtify and compare our dramatic *Airs*, *Duets*, and *Trios*: the happy as well as difficult verſion of the beautiful ſcene in the *Hecuba* of Euripides: the generous modeſty of giving the preference to my cantatas over your own: the maſterly analyſis of the firſt ſcene of *Artaxerxes*, and that of *Sextus* and *Titus*: and every one of your ſage philoſophical conſiderations, would require a prolix and diſtinct chapter. But, begging your pardon, I cannot, however, approve that manifeſt exceſs of partiality, in my favour, which reigns in every period. You, by this means, expoſe yourſelf to the contradictions of thoſe who have their reaſons for not being of your opinion: and at the ſame time, expoſe your friend, by the moſt violent temptations of vanity, to quit

that

that modeſt courſe which it is his duty to ſteer, temptations from which he is the leſs likely to defend himſelf, when aſſailed by a perſon armed with ſuch learning and ſeducing eloquence.

I ſhould ſay much more, if I did not fear that my moſt ſincere praiſes would run the riſk of being conſtrued into a mercantile reſtitution of thoſe with which you have voluntarily honoured me; ſo that, embracing you with my uſual affection, I commit to your perſpicacity, the care of inveſtigating, and of figuring to yourſelf, my eſteem and gratitude.

After the above was written, your letter, dated from Naples, arrived. Beſides the uſual faculty which all your letters poſſeſs, of conſoling, exhilerating, and of meriting my gratitude; this laſt, which informs me of your happy return to Naples, in perfect health, after a long and inconvenient peregrination, has every title to my thanks; as it aſſures me, that no inauſpicious circumſtances have thus long deprived me of the ſatisfaction of hearing from you: as your family cares and affections, have had a conſiderable ſhare of your time, of which you kindly gave me an account, and as the exceſſive impetus of

ſome expreſſions of friendſhip in this letter enables me to judge of that regard which occaſioned it. I am extremely grateful, as indeed I ought to be, not only on theſe accounts, but for the aſſurance with which you have gratified me, of the favourable remembrance of the admirable princeſs of *Belmonte*; yet concerning the inſtances which you give, I muſt in all modeſty and decorum be ſilent.

O how many ſweet and exhilerating ideas has your account, my dear Signor *Saverio*, of Magna Græcia, awakened in my mind! Renovating all the happineſs of childhood and adoleſcence, which I enjoyed in that country, no leſs uſeful than pleaſing! It has brought again to my view all thoſe objects with which I was then ſo much delighted. I have again inhabited the little chamber where the extreme proximity of marine murmurs lulled me for many months, ſo delightfully to ſleep. I have, in fancy, croſſed the neighbouring ſea in a bark to *Scalea*: all the names and aſpects of *Cirella*, *Belvidere*, *Cetraro*, and *Paola*, have been brought back to my mind: I have again heard the venerated voice of the celebrated philoſopher *Caropreſe*, who adapting himſelf, in order to inſtruct

me

me, to my weak ſtate, conducted me, as it were by the hand, through the vortices of the ingenious *Deſcartes*, at that time in high favour with philoſophers, and of which he was a furious aſſerter; and indulging my childiſh curioſity, now demonſtrating with wax, in a kind of ſport, how globes were formed by the fortuitous concourſe of atoms: now exciting my admiration by the enchanting experiments of Dioptrics. I ſeem ſtill to ſee him labour to convince me, that his little dog was only a machine: and that the trine dimenſion was a ſufficient definition of ſolid bodies. And I ſtill ſee him laugh, after plunging me for a long time in dark meditation, and making me doubt of every thing, in proving that I breathed, by his *Ego cogito, ergo ſum:* an invincible argument of certainty, which I deſpaired of ever again demonſtrating.

But you have rouſed a hornet's neſt, ſo that I find myſelf as much ſurrounded by remembrances and a wiſh to communicate them, as you by the literary and law caſes with which you were aſſaulted at your return: ſo that not to rob you of the time neceſſary for theſe more uſeful and neceſſary conſi-

conſiderations, I embrace you affectionately; and leave you in peace.

Vienna, September 1, 1772.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

In your obliging letter of the 12th of laſt October, you courteouſly thank me, dear Sir, for the pleaſure and profit which I had received from the attentive peruſal of the fourth volume of your illuſtrious and learned work. Now who would not purchaſe the right of a creditor upon ſuch eaſy terms? You, however, continue to give me ſimilar opportunities; but aſſure yourſelf, that you will always encreaſe the load on your own ſhoulders by ſuch debts. For my part, I ſhall repeat all I have formerly ſaid, adding, that, among other things, I have particularly admired the maſterly, inſtructive, and very elegant ſonnet, which I have met with at the end of the obſervations upon the 110th Pſalm; and have there obſerved the natural analogy, which is uſual between plants and their fruits. I beg of you to congratulate

gratulate the respectable author of it, in my name, when you have an opportunity; as I now felicitate you yourself on the tender, grateful, and exemplary disposition of your own good heart, towards so worthy a father.

I am sorry that your engagements at the bar, have confined you to the city, and deprived you, this year, of the refreshment of your usual autumnal holidays in the country. But this convincing proof of the just reputation which your abilities have acquired, a little softens the idea of many present inconveniences, by thinking of those splendid and tranquil advantages, which I so ardently wished and presage. When, very long ago, under the direction of the celebrated advocate and, afterwards, councellor, *Castagnola (x)*, I kept these courts myself, I learned the following axiom, which I have never since found reason to doubt: that the fields of *Themis*, (goddess of justice, law,) produce in the beginning to the cultivators there (in Naples) nothing but knavery and mere fatigue; but, afterwards, in the middle of their career, when indeed they have other labours,

(x) This is the Neapolitan civilian, whom most of Metastasio's biographers called *Paglietti*.

but which produce fruits proportioned to their toils, they luxuriate in a ſpontaneous and conſtant fecundity, exempt from labour. From their laſt deſirable ſtage I believe you, my dear Sir, at preſent, not very remote. I beg you to reſpect and fulfil my vaticination; and to perſevere in believing me to be, &c.

Vienna, Nov. 9, 1772.

END OF THE SECOND SECTION.

SECTION III.

It was in the Summer of this year, 1772, that I gratified both my curiosity and my heart, by frequently visiting and conversing with the great lyric bard at Vienna; and though an account of these, to me, most agreeable visits and conversations, has been already given to the public in my *German Tour* (vol. 1.) yet I shall here try to recollect what has been omitted in that relation.

During my residence in that city, I discovered that the poet was not more admired for his extraordinary public talents, than beloved and respected for his private virtues and character. The few innocent singularities which have been ascribed to him, for which he frequently accounts in his letters, were so amply compensated, by his constant probity, politeness, friendship, and philanthrophy, that I heard nothing but his praises from persons of every rank, whenever his name was occasionally mentioned. He seems to have supported dignity without pride; and to have acquired universal admiration without vanity or indirect means. His private,

tranquil, and unvaried habits of life, allowed him no opportunities for the practice of those sublime, splendid, and heroic virtues of courage, patriotism, magnanimity, fortitude, clemency, and beneficence, which he has so admirably described and illustrated in his dramatic works; but there can be no doubt of their existence in his heart, whence his sentiments so manifestly appear to have flowed. The private, domestic, and social virtues of filial and fraternal affection, friendship, philanthrophy, urbanity, probity, honour, and general benevolence, seem never to have been practised with more constancy and devotion, than by our bard; who has been as justly, as emphatically, called, by one of his countrymen, not only *the poet*, but *the philosopher of the heart* (y).

The monotonous manner in which he spent his life during his long residence at Vienna, has been ridiculed, and thought insipid, by perturbed spirits; but to the admirers of his writings and virtues, it will not be indifferent to know how he passed his time, which was in a way so regular and constant, that there were few persons at Vienna unacquainted with it.

(y) *Elogj Italiani*, Tom. I.

He

He ſtudied daily from eight o'clock in the morning, till noon, Then viſited his friends, and thoſe families and individuals from whom he had received civilities. Dined at two; and at five received his moſt familiar and intimate friends, At nine, in Summer, he went out in his carriage, viſited, and ſometimes played at *Ombre*, a game which he liked better than thoſe of mere chance, as it afforded him ſome exerciſe of mind in calculation. Men accuſtomed to think, make their amuſements contribute to mental improvement.

He returned home at ten o'clock; ſupped, and went to bed before eleven. In his converſation he was conſtantly chearful; fanciful, playful, and ſometimes poetical, in his diſcourſe, as well as in his letters; never ſarcaſtic or diſputatious; totally devoid of curioſity concerning the public or private ſcandal in circulation, the morality of his ſentiments reſembled that of his life. His anſwers were elegant, acute, and ingenious; occaſionally learned without pedantry; and full of intereſting and applicable anecdotes of paſt and preſent times. In confidence with few, but polite to all. His affection for his countrymen was great, and extended

to eccleſiaſtics, painters, muſicians, poets, and miniſters of Italian ſtates, who were all ſure of his kindneſs and good offices. His liberality was exactly proportioned to his means: he ſeemed to wiſh for wealth for no other purpoſe than to ſupply his own wants, without ſuperfluity, and thoſe of neceſſitous friends. He preſented the *Improviſatore* Talaſſi, with twelve Sequins, and recommended him to the attention of the great, for higher patronage. His character was never ſtained with any vice, or illiberal propenſities. His ſenſibility inclined him to the paſſion of love; but as it was ſincere, it became a bridle to itſelf, and a ſtimulus to virtue; as his whole life and writings have manifeſted.

Un amour vrai ſans feinte et ſans caprice
Eſt en effet le plus grand frein du vice;
Dans ſes liens qui ſçait ſe retenir,
Eſt honnête homme, ou va le devinir.

VOLTAIRE.

The ſureſt check to pravity of mind
Is love ſincere, to no caprice conſign'd;
Whoever in his heart admits the gueſt
Or has no vice, or ſoon will vice deteſt.

"From

"From a natural love of order and regularity (ſays the Abate Taruffi) (z) even to ſcrupuloſity, he uſed invariably to perform the ſame offices each day at almoſt the ſame inſtant; and in his own defence, he would tell thoſe who contemned ſuch exactitude as contracted and frivolous, that he had always found the regular diſtribution of time, not only contributed to bodily health, but to ſerenity of mind."

Among his moſt agreeable evening occupations, the literary converſations with his two ancient and confidential friends, *Count Canale*, and *Baron Hagen*, ſeem to have held the firſt place; theſe grave and learned perſonages, eminent for erudition and probity, were attached to him by all the ties of good taſte and ſimilar affections. Greek, Latin, Italian, and French writers of the firſt claſs, continued during many years to exerciſe the critical acumen of this illuſtrious triumvirate.

Among the lively ſarcaſms againſt our inoxious bard, it has been ſaid, that the ſmall-pox, old age, ſickneſs, and death, were never

(z) *Elogio dell' Ab. Metaſtaſio.* The author of this Eulogium lived in the greateſt intimacy with the poet at Vienna, during many years.

to be mentioned in his preſence; but we find them all frequently mentioned in his letters, by himſelf.

Even his not learning the German language during the many years he reſided at Vienna, admits of ſome apology. His favour at the Imperial court, and fame throughout Europe, depended on his Italian poetry; and it is moſt probable, that he was fearful of corrupting his native language by uſing another, too frequently, in converſation. Every Engliſhman muſt know, that all foreigners who reſide a conſiderable time in our country, if they learn our language ſufficiently to converſe in it, ſoon looſe the purity of their own, by a mixture of the two tongues, and by frequently thinking in the one, and ſpeaking in the other. I have never known a French governeſs, or teacher at a boarding-ſchool, who, in ſix or ſeven years reſidence here, has not loſt as much of her own language, as ſhe has gained of ours. It is the ſame with profeſſed language maſters; of whom, if I wiſhed to learn a living language with correctneſs and purity, I would, *cæteris paribus*, prefer him who had come laſt from his own country. At Vienna, Italian is more generally ſpoken than

than French, particularly among ſtrangers, and the *Corps diplomatique.* Indeed on account of the Auſtrian poſſeſſions in Italy, there are generally more Italians in the capital of the empire, than French; ſo that Metaſtaſio had no occaſion to learn German for the ſake of converſation, though he had acquired according to his own account (*a*), the names of neceſſaries in that language, *per ſalvar la vita.* And I am inclined to believe, that it was neither the harſhneſs of the Teutonic dialect, nor the difficulty of learning it, that ſo much prevented or impeded his acquiring it, as the fear of corrupting his own.

But as his friend and correſpondent, Sig. *Saverio Mattei*, ſays (*b*), "whoever would have an exact account of his cuſtoms, manners, way of thinking of himſelf and others; of the fulfiling his duties, the viciſſitudes of his fortune, his application, and the degree of ſucceſs with which his works were at firſt received, with their influence on the public taſte of Italy, and on every lyric ſtage in Europe, can only find them in his

(*a*) *Muſical Tour through Germany*, &c. Vol. 1. Art. VIENNA.

(*b*) *Memorie per ſervire alla vita del* METASTASIO, 1785.

LETTERS;

LETTERS;" we ſhall proceed to ſelect, extract, and tranſlate, ſuch of them as ſtill remain unnoticed, concerning the ſubſequent part of his life.

LETTER I.

TO SIG. SAVERIO MATTEI.

HAVING no experienced and truſty correſpondent in *Trieſte*, I have not been able to avail myſelf of your ſage counſel in fixing on a commiſſioner there, who would undertake to receive and forward to Vienna, the box which you have ſent by that road; but I am acquainted with perſons here, who are on very friendly terms with the conſul in that city, Sig. D. *Giovan Battiſta Orlandi*, and I have already obtained a promiſe of his aſſiſtance with reſpect to the box in queſtion; ſo that we have reaſon to hope for better fortune from the preſent expedient than the paſt. The advice which you give me of the precious contents of this box, makes me very impatient for its arrival; after which you ſhall have tranſmitted to you, an exact relation of the pleaſure and profit which this acquiſition ſhall have produced. In the

mean

mean time, I beg of you to deliver, in my name, all due acknowledgments to the most worthy counsellor *Patrizij*, for the generous alacrity with which he has seconded your beneficent intention of enriching me with his excellent writings; and assure him of my sincere respects. I have read with equal delight and admiration, your new, eloquent, sage, and learned dissertation, upon the Dramatico-Lyrica poetry of the Psalms; and I do not see how it is possible, that oppressed as you are with the enormous weight of so many legal, professional, literary, and domestic cares, you are able to preserve entire and equal to yourself, that wonderful vigour of mind, which is necessary to the continual production of new works, as valuable for their correctness, as genius and variety of knowledge. Then I know not how to express to you my satisfaction, in finding such an exact coincidence in our way of thinking, concerning the affinity between the ancient and modern theatre, and that, without the least communication with each other on the subject. In an extract from the poetics of Aristotle, which I have lately augmented, and in which I have endeavoured to combine the dramatic precepts of this

great

great philoſopher with my own but too long experience; and likewiſe in the notes which I am going to amuſe myſelf with writing to my old tranſlation of Horace's Epiſtle to the Piſos, I ſee, that your reaſoning and mine ſet off from the ſame ſource, though they meet in concurrence by mere accident; and the ſpontaneous opinion of ſuch a one as you, puts me in humour with my own.

I am ſorry that your well-known partiality in my favour, ſhould expoſe you to a participation of the vigour of the learned author of the Roman daily *literary journal* againſt me, whoſe impatient ſincerity has manifeſtly *me* for object, and not *you*; but the opportunity which it has afforded you of becoming by this laſt production more wonderful, and more celebrated, and me of being able to boaſt of ſuch an inſtance of your affection, certainly demands our gratitude more than reſentment. To ſay the truth, I ſhould rather have expected from my country, a defence than an attack; but it is juſt that all private regard ſhould give way to the advantages of public correction. As for myſelf, my dear Sig. Saverio, who am rendered callous and impenetrable by old habits (good

or

or bad) contracted by an uninterrupted use of more than half a century, and in which I have been indulged not with an accidental, but constant favour of the public, it would be manifest injustice in me to pretend to see or feel the necessity of the proposed corrections; and upon the inutility of admitting them, you have written with so much learning and solidity, that I should be utterly unable to add any thing to your reasons, which would not be repetition and superfluous. Assure yourself, therefore, that my affection for you encreases, in proportion to the new and illustrious proofs which I receive, from day to day, of your friendship.

Vienna, March 11, 1773.

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

In short, we must never despair. For when I had relinquished all expectation, that the box of books, which you had kindly directed to me so many months ago, would ever arrive, the inclosed letter of advice from a courier of *Trieste*, most unexpectedly informed

informed me, that all its contents had long been in the poſſeſſion of *Ratrop*, the druggiſt at Vienna. I ſought, and found him. He has conſigned to my meſſenger, the book of counſellor *Patrizj*; and the muſic of the Pſalm, ſet by Sig: *Caſarò*, with ſix volumes, that is to ſay, two copies of the three firſt volumes of the new edition, in octavo, of of the poetical books of the bible; and all this; not only without a box, but without any kind of envelope, or direction, to inform the druggiſt how to diſcover to whom theſe goods appertained. It will now be of no conſequence to inveſtigate the cauſe of this diſorder: I ſhall therefore indulge my impatience, and immediately proceed to give you an account of the effect which your precious gift has produced in me, though hardly *ſummis labiis deguſtatum.*

——— I began by reading the firſt conſultations of the very worthy counſellor *Patrizj*, nor did I deſiſt till I had entirely admired them all. I am extremely obliged to you, for having enriched me with ſuch a treaſure; and I entreat you to inform the illuſtrious writer, of my true reſpect and gratitude, for the honour he has done the republic of letters, and his country.

Of the masterly Psalm, by the celebrated *Cafaro* (*c*), it does not become me to speak. It is an acquisition for Signora Martinetz to appreciate, not me. She seized, played, and sung it, the instant it was received in my presence; and it appeared too short. We returned to it, and tried it again the next day, more deliberately; when she discovered in it new beauties, and determined to study it constantly for her improvement in harmony. She has commissioned me to render you a million of thanks, for your kind attention; and I join to them my own acknowledgments, for the pleasure which I have received myself in hearing this admirable music performed.

I have still to speak of my new obligations to you, for enriching me with duplicates of the second edition of the three first volumes, of your most learned book. I have already examined them, though *festinanti oculo*, and find that this edition is more elegant, more convenient, more ornamented, and more rich than the first.—The beautiful octave stanza, the learned dissertation on the *traditions* that have been preserved, &c. and

(*c*) Sig. CAFARO, an excellent Neapolitan composer, in a correct, solid, and masterly stile.

what

what you have added, are all worthy of you, and extremely applicable to the ſubject. But what has intereſted me moſt, is an unexpected portrait, elegantly drawn, of my dear Signor Saverio, and that which he has ſo well delineated, in words, of his moſt worthy father. I have been pleaſed to find in the features of the firſt, particularly in the eyes, a perſpicacious vivacity beaming from the mind; and that exemplary filial tenderneſs in the expoſition of the ſecond, which renders viſible the excellent heart of the painter.

But amidſt ſo many motives of ſatisfaction, I cannot conceal my chagrin, in perceiving what a number of my letters you have publiſhed, in ſpite of my continual prayers and remonſtrances to the contrary. If, Sir, you had believed them ſincere, loving me as you always ſeemed to do, you would not have manifeſted your affection by continuing ſo conſtantly to afflict me; ſo that I am convinced you muſt regard my antipathy in the ſame light as Virgil did the ſhyneſs of Galatea: *Quæ fugit ad ſalices, & ſe cupit ante videri.* But if ſuch is your opinion, you are miſtaken, Sir, and wrong me very much. My timidity, I know as well as you,

may

may be carried to excefs, but not to hypocrify; and, at prefent, you ought to have a better opinion of my heart. Pardon, or rather receive kindly, this tranfport of fcrupulous friendfhip, in which all diffimulation is culpable; but ftill continue to love your, &c.

Vienna, May 22th, 1773.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

THE violent tenfion of my nerves, particularly in the head, and hypochondriac affections, which at this time of the year plague me infufferably, and deprive me of all activity, and power of application however flight, have not abated my eagernefs to read your philofophical and very learned differtation on mufic; and I have determined to give it a fecond perufal, for which I fhall be well rewarded, as foon as I am able to undertake it with lefs heroifm. In the mean time, let me confefs, that the partiality in my favour, which runs through all your writings, if it does not convince me of my merit, affures me of your love; and I am ex-

tremely grateful for ſo dear and valuable a poſſeſſion.

The truths which you aſſert concerning modern theatres, with ſo much eloquence and learning, are ſo evident and inconteſtible, and have been but too long remarked with indignation by myſelf, that in a fit of diſguſt, I determined upwards of fifteen years ago, never to enter any theatre again, except that of the court, which for my comfort, is now wholly ſhut up. When abuſes are arrived at their higheſt exceſs, nature, and the inſtability itſelf of human affairs, alone can cure them. You may flatter yourſelf with the hopes of ſeeing this change, but not I; ſo that it is more your buſineſs than mine to endeavour to haſten it.

The ingenious and lively *ſcherzo poetico* (poetical flight) for the enſuing feſtival, which you have been ſo obliging to ſend me, is worthy of the occaſion. I have peruſed it more than once, with that pleaſure which I always receive from whatever comes from your pen; and I conſtantly find new cauſe of admiration and envy, at the fecundity with which you treat every ſubject, however barren and common in itſelf. I pray heaven to preſerve you, and forgive the abuſe of that

vigour

vigour which it has granted you, by allowing yourself no kind of relaxation amidst such numerous and different applications. Wishing for the continuance of your affection, I remain, &c.

Vienna, December 3, 1773.

As no more than two letters from our Bard to this spirited and voluminous writer, remain to translate and insert, though their dates are posterior to those which are still behind, addressed to other persons, we shall finish this correspondence; as the letters being chiefly on learned and critical subjects, are too much connected by reference to each other, to be separated without fatiguing the recollection of the reader.

LETTER IV.

TO SIG. SAVERIO MATTEI.

THERE is no occasion, my dear D. Saverio, to reform any of the versions of the Psalms which you have obligingly sent me, they being already so advantageously adapted for the reception of music. I am truly sensible of the labour which you must have had in selecting

passages favourable to Airs, Duets, and Trios, and in faithfully compressing into them the sense of the text, without losing that noble, clear, and elegant smoothness, so necessary to music, so easy in appearance, and so difficult to attain. But do not repent of your fatigue. It is concealed in a masterly manner; and you have fully accomplished what you proposed; so that, at present, every composer will employ in these Psalms, both the species into which Aristotle divides music; that is, the *plain* and *florid* (as the ancients in the *diverbia*) using in the Recitatives the first, which is so simple and unadorned, that it is sufficiently formed by the mere cadence of the verse; and in the second, the more ornate, which acquires the name of Melody in our Airs, as the ancient did in the *cantica*, *monodia*, *strophes*, *antristrophes*, and *epods*. This melody is formed (as you very well know) principally from *rhythm* or *numbers*, of which the metres are a part; but these metres do not constitute rhythm, if not arbitrarily varied and compounded by a combination of periodical measures, which are invented, with more or less felicity, by musical composers in proportion to their genius and abilities; hence arises that alluring and infinite variety in the Airs of different masters

to

to the ſame words, in the Subject, Movement, Style, Paſſages, or whatever you are pleaſed to call them. But the convenience which compoſers will find in ſetting your Pſalms to muſic, is manifeſt and endleſs; being now furniſhed with rhythmic poetry, inſtead of the mere accents of proſe, which they were obliged to ſeek and expand or contract into meaſure, for the ſake of their melody. I congratulate you on your ſucceſs in this enterprize, and myſelf, in finding that, without previous diſcuſſion, our opinions conſtantly coincide.

I cannot forgive you for unjuſtly calling your eloquent and learned letter, to the journaliſt of Modena, mere *babble*. Such injuſtice merits reparation, and of the ſame kind as that of Longinus, who having called the events of the Odyſſey of Homer mere dreams, immediately repents, and adds: but *they are the dreams of Jove*. If, however, I was diſpoſed to cenſure you, I ſhould perhaps ſay, that the occaſion did not merit ſuch pains. But every thing merits pains, when there is any one, who like you, can turn every ſubject to general inſtruction, as well as to the increaſe of his own fame. All your letters which I have found in the ſheets

which you have ſent me, are extremely worthy of the writer; but particularly, the elegant, reverential, and decorous Latin epiſtle, addreſſed to the *Servus ſervorum*. In ſhort, there is no literary province in which you are not a citizen.

But do not, my dear D. Saverio, imagine the ſame of me; for if I had not a ſmall place in Parnaſſus, I ſhould perhaps find a habitation no where elſe. What can I therefore ſay to you about the various eſſays on legiſlation, by yourſelf and others, with which you have ſo obligingly furniſhed me? It is true, that I diſcover facts in them, that have been mentioned in your works, and try to underſtand them; but I ſhall never have the courage to diſcover my opinion of them *. If a poet may be allowed to judge of the eloquence and hiſtorical part of a work, I ſhall ſay ſincerely, that I have read with infinite pleaſure, the life of the Marquis *Fragianni*, written with elegance, and judgment, and reduced in the moſt difficult form of a

* The late Dr. Johnſon, having been ſhewn a proof-ſheet of the *Diſſertation on the Muſic of the Ancients*, by the Editor of Metaſtaſio's Life and Letters, ſaid to him,— "Sir! the words are well arranged: but I do not underſtand one of them."

continued dedication to the learned and sage reports and cases in jurisprudence, of counsellor *Patrizj*. I should wish to this great and most worthy friend, the fame and fortune of his celebrated master Fragianni, if I did not already discover that the first is prepared, and that he is not far from the other: I shall therefore rather form wishes, as you are inferior to none in merit, and in the universal esteem which that merit has acquired you, that vanquishing every obstacle which envy may throw in your way, you may compel fortune to join in rewarding your virtue. Continue, in the mean time, to honour me with your regard, and to assure yourself, of the high estimation in which I hold your extensive knowledge, and wonderful talents; and that I shall be always, &c.

Vienna, January 15, 1774.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

I AM extremely obliged to you, my dear D. Saverio, for not suffering me to remain in ignorance, of your elegant and excellent poem on the birth of our Saviour. In its con-

tracted form, the rich mine from which it has been drawn is discoverable. Such masterly miniatures sometimes cost the more trouble, in proportion to the necessity of concealing it, in these poetic labours, more than in any other. I have communicated it to several persons. All applauded it, and I am flattered by the confirmation of my own opinion. I am told, that an edition of your Psalms, is already printing at Padua; see that this most happy Canzonetta is inserted in one of the volumes: as these short compositions are soon lost, when printed separately. I am impatient to see this Patavinian edition, of which I am told, and much more, the many corrections which you say you have made in those places, which did not satisfy your extreme fastidious taste, though so universally approved by others. The learned men of that seminary, make me hope that the edition will be extremely correct; and I wish it as much success as I do the magnificent edition of my own works, which is now preparing at Paris.

The cold, horrid, and obstinate winter, with which we are still struggling, is not at all favourable to my hypochondriac affections: the poor nerves suffer more than usual,

usual, and require a greater expence of patience than my capital can afford. However, there are people who bear petrifaction heroically; but the trade of a hero is a cursed trade.

I am extremely grateful for the valuable acquisition, which your golden writings have procured me, of so valiant, learned and celebrated a champion, as the Abate *Cesarotti*; whose vast knowledge, sublime genius, and wonderful activity, I have long admired, in every species of pleasing and profound literature. I am only sorry, that he has armed himself with my trifling works against our foreign foes; but the smallest twig in such hands, becomes as formidable a weapon as the club of Hercules. Adieu my dear friend. Take care of yourself, and believe me ever, &c.

Vienna, February 15, 1779.

Among Metastasio's literary correspondents, whom he never saw, or had heard of, till made acquainted with their existence by a present of their works, was the Abate MAZZA; who, in 1766, sent him two poetical essays, accompanied with a letter, which the

the imperial laureat acknowledged with his accuſtomed urbanity. Indeed though neither the writings, nor the name of this author ſeem to have penetrated into our country, the elegant and warm encomiums beſtowed on them, by ſo exquiſite a judge, deducting for mere civility and fear of offence, excite curioſity and an eager wiſh to be acquainted with them, "I have read the whole of your preſent," ſays he, in his firſt letter to this Abate, "and almoſt re-read, with the plea-
"ſure and admiration which productions ſo
"rich and elaborate deſerve. You have no
"occaſion for my vote, to be ſure of a diſ-
"inguiſhed place in Parnaſſus. Your own
"talents, learning, indefatigable application,
"and ſmiling time of life, render your elec-
"tion certain. What may we not expect from
"a ſoil, which produces ſuch exquiſite fruit,
"at a period when flowers can hardly be
"expected? I can ſee no obſtacle which can
"check your flight, but want of volition.
"Natural diſpoſition armed with ſuch vari-
"ous knowledge, wants only ſelf-confidence,
"to enable you to quit the tracts which have
"been ſo long beaten by others, and finally
"to ſeek in your own judgment the true
"paths to utility and delight.——You muſt
"not

"not expect that I ſhould ſpeak of your elo-
"quent and flattering letter, nor of the
"magnificent ſonnet which accompanies it.
"In ſpeaking of either, vanity would appear
"through the tranſparent maſk of humility."

In 1771, after praiſing in very ſtrong terms, ſome other poems which this author had ſent him, Metaſtaſio adds: "I congra-
"tulate you ſincerely on your ſucceſs in
"theſe productions; and from the ſmall por-
"tion of prophesy which I may claim as an
"old prieſt of Apollo, I venture to predict,
"that you will appear to poſterity, one of the
"brighteſt ornaments of the Italian Par-
"naſſus."

Again, the ſame year, he ſays to this young poet: "from the ſuperabundant re-
"turn of praiſe with which you honour me,
"in your laſt letter, I begin to fear that my
"approbation of your lyrical compoſitions
"has been regarded by you, more in the light
"of gratitude than juſtice; therefore to
"avoid every expreſſion that may be con-
"ſtrued into panegyric, I muſt tell you with
"hiſtoric ſimplicity, that you have wonder-
"fully united the lively flaſhes of genuine
"poetry, with the minute philoſophical
"analyſis of the eſſence and activity of that
"harmony

" harmony which is ſought in all the opera-
" tions of nature."

And finally, in 1773, he tells his poetical correſpondent, that he had repeatedly read " the three odes on the effects of muſic, the " hymn to the Creator, and the two ſonnets " to his ſovereign on the commencement of " the new year, and always with new plea-" ſure and admiration; and inſtantly diſ-" covered in the richneſs of the metal, the " mine that had produced it. To ſuch " poetic eloquence, always big with ideas, " always ſonorous, ſparkling, and equal to " yourſelf, it is not permitted for every inha-" bitant of Parnaſſus to aſpire"—but the bard " entreats him not to riſk the diſgrace of his " judgment, by exceſs of partiality to him-" ſelf, or provoke his readers to examine " his merit too minutely."

If a ſpecimen of Metaſtaſio's elegant and polite acknowledgment of unſolicited favours from new correſpondents was neceſſary, perhaps his firſt letter to the Marquis *Andreaſi* might be ſelected, as a model of its kind.

LET-

LETTER VI.

TO THE MARCHESE LODOVICO ANDREASI, OF MANTUA.

RETURNING home the other day, I found on my table an elegant casket, big with most valuable merchandise, and delivered without direction or letter. Upon enquiry, my servant told me, that as far as he could gather from the bearer, it was a present from the Marquis Andreasi: but he was unable to discover the name of the benevolent commissary, who had undertaken to have it delivered to me: and he therefore still remains incognito. This circumstance discovers the author. And who else would have thought of giving me such a sweet, and flattering testimony of his remembrance, which alone, without embellishment, is always sufficient to fulfil the measure of my ambition? For if this contrivance had no other merit in my eyes, than the having employed your thoughts on me, for a few minutes extraordinary, I should think myself in a particular manner indebted to it.

Now

Now you have ſo well ſweetened my exiſtence by your gifts, forget not to honour me with your commands, and give activity to the reſpect and gratitude with which I have the honour to be, &c.

Vienna, June 24, 1773.

We ſhall now return to his old confidential friend, Sig. Filipponi, ſecretary of the univerſity of Turin.

LETTER VII.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

THE prolix enumeration of the amiable and reſpectable qualities of this Count *Scarnaſigi* which you have detailed, my dear Filipponi, with ſuch ſeeming pleaſure in your laſt letter, is but a repetition of what I had long ſince learned from our friend Count *Montagnine*, who was perfectly acquainted with his merit, and flattered me with the hopes, of ſome time or other procuring me the honour of ſo valuable an acquaintance.

My

My ſelf-love does not riſe to ſuch a height, my dear friend, as to believe my private letters fit to ſee the light, having been written in haſte, and ſent away without ever being read by myſelf. The rapacity of printers, who make not the leaſt ſcruple of enriching themſelves at the expence of an author's reputation, have attempted, without my permiſion, in Naples, Florence, and Bologna, to publiſh a collection of them; but thank heaven, I was appriſed of their intention time enough to prevent their putting ſuch a deſign in execution, and ſhall continue to prevent them in future, to the utmoſt of my power.

The manifeſt inattention with which your royal preſs (at Turin) has publiſhed the tenth volume of my poems, does not make me wiſh to ſee an eleventh volume printed with equal negligence; you will therefore believe that I ſhall not be very diligent in collecting materials for it.

Vienna, May 2, 1774.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

As you had prepared me, my dear friend, for the arrival of the most worthy Count *Scarnafigi*, at this court, it is my duty to give you an account of his reception. This minister, in the few days which he has resided at Vienna, has already had the power of acquiring the approbation and esteem of the whole court, the ministry, and the nobles. I was early in paying my respects to him; he has repeatedly honoured me with visits, and we have already passed some evenings together, under my roof, in a small society to which I am accustomed. So that I have had the advantage of long conversations with him, and found him cultivated, obliging, full of various and uncommon information, and of a gay and graceful commerce, in which he has the faculty of pleasing, without the least tincture of diplomatic mystery or dignity hence, I venture, by virtue of my poetical privilege, to predict, that he will fulfil his commission with applause.

Hitherto

Hitherto he has lodged at a villa in the environs of Vienna; but he has taken a magnificent houſe in the city, where I ſhall make my court, when age and infirmities will allow me. He has frequently ſpoken of you with regard; and I can perceive, clearly, that he remembers you with affection. But let this ſuffice for the preſent, as it is all that my tumultuous hypochondriacs will allow me to write.

Vienna, Auguſt 18, 1774.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

You may trace and aſcertain, my dear Sig. Filipponi, an almoſt immemorable and uninterrupted poſſeſſion of my tender friendſhip, and are enabled to figure to yourſelf what conſolation I muſt receive from the aſſurances of your affection, and the emotions which your laſt moſt cordial letter muſt have occaſioned in my mind; I ſhall therefore not attempt to deſcribe them, nor ſolicit the continuance of your kindneſs, as neither of us has it in his power now to change his ſyſtem.

You are now in the midſt of the feſtivity of royal nuptials; and we have no reaſon to envy you, as we are likewiſe enjoying the preſence of his moſt ſerene highneſs the Archduke Ferdinand, and the charming Archducheſs his conſort, the Princeſs d'Eſte, who has endeared herſelf to all the inhabitants of this country, from the court to the cabin. The magnificent and numerous demonſtrations of joy, with which our court honours and adorns the preſence of theſe great and beloved gueſts, are truly imperial; but you will, however, far ſurpaſs us in the ſtrife of felicitation, as You will preſerve your acquiſitions, and We are not far off the painful moment of being bereaved of ours.

Adieu, my dear friend. Preſerve your health, and continue to believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, October 12, 1775.

This is the laſt letter that ſeems to have been preſerved, between theſe two old friends; though Sig. Filipponi lived, and ſeems to have continued the correſpondence, till the year 1779. The following letter of condolence to his ſon, is a melancholy record

of

of Metaſtaſio's affliction, on the deceaſe of a perſon for whom he ſeems to have had ſo cordial an attachment.

LETTER X.

TO SIG. LUIGI FILIPPONI,
Auditor of the Royal Chamber of Accounts to the King of Sardinia.

THE melancholy news of the deceaſe of your worthy father, my old and moſt cordial friend, Signor Tommaſo Filipponi, did not arrive without an ill-boding precurſor. The unuſual long parentheſes which he begun to make in our correſpondence, had already, for ſome time, occaſioned black ſuſpicions, concerning which I was afraid to enquire, leſt they ſhould be verified. From my own great and juſt affliction, I can comprehend what yours muſt be, wounded at once, in the two moſt ſenſible parts of the heart. But if I am not entitled to the ſame degree of pity as is due to you, diſdain not, at leaſt, to allow me to be no unworthy companion in your ſorrow, and in that affection which we have both had in common. Forgive involuntary

brevity, and believe me to be with the most sincere and respectful esteem, &c.

Vienna, March 17, 1779.

The following letters of this period, will shew how dexterously Metastasio eluded gratifying the vanity of authors, who sent him their works, in hopes of obtaining from his candour and politeness, some token of approbation, as a *certiorari*, in passing them through the world.

LETTER XI.

TO COUNT DANIEL FLORIO.

With whom Metastasio, (says the editor of his Letters) was in close friendship and correspondence.

It is unnecessary for me to inform you, Sir, of my internal and candid opinion concerning the admirable Pindaric ode, which, with affectionate partiality, you have been pleased to communicate to me. It neither is, nor can be, different from that which the productions of your cultivated and admirable genius have always exacted from me;

me; and which, to do honour to my own judgment, I am never tired of repeating at all times and in all places. To ſecond, by my obedience, your exceſſive modeſty, in a moſt attentive re-peruſal of this moſt neat and finiſhed compoſition, I have ſought, with almoſt malignant ſolicitude, for ſome little imperfection, which I might, with the leaſt appearance of reaſon, point out; but have not ſucceeded in finding one; on the contrary, in theſe reſearches, I am more and more convinced, that your poetic vigour is encreaſed, inſtead of diminiſhed, by years; and am confirmed in my former opinion, that whoever would be acquainted with the true enchanting language ſpoken in Helicon by Apollo and the Muſes, ſhould read your verſes. Theſe indiſputable truths I am proud to know, and anxious to publiſh: hence you may eaſily imagine what pleaſure it would afford me to ſeize the opportunity which you would give me of prefacing your incomparable poem, when printed, with a letter; but, for my great misfortune, I am totally unable to avail myſelf of this permiſſion. And here I ſhall relate to you the inſuperable obſtacle. Many years ago, it was

the cuſtom of a ſwarm of very obſcure inſects of our Italian Parnaſſus, imitating each other, to ſend me their works in manuſcript; and afterwards print them, prefixing, without my permiſſion, the letter, which in mere civility, I had written, in returning the MS. I did not fail to reſent this; but my letter only produced a formal requeſt, that my opinion (or rather eloge) might be printed with their works. I reflected, that if I had only obliged thoſe who deſerved it, the reſt would have been in a fury; and if I had indiſcriminately complied with every requeſt, I muſt have appeared either like the ambling nag of Silenus, or a moſt impudent and barefaced flatterer. Hence, I found it the ſafeſt way, to excuſe myſelf, modeſtly, to all. This law, which I neceſſarily impoſed on myſelf, is now become inviolable, from the juſt fear of offending thoſe to whom I owe reſpect, and with whoſe requeſts, for the reaſons juſt aſſigned, I was unable to comply. Pity me therefore, my dear Count, for my not being able to avail myſelf of ſo favourable an opportunity of doing honour to my judgment; and be not offended, if the *genus irritabile vatum* which impoſed ſilence

on

on Horace, ſhould terrify me. I thank you however, for the partiality which ſuggeſted the idea.

Vienna, April 15, 1775.

LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

AFTER a prolix reply to your laſt favour, comes another, with a magnificent Sonnet to my honour and glory. And what exceſs of poetic furor could have ſtimulated my dear Count, after more than forty years of affectionate friendſhip, to ſet about leading into the temptations of vanity, a poor follower of Apollo, who has already laid down the laurel and worn out lyre, and offer to him that precious incenſe which alone belongs to the luminous ſons of fortune? God forgive you! If I had not, for the reaſon aſſigned in my preceding letter, been deprived of the power of calling the muſes to my aſſiſtance, and was not buſily occupied in executing the orders of my ſovereigns, I ſhould perhaps have tried to revenge myſelf, by another Sonnet; but I am very glad of this legitimate excuſe, which ſkreens me

from the diſadvantage of a parallel, particularly with theſe ſhort arms, which I am unuſed to wield, &c.

LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

My poor *Nugæ canoræ* are unworthy of a place among the choice and learned volumes which you are collecting. However, if your fond partiality ſhould obſtinately determine on elevating them to ſo high a rank, wait at leaſt till they are adorned with their nuptial dreſs, which our intrepid editor is at preſent preparing for them at Paris; and who, if he fulfils his promiſe, will embelliſh them with eleven copperplates, exquiſitely engraved, of which he has already ſent me ſome proofs. This will be the neateſt edition which has hitherto appeared, and will, in ſome degree, be an excuſe for its admiſſion into your library, as the excellence of the frame may make ſome amends for the mediocrity of the picture.

Vienna, April 30, 1777.

The following lettter to a young author of ſome rank, in ſociety at leaſt, if not among

among poets, ſeems worth inſertion, not only for the elegance and politeneſs of our author's compliments, but for the judgment and good taſte with which he gives him his advice.

LETTER XIV.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY DON CLEMENTE FILOMARINO.

A YOUNG gentleman in the firſt flower of adoleſcence, to have mounted already ſo high in Parnaſſus, is a phenomenon, no leſs rare, than important. The valuable ſpecimens which you have ſent me, are ſufficient to manifeſt the uncommon fertility of your genius, the wonderful perſeverance of your application, the vigour with which you invent and think, and, above all, your natural propenſity to a noble clearneſs and perſpicuity, which has not yet been ſeduced and contaminated by that obſcure ſtyle which has ſtrangely reigned, for ſome years, in many parts of Italy; where, deſpiſing the favour of the people, that is, of the moſt certain guarantees of immortality, and affecting profundity of wiſdom and ſcience, writers are loſt in the dark clouds of the confuſed oracles of

Delphos: their ſtyle has not eſcaped the maſterly whip of our great Venoſinian bard, in his *Ars Poetica.*

Et tulit eloquium inſolitum facundia præceps :
Utiliumque ſagax rerum, & divina futuri
Sortilegis non diſcrepuit ſententia Delphis.

Thus poetry precipitately flow'd,
And with unwonted elocution glow'd;
Pour'd forth prophetic truths in awful ſtrain,
Dark as the language of the Delphic fane.

FRANÇIS.

Confide, therefore, in your natural good ſenſe; remember always, that the firſt duty of a writer, is to make himſelf intelligible; that the moſt difficult art of being clear, without ſinking into meanneſs, is much more generally taſted, than the begging dignity from darkneſs; and I'll engage all my little credit, as an old Deacon of Apollo, to ſecure to you a moſt diſtinguiſhed place among the celebrated names of the elect Italian poetical band.

The partial expreſſions with which you honour me, are extremely flattering; and I ſhall not enter upon demonſtrating their exceſs, leſt I ſhould bring on myſelf new temptations of vanity from the ſame quarter.

Vienna April 6, 1775.

The

The ſubſequent letter to the ingenious and eloquent Ex-Jeſuit, EXIMENO, will probably gratify the lovers of muſical hiſtory. This bold writer on Muſic, publiſhed at Rome, in 1774, a treatiſe in quarto, *On the Origin and Rules of Muſic, with the Hiſtory of its progreſs, declenſion, and renovation**. In the preface to this treatiſe, the author modeſtly confeſſes, that by a combination of circumſtances too long to relate, he *chanced* "*four years ago*, to give a glance at muſic." And during that ſhort period, he not only made himſelf maſter of the art, but diſcovered great defects, both in its practice and theory. He propoſes in his diſſertation, nothing leſs than a total *diſorganization* of the preſent ſyſtem of counterpoint, which if adopted, would probably contribute about as much to the melioration of muſic, as the revolution in the government of France has contributed to the happineſs of its inhabitants. He ſhews no mercy to the ancient maſters of harmony, and as little to the moderns, who adhere to the old *regime*. This author, a ſcholar, mathematician, and man of taſte

* *Dell' origine e delle regole della muſica, colla ſtoria del ſuo progreſſo, decadenza, e rinnovazione.* Opera di D. ANTONIO EXIMENO.

and

and learning in general literature, writes with fire and eloquence, on ſubjects within his competence; but after trying to *pull down* all the ancient temples to Apollo, the buildings he propoſes to erect in their ſtead, were ſo defective in deſign and execution, that, they crumbled to pieces before they were finiſhed; nor do his plans ſeem to have been adopted by any man of genius or ſcience, in order to propagate his doctrines.

In 1775, this muſical Reformer attacked *Padre Martini*, the moſt learned Contrapuntiſt of the preſent century, in a work entitled, *Doubts concerning his Eſſay on the fundamental Practice of Counterpoint* *. And if he had confined his cenſures to the too great partiality and attachment of this good father, to the ancient method of building all eccleſiaſtical harmony upon *Canto fermo*, he would probably have formed a powerful ſect; but, extending his hoſtilities to the works of all the fathers of harmony, and to the ancient fundamental principles of the art, his opinions ſeem to have been no more

* *Dubbio di D.* ANTONIO EXIMENO *ſopra il ſaggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto del reverendiſſimo Padre Maeſtro* GIAMBATTISTA MARTINI. In Roma, l'anno del Giubileo, MDCCLXXV. 4to.

reſpected

respected at Rome, or in any part of Italy, on the subject of music, than those of Luther or Calvin, concerning religion.

It not only appears from the following letter, but from other letters of Metastasio, that Signor *Eximeno* had projected a scheme for printing this poet's operas, with the original music in score, which had been set to them by the great masters of Italy, when they were first performed. To have assisted him in the execution of this plan, and others which he had in meditation, would have occupied too much of the Imperial Laureat's leisure at his late time of life; nor does it seem likely, that at an earlier period, he would have involved himself in labours of such a kind, with a man so decisive, and of such difficult commerce, as D. *Eximeno.*

LETTER XV.

TO SIGNOR D. ANTONIO EXIMENO.

INDOLENCE (which at my time of life, is but too legitimate an excuse) has not been the only cause of my tardiness in answering your judicious, learned, and affectionate letter of last June: a letter which alone is suf-

ficient

ficient to convince me of the vaſt extent of your talents, the value of the ample treaſure with which your amazing indefatigable application has enriched your mind, the *ſapience* of Horace, that is, the correct judgment which reigns in all you think and write, a faculty which has at all times been uncommon, even among the greateſt writers, and above all, the debt of gratitude for the exact correſpondence of ideas which loads me with ſuch viſibly exceſſive, or rather affectionate partiality, as that with which you honour me and my writings: But a wiſh (not a command) of my auguſt Patroneſs, that I would write ſome verſes upon her delightful Imperial reſidence at *Schonbrunn*, has obliged me to run unexpectedly to Parnaſſus, and bring thence in haſte, a tribute of the few flowers that I have been able to gather in the humble bourns, beyond which I am forbidden to aſcend. It certainly was not the merit of my homage, but my prompt obedience which procured in writing, in ſpeech, and in Imperial munificence, ſuch marks of favour from my generous ſovereign, and ſo ſuperior to my hopes, that I cannot yet recover from my confuſion: and theſe, with the addition of attending the preſs in print-

ing this late fruit of my exhausted soil, have, till now, entirely absorbed all my activity, which has ever been circumscribed, but at present becomes more and more limited than ever.

After this justification, let me, in the first place, thank you for the favour which you have done me in describing the darkness in which you were involved, in seeking for the true and solid principles of music: since the example of such enquirers as you, diminishes my own mortification in similar attempts, which I soon abandoned, in despair.

The immense, and extremely expensive, enterprize, which you have in meditation, of publishing a new edition of my dramas, with their most favourite music, and with such inevitably copious observations as you will be obliged to give in defence of your opinions, oppress my imagination, which represents to me the enormous fatigue, the excessive expence, the little hope of your indemnification by the number of purchasers, and still more, with the painful reflection, that I shall be utterly incapable of assisting you, as an able amanuensis in this laborious undertaking, the diminution of my physical

force

force not permitting me to pay with punctuality, or even with ſhort anſwers, my debts to all thoſe who honour me with their letters.

My works, however, would be in want of but too much correction; but how could I plunge into ſuch a ſea of trouble? I have already tired the public with too many of my gingling trifles; and, beſides the vigour and patience which would be wanting to go over them again, I ſhould have to combat my vicious temperament, which inclines me always to doubt of myſelf, and not merely from exceſs of modeſty, but from inſatiable ſelf love, which frequently makes me reject what is good, to run after what is perfect; by which means I run the riſk of chooſing at laſt ſomething ſtill worſe than the firſt.

Add to all this, that the appearing in print has always impreſſed and ſtill impreſſes me with ſuch reſpect, that without abſolute neceſſity, I ſhould never have had the courage to riſk its effects. I ſhall here give you a proof of this diffidence. Many years ago, I undertook and compleated an extract from the Poetics of Ariſtotle, in which, chapter by chapter, I confeſſed what I was able to underſtand, and what remained ſtill obſcure to me,

me, in ſpite of the diligence and ſagacity of the moſt illuſtrious commentators; I tried to acquire a more clear idea of the nature of *Poetry*, *Imitation*, and *Probability*. By examining the Greek and Roman dramas, I have demonſtrated the falſe foundation of ſome of the rules laid down by modern critics; and have pointed out the authority which the text gave me, of laying down certain axioms, which the practice of more than fifty years has ſhewn to be erroneous. Even before I had made this extract, I had tranſlated into blank verſe an exact verſion of Horace's Art of Poetry, with the moſt ſcrupulous fidelity, illuſtrated with notes, that were neither common nor pedantic, but neceſſary; and yet theſe two labours, terminated long ſince, notwithſtanding the ſolicitations of my friends, ſleep quietly in my port-folio; and there they will remain undiſturbed: as I cannot poſſibly muſter courage ſufficient to publiſh them. With this diſpoſition of mind, you may eaſily imagine, Sir, what agitation your affectionate and partial propoſition of employing your pen in writing my life muſt have occaſioned. Drive from your thoughts, I entreat you, my dear D. Antonio, ſuch wicked temptations, if you would not ex-

ceſſively afflict me by your too great deſire of doing me honour. It is a perilous generoſity to be prodigal of incenſe ſo ſweet to ſuch as me: it would excite nothing but envy, diſputes, and malignity, among partizans; but ſtill if by means of your enchanting eloquence, it were to ſucceed to your wiſhes, in obliging the whole world to be of your opinion, and you ſhould lift me up to the ſkies, I muſt confeſs (call it weakneſs or reaſon, as you pleaſe) I do not feel myſelf inclined to be a living ſpectator of my Apotheoſis. With the ſame ſincerity as I confeſs my infirmity, permit me to acknowledge my infinite gratitude and true ſenſe of your partiality towards me, which I regard as a moſt valuable acquiſition. But how would it be poſſible for Me to inform you of the Beſt Muſic that has been ſet to my operas, having ſcarcely heard of any but what has been performed in the theatre of the Imperial Court? and of this, the chief part has been ſet by the celebrated *Caldara*, an eminent contrapuntiſt, but extremely deficient in expreſſion, and pleaſing melody.

The moſt painful effect of my inability, would be the diminution of your eſteem: but you are too juſt to regard as crimes mere

involuntary

involuntary defects: with this hope I shall therefore entreat you to believe me to be, with the highest regard, &c.

P. S. I am impatient to free my conscience from the weight of a great number of correspondents, who have long been unavoidably neglected, for the reasons specified in the former part of my letter, in order to acquire leisure sufficient to enjoy the delight and profit which I expect from the perusal of the books which you have sent me: but in the mean time, let me gratefully thank you for the precious and obliging gifts.

Vienna, August 22, 1776.

In this dexterous manner did Metastasio extricate himself from the wild and unreasonable project proposed to him by *D. Ant. Eximeno*, and it should seem, from giving an opinion of his Treatise, and attack of P. Martini; for we hear no more of either.

The Bard had another Roman correspondent on his hands about this time, who wished to inlist him in a service for which he seems at all times to have had an invincible repugnance. His fear of giving offence, and love of tranquillity, made him decline polemics

 and

and comparative criticiſm, not only with reſpect to the works of living authors, but even of thoſe who had been dead more than 2000 years. But let him ſpeak for himſelf.

LETTER XVI.

TO THE ABATE * * *, AT ROME.

THE affectionate partiality with which I am honoured, by a perſon of your uncommon merit, would oblige me, in return for ſuch goodneſs, to be more punctual in my anſwers, and more diffuſe in my expreſſions of gratitude, did not the precarious ſtate of my health, and the ravages of time, which conſpire day by day to diminiſh my vigour and activity, deprive me of the pleaſure of correſponding with thoſe whom I moſt love and eſteem, and who have deigned to think me worthy of their regard. From this ingenuous confeſſion, you may eaſily comprehend whether I can be in a ſtate capable of executing your commands, in giving my ſentiments on the Works of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*: an enterpriſe very unfit for me to undertake, who am by nature averſe, even

to

to a vice, to the drawing parallels, which are generally odious, and subject to the insults of critics and disputants. I shall therefore confine myself to the telling you, laconically, that I regard these two illustrious Greek poets, as two artists equally excellent: that *Sophocles* is skilfully majestic; *Euripides* more simple and tender: that the first is full of luminous ideas, and the second of affections more true, and natural; and that both equally astonish, by the conduct of the principal action, by the exact delineation of characters, and by that most difficult power of modelling, and chiseling from the life, the passions of the human heart. But I communicate my opinion to you in mere confidence; nor will you think it merits publication, if you have any regard for my credit; therefore, begging you to spare my blushes, I remain, &c.

Vienna, June 16, 1775

The following letter to the same anonymous Abate, who had written a dissertation on *Modern Music*, a music which Metastasio seems to have censured with great severity,

will disclose to the reader the poet's ideas on the same subject.

LETTER XVII.

TO THE ABATE * * *, AT ROME.

If I was not occupied and fatigued with my present employment, and rapidly declining and tottering under the weight of years, I should not neglect a correspondence so valuable as yours, from which I am certain of deriving such great advantages; being well convinced by your obliging letters, with what rich and rare merchandize your storehouse is furnished. I congratulate you on the acquisition of such inestimable treasures, and wonder how it has been possible for you to unite with the noisy occupations of the Forum the elegant amusements of Helicon; and that, in spite of Themis, you are able to enjoy such delightful pastime with the muses.

I have, at length, had the pleasure of reading your dissertation on *Modern Music*, and assure you that you have greatly surpassed my expectations. But above all, I have been surprised at the arrangement of the materials, the

the neatneſs and elegance of the ſtyle, the ingenious texture of the arguments, and in ſhort, at the artful and maſterly manner in which you have thrown lights on the moſt remote and dark antiquity. To theſe incomparable excellencies of profound learning, muſt alſo be added, your initiation into the myſteries of harmony, which ſeems very conſiderable, and gives great force, luſtre, and weight to your opinions. With reſpect to the intrinſic excellence of Modern Muſic, I am of your opinion; and agree with you, that its effects are few and feeble, compared with thoſe which Plato aſcribes to the ancient. In fact, our muſic * enervates the mind, being ſo extremely artificial and refined, that it is impoſſible to trace through it, either probability or natural expreſſion; and yet, from inſuperable habit, it is become the reigning model of almoſt all the muſic of every nation; as men judge more by their ears than by reaſon †. By diviſions and artful modulations of voice, and by the union of ſo great a number of different inſtruments, the ſenſe

* The Italian.

† Muſic is more the object of ſenſe than intellect; its uſe is to pleaſe the ear, not to improve the underſtanding. It has been ſaid, that muſic can awaken and excite ſenſations, but cannot reaſon.

is flattered and tickled to ſuch a degree, that it remains enfeebled, and almoſt bewitched, by thoſe long and rapid trills, which, though they reſemble ſo much the warbling of birds, pleaſe us much leſs, becauſe leſs natural. The pleaſure of converſing with you, drags me on inſenſibly; and pleaſed with this tranſport, I flatter myſelf with the hopes of your affectionate forgiveneſs.

Vienna, September 8, 1776.

Metaſtaſio, late in life, readily joined in the almoſt general complaint againſt rapid and difficult execution in muſic; and yet, at other periods, he was partial to a Farinelli and a Gabrielli, whoſe chief excellence was *execution*. The extraordinary talents, perhaps, of theſe ſingers greatly encreaſed the celebrity of his dramas; but when that was firmly eſtabliſhed, it was natural for him to wiſh to ſimplify muſic, and render its powers inferior to thoſe of poetry. Indeed there never was perhaps a lyric poet who did not *liſten* with an *evil ear* to the rapturous applauſe given to a ſinger in performing an air, of which, according to the late Mr. Stillingfleet,

fleet, nobody would think of reading the words, but the author *.

We ſhall now return to Farinelli, in the correſpondence with whom there is a *hiatus valde deflendus*, from 1769 to 1776, which has not been accounted for by the editor of his letters. In 1770, when I ſaw Farinelli at Bologna, and frequently mentioned Metaſtaſio in our converſations, he ſpoke of him as his beloved *Gemello*, ſhewed me his picture, and, in 1772, Metaſtaſio ſpoke of Farinelli with reciprocal kindneſs: ſo that there ſeems to have been no breach of friendſhip, coolneſs, or diminution of affection, on either ſide, during the chaſm in Metaſtaſio's printed correſpondence; and the accident which occaſioned it remains yet to be diſcovered.

LETTER XVIII.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

My poor abortion of an ode to *Schonbrunn*, is really born under the favourable

* Principles and power of muſic.

influence

influence of all the planets *. The approbation which it meets with, to the wonder and confusion of the author himself, is certainly not merited by its intrinsic worth. That it should appear marvellous to my dear Gemello, long blinded and seduced by his old tender affection, now transformed into nature, is a phænomenon not difficult to explain; but I am at a loss to discover how he has been able to communicate his partialities to their severe and enlightened eminencies, to such a degree as to incline them to honour me with their benevolence and approbation. It now becomes your task to endeavour to preserve the advantages which you have procured me, by representing to them, with your enchanting voice, my grateful, humble, and respectful sentiments to the Cardinals *Borromeo* and *Buoncompagni*; assuring the first, that I have always present in my mind his venerated person, with all the train of great qualities by which it is distinguished; and affirm to the second, that notwithstanding the vicissitudes which occasioned my

* This ode, of which the author speaks in several letters to different persons, did not appear in any of the printed copies of his works which I have seen, during his life. It consists of twenty-six stanzas, six lines in each.

quitting

quitting my country before he had become a citizen of the world, I am not ignorant how much he has honoured it, and how much his laudable actions, and amiable manners have encreaſed the luſtre and ſplendour to which he was born.

It is ſome conſolation to me, that your familiar complaints have had the diſcretion to ſubſide, for a little while; mine are conſtant; but I dare not complain: at my age, I have no right to complain: murmuring would but irritate my infirmities, and render exiſtence more painful. We have here, as well as you at Bologna, all the amuſements of the Carnival: operas, plays, Italian and German, public and private balls, feſtivity, banquets, and vigils, without end; but all theſe cannot produce, in this tranquil nation, that epidemic hilarity, which in our gay climate is transfuſed into all characters, not only thoſe that ſeek it not, but forcing itſelf even upon thoſe who wiſh to avoid it. And at preſent, ſuch as I are well off if they can defend themſelves from the horrible third winter, which, like the liver of Prometheus, re-produces itſelf: and it is certain, that without the valid patronage of our beneficent ſtoves, we ſhould at preſent be in the ſtate

of

of thoſe preſervations which you have certainly heard of, in the mountains of *La Mancha*, or the *Sierra Morena*, I forget which, that, without ſalting, become incorruptible when buried under a deep ſnow. But you have ſet me a ſcribbling, though the nerves of my head proteſt againſt it. Adieu, dear Gemello. I do not put you in mind of loving me, as, after ſo many proofs, it would be a ſpecies of ingratitude to imagine there was any occaſion for it: but by taking care of your health, you will give the beſt proof of it, to your moſt conſtant friend.

Vienna, February 9, 1776.

LETTER XIX.

TO THE SAME.

It is not to preſent you with the inſipid fruit of my exhauſted ſoil; but to fulfil the inviolable right of our twinſhip, that I ſend you a copy of my ode to *Schonbrunn*, which is juſt come from the preſs, in order that you may have the diſtinction of being firſt puniſhed, in ſome way or other, for the want of merit, which but too eaſily will be found in my production. I did not accompany my

poor

poor preſent with a letter, becauſe I muſt have done the ſame to other perſons to whom I owe reſpect and gratitude; and the time it would have required, would have robbed me of the merit of ſolicitude. The more than exceſſive clemency, which my moſt auguſt ſovereign has publicly expreſſed, in ſpeaking, writing, and acts of generous munificence, has filled me with ſuch joy and confuſion, that I was a long time incapable of thinking of it with any degree of compoſure. Be not offended therefore, my dear Gemello, with my innocent ſilence; you ought, indeed, the more readily to forgive me, as the ſame thing would have happened to your own heart, in ſimilar circumſtances.

I honeſtly diſburſed to our friend *Poggi*, the affectionate compliments which you remitted, and he is to reimburſe you, on account, when he ſhall again ſee the aſs's tower *. In the mean time, do you pay on my account two hundred kind remembrances, accompanied with innumerable proteſtations of eſteem and affection, to my

* *La Torre degli Aſinelli.* A celebrated tower at Bologna, three hundred and ſixty feet high. This city, at a diſtance, has been compared to a ſhip, of which the tower *degli Aſinelli* ſeems the maſt.

dear

dear and worthy Abate *Taruffi*, who is ever present to my thoughts; wishing him the indemnifications of fortune, who, at present, makes a shameless parade of her hostilities to merit. My health is not what I wish it; but it is better than I have a right to expect: so that I dare not complain. Preserve your own carefully, and sail through the alternate good and bad vicissitudes of life, guided by that sound philosophy with which nature has liberally furnished you, and continue to be always as much mine as I am yours.

Vienna, September 30, 1776.

LETTER XX.

TO THE SAME.

HERE comes another most cordial letter from my beloved Gemello, who, through excess of affection, repeats the approbation which he had profusely given in a former letter, to my few verses on the delights of *Schonbrunn*; verses which have no other merit than what is reflected on them, from the general favour and veneration which the public bestows on every thing that concerns my admirable Sovereign; and this repetition affords

affords me infinite comfort, not merited by the ſound of my diſcordant lyre, but as an indiſputable teſtimony of your affection, of which, though I am already convinced by a thouſand proofs, new confirmations are always received with delight. The thought of honouring my dear Gemello with a viſit, is worthy of the generous heart of her Royal Highneſs the Dutcheſs of Parma, the illuſtrious protectreſs of the fine arts; who is not only an exquiſite judge of the abilities of artiſts, but appreciates their probity, candour, and ſpotleſs morals; rare merchandize, and not always ſufficiently valued. I can never forget her performing the part of Apollo, by which, with her enchanting voice and angelic figure, ſhe rendered one of my feeble dramatic compoſitions, written by order of my moſt auguſt Patroneſs, admirable and ſublime, and lifted me up to a degree of happineſs, of which I ſhall ever be proud.

The benign graciouſneſs with which I have been remembered by her Royal Highneſs, at once comforts and confounds me, in the generous manner with which ſhe has deigned to ſignify it repeatedly, to the Venetian Ambaſſador, Count *Durazzo*, and to my dear Gemello: and from the ſituation of your

own

own heart on ſimilar unexpected occaſions, you may perfectly imagine what muſt be the emotions of mine.

Adieu, my dear Gemello, I ſhould write a longer letter, if my conſtant hypochondriac affections, rendered more troubleſome and perverſe by the cold, would let me; but in ſpite of all my defects and infirmities, continue to love me.

Vienna, November 13, 1776.

The next letter to Farinelli, dated March 13, 1777, contains little more than thanks for a preſent of various things ſent in a cheſt, which was not yet arrived; and elegant compliments and grateful effuſions to Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, for his partiality towards him, and expreſſions of gratitude to a Bologneſe phyſician, who had enriched his diſpenſary with a preſcription in pure love of poetry. He finiſhes this letter in the following manner: "I ſhall not ſpeak to you of my incorruptible complaints, which I pretend not to deſtroy, and ſhall forgive all the plague they occaſion, provided they do not ſurpaſs my patience."

The

The *flottiglia*, as he calls the cheſt, being arrived, he writes as follows:

LETTER XXI.

TO FARINELLI.

THE day before yeſterday, the 20th inſt. I was informed of the arrival at the cuſtom houſe, of the cheſt, which you had ſent me; and yeſterday morning, I received, and had it opened in my preſence, and found it full of moſt powerful temptations of every kind. The firſt thing I thought of, was to ſeek and taſte the ſimnel*, choſen by you as a treat for my favourite gueſts. I believe this is the moſt delicate ſimnel that ever came out of the exquiſite ſhop of Parthenope. Oh my poor temperance! thou art in the moſt imminent danger. And how can ſuch aſſaults be reſiſted? Theſe famous myrtles too! Theſe little boxes compoſed and ornamented

* *Moſtacciuolo*, is a cake made at Naples, of flour, ſugar, eggs, and ſweet wine, very different from a Shrewſbury ſimnel, which is a rich plum-cake incloſed in an impenetrable caſe, or cruſt made of flour and water, and coloured with ſaffron, which preſerves it from injury and decay in the longeſt voyages to the moſt remote parts of the globe.

for the table of Jove! Thoſe excellent iced-quinces, with which the maiden care of the genteel inhabitants of the monaſtery of Saint Lorenzo, diſdains not to flatter the palates of others; and that inundation of odours, piquant and exquiſite *liqueurs*, with which you ſcruple not to raiſe a tumult in the too ſenſible nerves of your poor Gemello's head! But the moſt violent ſeduction of all, and that which occaſions the greateſt agitation in my mind, is reflecting upon the kind manner in which you muſt have been for ſome time employed in the ſervice of your Gemello, while chuſing, ordering, and collecting together, ſuch a combination of various, exquiſite, and precious merchandiſe. Accept my moſt hearty and affectionate thanks: but that I may not abuſe your kindneſs to the injury of my health, and that theſe teſtimonies of your love, may be of long duration, they ſhall be enjoyed with the moſt prudent parſimony.

I received ſome weeks ago, an obliging letter from Signora *Giacinta Betti Onofrio:* a lady who voluntarily, a few years ago, began to honour me with her letters, by which alone ſhe is known to me. I anſwered them; and as ſhe ſaluted me in your name,

name, I charged her with my kindeſt compliments to you in return; pray tell me, at your convenience, whether ſhe executed my commiſſion. Adieu, my deareſt Charles. My head rebels, and has been for ſome weeks more troubleſome than uſual: but in ſpite of it, I have been, am at preſent, and ever ſhall be, while I exiſt, yours.

Vienna, March 22d, 1777.

LETTER XXII.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR moſt kind anſwer of the 8th inſt. permits me not, my dear Gemello, to remain in that ſilence which my renewed hypochondriac complaints but too juſtly authorize; as, contrary to expectation, the return of winter has driven us back again to the protection of our ſtoves, which we had abandoned. The peruſal of your letter has been more efficacious in calming my gloomy humours, than all the antidotes of philoſophy, which promiſe ſo much, and perform ſo little. I have diſcovered how precious to me, are the choice and exquiſite dainties with which you have enriched me, by that ava-

ricious repugnance which I felt in diſtributing any part of them, even to perſons to whom I owe the moſt ſincere gratitude: but the pain which the ſacrifice occaſioned, has been recompenſed by the great pleaſure which the approbation of my friends has occaſioned, and by the renewal of the juſt praiſes beſtowed on the qualities of my dear Gemello, of which, to my great delight, I find the whole world well informed.

I am confuſed, and proud of the partial benignity with which the moſt venerated Cardinal *Buoncompagni* regards me. And as you are juridically authoriſed to procure me its continuance, with the opportune and repeated proteſtations of my grateful, dutiful, and profound reſpect, I here ſolemnly declare you, in this moſt important negotiation, my procurator, or rather, my ALTER EGO. Adieu, dearest Gemello, preſerve yourſelf carefully, if you would contribute to the preſervation of your, &c.

Vienna, April 21, 1777.

LET-

LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

If you, my dear Gemello, find yourself involved in the difficulties of the *Plagal tones*, I am not among the *Authentic* *. The last winter assailed me with rheumatism, tension of nerves, implacable hypochondria, and other gentilities: from which the present benign season promises to deliver me, though with less promptitude than I should wish, But according to the ancient proverb, we should suffer under the auspices of constant resignation; *hoping for good, and tolerating evil,*——

I thank you for the important personage which you made me represent in the consistory held by the three worthy Cardinals in your house: and when, and where, either in speech or writing, it is in your power, I beg you will not neglect presenting to them my grateful and profound respects.

An intrepid editor at Paris, has undertaken a magnificent and expensive edition of all my

* Alluding to the ecclesiastical tones of Canto fermo, an for account of which, see History of Music, vol. II. p. 13.

works; and in informing me of his design, has transmitted to me proofs of eleven of the plates, already excellently engraved: and if the rest correspond with these, the cornice will be much more rich and elegant than the building. I shall in due time inform you of the further progress of this enterprize.

Notwithstanding my having called for assistance in devouring the dainties with which your seducing *Flottiglia* has enriched my store-room, I have not yet come to the bottom of my stores: so that I still continue, and shall, the Lord knows how much longer, to masticate your favours, and mentally to embrace the amiable donor. Adieu, incomparable Gemello.

Vienna, June 21, 1777.

LETTER XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

HAVING read with the highest satisfaction, some weeks ago, in letters from Rome, that his Eminence Cardinal *Buoncompagni* was preparing to return to Bologna, I rejoiced extremely at the thoughts of your happiness, and wished instantly to congratulate you

upon

upon it; but my abominable hypochondriac, or rather hyſterical affections, were in ſuch a tumult, that I durſt not touch the pen. At preſent, as you have confirmed this pleaſing news in your letter of the 25th of July, which is but juſt received, I fly with my whole mind to Bologna, to embrace and felicitate you, and to participate of your unexpected happineſs, in ſpite of the obſtinate perſecutions of my various maladies. Do you be my eloquent delegate with this moſt worthy Cardinal, and contrive to convince him of my veneration, gratitude, and reſpect.

What can I ſay to the unſolicited generous partiality of that moſt worthy Marchioneſs *Pepoli Spada*, in favour of my poor ſilly rhymes? The picture which you have drawn of her, with the enumeration of her rare qualities and accompliſhments, render me proud of the acquiſition of ſuch a protectreſs, and I ſhould be much more ſo if I did not believe her deluded by your *twinly* ſeduction. I envy extremely the fate of that volume of my writings, which the *Abate Pignatelli* has exalted to the dignity of his companion: and am only ſorry that he will not be better rewarded for the trouble of taking it with him. Expreſs to both my gratitude; you, who are not incommoded

with my confusion, may do it much better than me.

I expect soon to receive the Paris editor's proposals; and shall inform you, the instant they arrive, of the plan and conditions of this vast enterprize. He wrote me word some time ago, that he should associate partners, and take in subscriptions; not for advancing money, but to ascertain the number of copies which he may venture to work off. Nothing is to be disbursed till the work comes out, which will be delivered by a volume or two at a time.

Speak not to me, my dear Gemello, of another *flottiglia*: I cannot get to the end of the first; think therefore whether I can allow you to send a second. Besides, more virtue than I possess, is necessary to prevent intemperance in the use of your kindness: and you, my dear Gemello, should be more solicitous for my health, than sensual pleasure.

Adieu, dear Gemello: preserve in yourself a rare model of amiable, honest, generous, and prudent men, in the midst of such scarcity; be assured that I perfectly know you, and therefore can never cease to be truly yours.

Vienna, August 12, 1777.

LET-

LETTER XXV.

TO THE SAME.

THE ſteady and neat writing of your laſt dear letter of the 15th inſtant, the chearful humour which reigns in it, and the gay ſympoſiacs which you deſcribe, if they do not entirely make me amends, my dear Gemello, for my affliction at the news of the cruel and violent hurricane which your health has lately ſuffered; I at leaſt hope that this unexpected attack which you ſo valiantly repelled, was inferior to your remaining vigour: and that it has made no impreſſions on your machine, which can diſturb its equilibrium. I congratulate you on this circumſtance, though I do not wiſh you, however, to have frequent occaſions for ſuch congratulation.

You ſhall be obeyed in due time, with reſpect to the copies which you wiſh of the new Paris edition; but the propoſals not being yet arrived, I am unable to anſwer your queries.

I am truly ſenſible of the zeal which his Eminence Cardinal Buoncompagni expreſſes

for

for corrections in the Paris edition; but it is difficult to promiſe them all, as the editions whence this will be printed, are ſo numerous. I certainly ſhall not fail to recommend the meaſures he wiſhes to have purſued: and in the mean time, plume myſelf in having my poor labours honoured with the attention of ſo great a Patron. Preſent to him, I entreat you, my gratitude and veneration. Aſſure the moſt obliging Marchioneſs *Spada*, and the Abate *Pignatelli*, of my gratitude, and that they ſhall be informed of the method of becoming ſubſcribers to the new edition, as well as of the time for paying their money, and receiving their books, as ſoon as I ſhall know it myſelf; but of which, at preſent, I am wholly ignorant.

Our honoured friend, Signor *Poggi*, has been very long in paying you the fraternal embraces which I conſigned to his care; but the pleaſure which you expreſs in receiving them, will not allow me to complain of this delay.

Adieu, dear Gemello: take care of yourſelf for your own ſake, as well as mine, for the reaſons given warm from my heart in my laſt letter; and which you, from gratitude and innate goodneſs, repay me with

intereſt.

intereſt. I am pleaſed with your panegyrical expreſſions, as proceeding from that affectionate ſhort-ſightedneſs, which makes you mine, and me yours.

Vienna, September 29, 1777.

LETTER XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

THE hilarity of your dear letter, of the 20th of October, which, I know not for what reaſon, only arrived yeſterday, has given me more than uſual pleaſure. If this ſerenity is a phyſical conſequence of the good ſtate of your health, I congratulate you on the ſolidity of your little frame; and if it is the fruit of your philoſophical meditation, I admire the vigour of your mind. My thoughts have not been inactive concerning you, during my ſilence: I have always been thinking of my Gemello, even during an indiſcreet attack of eryſipolas in my left foot, which has confined me to the houſe four entire weeks: and yet I owe it no ill-will, as it has left me in a better ſtate than it found me. We are here up to the chin in froſt and ſnow; but grown callous, by the frequency

frequency of ſuch favours, we pay little regard to them.

Yet the Teutonic winter will certainly be revenged for our preſent contempt, by ſome inſupportably cold weather; but we flatter ourſelves that it will not be of long duration, and in the mean time, are preparing for our defence. I envy your vicinity to the venerated Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, the worthy Marchioneſs *Spada*, and the moſt accompliſhed Abate *Pignatelli*: to all whom I beg of you to preſent my grateful and ſincere reſpects.

The printer, *Reggiano*, pledges himſelf for what I cannot poſſibly give; having repeatedly promiſed, long ſince, all my inedited works to the publiſher of the Paris edition. He had better wait for the French preſs, and copy into his edition all that is new in it: but then thoſe pieces will not be inedited. It would be great pity if the whole impreſſion, as you ſeem to fear, ſhould remain on his hands. The public would be robbed of the numerous inſtructions concerning the dramatic art, which, in this edition, would ornament my poor poetical follies. Adieu, dear Gemello, forget not to believe me, &c. &c.

P. S.

P. S. Upon a more accurate perusal of your letter, I find it dated the 10th of December, and not October. Therefore, it is but just to exculpate the post.

Vienna, December 30, 1777.

LETTER XXVII.

TO THE SAME.

After a most beautiful Spring, during the first thirteen days of the present month, that had rendered this country warm and smiling; the treacherous winter is returned, and has mortified the fields and plants which had put on their green and flowery dress: so that your dear letter found me again muffled up in the furs and flannels which I had but just laid aside, and extremely scandalized at the discourtesy of this climate. Since yesterday, it has seemed inclined to behave better; but I shall not trust to it, and shall adhere to the sage Spanish proverb: *Hasta el quaranta de Mayo no te quites el sayo**.

You are all occupied with the representation of Alceste; and we are equally employed

* Till the fortieth of May
Fling thy cloak not away.

by

by the ſacred eloquence of father *Franceſco Maria* of Bologna; who, in the Italian national church here, has not only collected and edified a noble and moſt numerous audience, by the ſermons and diſcourſes which he has ſo ably given, but greatly encreaſed the juſt reputation and eſteem which he had acquired in this city two years ago. His departure hence is fixed for the next month; he is charged with my moſt affectionate and fraternal remembrances, with all the vivacity which could be given to them, conſiſtent with the ſerious and reſpectable character which he ſuſtains.

My health being better, as I have heretofore ſaid, than I have a right to expect, I dare not give way to the temptation, to which I am but too much inclined, of complaining. I muſt, however, perpetually recommend to you the care of your own health, if you have any value for mine. Neglect not to keep me in the remembrance of the moſt worthy Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, and in that of the no leſs worthy and noble houſe of *Spada*; accept my thanks for the precious lentils which you have ſent me, and believe, without ever ſacrilegiouſly doubting of it, that I am yours.

Vienna, April 23, 1778.

LETTER XXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

I WISH, my dear Gemello, that our twinſhip made you reſemble me leſs in the too frequent irregularities of health; but your dear letter of the firſt of this month, convinces me, that you are no leſs obliged to be always upon your guard againſt inſidious attacks of your tranquillity. I know that the moſt ſpecific drug for our maladies, is patience; but to put it in practice requires heroiſm; and it has ever been my opinion, that the trade of a hero is not long ſupportable.

The benign remembrance of me by the Arch-dukes at Milan, at once conſoles and confounds me: and I entirely participate in the favour which they have manifeſted to you. It is but juſt, that he who ſhares your pains, ſhould partake of your honours. Included in this account, are likewiſe the viſits which you receive from their Eminences, *Buoncampagni*, and *Simoni*: to the firſt of whom, I beſeech you to renew the uſual atteſtations of my veneration, as well as of my reſpect and gratitude to all the illuſtrious family

family of *Spada*, and to all others who honour me with their remembrance; but in particular, to the very worthy father *Francesco Maria* of Bologna; who, in a most obliging letter, has given me a very exact account of the state of your health, and of my situation in your good heart, as well as of the affectionate and obliging reception with which you have honoured him.

I hope you have already seen and read, the proposals of Molini the printer, at Paris, for publishing a complete and magnificent edition of all my works: I should instantly have transmitted his proposals to you by the post, if I had not seen the names of Messrs. *Taruffi* of Bologna, in the list of commissioners for receiving subscriptions and delivering the books, when ready; which rendered my original intention useless.

I should lengthen my letter, but it is late, and I have people all around me; so that with a tender and hasty embrace, I, for the present, take my leave.

Vienna, June 18, 1778.

The subsequent letters of this year to Farinelli, are chiefly on the subject of the

Paris edition of the poet's works, and mutual complaints of infirmities and declining health. In September, he ſays—"Here, the ſeaſon, "which had already threatened us with the "return of winter, is again become ſerene, "temperate, and in every particular plea-"ſant; I hope that your's is likewiſe "changed for the better, and that the "indiſpoſitions of which you complain, will "be all removed. Mine, by dint of habit, "have familiarized me to patience; ſo that I "do not complain of them, except ſome "phyſical ſhock of the machine torments "me more than uſual. Employ yourſelf, "my dear Gemello, as much as poſſible, to "divert your attention from thoſe gloomy "meditations to which I perceive you in-"clined, and which, inſtead of relieving, "encreaſe our ſufferings. Your former "felicity was not ſufficient to make you loſe "your equilibrium; a proof, that your "mind does not want the neceſſary vigour "for facing inconvenience. Adieu. I find "that I have already moralized too much. "Do not ceaſe to love me, or, at leaſt, to "think of me, which did not uſe to put you "out of humour; and I will do the ſame: "conſoling myſelf always with the pleaſure

" I feel, in ſuppoſing that I am poſſeſſed of
" your affection."

LETTER XXVIX.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

It is not from entertaining the leaſt doubt of your affection, on account of the time that has elapſed ſince your laſt letter, but to interrupt the preſcription of ſo long a ſilence, that I vanquiſh my too reaſonable repugnance to writing, which daily encreaſes with my age; and likewiſe to give you on paper, a thouſand of thoſe embraces that I never ceaſe giving with my heart, which is always the ſame for you. In the news which has arrived here of the earthquake at Bologna, you have been the firſt object of my reflections. But not having found your name in any account which has been received here, I have aſſured myſelf, that you and your chattels have been unhurt: and this I am the more inlined to hope, as a letter from his eminence Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, addreſſed to one of his correſpondents in Vienna, conſiderably diminiſhes the horrors of the firſt account, which were extremely

extremely exaggerated. The ſame will likewiſe happen to you concerning the account of our magazine of powder being blown up; which by the force of tragic eloquence in the firſt relators, announced the deſtruction of Vienna. Amidſt all theſe events, my health obſtinately preſerves a good appearance; but, though it deceives others, it is not ſufficient to deceive myſelf, who really feel the inſidious progreſs internally making by the enemy: and, like a theatrical hero, I am never able to impoſe on myſelf in the ſame manner as I do on the ſpectators.

Vienna, Auguſt 19, 1779.

LETTER XXX.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR moſt cordial letter of the 12th inſt. as uſual, full of thoſe affectionate expreſſions, of which, without ingratitude, I cannot doubt the ſincerity; and ſeaſoned with that gay and ſerene eloquence, which alone can announce the regular equilibrium of our humour, has conſoled, rejoiced, and furniſhed me with arguments to confirm me in the hope, that heaven will long be propitious

to my prayers, in preſerving your life for the ſolace of your friends, and as a model for thoſe who are capable of knowing and imitating you. I, who feel the weight of a pen at our time of life, gratefully receive inſtances of that affection, which ſtimulates you from time to time, to comfort me with your letters. *Padre Guardiano* minutely informed me of the delightful day which he paſſed with you in your garden of the Heſperides; and I conſoled myſelf for not being of the party, by thinking of your own pleaſure on this occaſion, and wiſhing you a repetition of that happineſs; flattering myſelf with the hopes of the Gemello not being wholly abſent, though far diſtant.

I believe myſelf entirely indebted to your conſtant partiality, for being ſtill remembered by the *Spada* family, by Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, the Duke *Riario*, Signor *Pignatelli*, and Signor *Germani Valdivia*: and beg of you to continue the taſk of helping me to ſecure ſuch an invaluable bleſſing, by repreſenting to them the reſpect and veneration with which I am impreſt by their condeſcenſion. Preſent particular thanks to Duke *Riario*, for the pains which he takes in embelliſhing one of my poor dramatic children

with

with his elegant muſic: and, in gratitude, I wiſh him patience to perform the operation.

Cardinal *Migazzi*, Count *Roſenberg*, and the Spaniſh Ambaſſador, will have your compliments, whenever I am able to tranſport myſelf into their vortex, which is at preſent too tumultuous for me.

Forget not, I entreat you, to render particular thanks to our good father *Guardiano*, for the lively account which he has given me of the extaſy into which he was raviſhed, at hearing what a valiant defence your voice has made againſt the injuries of time. I have it ſtill freſh in my memory, and I might ſay in my ears, what it was when you firſt aſcended the throne of the whole vocal band: ſo that I am not ſurpriſed at his ſurpriſe.

Vienna, November 23, 1779.

At this late period of the poet's life, he not only preſerved his epiſtolary intercourſe, with ſurviving old friends, but accepted the voluntary offers of new correſpondents, who ſolicited his approbation, advice, or acquaintance. Of the former claſs, was the Abate *Galfo*, to whom the firſt letter in the collection, that ſeems to have been preſerved, is

dated 1778, when the Poet was arrived at his eightieth year.

LETTER XXXI.

TO THE ABATE DON ANTONIO GALFO.

Six days ago, your moſt obliging letter, dated at Rome the firſt of June laſt year, was ſent to my houſe by Count *Erneſt D'Harrach*; which letter (I know not by what accident) having been nine months on the road, has at length put me in poſſeſſion of your ſurpriſing mock-heroic poem. I have attentively read, and greatly admired it; nor do I ſee it poſſible for me, without being guilty of uſurpation, to arrogate to myſelf the title of your Maſter, with which through exceſs of politeneſs, you have qualified me in your letter. How could I poſſibly communicate to You, that ardent, and prodigiouſly fertile vigour of fancy, which I feel but too ſenſibly I do not poſſeſs? How, immerſed as I have always been, even to a fault, in my conſtant endleſs natural doubts, could I inſpire you with that frank and noble ardour, with which you have dared to open and purſue a road hithero

unknown,

unknown, through which you have mounted to the ſummit of Parnaſſus? Ah, my good Abate, aſſault not, I beſeech you, my due moderation with temptations ſo violent: do juſtice to your well-known merit: accept of the ſincere ſentiments of gratitude which I proteſt, both for the valuable gift, and the manifeſt gratuitous partiality with which you honour me, and which I moſt amply return; and permit me, inſtead of arrogating the title of Maſter, to ſubſcribe myſelf your faithful Servant.

Vienna, February 26, 1778.

LETTER XXXII.

TO THE SAME.

WHOEVER ſhall read the lively, moral, and feſtive compoſition, entitled *Il Tempio della Follia, The Temple of Folly*, will be obliged to confeſs, that the author of it is truly a poet, both by art and nature. I have re-peruſed it always with new pleaſure; I have admired its ingenuity, and harmonious facility; and have diſcovered in it many inconteſtable truths, which have always been before our eyes, without my ever ſeeing

them. Congratulate yourſelf in my name, if you pleaſe, and in that of the worthy Count *Girolamini*.

In order to avoid much writing, (an œconomy at preſent to me but too neceſſary) I anſwer at once the letter which accompanied your poem, and that which you ſent with the letter of the Abate *Salvini*, full of affectionate and kind expreſſions, which I return from the bottom of my heart.

Drive from your thoughts, my dear Sig. *Galfo*, as evil temptations, the deſire of croſſing the Alps, in order to undeceive yourſelf concerning my merit; and be conſtant to bear with me at a diſtance. Convinced of the goodneſs of your heart, I ſhall freely avail myſelf of your generous offers, whenever any urgent occaſion preſents itſelf: or, rather I ſhall begin now, by loading you with injunctions to continue to me your affection and regard; to believe me invariably yours; and never to doubt that I am with the trueſt eſteem and gratitude, &c.

Vienna, July 25, 1778.

The Abate Salvini's application to Metaſtaſio, being mentioned in the preceding letter,

ter, this ſeems to be the place for its inſertion.

LETTER XXXIII.

TO THE ABATE LUCA SALVINI.

I AM extremely grateful for your obliging attention in making me acquainted with the luminous progreſs of our academy; which, as you inform me, is rendered more illuſtrious every day, by frequent and ſublime aggregations; and I ſhould be extremely proud, if it were in my power to procure it the gratification of which my worthy colleagues are at preſent ſo ambitious. But this is not the time for thinking of it; for who would propoſe a place in a literary academy, to a prince not only occupied with his ſtate affairs in Vienna, but actually in the camp of Bohemia, regulating the motions of two hundred thouſand armed men, who depend upon his nod? and even if he were in his capital, in the boſom of the moſt profound and tranquil peace, my due reſpect would not permit me to utter with my lips the propoſition which you ſuggeſt. So much the leſs, as what lately

lately happened at Paris is ſufficient to diſcourage ſuch a liberty; where, though the Emperor honoured a meeting of the moſt celebrated of the royal academies with his preſence, yet he neither deſired, nor was it propoſed to him, as I have ever learned, to become an integral part of it. Perhaps ſome perſon high in office, honoured with the familiarity of his ſovereign, availing himſelf of the opportunity of chuſing ſome favourable moment, might riſk the mentioning ſuch a buſineſs; but theſe are not operations for ſuch as me, obliged by prudence to confine myſelf within the narrow limits to which I am reſtricted by the duties of my office. You will, I hope, excuſe my perhaps too great timidity, which may be indulged to an exceſs; but remember, that at preſent, my age will not allow me to attempt the correction of natural defects, or bad habits. Puniſh me not for this involuntary crime, by diminiſhing my favour, and and believe me, with the higheſt reſpect and regard, &c.

Vienna, June 25, 1778.

LET-

LETTER XXXIV.

TO SIG. MATTHIAS VERAZI,
Secretary to his Highneſs the Elector Palatine.

By the opportunity of a courier, I was ſpeedily furniſhed with a copy of *Europa riconoſciuta*, which you have been ſo obliging as to ſend me. In this compoſition, I find my friend, Signor Verazi, always equal to himſelf: flowing, happy, clear, and rich in that enviable fertility of fancy which conſtitutes the principal merit of dramatic poetry, and which communicates itſelf to all the inferior arts employed in its ſupport. I rejoice and congratulate you on obtaining the favours of ſo enlightened a city; and find nothing reprehenſible in the book you ſent me, except the manifeſt exceſs of partiality, with which you publicly ſpeak of me: an exceſs which I can no otherwiſe accept, than as a conſequence of that dimſightedneſs which the friendſhip with which you honour me occaſions.

Vienna, September 3, 1778.

Metaſtaſio

Metaſtaſio, fearful of offending, and ever doubtful of his own favour, both with the public and his Imperial benefactors, could never be prevailed upon to riſk the diſpleaſure of either; as he would not venture to print any of his writings, till they had been approved in their performance or peruſal while in manuſcript, nor to try his influence at a court which he had ſo long delighted, by ſoliciting benefits either for himſelf or friends. And perhaps to this prudent backwardneſs in ſolicitation, he owed the countenance and condeſcenſion with which he was ſo long honoured. However benevolent and willing to confer favours gratuitouſly, princes may be, it is natural for them to keep at a diſtance the importunate; who by being refuſed what it may be inconvenient, improper, or impoſſible to grant, become active and implacable enemies. The following letter in anſwer to a ſolicitor for court patronage, through the influence of the poet, will enable the reader to judge of his reaſons for putting a negative on the requeſt.

LET-

LETTER XXXV.

TO FATHER FILIPPO STANISLAO MELANO.

THE Sonnet which your reverence has been pleaſed to ſend me, is worthy of its ingenious and learned author, and I feel all the weight of gratitude which is due from me, for ſuch a partial remembrance; and ſhould be proud if it were in my power to manifeſt my ſenſe of your kindneſs, by a prompt execution of your reſpected commands. But as my admirable ſovereign is perſecuted with an inundation of bad Italian poetry for the moſt part, which ſince his journey to Rome, is perpetually pouring in upon him, he has clearly expreſſed his determination to receive no more. Now how would it be poſſible for me to have the courage to demand an audience (as there are no other means of getting into his preſence), and pretend that he ſhould lend an ear to my poetical lecture, at a time when he is immerſed in the ſerious affairs of a war, which is at preſent in its moſt violent fermentation? By doing this, I ſhould run too great a riſk of injuring both the merit of

the author, and my own character, for respect and discretion. I entreat you to suggest to me some more favourable opportunity of demonstrating my obedience, and esteem.

Vienna, January 13, 1779.

In the following letter to the Abate Galfo, we have the poet's opinion of controversy and polemics.

LETTER XXXVI.

TO THE ABATE GALFO.

In the parcel from you, which I received through the favour of the Apostolic Nuncio, I find impressions of two of my letters written to yourself, in which their only merit is the justice which I render to your talents; and the having fulfilled this indispensible duty, somewhat diminishes the mortification which I feel when any of my writings are printed, from that innate want of confidence in myself, which through the whole course of my life, has robbed me in a great measure, of the limited powers which were allowed me. I am extremely pleased at the perfect

analogy

analogy which there appears to be, between my opinions and thoſe of the learned journaliſts which you mention, and congratulate myſelf on the occaſion. I wiſh I were able to felicitate you on the acquiſition of that tranquil philoſophy, which the moſt excellent authors want, to render them inſenſible to the inevitable aſſaults of detraction. But remember, my much reſpected Abate, that no race of men has been plagued with this abominable contentious ſpirit, ſo much as men of learning. Think of *Scaliger*, *Eraſmus*, *Schioppus*, *Muretus*, &c. I pity humanity for nothing ſo much as that infirmity, which by its violence, reduces men, venerable for their doctrine, to the level of actors on a public ſtage, for the diverſion of idiots. If you would avenge yourſelf and cruſh envy, it muſt be done by an encreaſe of merit. And the ſpecific which I preſcribe to you, is the only one which I have ever propoſed to myſelf.

It is neceſſary to be ſeized (as for my good fortune ſeems your caſe) with an exceſſive degree of kindneſs and partiality in my favour, to exalt into a model my old Epithalamium, written during the firſt effervescence of a juvenile fancy, when wholly ignorant

ignorant how much it wanted a bridle. But this kind of ſolemn approbation, with which you have honoured it, has reconciled me to it ſo much, that I am now blind to its defects, and am proud, that it has in any degree given occaſion to ſo new, delicate, and pleaſing a production as yours; or rather, that it has in any way ſeemed to entitle me to a ſhare of your praiſe. I congratulate you on the conſtant favour of the muſes, and am, &c.

Vienna, March 28, 1779.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR moſt beautiful Epithalamium, neatly printed, has been delivered to me ſome days, together with the remarks of the learned journaliſts. I have received new pleaſure in the peruſal of the firſt, by the maſterly manner with which you have contrived to rectify the miſtakes of my early inexperienced youth; and in the ſecond, have applauded the exact juſtice rendered to your extraordinary merit, which encreaſes every day—Take care of your health for the honour of our

Parnaſſus

Parnaſſus; pity my neceſſity for brevity, and give me new opportunities of manifeſting my obedience to your commands.

Vienna, October 18, 1779.

Though the following letter, which ſeems the firſt that has been inſerted in the collection of our bard's correſpondence to Signor Volta, is dated at ſo late a period of his life; the affectionate manner in which he expreſſes his regard, appears to indicate a long, tried, and intimate acquaintance.

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLDO CAMILLA VOLTA, REGIUS SECRETARY AT MANTUA.

THOUGH extremely eager to receive news of your health and welfare, I have never accuſed you, my dear and valued friend, of negligence in tranſmitting it; well knowing with what an inevitable croud of affairs, of every kind, you muſt be oppreſſed at your return to Italy: I am, therefore, extremely grateful to you for the juſtice you have done me, in believing me always, in ſpite of long

ſilence, the ſame affectionate friend, and exact calculator of your great merit, admirable talents, and literary treaſures with which you are enriched; but above all, I ſhall ever bear in mind your ſweet and innocent manners, which render you always pleaſing to your equals; and ſhall ever remember my own acquaintance with you among the deareſt and moſt honourable circumſtances of my life.

Speak not to me, I entreat you, of Theatres, either tragic or comic. The firſt, which (as far as my powers have enabled me) I have tried to render leſs abſurd, conſpire at preſent to combat common ſenſe: and the ſecond, in the midſt of ſuch innumerable, not only ſupportable, but good and excellent examples with which the French have furniſhed us, have not yet found a tolerable imitator in Italy. A very mortifying circumſtance for our nation! But this ſubject is too extenſive and abundant for a worn-out old writer, which, though in appearance it ſeems in the ſame ſtate in which I left it, is in reality ſubject to all the laws of nature.

Signora Martinetz is extremely flattered, though confuſed, by the academic patent which does her ſo much honour. She ren-

ders

ders thanks to You for it, as she believes herself indebted to your declared partiality; and entreats you to represent in more suitable eloquence than she has been able to do in the inclosed letter to her generous promoters, the most humble sentiments of her unfeigned gratitude. Counsellor Martinetz*, Don Domenico, and Ercolino, return you their best acknowledgments for your kind remembrance; and I embrace you with the most tender and cordial affection.

Vienna, August 9, 1779.

LETTER XXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

SIGNOR *Angelo Talassi*† delivered to me, a few days ago, your dear and much respected

*Brother of Mademoiselle Martinetz, Aulic Counsellor, and first keeper of the Imperial library. Metastasio, on his first arrival in Vienna, took up his abode in the house of their father, Signor Nicolò Martinetz, Master of the Ceremonies to the Apostolic Nuncio, with whose family he lived fifty-three years.

† The celebrated *Improvvisatore*; who, when in London about eighteen years ago, by his extemporaneous numbers on a subject given, astonished even Dr. Johnson; who was very incredulous concerning this faculty, till he heard *Talassi improvvisare* at Streatham.

letter, with a magnificent eulogium on the poetical merit of the bearer, to whom I am ready to do all due juſtice, upon the faith of ſo enlightened a judge as my friend Signor Volta, even before I have had an opportunity of making the experiment myſelf. But I fear he has undertaken a very difficult taſk, in trying to render Italian Poetry familiar and grateful to German ears; eſpecially extemporaneous numbers, which allow not a moment's reflection to the aſtoniſhed hearer. I ſhall do every thing in my power to contribute to his favour. But you, who ſo well know the preſent paucity of my phyſical faculties, muſt proportion to that my hopes of ſucceſs.

All thoſe whom you have ſaluted, ſalute you again; and I, with involuntary and inevitable brevity, moſt affectionately embrace you, and am, &c.

Vienna, Auguſt 18, 1779.

The following letter is the firſt which appears in the collection, to a new and unknown correſpondent, ambitious of the poet's approbation.

LET-

LETTER XL.

TO THE ABATE GIOVAN GABRIELLO MACCAFANI.

THE violent and paſſionate enthuſiaſm excited in you by the peruſal of my poetical trifles, is expreſſed in ſo lively a manner, both in proſe and verſe, that I make no doubt, if you choſe it, but that you might aſcend to the ſummit of Parnaſſus. You have exalted me, Sir, ſo far above my merit, that in order not to appear a bribed and ſeduced judge, it is neceſſary for me to be more ſparing than I wiſh, in rendering due juſtice to your talents. But I find it impoſſible to be parſimonious with reſpect to the candid and affectionate partiality in my favour, which is diſcoverable in all your expreſſions: This requires gratitude and reciprocation, and I aſſure you of both, with the utmoſt ſincerity; and wiſh for opportunities to give ſuch proofs of them, as ſhall render it impoſſible for you to doubt of my being with due reſpect and eſteem, &c.

Vienna, December 20, 1779.

LETTER XLI.

TO THE SAME.

THE fable of my ſufferings and recovery from a dangerous accident, afforded me new information, and an indubitable proof of your cordial affection for me, as well as of your admirable poetical talents; ſo that I think myſelf extremely obliged to the ingenious inventor of the report, and congratulate you, Sir, on your abilities in compoſing Eulogiums, and on the amiable qualities of your head and heart. The reaſons aſſigned in my firſt letter, and the imperious authority of age, which, though it malignantly ſtill permits me to write, will not allow me to expreſs ſo amply as I wiſh, the true value of your obliging and beautiful compoſitions, nor the affectionate return, which is due for your candid propenſity in my favour: ſo that I am conſtrained, moſt unwillingly, to confine myſelf to the ſincere proteſtations of gratitude and eſteem, with which I am, &c.

Vienna, March 30, 1780.

LET-

LETTER XLII.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH the buſineſs of writing has long ſince become difficult and laborious to me, and by the laws of nature is rendered more heavy every day, my gratitude will not permit that your very beautiful and truly poetical ſonnet, which you have done me the honour to addreſs to me, ſhould remain unnoticed: as it is not only a teſtimony of your exceſſive partiality for me, but of your own favour with father Apollo, and the tuneful ſiſters. I congratulate myſelf on both, and in return, wiſh you ſubjects leſs ſteril and more worthy of your abilities; yet I ſhall not ceaſe to feel how much I am indebted to them, nor to be with all due reſpect and eſteem, &c.

Vienna, May 1, 1780.

LETTER XLIII.

TO THE ABATE GALFO.

By means of our moſt worthy Apoſtolic Nunzio *, the infallible Socrates came in perſon ſix days ago, to inform me, that my dear Sig. *Galfo* had courageouſly undertaken, and happily ſuſtained, the difficult enterpriſe of always ſurpaſſing himſelf. The tragedy which has been ſent to me, with its vigorous and ſeducing ſtyle, richneſs of thought, vivacity of imagery, ſolidity of doctrine in the numerous moral maxims it contains, together with the poetical fire which ſo happily ſparkles in ſome of the ſimiles, confirms the

* Meaning Monſignore Viſconti, the titular biſhop of Epheſus, with whoſe notice I was honoured at Vienna in 1772. His Excellency was a great collector, and not a mean performer, of Italian Catches and Canons, and condeſcended to furniſh me with copies of ſeveral ſcarce and valuable compoſitions of that kind. See *Preſent State of Muſ. in Germany*, Art. Vienna, p. 285. It was this prelate who obſerved, when I excuſed myſelf for arriving late at dinner, by ſaying, I had been ſtopt in the ſtreet by proceſſions: *Quei genti ſon portaitiſſimi alle proceſſione:* "The Auſtrians are extremely addicted to proceſſions."

aſſertions in this truly philoſophical repreſentation. The inevitable infirmities of age forbid me a longer uſe of the pen; I ſhall therefore merely ſubſcribe to the ſound judgment of the enlightened journaliſts, who ſay of you, that your firſt attempts bear the ſtamp of a maſter: *pour des coups d'eſſai vous faites des coups de maitre.*

Vienna, Auguſt 17, 1780.

LETTER XLIV.

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLDO CAMILLO VOLTA.

THOUGH writing, my dear Signor Volta, is extremely inconvenient to me, yet the not anſwering your cordial expreſſions is impoſſible. I too clearly diſcovered the eſtimable and amiable qualities of your mind and heart, during your reſidence here; and I have too much pleaſure in telling you how much I love and eſteem you, and how conſtantly I ſet that value on your worth which you have convinced me you ſo well deſerve. I hope you will frequently remind my much revered Marquis *Andreaſi* of my reſpect. Pray tell him that the Paris edition of all

my works, has already begun to be publiſhed, We have already received here three extremely elegant volumes, and next month are promiſed three more. I wonder that you have not yet received them. If you cannot procure them from any neighbouring city, it will be beſt to write immediately to the Abate *Giuſeppe Pezzana* at Paris, who is the diligent editor.

Signora *Martinetz* is much flattered with your remembrance, and is joined by her whole family in a grateful return of your regard. Our Don *Domenico* will do the ſame, as ſoon as I ſhall inform him of your obliging attentions: aſſure yourſelf of my regard and affection, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, July 13, 1780.

LETTER XLV.

TO THE SAME.

By the lively manner with which you have been ſtruck at the ſight of the elegant Paris edition of my works, I form an idea of my dear Sig. *Volta's* ſincere and affectionate friendſhip; and though I was ſure of it before, ſuch an obliging proof of it cannot fail

of

of ſweetly ſtimulating my vanity. I will not diſſemble the pleaſure which I likewiſe receive myſelf, in ſeeing my children ſo magnificently cloathed and provided for; but at the ſame time, I cannot deny my fears, that this will give a furious opportunity to many people to examine too minutely how well they deſerve ſuch an expenſive partiality. I believe the edition advances happily; the Abate *Pezzana* having informed me in his laſt letter, that the firſt ſheets of the ſixth volume went to preſs on the fourth of laſt month. The ſonnet of Count Bulgarini, is truly beautiful. I not only do it all due juſtice myſelf, but ſucceſsfully procure it from every body elſe; nor ſhall I fail to put it in the road to our Olympus.

I ſhould gladly lengthen my letter; but my diminiſhed phyſical faculties hardly permit me to give you a haſty embrace.

Vienna, September 4, 1780.

END OF THE THIRD SECTION.

SECTION IV.

THE letters of our bard have for ſome time been conſiderably diminiſhing, both in number and length; and the complaints which he ſo frequently repeats of his want of force and vigour to reply, in the ample manner which he ought, to the few perſons with whom he ſtill wiſhes to keep up a correſpondence, ſeem perfectly real and ſincere. He is now (1780) arrived at his eighty-ſecond year, a period to which few mortals are allowed to extend their exiſtence. However, his friend Farinelli, after ſixty years trial, is not neglected. His letters to him, though ſhort, compared with thoſe of former times, are not leſs frequent or affectionate. Eight of theſe for the preſent year have been printed, of which we ſhall give a tranſlation.

LETTER I.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI, AT BOLOGNA.

YOUR letter, written during the laſt ſighs of the old year, has had the power to diſpel the

the hypochondriacal clouds, which, during this ſevere ſeaſon, are generally condenſed to ſuch a degree, that I ſeem in danger of loſing the ſmall remains of my obſtinate patience. Your letter, which breathes nothing but kindneſs, tranquillity, and that wiſe equanimity, which preſerves an equilibrium amidſt all the furious tempeſts incident to humanity, has inſpired me with the wiſh and faculty of imitating you. Yes, my dear Gemello, in your neat and ſteady writing, and in that chearful eloquence with which you inform me of the gay parties which are formed at your country houſe, I exult in the ſolid arguments which they afford me, of your being ſtill in poſſeſſion of that ſolid health of body and of mind, which will not only preſerve your philoſophical gaiety in misfortune, but ſtill have the power of communicating it to thoſe with whom you converſe. May that Omnipotence by which you have been ſo partially endowed, long allow you the enjoyment of theſe bleſſings, and ſecond the prayers of your conſtant Gemello!

I have deſcribed the character of your Ambaſſador to the Counteſs *Figuerola* and Monſignor *Perlas*, preſenting to them, as my credentials, your original letter, which they have

have entirely read, and highly commended; your gratitude is due to them for the pleasure which they express in their remembrance of you, whom indeed it would not be easy to forget, among the many who daily propose you as an example of wonderful abilities, united with candour, and innocent manners.

But I entreat you, who have already gained me the favour of so many and such illustrious persons, to be careful in preserving it for me, by bearing testimony to my gratitude and respect, and reciprocal return of wishes for their prosperity. You know that I am now no longer a man to write letters of great length; but as an ancient inhabitant of my heart, you ought to know its most secret and recondite recesses: and therefore, I desire you to inform yourself, of all that your most faithful friend and Gemello would write, if he were able.

Vienna, January 13, 1780

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR last chearful and affectionate letter, by the pleasant humour which runs through it

it from the beginning to the end, has nearly diſſipated the dark clouds which obſcured my hemiſphere; and made me bluſh at my inability to aſſume a ſimilar diſpoſition, notwithſtanding the pompous philoſophical axioms ſo oſtentatiouſly diſplayed in my writings. You, in the midſt of frequent earthquakes and the indiſcreet irregularities of your health, are not only able to defend yourſelf from perturbation, but capable of conceiving, arranging, and writing, muſical compoſitions, which exhibit all the ſcience and practice of an excellent contrapuntiſt. The Duet which you have had the kindneſs to ſend me, is marvellous, not only for the difficulty of the labour which you have contrived to diſguiſe in ſo maſterly a manner, and the lively expreſſion of the words, but for the opportunities it affords to a fine and cultivated voice, to diſplay its powers, in ſwells, ſhakes, beats, *appogiature*, *volate*, and all thoſe extemporaneous and unexpected paſſages and embelliſhments, which are indebted to you for their exiſtence*. I have already

* We have here a comprehenſive deſcription of good compoſition and excellent performance. The poet, however, ſpeaks not only with approbation, but eloge, of his friend's invention and execution of difficult diviſions; talents which

already heard it performed ſeveral times, by perſons extremely ſkilful and intelligent, not only in execution, but in the laws of harmony; who were ſo enchanted with the compoſition, as to comply with infinite pleaſure with my eagerneſs to have it repeated again and again.

We are not perſecuted here with the frightful threats of your earthquakes, but for more than two months we have been ſtruggling with the moſt horrid and obſtinate winter which can be imagined, and without the leaſt reſpite. Figure to yourſelf all that is moſt cruel in this dreadful ſeaſon, and you will conceive ſome part of the inſults and inconveniences with which we are ſurrounded: impetuous freezing winds, ice harder than marble, deep, inceſſant, and permanent ſnow, which covers and renders all objects of one colour: ſo that to keep open a little intercourſe between the inhabitants, whole regiments of pioneers, with ſhovels,

which he condemns ſo ſeverely in others. Farinelli, with his wonderful, natural, as well as acquired powers, was the Archetype of all the rapid and difficult execution, which has been carried to ſuch exceſs in modern times, as to fatigue and annihilate admiration; which exiſts no longer than its objects are rare and extraordinary.

ſpades,

ſpades, pickaxes, brooms and carts, are conſtantly employed, and even theſe are not a match, with all their fatigue and diligence, for the quantity of ſnow which is falling without intermiſſion, and renews and encreaſes their work. The Danube, with new and incredible viciſſitudes, ſometimes fluid, and ſometimes congealed, has at length broken all the great bridges, by which the proviſions are brought to this populous city from Hungary and Moravia, which are the chief diſpenſers of its nouriſhment; and every thing is become ſo dear, that the common people are unable to procure the neceſſaries of life. But this *nænia* is too long, and tireſome. Adieu, my dear Gemello. Let us preſerve ourſelves for better times, and in the mean while do you continue to love, and believe me, yours moſt faithfully.

Vienna, February 24, 1780.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

I RECEIVED a few days ago, a moſt affectionate letter from you, with a ſplendid pre-

ſent of *liqueurs* and ſweetmeats, with which your tender and generous friendſhip, by exceſs of kindneſs, puts my moderation, ſo neceſſary to ſecond childhood, to too great a trial. With this *flotta*, I have likewiſe received, the Aria of *Thyrſis*, of your compoſition. I waited for leiſure to examine the whole, before I gave an account of all the treaſures with which you have put me in poſſeſſion. But during my delay, comes another letter from you, big with a Cantata, produced on the banks of the *Manzanare*, by the prolific vein of Bonechi, and rendered admirable by the enchanting notes of my incomparable Gemello, who on all occaſion, manifeſts how much art and nature have conſpired to diſtinguiſh him. The ſame golden mine is diſcoverable, whence the duet *Mille volte mio teſoro*, &c. was dug. But through the uniformity of ſtyle, that ingenious diverſity appears, of which expert compoſers ſo well know the uſe; wonderfully combining together the lively expreſſion of two effects, totally contrary. Adieu, my head will not permit me to uſe the Aſiatic ſtyle to-day. Remember my reſpects and ſalutations to thoſe perſons who honour me with their remembrance:

and

and continue yourſelf to me, what has been, and ever will be to you, your moſt faithful.

Vienna, March 29, 1780.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

On Monday, the 17th inſtant, I had advice from the cuſtom-houſe, of the arrival of the elegant little Petronian cheſt*, big with ſweetneſs to ſeduce both the ear and the palate. My firſt care was to have it inſtantly brought home, the ſecond to procure me the delight of being in your company, at leaſt mentally, continuing to drink my delicious ardent liquor from the little flaſk which you had already broached, and to finiſh the remains of the Ferrareſe peaches, defective only in the ſmall portion which you had taſted: ſo that we have eaten and drank together, by means of your kind invention, in ſpite of the enormous tract of land which divides us. I ſhall make grateful and frequent uſe myſelf of the incomparable

* St. Petronius is the Patron Saint of Bologna, whence the cheſt was ſent.

peaches, but much more rarely and ſparingly (againſt my will) of the ſpirituous potation, which by its too great activity, puts all the indocile nerves of my head into ſuch a tumult, that they are dancing like thoſe of a bacchanal, and continue a long time to deprive me of natural repoſe. Imagine not, however, that your favours will remain uſeleſs; I ſhall eaſily find coadjutors ready to do juſtice to the precious merchandiſe, and who will be moſt grateful to me, for the permiſſion. The Palate ſatisfied, I ſhall not neglect the Ear, which expects my notice with impatience; and the Air of *Tirſi*, excellently performed, makes me taſte a new and more exquiſite pleaſure, by the union of its infinite merit with my own ſelf-love: for though in this Air, not only the humanity, the ſweetneſs, and ſcience of my Gemello triumph, but the genius of the words, to which he has ſo wonderfully adapted the melody, that I find them infinitely more beautiful in his muſic, than I was ever able to make them with my pen. The ſame moſt correct performer*, at length, without interrupting her pleaſant vocal employment, let me hear the

* Mademoiſelle Martinetz.

two

two beautiful Sonatas, which are visibly the legitimate daughters of my dear Gemello's brain; and please me so much, that I have resolved to hear them frequently repeated; but by the same hand: as I should esteem it a sacrilege to defile them with the inexperience of my own, which deprived of the necessary practice, imperfectly assists the little theory with which I have been able to furnish myself. The merit of both these pieces is equal; but that of the first in G natural, in my mind, has some advantage over the minor sister*.

If my head would allow me, I should be very prolix in my thanks; but that not being the case, read them in my heart, where you have so long been an inhabitant: pay my debts with the dear and venerated persons who remember me: put not my too necessary moderation so often to the trial with your seducing presents, and continue to believe me, &c.

Vienna, April 9, 1780.

* In the year 1770, when I visited *Farinelli*, at Bologna, his chief musical study and amusement, was composing and playing pieces which he made expresly for his different harpsichords, of which he had a great number of the best and most curious of the time. See *Present State of Music, in France and Italy*. Art. Bologna.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

When I anſwered your laſt letter but one, I was at war with my maladies and infirmities, and ſo ſtupified by both, that I knew not whether I was male or female; ſo that I neglected to thank you for a beautiful *Canzonetta* of your compoſition, which I found among your ſweet-meats. I confeſs my ſin, and beg your abſolution. Enquire not, my dear Gemello, after my worthleſs health, ſhe is unworthy of your notice: always the ſame impertinent ſtrumpet. However, I hoped that by the return of good weather, ſhe would be a little reformed——but not entirely to relinquiſh hope, I have recourſe to our Spaniſh proverb, which ſtill allows me a day or two more, ere I give way to deſpair: *haſta el quarenta de maio no te quittes el ſaio**.

If through caprice, you determined to write down, and execute, ſomething in mu-

* This proverb occurred to our bard on another occaſion, ſee above, p. 205.

ſic,

ſic, imperfectly, you would find the undertaking impracticable: the machine organized by nature, to the moſt perfect harmony, and the heart ſenſible to the beſt paſſions, as well as long habit, would oppoſe and vanquiſh ſuch an extravagant enterpriſe. So thinks, and always ſays, the ſtudious performer of your productions; who juſtly admires you, having been long ſince informed by me, not only of your profeſſional merit, but of the other invaluable qualities which are peculiar to yourſelf, and by which you will ever be diſtinguiſhed. She is, therefore, proud that you are pleaſed with her approbation, which does herſelf honour, and will do you no great harm. Accept it, therefore, and enroll her among the numerous band of perſons, who, *avec connoiſſance de cauſe*, admire and reſpect you.

I would go on, but my head commands me to *halt*, and I muſt obey. Pay my debts for me, to all my dear and reſpectable creditors around you: particularly to the moſt noble houſe of *Spada*, not forgetting father *Guardiano* of the ſeraphic family, and continue obſtinately to believe me your moſt faithful, &c.

Vienna, June 1, 1780.

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

My worthleſs head may proteſt againſt it as much as it pleaſes, but it ſhall not deprive me of the pleaſure of anſwering your moſt affectionate letter of the 26th of June. But what ſhall I talk about? ſhall my poetical whimſies be diſcuſſed? I have written ſo many in my life, and talked about them ſo much, that it would be a reprehenſible delicacy to bluſh at mentioning them to my Gemello, who *ab immemorabili* muſt have ſeen all my defects; but he on the contrary, exalts them, as laudable and exemplary qualities. One of the moſt diſtinct merits of the indefatigable Signora Martinetz, is the knowing how to do juſtice to your ſtudious and enchanting notes, and to ſee in them that uncommon art, which diſtinguiſhes the beautiful from the wonderful; in which talent there muſt conſequently be a union of natural gifts, with long experience, and an intelligent and conſtant application, in order to inveſtigate the certain ſources of that perfect

harmony,

harmony, which has a deſpotic power over the emotions of feeling hearts. In ſhort, your admirer believes ſhe does honour to herſelf, by honouring you; and numbers your friendſhip and patronage among her dearest and moſt eſtimable acquiſitions.

I congratulate you (not without ſome little ſpice of envy) on the vicinity of your gardens of the Heſperides to the moſt venerated houſe of *Spada*, and conſequently grieve at the painful reflection of the impoſſibility of my ever being of the party.

I feel myſelf very much honoured by the obliging mention which has been made of me to you by the worthy Padre Martini, and his learned companion, the Abate Mingarelli; the firſt ought to be already convinced, long ago, of the high and juſt eſtimation in which, with the whole world, I hold, and ever ſhall hold, his merit. And to the ſecond, not unknown to me, I am particularly beholden, for giving me an opportunity of declaring my eſteem and ambition to procure his patronage. Adieu, dear Gemello; I am tired, and muſt ere this have tired you. Therefore, inform yourſelf, of all that you already know I would ſay, if I were able.

Vienna, July 13, 1780.

LET-

LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

WHENCE, for heaven's ſake, could my dear Gemello have taken the new and unexpected idea of making me independent at his expence, by a pious and unmerited ſtroke of generoſity? The very worthy Padre Guardiano, to my incredible ſurpriſe, informed me of it by a letter which I received by the laſt poſt, and has made me conceive all the grandeur of your true affection for me. If my faculties were not abſorbed by ſo many indiſpenſible anterior debts, I ſhould profit from your admirable example, and imitate your liberality; but being utterly unable to change the circumſtances of my ſituation, I beg of you to accept in return, my grateful and ſincere acknowledgment of being your debtor *.

My moſt tormenting head obliges me to meaſure my words: ſo that I muſt haſten to

* It does not appear by any of the printed letters, in what the generous propoſition of Farinelli conſiſted; it probably was his wiſh that the poet would ſpend the remainder of his days under his own roof, at Bologna.

entreat

entreat you to load in my ſtead, our exemplary and partial ſeraphic friend, with all the expreſſions of gratitude which are due to him on my account, and believe me to be your moſt obliged and affectionate Gemello.

Vienna, Auguſt 24, 1780.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR moſt affectionate letter of the 18th of laſt month, is ſo full of expreſſions and ſentiments worthy of two fond twins, that I perfectly conceive by it the full extent of your regard for me, and what mine ought to be for you. I ſhall take no pains to perſuade you what I am, with reſpect to you, as your ideas would not ſo exactly correſpond with mine, if you had not long ſince been convinced of the ſincerity of my affection.

Signora Martinetz has learned to know your worth from her infancy, by my continual and authentic relations; and encreaſing in the manner ſhe has done ſince, in harmonical knowledge, indeed to a greater degree than was intended or expected, ſhe has diſcovered by her own ſcience, the ſolid

foundation

foundation upon which my reaſoning was built, from which ſhe derived her early ideas of your extraordinary merit. She is extremely thankful for your moſt obliging compliance with her wiſhes concerning your ſelect muſical labours; and proud of the generous offer of your friendſhip, ſhe moſt eagerly ſeeks for ſome opportunity of manifeſting her ſenſe of your kindneſs; and I will be anſwerable for the ſincerity of her flattering expreſſions.

I congratulate you on having, at length, after ſo long a parentheſis, again recovered the worthy family of *Spada* for your neighbours; among whom, by mere dint of wiſhing it, I have more than once in a dream, found myſelf. Kiſs all their hands for me, moſt reſpectfully, I entreat you, and aſſure them of my veneration.

I envy the three firſt volumes in great and in ſmall, of the magnificent and elegant Paris edition of my writings, being in the hands of my dear Gemello: but I hope their contents will be thought more valuable, thus ornamented, than I could ever perſuade myſelf they would be. Pay, I entreat you, all the debts of compliment for which I am

anſwerable

anſwerable to your obliging and benevolent friends.

Vienna, Auguſt 31, 1780.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR kindeſt of all letters, written the 4th inſtant, found me in the moſt unhappy and afflicting circumſtances that I could poſſibly apprehend in the courſe of my life. I have loſt my auguſt and ever adorable Patroneſs, Benefactreſs, and Mother; a loſs for which I have not the leaſt hope of ever conſoling myſelf! It is unneceſſary to decribe my ſituation to You; your fortitude has been put to the ſame trial, and you know what compaſſion fellow-ſufferers deſerve. I I ſhould now be your Gemello, in the virtue with which you ſupported your loſs; but with which I confeſs I do not feel myſelf provided. Incapable at preſent of ſpeaking to you upon any other ſubject, I muſt entreat you to ſay for me all that is proper and reſpectful to thoſe where you are, who honour me with their remembrance and commiſeration.

Vienna, December 23, 1780.

This

This princeſs, (Maria Thereſa of Auſtria, Empreſs of Germany, and Queen of Hungary) who had been educated with the moſt tender care by the emperor her father, was early initiated into the myſteries of the elegant arts, to which ſhe remained a liberal patroneſs, amidſt all the perils and viciſſitudes of her reign, to the end of her life. Her piety has been thought to border on bigotry; but if we may judge of its effect, by the tranquillity, happineſs, and affection of her people, compared with the turbulence, diſcontent, and deteſtation, of the ſubjects of her unprincipled, philoſophical, and diſorganizing ſucceſſor, we may ſuppoſe that too much religion is leſs miſchievous in a ſovereign, than too little. In the two long wars with her formidable foe, the late King of Pruſſia, ſhe ſupported the frequent reverſes of her fortune with abilities, fortitude, and dignity. And after a reign of forty years, in which ſhe deſervedly merited the title of Parent of her people, ſhe died univerſally regretted, and her name and reign are ſtill remembered with the utmoſt reverence and regret, by her ſurviving ſubjects.

 A con-

A conſiderable part of her life, was employed in beſtowing benefits on the indigent, particularly orphans of both ſexes: and among the laſt words which ſhe was able to utter, are recorded the following, to her ſon and ſucceſſor, of which hiſtory has not yet diſputed the truth: "If I have done any thing reprehenſible during my reign, it has certainly been without my knowledge; for I have always had the public good in view. My heart has never been hardened againſt the unhappy: and this is the greateſt comfort of my laſt moments." She had been made acquainted with the buſineſs of the cabinet, by her father, at fourteen years of age, and attended his councils. The frequency of her petitions in favour of worthy objects, made the emperor one day cry out, "You ſeem to think a ſovereign has nothing to do but to grant favours,"——to which ſeeming rebuke, ſhe anſwered: "I ſee nothing elſe that can make a crown ſupportable:" and theſe were not words lightly uttered without feeling. Innumerable inſtances of her benevolence and pity for the diſtreſſed, are recorded. Having perceived a ſick ſoldier on duty, at one of the gates of her palace, ſhe immediately ordered him

to

to be relieved, and conducted in a carriage to the hospital. And being informed that this young man's disorder proceeded from indigence, and his separation from a mother, whom he was no longer able to support by the labour of his hands, she sent for the poor woman from Brinn in Moravia, which is 120 miles from Vienna, in order that she might be with her son. "I am delighted, says the empress, to her, on her arrival, to restore to you a child who is so tenderly attached to you. I will give you a pension for your support, to indemnify you for the loss of that assistance which you used to receive from his labour; and I recommend to you both, always to continue to love and cherish each other. *These are my recreations.*"—The good woman, transported to hear her sovereign speak to her with such condescending goodness, cried out—"Though I have no other child than this which you restore to me, and whom I love more than my life, I would this instant see him expire, if his death could be of any service to your majesty." The Empress Queen, without any other guard than the hearts of her subjects, was accessible to all, without distinction of rank. "I am only a beggarly peasant, (said a poor Bohemian labourer)

labourer) but I can ſpeak to our good queen, whenever I pleaſe; and ſhe liſtens to me as if I was a Lord."—The empreſs one day returning to her palace, perceived a woman and two children whom ſhe could hardly drag along. Hunger had driven them from their miſerable dwelling. "How have I offended Providence, (ſays ſhe) that I ſhould be witneſs of ſuch a ſight?" And immediately gave orders that her own dinner ſhould be carried to them: and had herſelf no other refection than the tears ſhe ſhed over the mother and her almoſt famiſhed offspring. "They are my children (ſays ſhe) and ſhall never again be driven to beggary."—"I lament the time I am forced to give to ſleep, as it is a robbery from my people." The partiality of her Imperial majeſty, to the character as well as genius of Metaſtaſio, muſt have been long ſince diſcovered by the reader of theſe Memoirs, and will be further manifeſted in the ſequel.

LETTER X.

TO FARINELLI.

WHILE you wrote to me in your bed in the neighbourhood of Bologna, your moſt kind letter of the 20th of laſt month; I, (like a good twin) was in bed at Vienna, where I was confined by a violent fever, and an eryſipelas in my leg. This accidental ſympathy juſtifies our aſſumed twinſhip. The fever obliged me to keep my bed a few days, and departed; but the departure of the eryſipelas does not yet permit me to quit the houſe.

I thank you for informing me of the ſafe arrival of the books, and for the generous and kind thankfulneſs with which you received them. I dare not enter on the ſubject of my loſs: you know by experience, that wounds of this kind do not ſoon digeſt, and that they never cicatriſe till after a long lapſe of time, if at all!

Signora Martinetz renders you her beſt thanks for your courteous remembrance of her; which ſhe returns with ſincere ſentiments

ments of the high esteem that is due to such excellence as yours. I most earnestly hope that you will soon subdue your importunate complaints, and am with usual twinly kindness, yours most faithfully.

Vienna, February, 1781.

LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

I AT length vanquish my pardonable laziness of old age, to tell my dear Gemello, that I am always his, in spite of infirmities, which as usual, never neglect to exercise my tired patience: and to inform him, that I have consigned to Signor *Milani*, a friend and correspondent of our most worthy Padre *Francisco Maria*, the three subsequent volumes of the grand Paris edition of my works; that is, the 4th, 5th, and 6th, which will be delivered to you with more punctuality than the former volumes. These have been some time in my possession; but I kept them back for three plates which were wanting, from the indolence of the Paris engraver. I hope that the other two *livraisons*, which are to complete the edition, will be more

regular. Adieu, dear Gemello. Neglect not your health, as you prize mine: Signora *Martinetz* will not ſuffer me to omit her devout reſpects; and with my old age and obſtinate affection, I continue to ſubſcribe myſelf, &c.

Vienna, April 6, 1781.

LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE this moment received, moſt incomparable Gemello, your very affectionate letter; and though I wrote to you but three or four days ago, to inform you that I had conſigned the 4th, 5th, and 6th volumes of the Paris edition of my works to Signor *Milani*, I will not leave wholly unanſwered your cordial wiſhes for my health and peace of mind. Would to heaven the tranquillity, which you were able to muſter in writing to me, had required leſs patience to obtain; but at our age, it is no ſmall inſtance of divine mercy, that we ſtill exiſt. Signora *Martinetz*, in this letter, repeats her juſt ſentiments of gratitude and eſteem, which I inſerted in my laſt: and with a thouſand,

and

and a thouſand affectionate wiſhes for your happineſs, I am, &c.

Vienna, April 12, 1781.

LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

YESTERDAY, the 28th inſtant, I received your very affectionate letter of the 15th, and anſwer it immediately, from mere eagerneſs to talk with you, though this letter cannot depart theſe three days. I perceive that though theſe earthquakes and complaints will not ſuffer you to remain in peace, yet, in ſpite of them, you have the wonderful courage and ſtrength of mind to keep up your ſpirits, and to amuſe yourſelf with running over the keys of the harpſichord, or with a plate of Neapolitan Maccaroni, which there is leſs hope of obtaining here from our moſt learned cooks, than a Cardinal's hat. I do not envy you this enjoyment, becauſe I always ſeem to partake of whatever belongs to you, be it good or bad; yet, I hope you will not fail to deplore my privation. I wiſh a good journey and a proſperous expedition to our worthy *Padre Guardiano*, who has ſo

ſpeedily put you in poſſeſſion of the laſt publiſhed volumes of my trifles: and when I receive the reſt, I ſhall not fail to put them in the ſame road. You know that my brevity is not a matter of choice; therefore, receive with good humour, though ſhort, my tender embraces, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, May 29, 1781.

LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR dear letter of the 11th inſt. though a mixture of ſour and ſweet, has comforted me extremely; as after that abominable addition of *ai! ai!** of which you give me an account, you appeaſe me by ſpeaking of dinners, harpſichords, maccaroni with *zucchillo*, and admirable company; convincing me that ſilence has not robbed me of the ſmalleſt portion of your love; and I firmly believe, that you will think the ſame of me. But, my beloved Gemello, the whole months of July and Auguſt, and

* *Ai ai* is a contraction of *aiuto-aiuto*, help! help! murder!

ſeventeen

ſeventeen days of the preſent month, we have inhabited here the torrid zone, without being able to breathe, day or night, from a continual burning and ſuffocating heat beyond what has ever been remembered in this country. My poor nerves, which hitherto only dreaded cold, are ſcandalized to ſuch a degree by this ſtrange irregularity, that encreaſing their painful tenſions and tremors, particularly in my aching and confuſed head, they have rendered me unable to read, write, and almoſt to think; leaving me, however, an outward appearance of tolerable health, which does not augment my own patience, though it conſiderably diminiſhes the compaſſion of others, to which I am but too well entitled. The very worthy Count *Gaddi* has frequently ſeen me in ſimilar ſituations, and therefore has given you accounts of the florid and happy ſtate of my health, to which I can by no means ſubſcribe. I love and eſteem this Count extremely, and have here many rivals, whence I hope that your acquaintance with each other, produces reciprocal pleaſure.

Divide and diſſeminate my thanks and reſpects in due proportions among the Marchioneſs *Spada*, Meſſrs. *Pignatelli*, and *Valdivia*,

the incomparable *Padre Guardiano*, the Abate *Mingarelli*, and all those in your quarter of the world who remember me: and in return, I shall have the merit of securing the Countess di *Figueruola*, and *Monsignor Perlas*, as I have already comforted the indefatigable Signora *Martinetz* with your obliging remembrance. Do you continue obstinately to love me with all my infirmities and complaints, which will never be able to make me forget you for a single moment.

Vienna, September 27, 1781.

LETTER XV.

TO THE SAME.

Your amiable letters, full of cordiality, grace, and candour, are always dear to me, and efficacious restoratives, in refreshing my worn-out patience, at the obstinate tension of the nerves of my head, by which I am eternally persecuted. I am therefore extremely grateful to you for this succour which you administer to me from time to time. But that I might enjoy it more amply, I wish most ardently, that your importunate complaints

complaints would render the exercise of your charitable assistance, which is of such singular use to me, less painful to yourself. But let us change the subject, and not contaminate the consolation, which, by our cartel, we are mutually bound to afford each other.

I rejoice in the new and desirable acquisition which you have made, by your acquaintance with the Imperial minister, and his most worthy noble family, and likewise with the most learned *Padre Maestro Gazzaniga*: of the merit of all whom I judge by their esteem for you. To the last, whom you will always have the happiness of retaining with you, give, I beseech you, a thousand affectionate compliments in my name; and tell him that I shall never cease to love and esteem him, and to feel grateful for his constant demonstrations of benevolence. Happiness attend our incomparable wanderer, father *Guardiano!* who, among his other innumerable faculties, has the power to inspire my delightful Gemello with chearfulness and good humour, at his charming dinners, his harpsichord, and the conversations of his select parties.

I am arrived at the 7th, 8th, and 9th volumes of the Paris edition, and shall transmit

mit them to you by the usual road; but I would first run them through, to discover the errors that may still remain uncorrected; and at present, the tremulous nerves of my eyes are not fit for such an operation (as you may discover by my hand-writing.) If this impediment should be obstinate, I shall postpone the revision, which I believe is not very necessary.

Signora *Martinetz*, in composing an oratorio, which she has just finished, has always invoked your harmonical influence. Adieu, dear Gemello. Assure yourself of my obstinate perseverance in loving you, and believe me, with my whole heart, &c.

Vienna, November 14, 1781.

LETTER XVI.

TO THE SAME.

YESTERDAY, December 16th, I ordered the 7th, 8th, and 9th volumes of the new Paris edition, in 4to, to be consigned to our faithful friend, Signor *Milani*, in order to forward them to you: and as I am informed, that our Padre *Guardiano* is not at Bologna, I shall lodge my advice to him in your hands, being

being certain, that he will have notice of this new diſtribution of books elſewhere. We have now three-fourths of the impreſſion, and I hope that our patience will not be put to any great trial, ere we receive the remaining three volumes.

The Grand Duke and Dutcheſs of Muſcovy, who you ſo much admired at Bologna, and whom we at preſent poſſeſs in Vienna, where they are juſtly adored, not only for their elevated rank, but perſonal qualities, by which they are rendered more illuſtrious and dignified, will abandon us the firſt day of the new year, and I begin already to deplore our loſs.

Pray combat the winter valiantly, as I ſtrive to do, though I have no reaſon to be proud of my bravery. The female compoſer devoutly ſalutes you; and I, with my uſual doſe from the *vaſi pizzechillo*, aſſure you that I am yours moſt faithfully.

Vienna, December 17, 1781.

No more than two or three letters of this year, except thoſe to Farinelli, appear in the printed collection; ſo much were the poet's ſtrength and activity diminiſhed, as well as the number of ſurviving correſpondents!

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LETTER XVII.

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLD CAMILLO VOLTA;

Secretary and Prefect of the Royal Library at Mantua.

An eryſipelas in my left leg, to complete my ſufferings, has confined me to my bed for many days, and which does not yet permit me to quit my domeſtic habitation, is the cauſe of this late arrival of my anſwer to your laſt letter. I have peruſed and re-peruſed the ſonnet, which I find worthy of the ſubject, and of the author: and I am gratified with the praiſes which it receives from thoſe hearers to whom I take care to communicate it. I return you my thanks, not only for being ſo obliging as to favour me with a copy of it, but alſo for the public confirmation of the juſt judgment I formed of your talents from the firſt day I had the happineſs of converſing with you in this capital. Continue to honour me in the ſame manner. Aſcribe my ſilence to the irreparable loſs with which we have been afflicted: accept a

reciprocal

reciprocal return of the compliments with which you commiſſioned me for the inhabitants and frequenters of this houſe; and continue to believe me, with my accuſtomed eſteem and affection, yours, &c.

Vienna, February 1, 1781.

LETTER XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

I RECOGNIZE, my dear Signor Volta, all the ſenſibility of your zealous friendſhip in the indignation which you manifeſt in communicating to me, the *Canzonetta della vita umana*, printed under my name at Florence. The merit of compoſing it is not mine, and I ſhould be ſorry to rob the author of his fame: you will therefore oblige me extremely, by acquainting our friends how much I abhor the character of a Plagiariſt. I am ignorant how it happens to be my fortune, that ſo many generous poets ſhould undertake to aſſiſt me in the production of children. The imperfections of my legitimate and natural offſpring (not all very well known to me) are ſufficient to diſturb and plague me, without being burthened with

the

A commerce with which I have been ſo honoured and delighted, would have gratified my vanity in the higheſt degree; but my poor exhauſted humanity, has, at length, much againſt my will, obliged me to aſk quarter; and God knows the difficulty which I had in obtaining it. Now you will be ſo good, my dear Abate, to tell me with what face I could ſend public documents to Rome, of my being able to comply with the requeſt of others, after having proteſted that it was not in my power to oblige him? You are in no kind of want of my ſuffrages, and thoſe which I have antecedently given, will leave no doubt of my reſpect for your productions. I ſhall, however, read what you have ſent me, when I can do it with a mind leſs oppreſſed, and with eyes more ſteady. In the mean time, I beg you will not conſpire with nature, in diminiſhing your regard, as ſhe has done my activity, but continue to love me as I am, and believe me, with uſual eſteem.

Vienna, June 11, 1781.

The following is the only letter that appears addreſſed to the ſame perſon. It ſeems an anſwer to a letter of thanks from the author of a recent Italian tranſlation

of

of Homer, to Metaſtaſio, for his approbation, of that verſion.

LETTER XX.

TO THE ABATE GIUSEPPE BOZZOLI.

THE juſtice which I rendered to your happy Homerical verſions, was not ſo much to increaſe the celebrity of your literary talents, become ſo illuſtrious by univerſal applauſe, as to do credit to my own judgment; which if it had been different, would have proved, that I was ignorant what learning, vigour of mind, good ſenſe, and conſtancy, were neceſſary to conceive, undertake, and conduct, to a happy termination, ſo long and difficult an enterpriſe. You are, therefore, only obliged to me for the advantages which I have procured to myſelf. Cheriſh, I entreat you, your gratuitous, partial propenſity towards me, and extend a ſimilar indulgence to my age and infirmities, which hardly allow me to aſſure you, in this ſhort manner, of the eſteem and affection, with which I ſhall ever remain your, &c.

Vienna, October 24, 1781.

 This

This is, chronologically, the laſt letter in the collection, to any of Metaſtaſio's correſpondents, except Farinelli, to whom we now return.

LETTER XXI.

TO SIGNOR FARINELLI.

Our laſt letters on the ſame ſubject, met upon the road; hence, my dear Gemello, I ſhould have had nothing to write about, if luckily I had not an account to give you of an unexpected viſit from Signor Filippo Cavalier *Gatteſchi*, captain in the ſervice of Ruſſia, with another officer, and a Greek lady, his conſort, who ſurpriſed me, and remained a conſiderable time in converſation; informing me of the ſtate of Italy, and the north, whither they are now returning. During this viſit, I forgot my complaints, more than uſual, while ſuffering from the intenſe cold of this climate and ſeaſon: they ſung, ſpoke of you, and the memory of my dear Gemello is a ſpecific againſt all my ſufferings. The Cavalier, your relation, is extremely courteous and animated, and I wiſh him proſperity equal to his merit. If writing were not ſo painful

to

to me, I ſhould ſay much more; but we underſtand each other without ſpeaking: that is, preſent my reſpects, ſalutations, and thanks, to thoſe at Bologna, to whom I am in debt; preſerve yourſelf carefully, during this horrid ſeaſon; accept the compliments of Signora *Martinetz*, and believe me always more than ever yours.

Vienna, January 3, 1782.

LETTER XXII.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE no materials, my dear Gemello, for a letter to-day, and my head proteſts againſt the uſe of the pen: and yet I cannot reſiſt the deſire of giving you a thouſand embraces, at leaſt in writing, and returning you a thouſand thanks for the ſincere and kind pleaſure you manifeſt at the great honour which it has pleaſed the northern princes to confer on me. The phenomenon, however, will not produce the ſame effect on all, and I have reaſon to fear, that many, and perhaps the greater part, will be puzzling their brains in finding out what

proportion my merit can possibly bear, with such an honourable distinction*: an enquiry which cannot be of much advantage to me. But let us have no more of it, at present. I think of nothing now, but the pleasure it has afforded you, and the proof it furnishes me of your true and constant affection, of which, however, I had not the least occasion. Give liberally, and in due proportion, the usual return of regard and affection to all those around you, who honour me with their remembrance, and accept the reverence of the female composer. Adieu. I shall write more fully when the wicked nerves of my head will permit; *in tanto vasi a bizeffe*, and am, &c.

Vienna, January 24, 1782.

* The Grand Duke and Dutchess of Muscovy, in making the Tour of Europe, when they arrived at Vienna, made early and earnest enquiries after the Imperial Laureat, with whose merit they were perfectly well acquainted, not only from tradition, but his dramatic productions, which had been as frequently and magnificently represented, and as admirably set, sung, and performed at the court of Petersburgh, as in any great city in Europe. Not content with all the information which they could acquire of others, concerning his private life, these great personages visited the venerable bard in person; and when his character, talents, and age, are considered, the honour of the visit seems reciprocal, exalting the good taste of these princes, as much as the reputation of the poet.

LET-

LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

Ah, Ah! I did not expect this from You! After so many expressions of affection, publickly to become my rival in poetry! And that no doubt might remain, a faithful and authentic account has been transmitted to me, signed by two unexceptionable witnesses, whom I highly love and honour; and how is this rancourous rivalry and *jalousie du metier* to be reconciled with the tenderness of twinship? The effort would be vain. It is lucky for you, that your letter arrived to inflame and encrease my bile, at a time when I was unable to write: not only on account of my nervous head-ach, but a whitloe, that is, *pe no mêmardetto punticio*, in the stitching or thimble finger (in the good language of seamstresses) the best finger of my right hand, which obliged me to have recourse to the Cæsarian surgeon for assistance, which I have not yet completely obtained. In the first impetus of my professional jealousy, God knows what indecorous expressions might have escaped my pen. But let

us change the ſubject, as I feel, that ſpeaking of it, rouſes irraſcibility; and I believe it is not your wiſh, that I ſhould revenge myſelf upon you in muſic—What would become of your fame, if I did?—No, no—Make as many verſes as you pleaſe. I ſhall forgive the inſult; and by the power of twinſhip, I will ſuppoſe them to be written by myſelf. I know not of what *flotta* you ſpeak, if you mean to fill it with poetry, it ſhall be welcome; but I proteſt againſt all things elſe. I can write no more. Act liberally for me, and for Signora Martinetz, in giving and taking compliments, and let us ſeal our reconciliation, by a million of mental embraces, and, with uſual wiſhes, be to each other "as we were wont to be."

Vienna, February 11, 1782.

LETTER XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

WHAT! then is envy, in mercy to humanity, no more? Neither here, nor elſewhere, during this dreadful ſeaſon, can I find a friend or acquaintance who does not complain

complain of want of health. We are all equally obliged to have recourſe to reſignation: one prays for me, another for you, and all are wiſhing better health to their tormented neighbours. My whitloe has at length left me, but it was ſlow in taking leave; my other complaints obſtinately defend their poſts, and I my patience; but I will not tire yours: let us therefore talk of other matters.

The great *Servus Servorum*, is ſaid to be within two or three days' journey of us; and our Emperor, who from an obſtinate complaint in his eyes, is obliged to keep his room, would otherwiſe go to meet him. Heaven ſend, for the ſake of the Chriſtian world, that this unexpected viſit may be proſperous! The Petronian cheſt, which as uſual, illuſtrates the generoſity of my dear Gemello, will oblige me to practiſe a difficult and importunate moderation in the uſe of its contents. But Signora Martinetz, who devoutly reverences you, will heartily ſupply my inability, and begins already to thank me for the enviable commiſſion. She has happily ſet to muſic my oratorio entitled *Iſacco Figura del Redentore* (Iſaac type of the Redeemer). It was yeſterday performed

in the theatre, for the ſecond time: And notwithſtanding the rigour of the ſeaſon, and catarrhs of the ſingers, it was not defrauded of its merited approbation. This ſacred function was performed here for the benefit of the poor widows of muſicians, raiſing by the profits a fund, in order to relieve them by penſions, at the deceaſe of their huſbands*.

Oh how many things I ſtill want to ſay! But what is to be done when we can do nothing! I beg you, my dear Gemello, to act my part with due reſpect and proportion among the many perſons in your neighbourhood, who honour me with their remembrance. The admirable *Carlucciello* is embraced with my whole heart, and the fraternal tenderneſs confirmed of his immutable Gemello.

Vienna, March 20, 1782.

This was the laſt letter written by Metaſtaſio to his beloved friend Farinelli, and

* This plan was eſtabliſhed in imitation of the original Engliſh *Fund for the ſupport of decayed muſicians and their families*, now called the *Royal Society of Muſicians*, and ſtill ſubſiſts. See *Account of the Commemoration of Handel*.

perhaps

perhaps the laſt uſe which he made of his pen! For in leſs than a fortnight after, he was ſeized with a fever, which deprived him of life, and the world of one of its beſt inhabitants and brighteſt ornaments! But the account of his laſt ſickneſs and deceaſe, which the accompliſhed Mademoiſelle Martinetz ſent to Farinelli immediately after the fatal event, deſcribes the circumſtances ſo amply, and with ſo much feeling and elegance, that we ſhall give it to the reader, as much in her own words as a faithful tranſlation will allow,

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

THE loſs of a mortal who honoured humanity, is felt by all; but it is particularly calamitous to thoſe who, like yourſelf and our family, were united to him by the ſtricteſt bonds of a long and ſincere friendſhip. Indeed from the time of the immortal Metaſtaſio's firſt arrival in Vienna, April 17th, 1730, he never quitted our houſe, nor ceaſed conferring benefits and acts of kindneſs on its inhabitants: it will therefore be unneceſſary minutely to deſcribe the affliction of my mind to you, Sir, whoſe ſenſibility of

heart

heart and affection for your friend, are ſo well known. The ſtroke, however, came upon us too ſuddenly: as the vigour of his conſtitution, ſuperior to the age of eighty-four, animated by a conſtant and equal vivacity and incomparable wit, were ſuch as promiſed a longer continuance among us, notwithſtanding the habitual hypochondriac affections with which he was frequently incommoded, but which did not, however, deprive him of the enjoyment of ſociety, ſleep, appetite, ſtudy, or other vital functions. In the evening of the firſt of April, his fatal malady began. Returning home from his conſtant viſit to Count *Perlas*, he complained of a chilneſs, eat very little at ſupper, went to bed at his uſual time of twelve o'clock. The next morning, at ſeven, he called for my elder brother, Giuſeppe, and conſulted him whether he had beſt riſe and go to church, as he had intended, it being Eaſter Sunday; but was adviſed by him to remain in bed, as his pulſe was very quick: an hour after, the fever increaſed to ſuch a degree, that it deprived him of ſpeech, and he remained oppreſſed by a heavy lethargic ſleep, which continued during two days, with ſhort intervals, in which he was only

able to take the medicines prescribed by Dr. Molinari, his physician. The fever diminished so much on the morning of the fifth day, that he became tranquil, spoke freely, conversed with some of his friends, who visited him, and was able, after dinner, to have the sacrament administered to him. You may imagine, Sir, what great consolation this afforded us; but our hopes were of short duration, for at night, the fever returned with such violence, that every day he became more lethargic, and baffled all the skill of the most able physicians, who met in consultation; so that on the 12th of April, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, he finally, without much agony, rendered his sublime spirit into the hands of the eternal Creator, in the presence of his confessor, having three hours before received the general absolution of the Apostolic Nuncio. Now, since every mortal must pay the tribute of humanity, it was some alleviation to our sorrows, for so great a loss, to reflect, that this illustrious man, after having with universal applause, employed his extraordinary talents in instructing and delighting mankind, and amply fulfilled all the duties of a true Christian, of an eminent writer, and

acquired

acquired the indiſputable title of the firſt poet of the age, ſhould enjoy, at preſent, the worthy and everlaſting mede of his ſevere rectitude, probity, integrity, and morals.

For the Bologna preſent, generouſly intended for me, you muſt content yourſelf, Sir, as yet with my ſincere thanks: when it arrives here, I ſhall be more diffuſe in my acknowledgments, and with my information of its ſafety, give due praiſe to its kind contents. In the mean time, accept the moſt ſincere aſſurances of the reverence, eſteem, and reſpectful conſideration, with which I have the honour to be, &c.

Vienna, May 9, 1782.

His friend and adopted twin, CARLO BROSCHI, commonly called FARINELLI, ſurvived this event but a ſhort time; the poet dying April 12th, 1782, and the muſician September 22d, of the ſame year, having arrived at the great age of eighty-one.—Let not libertiniſm, indelicacy, or inhumanity, ridicule or degrade this moſt excellent and worthy perſonage, for the cruelty of avaricious parents during childhood! His talents

had

had effects upon his hearers beyond those of any musical performer in modern times(*d*): and it may be doubted, whether the most celebrated musicians of antiquity, Orpheus, Linus, or Amphion, however miraculous their powers over the heart of man, ever excited such splendid and solid munificence in their hearers (*e*). His extraordinary voice and almost supernatural powers of execution, have been so often celebrated in every part of Europe, that nothing need be added here to his *public* professional character; and in the course of this work, the numerous and impressive eulogies of so exquisite a moralist and judge of the human heart as Metastasio, must have exalted his *private* virtues and conduct through life, to an uncommon pitch of excellence. In my youth, during the keenness of curiosity, concerning the life of this portentous performer, I had accounts from the highest authority, of his modesty, humility, and benevolent propensities, during his splendid residence at Madrid, while in the meridian of royal favour, invested with

(*d*) See *Italian Mus. Tour*, and *Hist. of Mus.* vol. iv.

(*e*) The King of Spain, settled a pension on him for life, of 2000l. (many accounts say 3000l.) sterl. per ann. with honours, privileges, and presents innumerable.

wealth,

wealth, honours, and influence, ſufficient to excite every ſpecies of envy, hatred, and malice, in all the orders of ſociety. Yet ſo ſound were his intellects, ſo ſage and judicious his conduct, that he cannot ſo properly be ſaid to have eſcaped the ſhafts of envy, as to have prevented their being ſhot at him. Of almoſt all other great ſingers, we hear of their intoxication by praiſe and proſperity, and of their caprice, inſolence, and abſurdities, at ſome time or other; but of *Farinelli*, ſuperior to them all in talents, fame, and fortune, the records of folly among the *ſpoilt children* of Apollo, furniſh no one diſgraceful anecdote. It was not till after this moſt aſtoniſhing performer and worthy man had deſcended with dignity from the height of his former eminence, power, and royal favour, that I had the pleaſure of contemplating his manners, and enjoying his converſation at Bologna; but I do not remember that I ever was more ſatisfied or leſs diſappointed in approximating celebrity. Rouſſeau ſays of Philoſophers, that "the only prejudice of which they cured him, on acquaintance, was the having thought them, at a diſtance, ſuperior to other mortals." But Farinelli, inſtead of loſing

ground

ground in my favour by a close examination, considerably augmented my respect and admiration. With all the ease and grace of a man of the world of high rank, long accustomed to the practice of urbanity, he joined intelligence, information, frankness and candour. Farinelli's mind was *entire*, whatever mutilations its mansion may have suffered. If vice, rashness, imprudence, or any thing in which his own volition might be accused, had rendered him different from his fellow creatures, reproach and contempt would have been justly his due. But when it is considered, that ever since he became a free-agent, his whole life was not only inoxious, but exemplary, in the practice of all the social, friendly, benevolent, and amiable virtues; that with natural powers, and acquired talents for delighting others in the most innocent and exquisite manner, he never lost his equanimity in the midst of the highest and most inebriating prosperity and applause, but remained humble, modest, and steady in his duty, gratitude, friendships, and attachment to his family and country; it seems as if the involuntary loss of the most gross and common of all animal faculties, had been the

only

only degrading circumſtance of his exiſtence (*f*).

METASTASIO's death illuſtrated the principles and practice of his life. Pious and firm in the belief of the religion of his country, he courageouſly, in his laſt moments, relied on the promiſed propitiation of his Saviour; and on receiving the ſacrament a very ſhort time before he expired, exclaimed,

T'offro il tuo proprio figlio,
Che già d'amore in pegno,
Racchiuſo in picciol ſegno
Si volle a noi donar.

A lui rivolgi il ciglio,
Guarda chi t'offro; e poi

(*f*) It is not eaſy to account, rationally, for the total ſilence of all Metaſtaſio's biographers, on the ſubject of his long, conſtant, and ardent friendſhip for this extraordinary and worthy perſon; though a volume and half of his letters are addreſſed to him, they ſeem aſhamed to mention his name. Signor Mattei, indeed, has once condeſcended to ſpeak of a letter *to the Eunuch* Farrinelli*—Why this contempt? If the vulgar and jocoſe chuſe to ſhew ſuperiority by their ſarcaſtic attempts at wit, they muſt not b robbed of ſo obvious and tempting an opportunity; but that men who fancy themſelves philoſophers, and elevated above plebeian prejudices, ſhould join in the cruel conſpiracy, is a diſgrace to wiſdom and learning.

* *Memorie per ſervire alla vita di Metaſtaſio.* p. 41.

Laſci

Lasci, Signor, se vuoi,
Lascia di perdonar (*g*).

O Lord, permit me, now my race is run,
While hov'ring o'er the gaping grave,
To offer up to Thee, thy only Son
In sacrifice, my soul to save.

See whom I offer; oh, behold him, Lord,
And for his sake my crimes excuse;
O turn thine eyes, and then refuse t'afford
Thy mercy, if thou canst refuse.

Dr. Johnson, equally pious, and impressed with the deepest conviction of the mystery of the incarnation, had too little reliance on his own merits, to think himself deserving of salvation, through his redeemer. With all his native courage, instead of boldly meeting his dissolution, he would gladly have suffered the most excruciating terrestrial torments, to have postponed the event. During his last visit to his friend Dr. Taylor, in Derbyshire, about four months before his decease, he says, in a letter to me, "I struggle hard for life. I take physic, and take

(*g*) This prayer was not pronounced extempore, as may be seen in the tenth volume of the *Nice* edition of his works, where it constitutes (with a small difference) the last Stanza of his *Paraphrase on the Miserere*, or fifty-first psalm, a posthumous work.

air; my friend's chariot is always ready. We have run this morning, twenty-four miles, and could run forty-eight more. *But who can run the race with death?*"

Metaſtaſio was interred in the pariſh church of Saint Michael, in Vienna, the 14th of April. The funeral rites were performed with ſplendor, by his grateful heir, Signor Joſeph Martinetz, in deſpite of the poet's injunctions, who had forbidden all kind of pomp. The inheritance of Signor Martinetz conſiſted in a well-furniſhed habitation, a coach, horſes, a great quantity of princely preſents, a very ample and ſelect collection of books, with a capital of one hundred and thirty thouſand florins; from which, however, were to be deducted, twenty thouſand for each of the executor's ſiſters, and three thouſand for each of his younger brothers.

The poet's attachment to the *Martinetz* family, was of long ſtanding. In the year 1730, on his arrival at Vienna, the firſt houſe in which he took up his reſidence, was that of Signor Nicolò *Martinetz*, maſter of the ceremonies to the Apoſtolic Nuncio in that city. The eldeſt ſon of this gentleman, whom he appointed his heir, was aulic coun-

ſellor

ſellor and firſt keeper of the Imperial library. Signora Marianna, his eldeſt daughter, educated under the poet's eye, and univerſally admired for her talents and accompliſhments, particularly in muſic (as has already been related) not only as an excellent performer on the harpſichord, and an exquiſite ſinger, but for her genius and abilities as a compoſer. She was an eléve of the admirable Dr. Haydn, who reſided three years under the ſame roof with Mataſtaſio, during her muſical ſtudies. She had leſſons in ſinging from the celebrated *Porpora*, who had many years before been the poet's own muſic-maſter. The productions of Mademoiſelle Martinetz, were communicated to, and approved by the greateſt maſters of Italy, and her name is inſcribed as a member of the Philharmonic academy in Bologna and Mantua.

Signor Saverio Mattei, one of the moſt uſeful of Metaſtaſio's biographers, though he rather gives advice to others, with looſe and indigeſted materials, than a regular life of the poet, ſays, that "whoever wiſhes to acquire an exact knowledge of his cuſtoms, manners, way of life, opinions of himſelf and others; of his preciſion in fulfilling his duties, of the changes in his fortune, his

application, and the different degrees of favour with which his ſeveral productions were at firſt received, their chronology, the influence they had on the taſte of Italy, and on that of all Europe, with reſpect to the melodrama, or lyric ſtage, can only acquire ſuch information by the peruſal of his LETTERS."

The reader has now been preſented with entire tranſlations of the principal letters contained in the five volumes of his correſpondence, publiſhed at Nice, in 1786, and extracts from the reſt; and it ſeems as if theſe would eſtabliſh his character as a benevolent, amiable, and virtuous man, as firmly as his dramatic works and miſcellaneous pieces have enrolled him among great poets.

His letters (ſays the moſt ample and accurate of all his Italian biographers, the Abate *Criſtini*, editor of the Nice edition of his works) "will do honour to all Italy, while they diſcover his moſt intimate attachments, his moſt ſecret thoughts, his favourite opinions, and the hiſtory of a man who was all heart and all virtue."

Theſe letters, like his dramas, are written without preface or text: he plunges at once directly into the buſineſs, whatever

it

it is; and in the firſt line makes known the ſubject. He is as ſhort and laconic as the matter will allow, without omitting a ſingle circumſtance neceſſary to be known; and with the moſt natural ſimplicity, beautifies whatever he deſcribes or explains. He riſes above the common ſtyle, without affectation or ſingularity, and has invented a new ſpecies of writing, free from extravagance, that renders the moſt trifling circumſtance intereſting which he has occaſion to mention. He has political, theatrical, critical, philoſophical, and encomiaſtic letters, and all are pleaſant and ſeducing. His genius, ſays Signor Arteaga (*b*), "may be compared to the goddeſs Chloris of the Greeks, who in flying through the air, ſcattered roſes wherever ſhe went." The ſame grace, facility, and elegance of ſtyle, appear in his *proſe*, which have rendered his *poetry* ſo juſtly celebrated. Indeed, till I ſaw theſe letters, I uſed to think, that there was no Italian proſe ſo eaſy to comprehend and conſtrue, by young ſtudents in the language, as the dramas of Metaſtaſio. But I am now con-

(*b*) *Revolutioni del Theatro Muſicale Italiano.* To. II. p. 92.

vinced, that, in point of *facility*, the prose of our author is to his own poetry, what the prose of others is to their verse.

What renders these letters infinitely more natural and satisfactory, is, that, like the *familiares* of Cicero, they were not written with the least view to publication; as the reader must have observed by the lively complaints he makes to his correspondents, who, for the gratification of their own vanity, had betrayed his confidence. Indeed, what Metastasio says of the unlicensed publication of his private letters by booksellers and others, might be said by the ghost of Dr. Johnson, and would come perhaps with equal propriety from the living and the dead. In a letter to Signor Diodati, July 14, 1769, he asks, "What right can men have to the possessions of others, without their consent? Is all idea of *meum* and *tuum* annihilated? These invaders must know, that every man says things in conversation and correspondence with friends, that he would not say to the whole world; and that such remarks on persons and things as are inoffensive in private, become injuries when published." And it is most certain, that there is no man, however candid and prudent, whose private opinions

and

and converſations would not give pain to, and draw on him the reſentment of perſons whom he would be ſorry to offend.

Metaſtaſio was an enemy to that pompous, verboſe, and obſcure ſtyle which prevailed in his country a few years ago; and was perſuaded, that the firſt duty of a writer, whether in proſe or verſe, was to be underſtood.

"The ſtyle of Metaſtaſio (ſays an Italian critic) never fails to pleaſe thoſe who give way to their own feelings, more than perſons of profound meditation; and I would rather be accuſed of partiality to him, whom I venerate and love, than ranked with cold philoſophers and deep thinkers, whom I may reſpect, but cannot love."

All Metaſtaſio's biographers ſeem to agree in his being of obſcure birth; and almoſt all allow of his father having been a common ſoldier, but with ſome education; as when he quitted the army, before he opened a kind of huckſter's ſhop, he became a copyiſt or writer, probably for the lawyers. Our poet's origin was ſo long a myſtery, that many wild ſtories of his firſt profeſſion, have been circulated; ſome have bound him appren-

tice to a *Goldſmith*, others to a *Stone-cutter*. But whatever was his genealogy, it cannot have been ſo high as to be degraded, or ſo low as not to have been ſufficiently exalted by ſuch worth and talents, to rank with illuſtrious anceſtry. A worthy nobleman of our country, as reſpectable for literary abilities as titled dignity, has ſaid, "I had rather be the firſt peer of my race, than the hundredth (*i*)." High birth moſt aſſuredly does not imply or preclude genius. The ſoul may be elevated by education and example; but even theſe cannot fertilize a barren ſoil. The gifts of nature are common to every claſs of human beings. How many great talents have been brought to light by mere accident! How many have burſt out, in ſpite of parental diſcouragement and oppoſition! The great muſician, Handel, was intended for the law; and our ingenious countryman, Dr. Arne, ſerved a clerkſhip to an attorney. We know not very well for what employment Shakeſpeare was educated; probably not for

(*i*) Deſcription of the collection of pictures at *Houghton-Hall*, Norfolk, in 1743.

poetry,

poetry, or a learned profeſſion. Paſcal's genius diſcovered itſelf very early. Without genius, all the education and example of a great father, ſuch as Cicero, could not make a great ſon. The melancholy and beautiful reflection of Gray,

> "Full many a roſe is born to bluſh unſeen,
> And waſte its ſweetneſs in the deſart air,"

is true, with reſpect to natural intellects, in poverty and obſcurity, being thrown away upon the world; yet, perhaps, "whatever is, is right," at laſt: there muſt be "hewers of wood and drawers of water."——A nation of philoſophers, poets, painters, or muſicians, without agriculture, uſeful handicraftsmen, and labourers, would be ſtarved to death, or extirpated by wild beaſts. There is, perhaps at preſent, a ſufficient proportion in every ſtate of Europe, of ſcientific and learned men, as well as of elegant artiſts; and *equality* of any one kind in a ſtate of ſociety, though all were to be Lockes, Newtons, Bacons, or Boyles, ſeems not only phyſically and morally impracticable, but the very attempt appears pregnant with miſchief, miſery, and ruin to all.

Metaſtaſio,

Metaſtaſio, notwithſtanding the indigence of his parents, fortunately received an excellent education from his adopted father, Gravina; which cheriſhed and expanded the natural qualities of his good heart, and ſound intellects (*k*). He was learned without pedantry, pious without cant or ſect; breathing the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, without fanaticiſm or bigotry; and practiſing its benign precepts of morality, ſo favourable to the tranquillity and happineſs of mankind.

The emperor, Charles VI, found in Metaſtaſio, a man who encouraged and confirmed his love of virtue, decorum, and propriety; and Metaſtaſio found in his patron, a prince ſuſceptible of receiving favourably his recommendations of the moral and ſocial, as well as heroic virtues. Indeed the poet and patron ſeem to have been made for each other.

Metaſtaſio delighted in virtue ſo much, that when he deliniates eſtimable characters, he refines upon the good qualities which hiſtory or tradition has aſſigned them; and

(*k*) The Abate Criſtini, ſays, "Gravina, not only had him inſtructed in the civil law, but in the true ſpirit of religion, the government of the paſſions, diſintereſtedneſs, love of honeſt-fame, humility, modeſty, probity, and the practice of every ſublime virtue."

by his exquiſite and tranſparent colours, gives to his pictures the utmoſt degree of perfection. Indeed his virtuous characters are more divine than human; but they are rendered ſo amiable and worthy of imitation, that they excite a wiſh in the reader or hearer to copy, or at leaſt encourage and venerate ſuch excellence. A true poet, ſays Horace (*l*), unites the ſweetneſs of verſe with the utility of his precepts: and no author has penetrated ſo far into the refinements of the art, as Metaſtaſio. His heart was a copious and durable fountain of deep morality; the pureſt harmony flows from the ſame ſource; and theſe running together, partake of the quality of each other, emanating by turns both vigour and ſweetneſs. Virtue cannot appear in a more pleaſing and alluring garb to humanity. His heroes, it has been ſaid, ſtart at the ſight of death, becauſe they are human; but they advance, becauſe they are virtuous.

Few writers have been fortunate enough to enjoy the favour of the public ſo completely during their lives, as Metaſtaſio. But this felicity is not to be more aſcribed, perhaps, to the excellence of his writings, than to

(*l*) *Omne tulit punctum, qui miſcuit utile dulci.*

his

his modeſty, candour, and determination neither to give nor take offence by cenſuring the productions of others, or reſenting the cenſures of his own. He ſeems to have ſeen with due horror, the effects of literary war on the combatants (*m*).

His whole life appears to have been of that even tenour, which nothing but great accidents or public calamities could diſturb. His veneration and gratitude for his patroneſs, the Empreſs Queen, ſeem, during the laſt years of his life, to have been the ſtrongeſt paſſions to which he gave admiſſion in his breaſt. When unfortunate in war, or on account of the ſickneſs or death of any of her family, he was as much agitated, as any of her moſt faithful and beſt ſubjects. But when her own life was endangered by diſeaſe, his equanimity and philoſophy totally left him. Then yielding to the natural ſenſibility and tenderneſs of a heart, neither chilled by apathy, nor petrified by ſtoiciſm, he became a common man; not too ſtubborn for affliction, or too proud and obdurate for the impreſſions of calamity. The ſickneſs of his brother, and death of the

(*m*) See his letter of March, 1779, to the Abate Galfo.

Counteſs

Countefs d'Althan, are likewife illuftrations of this occafional fenfibility. And if the well-known precept of his favourite poet is right, a man poffeffed of fuch irreftiftible pathetic powers over others, muft have felt fenfibly and painfully himfelf (*n*).

That celebrity which he enjoyed fo indifputably during life, was not diminifhed by his deceafe; his works are ftill in every hand: the philofopher, the courtier, the bigot, the man of the world, auftere and gallant females, all equally read them, and all find them equally beautiful. His moral maxims are daily cited, and his productions are become the code of lovers. The fetting and finging his verfes, have rendered Pergolefi, Venci, Jomelli, Sacchini, and Farinelli, Caffarelli, Pacchierotti, and Marchefi, as celebrated in all parts of Europe, as Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. Had his dramas been regular tragedies, written for declamation, without mufic, perhaps we fhould never have heard of them in England; but mufic being an univerfal language throughout Europe, they are certainly obliged to

(*n*) *Si vis me flere, dolendum eft*
Primum ipfi tibi.

the

the compoſer and ſinger for a great part of their fame, at leaſt out of Italy, notwithſtanding the complaints of Metaſtaſio himſelf, and the admirers of tragedy who are inimical to muſic, that they have been injured by compoſers and performers. Particular operas, and perhaps, at ſome time or other, all his dramas may have fallen into the hands of compoſers without genius, and ſingers without talents; but upon the whole, excellently written as are Metaſtaſio's dramas, and exquiſite as is the Italian language, it muſt be owned, that muſic has been the vehicle in which the operas of Metaſtaſio have travelled into foreign countries. Cato, Regulus, Themiſtocles, Artaxerxes, Olimpiade, and Demofoonte, are allowed to breathe a true tragic ſpirit, even through the effeminate languor of lengthened tones, and long diviſions; but it is in the peruſal, perhaps, not the vocal performance, that the force and beauty of Metaſtaſio's dramatic ſcenes, have been diſcovered out of Italy. When an air has been encored, it has not been for the beauty of the poetry, but the compoſition or performance of that air. It muſt be allowed, however, without the leaſt deduction, that Metaſtaſio's genius, good taſte,

taſte, and ſound judgment, firſt achieved the difficult taſk of rendering ſo wild and incongruous a compound of ſeemingly heterogeneous ingredients and abſurdities, a rational entertainment.

Whether the ſubjects he choſe for his dramas or fugitive pieces were ſacred or ſecular, hyſtorical or mythological, they are treated with equal purity and delicacy. Dr. Johnſon's high character of Richardſon, as a *moral writer in proſe*, is not more his due, than Metaſtaſio's among *moral poets*. Though love could not be excluded from his ſecular dramas, it is of that refined and delicate ſort which will mend and purify, not corrupt and deprave the heart. Decorum, probity, innocence, and good-faith, were equally inviolate in his actionsand writings. And his conſtant wiſh ſeems to have been through life, to inſpire in mankind, a love of virtue, and deteſtation of vice.

Even the church has defended his morality. The ci-devant Jeſuit, father CORDARO, in his Eloge of our poet, ſays, "I well know, that Metaſtaſio has been accuſed by ſome of having brought the paſſion of love too forward in his dramas, at the riſk of ſeducing and

and enervating the heart and virtue of the hearers. How ſhall we defend him from this charge? He would certainly have done better if he could have confined himſelf to the love of glory, and of our country, in diſplaying the virtues of valour, fidelity, and canſtancy, without medling with the follies of lovers. But there are certain noble affections, concerning which the vulgar have but little knowledge, and leſs taſte. On the contrary, every one underſtands love; and without that ſeaſoning, every repreſentation, at preſent, ſeems inſipid. It is the predominate paſſion of the times. He was perhaps neceſſitated to comply with it; but with what precaution and reſerve! Has an unchaſte word ever eſcaped him? Or an idea that is not ſtrictly within the limits of the moſt perfect delicacy? This may be ſaid of his ſecular dramas taken from profane ſtory; but his ſacred dramas are not only exempt from blame with reſpect to the paſſion of love, but ſufficiently pure in morals and doctrine, to ſerve as correctives to whatever the moſt moroſe critics may object to his productions for the ſtage."

The ſour critic, *Boileau*, diſputes not the theatrical dominion of love;

——*L'Amour*

——L'Amour fertile en tendres sentimens
S'empare du theatre——
De cette passion le sensible peinture
Est pour aller au cœur la route la plus sûre.
Art. Poet. Chant. III. v. 93.

Lord of the manor, love has seiz'd the stage,
There to display his joy, his grief and rage;
Though other passions may attention find,
'Tis that alone, which int'rests all mankind.

If the world could go on without love, the playful character which our poet makes the urchin give of himself, would fright timid and sober folks from having any thing to say to him.

——D'ogni costume,
Bella diva, io son capace:
Son medesto, e sono audace,
So parlare, e so tacer.
Serbo fede, uso l'inganno:
Son pietosa, e son tiranno;
E m'adatto al mio talento
Al tormento, ed al piacer (o).

I've ev'ry virtue, ev'ry vice,
Now hot as fire, now cold as ice;
Am sometimes modest, sometimes bold,
Loquacious now, now silence hold.

Both truth and falsehood have their turn,
I'm tender swain, or tyrant stern;
And can, as best my measures suit,
Give rapture sweet, or pain acute.

(o) *La pace fra la virtù, e la Bellezza.*

Metaſtaſio's meaſures, in the ſongs with which he terminates the ſcenes of his dramas, are ſo ſweet and varied, that they have often ſuggeſted to muſical compoſers, by the mere peruſal, melodies of every kind.

It has been doubted by ſome eminent ſcholars of our country (unacquainted, perhaps, with his adoption and education by Gravina) whether Metaſtaſio was able to read the Greek tragic poets in the original. This ſcepticiſm concerning the extent of the Poet's learning, ſeems to have ariſen from the little uſe that he has been found to make of the ancient fathers of the Drama in his own works, either by directly copying them, or by imitations; but this he might eaſily have done, by the help of Pere Brumoy, and others, from tranſlation. Whoever has read with attention his *Abſtract of Ariſtotle's Art of Poetry*, and remarks on the doctrines it contains, will not only find it impoſſible to doubt of his acquaintance with the Greek language and theatre, but clearly ſee his reaſons for not implicitly adopting their practice, or ſervilely copying their ſentiments. That he has highly taſted and reverenced the great Grecian models in every ſpecies of literature, and frequently tinctured

tured his writings with infusions from their inestimable productions, has been locally indicated by some of his learned countrymen, who have been most severe upon the few imperfections which they could discover in his works.

It has been said by Arteaga (*p*), that no one has so happily adapted the Greek strings to the Italian lyre, as Metastasio; he having seized the very soul of the Greek poets more successfully than any of his predecessors in Italy, not even excepting *Chiabrera*, who was certainly a great man, but who, in imitating the ancients, wanted the true philosophical spirit (*q*).

It is not sufficient (continues Arteaga) for an author to call an irregular ode Pindaric, because it is divided into *Strophe*, *Antistrophe*, and *Epode*, if devoid of the true Pindaric genius, the Greek *costume* and character, and if constructed in measures wholly untuneable, forgetting that music and poetry were inseparable in ancient Greece. It is the same

(*p*) *Ubi supra*, Vol. II. p. 84.

(*q*) Chiabrera, born at Savona in 1552, is said by Apostolo Zeno to approach Pindar in dignity, and Anacreon in sweetness. *Nella dignità si accosta a Pindaro, nella dolcezza ad Anacreonte.* Bibl. dell' Eloquenza Ital. di Fontanini con le Annotazione d'Apost. Zeno.

 with

with most of those who fancy they resemble Anacreon, when their ideas seem to spring from his gay system. But how different from the productions of these pretenders is the golden hymn of Metastasio in the Olympiade: In which, whoever is possessed of a soul for poetry, and free from pedantry, will recognize the true Grecian spirit.

Del forte Licida, &c.

The genius of the famed celebrator of Bathyllus appears with equal felicity in the hymn which Achilles sings in the opera of that name:

Se un' Alma annodi, &c.

In which our Poet's muse resembles the dove of Venus, quenching his thirst from the cup of Anacreon.

Some of his dramas, however, were certainly written under restraints and disadvantages at the court of Vienna. He was not only obliged to ride post to Parnassus, occasionally, upon very short notice, but circumscribed to very narrow limits in other respects; particularly in writing for the performance of the Arch-dutchesses. At such times he was obliged to relinquish the established rules and prejudices of the theatre; even the number of personages was prescribed,

ſcribed, as well as their habits, figure, age, and manners. A *Stock piece*, fit for general uſe, is a jack-boot, that will fit any leg; Metaſtaſio, however, was obliged to cut out to one meaſure, and finiſh to a particular laſt. But of theſe difficulties, we have his own account in various letters.

The ten firſt years of his reſidence at Vienna, will determine the point of elevation which his glory attained. He regarded *Attilio Regolo* as his beſt OPERA, *Betulia Liberata* as his beſt ORATORIO, and ARTASERSE as the moſt FORTUNATE of his dramas: for however ſet or ſung, it was always ſucceſsful.

It was an intelligent obſervation of the late accompliſhed muſician *Abel*, that the genius of Emanuel Bach would have been more expanded and of more general uſe, if, inſtead of being confined to the Hans town of Hambro' without a rival, he had reſided in a great capital, ſuch as Paris, Naples, or London, where he would have been ſtimulated to diligence and exertion by competitors, and obliged to ſtudy and reſpect the public taſte. But Metaſtaſio, confined to the Imperial theatre at Vienna, without an opponent, or fear of either public caprice or private cabal, though the performers were

not always of the first class, or his auditors such formidable critics as those he would have had to encounter in Italy, was so sure of success in the style which he had formed early in life, that he had no occasion to try experiments in order to excite curiosity, or awaken attention in an audience less able to judge of the poetry than the music, and not allowed to be severe, if displeased with their entertainment.

His monotonous residence at Vienna, seemed perfectly to suit with his natural love of order and tranquillity. Though late in life, when he felt "the cold gradations of decay," he was sometimes a little hurried and oppressed by the number of Imperial commands to write, yet he was not among the celebrated authors *qui ploravere suis non respondere favorem Speratum meritis.* Many instances have already been given of the favour and sense of his worth, manifested by his patrons; but more still remain, which equally deserve to be recorded.

When he had finished his opera intitled *Il Re Pastore, & l'Eroe Cinesi*, the Empress Queen sent him a gold candlestick, with a green shade *to protect his eyes* from too great a glare of light, which condescending care

of

of his *ſight*, the poet regarded as infinitely more valuable than the gift itſelf.

His drama of *Athenais* procured him from his Imperial patroneſs the following note, which will always be an honourable monument to literature.

"In this opera, and in the extreme alacrity with which it was written, I find the great Metaſtaſio full of all the fire and force of his extraordinary genius. And it pleaſes me the more, as it aſſures me of the good ſtate of the health of a man who has no equal, and of whom I have always regarded the poſſeſſion as one of the happieſt circumſtances of my life. This opera has enabled me to paſs an hour in the moſt delightful manner, and I am extremely grateful for it."

Upon another occaſion (the rapid production of a *Complimento*, or a ſhort Ode for Muſic, to be performed by Arch-dutcheſſes on a birth-day) the Empreſs Queen wrote him the following flattering note, in French:

"*La promptitude de la ſurprize m'eſt d'autant plus agréable, que je vois mon ancien Maître* (r) *parfaitement conſervé, qui fait la*

(r) The Empreſs Queen had received from Metaſtaſio her laſt inſtructions in the Italian language.

gloire de notre siecle, & plus encore de ceux à qui il s'est voué. " MARIE THERESE."

All his biographers mention the offer of the dignity of COUNT, BARON, and *Counsellor of the Court*, from the Emperor Charles VI, after he had written *Achille in Sciro*; and similar honours by the Empress Queen, of which he declined the acceptance.

He seems, systematically, to have declined all honorary distinctions which might excite envy, detraction, and obloquy, in his peers, and fill his own mind with humiliating thoughts and mortifying reflections. When the coronation of the *Improvisatrice*, CORILLA, was in meditation at Rome, the Empress Queen, justly supposing that the honour of the laurel crown, which Petrarca had not disdained to accept, could only belong to Metastasio, sent Baron Hagen to desire the Poet to accept of it; but he, with equal firmness and humility, declined the offer.

Before we proceed to speak of his numerous productions, it may be necessary to observe, that the French, ever aspiring at universal empire, not only in territorial dominion, but arts, sciences, literature, and

every

every ſpecies of ingenuity, deny Metaſtaſio all claim to *invention*, and claſs him only among *imitators* of the tragic poets of France. He certainly did not invent the ſtories and names of his heroes and heroines, which are generally the moſt grand and illuſtrious of ancient hiſtory, and ſuch as had not only been previouſly treated by writers of other countries, but of his own; but has he ſtolen or imitated the thoughts and conduct of his predeceſſors? Has he, like Quinault, confined himſelf to ancient mythology for his ſubjects, or always to the ſame heroes, or choſen the ſame virtues and vices to diſplay, as Corneille and Racine? Even the names of many of his pieces are not to be found in the works of theſe tragedians. Why then deny him the merit of invention, in treating ſubjects that have never been brought on the French ſtage; in delineating ſuch characters, painting ſuch ſituations, and colouring paſſions with ſuch new, ſublime, and touching ſentiments, as are not to be found in the dramas of any other writer, ancient or modern? Then let it be remembered, in writing for modern muſic, how circumſcribed and limited he muſt have been in the length, meaſures, and

diction

diction of his dramas; in drawing to a kind of epigrammatic focus the business and sentiments of a whole scene, in the AIR by which it is terminated, and to which it is a kind of epilogue. Who is able to read the melodramas of his predecessors, in Italy, or elsewhere? But, though so truly lyric, and happily simplified and polished for musical expression, there are few tragedies written for declamation in any other language which please and interest more in the perusal, without music, than the Operas of Metastasio. And yet he is denied the merit of *originality!* His simplicity, elegance, grace, propriety, and even morality, are original *on the stage.*

Thus far we have only considered Metastasio as a dramatic writer; but he would have merited a very distinguished place among the lyric and miscellaneous poets of his country, if he had only produced his *Cantatas*, *Canzonets*, and fugitive pieces, such as *La Libertà*, *La Partenza*, *La Primavera*, which, perhaps, have never been equalled in his own or any other modern language.

As the sedentary, and usually, uniform, life of a man of letters, seldom affords a greater variety of incident than that of a

Monk,

Monk, the chronology, plan, and reception of their most interesting productions, are, perhaps, the most useful materials which their biographers can boast. We have these resources still in store; and these Memoirs, which, with little deduction, may be said, from the great portion of each volume which is occupied by the poet's own letters, to be written by Himself, shall be terminated with an ample list of his writings, classed under different heads, beginning with his *Operas*, the great pillars of his fame.

Metastasio, in one of his letters to a friend, who tried to persuade him to continue to write, tells his correspondent, that, "After having treated almost all the modifications of the human heart, the intense application necessary for the invention and texture of a dramatic composition, became to him an exceeding hard labour (*s*)." In the following catalogue of his dramatic works, will be indicated the *moral object* which the poet had chiefly in view, while he was writing each piece; in which he has not only administered cathartics to the irregular passions, according to Aristotle, but anodynes to virtue.

(*s*) See Vol. II. Letter VII, to Saverio Mattei, p. 393.

A CHRO-

A

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

OF

METASTASIO'S SECULAR DRAMAS, OR OPERAS,

SPECIFYING THE TIME, AND PLACE, WHERE THEY WERE FIRST PERFORMED, BY WHOM SET TO MUSIC, AND THE MORAL OBJECT OF EACH.

I. DIDONE ABBANDONATA, was written and first represented at Naples, 1724. Set to music by *Sarro*. The dire effects of the inconsiderate passion of *love*, and the consequent rage of *disappointment* and *despair*, are displayed in this drama.

II. SIROE. First performed at Venice, 1726. Set by *Leonardo Vinci*. A parent's *blind partiality* for one unworthy son, and ill-treatment of another, whose *filial duty* and *affection* are proof against disgrace and suffering, are the vice and virtue chiefly displayed in this opera.

III. CATONE IN UTICA. Rome, 1728. Set by *Vinci*. In this piece, no one need be told that its hero's love for his country, and the freedom

freedom of its inhabitants, are painted under the well-known virtue of *Cato*, called *Patriotism*.

IV. EZIO, or ÆTIUS. Set by *Porpora* for Rome, 1729. *Valour* and *Fidelity* to the hero's sovereign, in spite of ill-treatment, are the principal virtues of the Protagonistes in this drama.

V. SEMIRAMIDE RICONOSCIUTA, 1729. Set by *Porpora*, for Rome. In this drama *Vice is detected*, but not punished; and no extraordinary efforts of virtue have been exerted by the successful characters. However, it is allowed by the severest critics, that the beauties of the poetry are sufficient to compensate for the defects of the fable; and that any one, except Metastasio, who has ever written for the lyric stage, would be glad to have been its author.

VI. ALESSANDRO NELL' INDIE, 1730. Set by *Vinci* for the Roman theatre. The *magnanimous Generosity* and *Clemency* of Alexander the Great, are the most prominent virtues in this drama; which, though it has ever been a favourite of the public, is not allowed by Italian critics to rank with the author's productions of the highest class. The words of the songs, however, are in such favour with Italian composers, that they have them by heart, and frequently choose one of them, occasionally, for a detached air, to display

the

the abilities of a concert singer, without any dramatic connection.

VII. ARTASERSE. Set for Rome by *Vinci*, and for Venice by *Hasse*, 1730. The principal virtues inculcated in this celebrated drama, are the *filial duty* and *affection* of Arbaces.

VIII. ADRIANO IN SIRIA. The *triumph* of the Emperor Adrian, *over the passion of love*, is the moral lesson of this drama, the first which the author produced at Vienna, for his Imperial patron, the Emperor Charles VI. 1731. It was set by *Caldara*, of Venice.

IX. ISSIPILE. Vienna, 1732. Set by *Conti*. The virtue that is chiefly displayed in this affecting drama, is *filial affection*: the heroine risking her own life, and that of her lover, to preserve her father.

X. DEMETRIO. First performed at the Imperial theatre in Vienna, 1732, to the music of *Caldara*. The moral inculcated is *the sacrifice of love to duty*.

XI. OLIMPIADE. Set by *Caldara* for the Imperial court, 1733. The subject of the fable turns upon a most heroic *sacrifice to friendship and gratitude*. The songs, in general, of this admirable drama, are among the most poetical and happy of Metastasio's lyric compositions.

XII. DEMOFOONTE. First performed at Vienna, 1733, to the music of *Caldara*. In this most interesting and affecting drama, which, for the

the ſublimity of the thoughts, the energy and force of expreſſion, and the grace and elegance of the language, may be regarded as the moſt perfect of Metaſtaſio's productions, *marital affection* is proof againſt the moſt humiliating diſgrace and terrific danger.

XII. LA CLEMENZA DI TITO. *Clemency*, the ſubject of this drama, was rooted in the heart of Metaſtaſio; and the luxuriance with which it ſprung up and flouriſhed, was never more manifeſt, than in the *benignity* with which he has embelliſhed the character of Titus, and eſtabliſhed his right to the title of *deliciæ humani generis*. This admirable leſſon for his Imperial patron, was firſt performed at the court theatre in Vienna, 1734, to the muſic of *Caldara*.

XIV. ACHILLE IN SCIRO. Written at Vienna in 1736, for the marriage of the Arch-dutcheſs Maria Thereſa with the Duke of Lorrain, and ſet by *Caldara*. *The conqueſt of glory over love* is the principal moral baſis of the piece. The character of the young Achilles in this drama is the *Hercules infans* ſtrangling the ſerpents in the cradle. It has been ſaid by an Italian critic (*t*), that if Metaſtaſio had written no other drama than this, it would have placed him in the high rank which he ſo deſervedly attained.

(*t*) The Abate Colomes.

XV. CIRO

XV. CIRO RICONOSCIUTO. Vienna, 1736. Set by *Antonio Caldara*. In this drama, a *fond* and *distressed mother* is the most interesting agent in almost every scene: where she is by turns anxious, terrified, enraged, and enraptured. The subject of this piece is manifestly the same as the Merope of Maffei, Voltaire, Aaron Hill, and the tragic writers of all ages and countries, from the time of Euripides.

XVI. THEMISTOCLES. Written for the court of Vienna, 1736, set by *Caldara*. This opera abounds with more noble sentiments, moral maxims, and patriotic effusions, than any one of Metastasio's works. There is not, perhaps, in the annals of mankind, a more respectable and interesting character than that of THEMISTOCLES. And this drama, of which he is the Protagonistes, has been lately pronounced in Italy (*u*) worthy of the best age of Athens, the happy, but ungrateful mother of this hero.

XVII. ZENOBIA, Vienna, 1740. Set by *Predieri*. This is ranked among Metastasio's best dramatic productions. In Zenobia's character, to the virtue of *filial obedience*, is added an extraordinary portion of *conju-*

(*u*) *Osservazioni di varij letterati sopra i drammi dell'abate Metastasio*. Tome II. p. 193. In Nizza, 1785.

gal fidelity to a husband whom her father's situation and entreaties obliged her to marry, though long passionately attached to a fond and worthy lover of her own and her parent's choice.

XVIII. ATTILIO REGULO. Written 1740, for Vienna, but not performed till 1750; when it was first set by *Hasse*, for the court of Dresden. It was an enterprize of great difficulty to support the character of *patriotism* in three different dramas, without monotony of sentiments, or deficiency of interest in the plot or personages. But the poet has so contrived to difference these patriots, as to avoid copying himself. The character of *Cato* is severe and inflexible; of *Themistocles*, grand, tender, and resolute; and of *Regulus*, magnanimous, rigid, just and almost divine.

XIX. ANTIGONO. Written for the court of Dresden, and set by *Hasse*, 1744. The social virtues of *parental generosity*, *filial duty*, *affection*, and *obedience*, *friendship*, and *fidelity*, are all in action, and put to the test in this drama.

XX. IPERMESTRA. Vienna, 1744. Set by *Hasse*. *Conjugal affection* is here manifested, at the imminent risk of life, by the heroine of the drama.

XXI. IL RE PASTORE. Vienna, 1751. Written for ladies of the Imperial Court, by whom

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it was first performed to the compositions of Signor *Bonno*. *Humility*, *moderation*, and *contentment*, are beautifully illustrated, and rendered desirable, in the sentiments of the Shepherd King. When it is remembered that this drama was written expressly for great personages to perform in the presence of their Imperial Majesties, invested with absolute power, the bold and vigorous sentiments on the duty of sovereigns, which the Poet ventured to put into the mouth of one of the characters, do equal honour to his Imperial patrons, who could listen to them with pleasure, and to the Laureat who had the courage to preach such doctrine in a court.

XXII. L'EROE CINESE. Represented for the first time by persons of distinction in the Imperial garden at Schonbrunn, 1752, to the music of *Bonno*. The heroic *loyalty* and *fidelity* of the principal personage in the piece, are such as must appear unnatural and excessive to Europeans unacquainted with the Chinese veneration for their princes and fathers of families.

XXIII. NITTETI. Written for the Court of Madrid, 1756. Set by *Conforti*. The heroism in this drama is wholly female. The character of *Beroe* is the triumph of Virtue, exhibiting an admirable example of generosity

rosity and fortitude in a female that is at once young, beautiful, full of sensibility, and in love! Though this is not one of Metastasio's best compositions, yet the delicacy of sentiment and expression of some of the songs, frequently equal those of his most celebrated productions.

XXIV. Il trionfo di Clelia. Vienna, 1762. Set by *Hasse*. *Patriotic enthusiasm* is the prominent feature in the opera of *Clelia*: a heroine neither coarse nor masculine. There are not, indeed, in this drama, those tender and touching strokes, those sentimental and elegant airs, and happy similes, which occur in most of his other theatrical pieces; but, if we recollect the Roman *costume* at the early periods of conquest, we shall find *la feroce virtu republicaine* admirably painted.

XXV. Romolo ed Ersilia. Written at Vienna, 1765, for the marriage of the Arch-duke Leopold, and set by *Hasse*. This drama, which has never been popular, is, however, not without infinite merit in its simplicity of plot and delicacy of sentiment. The hero determines to wave the exercise of power, in hopes of obtaining by affection what he could command as a conqueror; the heroine is ready to sacrifice every inclination and hope of felicity, rather than rebel against

the will of her father, and the rigid laws of her country.

XXVI. IL RUGGIERO, OVVERO L'EROICO GRATITUDINE. Written at Vienna, for the nuptials of the Arch-duke Ferdinand with the Princeſs of Modena; and firſt performed at Milan, 1771, to muſic compoſed by *Haſſe*. This was the laſt production of the great Poet, and excellent Muſician; who had both exceeded their 70th year. The *heroic gratitude* of *Ruggiero* towards a rival to his fame and love, who had generouſly ſaved his life and reſcued him from priſon, is the characteriſtic virtue of this drama. Superficial young critics have pretended to diſcover the coldneſs and ſterility of old age in the words and muſic of this opera; but however inferior to the more early productions of theſe illuſtrious authors, more intelligent and candid judges diſcovered ſcene and ſentiments in the poetry, and elegance and propriety in the muſic, of which, at the time they were produced, none but Metaſtaſio and Haſſe could have been the authors.

THE

THE present Work having been undertaken as a kind of supplement to the *General History of Music*, it is hoped that the musical reader will not be offended if a few reflections are added here concerning each class of Metastasio's poetical productions for music. And first, of the OPERA, or *Secular Musical Drama*, in the state to which it was brought by our Lyric Poet.

The most judicious critics of Italy, where the Melodrama is best understood, after analysing the dramas of this author, and witnessing the failure of his successors, are of opinion, that "good taste in theatrical representations in music was born and died with Metastasio." All the great Tragic Poets of Greece preceded the formation of the rules of the art by Aristotle. Rules are now drawn from the dramatic works of Metastasio, which can never be fulfilled but by imitation. And as poetry is derived from soul and sentiment, not from line and rule, and genius is an enemy to restraint and violence, whoever thinks it necessary to

imitate Metaſtaſio, even with equal genius, muſt be in trammels. And yet, if *he* is quite right, what can new candidates for dramatic fame, in writing for muſic, do better than to imitate him? It is impoſſible to diſcover new, eaſy, and pleaſant roads, in a country which he has ſo often interſected, without purſuing, or at leaſt croſſing, ſome of his paths.

Apoſtolo Zeno ſeems to have been the Eſchylus, and Metaſtaſio the Sophocles and Euripides of the modern Melodrama. What preceded and is ſubſequent to them, appears equally to partake of the wildneſs and weakneſs of their predeceſſors and ſucceſſors in Greece and Italy.

When any *ſtyle* of poetry or muſic is brought to perfection, little is left to be done for a long while, but to imitate and vary the thoughts and paſſages of that ſtyle. Milton's epic, Pope's ſatirical and epiſtolary ſtyle, in poetry, and Pergoleſi's in muſic, muſt be worn out and nearly forgotten, perhaps, before new ſtyles can be formed or favoured. Handel left nothing new to be done in *his* ſtyle of compoſition. Imitations are ever timid and feeble. What has been happily accompliſhed without rules or model,

del, cannot be achieved with the ſame energy, enthuſiaſm, and effect, by a *Receipt*: All great originals, ſuch as Homer, Pindar, and Shakſpeare, either preceded, or deſpiſed rules.

Novelty is wanting at preſent, both to Poetry and Muſic; but the time, or at leaſt the daring and inventive genius, is not yet arrived for either. The Oratorios of Handel, ſublime as are the choruſſes and many of the ſongs, from having been ſo often heard, have tired the public ear, and yet no other attempts are liſtened to with patience. It is ſo with opera airs and playhouſe ſongs: eternal imitation and repetition of what we have heard a thouſand and a thouſand times, renders our muſical theatres a confuſed and ill-bred *converſazione*, more than an intereſting performance of poetry and muſic (*x*).

Signor Saverio Mattei, in his diſſertation *on the Philoſophy of Muſic* (*y*), has made

(*x*) This complaint is confined to the generality of *Vocal Muſic*. The new Symphonies of HAYDN preclude all converſation, by their never-failing novelty, and the inexhauſtible fertility of his invention. Almoſt all other muſic is little more than a *Cento*, which can never grapple with *attention*.

(*y*) SALMI, Tomo V.

many just reflections on the declension of the musical drama in Italy, which are not totally inapplicable elsewhere. He says, that "every species of voice, from the ambition of soaring with the lark, and mounting to sublimity, has lost its true quality and character. The *Base* tries to rival the Tenor, the *Tenor* the Counter-tenor, the *Counter-tenor* the Soprano, and the *Soprano* the Flageolet, or bird-pipe.

The improvements in musical instruments and instrumental composition have been the ruin of vocal music. Instruments, for want of vocal expression, multiply notes and long divisions. But it degrades a singer to run races with hautbois, flutes, and fiddles. Let instrumental performers shew their power of hand, and the genius of their several instruments; but let not the human voice quit the sentiments and expressions of humanity, and the passions that belong to its nature: let instruments imitate birds and beasts; but let not the human voice imitate the tricks and tones of instruments, to which it should serve as a model: let its inflections be purely *vocal*, and such as will please, not disgrace, humanity.

Another observation of Signor Mattei,

 seems

ſeems naturally to account for the rapid decline of the Opera, as far as concerns Poetry and Muſic. "At preſent," ſays this judicious Critic, "the emoluments of the principal perſons employed in a muſical drama are ſettled in a direct contrary ratio to what they ought to be. At Naples, the manager of the Opera aſſigns to the firſt Dancer 2000 ſequins; to the firſt Singer 1000; to the Compoſer 200; and to the Poet 50; whereas the whole arrangement ſhould be reverſed: the higheſt ſalary ſhould be given to the Poet; the ſecond to the Compoſer; the third to the Singer; and the fourth to the Dancer." And perhaps, if theſe ſalaries were ſettled, like an Engliſh county election, by public ſuffrage, this would be the general opinion. As it is, ſays Signor Mattei, "Opera talents are proportioned to the pay: the dancer is better than the ſinger, the performance of the ſinger better than the intrinſic merit of the *ſcore* or compoſition, and the worſt of all is the poetry, ſtolen from Metaſtaſio, and totally ſpoiled by the poetaſter, who botches it together." From this ſtate of things it muſt appear in vain to hope for a good Opera, or a reform in the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem.

Subjects of dignity, heroiſm, and great paſſions, are ruined in the Italian Opera, by the kind of voice which ever claims the principal part. If, then, the ſtyle of ſinging were a little ſimplified, and ſelect *Tenor* voices, highly cultivated, were aſſigned the principal parts, the poetry would have its effect, as well as the muſic; and *Cato*, *Themiſtocles*, and *Regulus*, would appear with dignity and propriety, though they ſpoke in ſong (z). If the exquiſite voices and refinements in ſinging of the *Evirati* cannot be diſpenſed with, let them be employed in female parts, as is conſtantly the caſe at Rome, and as, in our Shakſpeare's time, was the caſe with all the female parts on our ſtage, which were performed by boys.

Italy, ever fertile in genius, cannot be in want of men of abilities equal to the difficult taſk of finding out a new path in an art thought to be already brought to perfection.

The preſent ſyſtem of giving the principal man's part to a *Soprano* voice, muſt confine the Poet to love, tenderneſs, and effemi-

(z) There can be no doubt but that the little ſucceſs and infrequency of the performance of theſe heroic dramas, were occaſioned by the principal part being written for a *Tenor* voice.

nate characters and paſſions. At preſent, the Italians condeſcend to imitate the noiſe, machinery, and *Balets analogues* of France; and theſe often ſupply the place of good poetry as well as muſic. A *Spectacle*, however ſplendid, muſt fatigue the eye, if the mind has nothing to do.

It ſeems neceſſary here to take ſome notice of the mutual complaints of Metaſtaſio himſelf, and his learned friend Mattei, of the neglect of Poetry and abuſe of Execution on the Opera Stage.

It is natural and juſt that poets ſhould wiſh to ſimplify *Dramatic Muſic*. But perhaps it would not be for the intereſt, even of the words, to ſtrip it of all ornaments and opportunities of diſplaying a fine voice and ſuperior vocal abilities. Some latitude may ſurely be given to the compoſer and performer in the airs, when it is conſidered that the whole buſineſs of the Drama, in carrying on the plot and developing characters in Metaſtaſio's Operas, is tranſacted in the *Recitatives*, and that the airs are merely recapitulations of each ſcene, and illuſtrations of the principal incident or affection on which it is founded. I would willingly ſacrifice all ſuperfluous ornaments and ſcience

in

in the compoſition of *Muſical Dramas*, but of reſpect to the POETRY; but I cannot join in the contempt which lyric poets put upon inſtrumental muſic in general. Good ſinging is infinitely more uncommon than good playing; and though the moſt pleaſing power an inſtrument can poſſeſs, is that of imitating the voice, yet both ſtringed and wind inſtruments of the firſt claſs have their peculiar qualities both of expreſſion and execution. The productions of Corelli, Geminiani, Handel, and Tartini, for violins, long gave lovers of muſic infinite delight, when well executed, without the aſſiſtance of the voice; and ſince their reign, the productions of Stamitz, Bach, Abel, Boccherini, Haydn, Vanhal, Pleyel, &c. have ſo much merit of compoſition, and effect in performance, that they not only make us forget our cares, but all the enchantments of vocal muſic.

SACRED DRAMAS,

OR,

ORATORIOS.

1. LA PASSIONE DI GIESU CRISTO. Written in 1730, at Rome, by order of the Emperor Charles VI. Set by *Caldara*, and performed in

in the Imperial Chapel at Vienna, in Paſſion-week.

II. SANT' ELENA AL CALVARIO. Written at Vienna for Paſſion-week, and ſet by *Caldara* for the Imperial Chapel, 1731.

III. LA MORTE D'ABEL. For the ſame place and occaſion, 1732. Set by *Reutter*.

IV. GIUSEPPE RICONOSCIUTO. Set by *Porſile*, for ditto, 1733.

V. BETULIA LIBERATA. 1734. *Reutter*, for ditto.

VI. GIOAS RE DI GIUDA. 1735. Ditto.

VII. ISACCO FIGURA DEL REDENTORE. 1740. Ditto.

Beſides the above ſeven Oratorios for the Imperial Chapel, he wrote a Sacred Drama, PER LA FESTIVATA DEL SANTO NATALE, at Rome, in 1727, for *Cardinal Ottoboni* (*a*), which was ſet by *Giovanni Coſtanza*, and performed in a theatre, with ſcenes, and in action (*b*).

Calſabigi (in the Preface to the Paris Edition of Metaſtaſio's Works, 1755) in ſpeaking of theſe Oratorios, ſays, that " Metaſta-

(*a*) It is ſaid, by ſome of Metaſtaſio's biographers, that *Cardinal Ottoboni* was his god-father, and that the Poet received the name of *Pietro* in honour of this illuſtrious ſponſor.

(*b*) In the *Nice* edition of theſe Oratorios, all the texts of Scripture are indicated in the notes.

ſio,

ſio, by adapting his beautiful poetry to ſacred ſtory, under the moſt ſevere laws of the Drama, has produced Tragedies as perfect as this kind of compoſition will allow." And Saverio Mattei, who is of the ſame opinion, and ſeems anxiouſly to wiſh for a theatre at Naples wholly appropriated to *Sacred Dramas*, during Lent, ſays, that "the Greeks went to a play as to a *ſpiritual exerciſe*, or as we go to a ſermon." And it is well known from Livy's account, that the Romans, in times of public calamity, flew to the theatre; and that the firſt introduction of Dramas with Muſic was occaſioned by the plague.

Mattei wiſhes the muſic of oratorios to be grave, learned, and ſublime. "Young muſicians (ſays he) are merely taught counterpoint; which is no more than *concordance* in grammar; but they know nothing of the *philoſophical* or *poetical* part of muſic. Their whole knowledge is mechanical, and they are never out of the grammar. As to different ſtyles of compoſition, they are ſeldom allowed to ſtudy any but that of their maſter. The vocal ſtyles of Vinci, Pergoleſi, Haſſe, Jomelli, Caſaro, and Piccini, are all different, yet all good."

In

In eſtabliſhing a *ſacred tragic theatre*, Mattei not only wiſhes the inimitable oratorios of Metaſtaſio to be new ſet by the greateſt maſters, without humouring the caprice of ſuch ſingers as are only capable of ſinging in one ſtyle, or of executing a particular paſſage or trick, which muſt neceſſarily be introduced in every ſong they ſing; but, above all, to have the poetry reſpected, and the precepts of *Joaſh*, *Joſeph*, *Judith*, &c. heard with reverence. His plan extends to the works of the moſt ſolid and ſcientific compoſers of the laſt age; ſuch as Leo, Haſſe, and Jomelli, which he would have revived, and performed without changing a ſyllable or a note (*c*).

Beſides his regular oratorios, in two parts, Metaſtaſio wrote ſeveral ſacred poems, which breathe great fervour of devotion (*d*).

ODE

(*c*) It does not appear that Signor Mattei wiſhes to have ſacred dramas performed in *action*; that would be a revival of *Myſteries* and *Moralities*. Oratorios have long been performed in ſeveral churches at Rome every Sunday evening, in the ſtill manner of HANDEL's Oratorios in England, but to a light and feeble muſic, and executed by an inferior band.

(*d*) Metaſtaſio was very firm in his religious faith, and diſcouraged ſceptical and light diſcuſſions of ſacred ſubjects:

ODE SOPRA IL SANTISSIMO NATALE; or, Ode for the birth of Christ.

PARAPHRASE ON THE MISERERE, or Fifty-first Psalm.

HYMN TO SAINT JULIAN.

This last was written about the year 1751, for the Italian chapel at Vienna, where it still continues to be sung. In a letter to his brother Leopold, about this time, he expresses his own pious rapture at the unexpected commission which Pope Benedict XIV had given him to inform the poet of his Holiness's paternal and benevolent remembrance. And, finding that the *servus servorum* was much pleased with his hymn to St. Julian, he says, "It is hardly to be imagined what pleasure the people of Roman catholic states in Germany, have in such spiritual songs, when allowed to sing them in their own language; or the raptures which pious sentiments, clothed in majestic harmony, excite. But it is not an enterprise for every one to attempt. With the assistance of *Jomelli*, and better health, I should

jects: telling his friends, that, "for the peace of his conscience, he found religious mysteries more easy to believe than to investigate."

be

be tempted to venture in this sea; but these are only *pia desiderata* (c)."

OCCASIONAL DRAMAS

FOR

MUSIC AND THEATRIC REPRESENTATION,

OF ONE AND TWO ACTS ONLY.

LA GALATEA, ENDIMIONE, ANGELICA; Serenatas, written at Naples between the year 1721 and 1723, and set by *Porpora*. These were never meant for action, but to be performed in still life, like our oratorios.

GLI ORTI ESPEREDI, written for the Empress Elizabeth's birth-day, 1721.

L'ISOLA DISABITATA, written in 1752, for the court of Spain, set by *Bosna*.

FESTE TEATRALE,

OR

FESTAL DRAMAS FOR MUSIC.

LA CONTESA DE'NUMI; or, Contention of the Gods, written at Rome, 1729, and set by

(c) His brother poet, our countryman, Mason, likewise writes divine hymns, and encourages metrical psalmody in our parish churches.

Vinci, for Cardinal Polignac, in celebration of the birth of the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI.

Il Tempio dell'Eternita, written at Vienna, for the birth-day of the Empreſs Elizabeth, and ſet by *Fouchs*, 1731.

L'Asilo d'Amore, written at Vienna, 1732, and ſet by *Caldara*; afterwards augmented, 1765, and new ſet by *Gaſman*.

Le Grazie vendicate, "Defence of the Graces," written at Vienna, for the performance of the two Arch-dutcheſſes, Maria Teresa, and Marianna, with a Lady of the Imperial court, on the Empreſs Elizabeth's birth-day, 1735. Set by *Caldara*.

Il Sogno di Scipione. "Scipio's Dream," written for the birth-day of the Emperor Charles VI, 1735. Set by *Predieri*.

Il Palladio conservato. Set by *Reutter*, 1735. Performed by two Arch-dutcheſſes and another Lady.

Le Cinesi. Written firſt for three Ladies only, at the Imperial court, 1735, and ſet by *Reutter*. But afterwards, with an additional character, it was performed by profeſſed ſingers, at the Prince of *Saxon-Hilburghauſen's*, in the preſence of their Imperial majeſties, Francis I, and Maria Thereſa, 1752.

Il Parnaso accusato, e difeso. Set by *Reutter*. Vienna, 1738.

La Pace fra la Virtù, e la Bellezza. For the

the birth-day of the Arch-dutchess MARIA THERESA, 1738. Set by *Predieri.*

In this little drama, VENUS's ELOGE on Beauty is admirable.

——————————Luce divina,
Raggio del Cielo è la Bellezza, e rende
Celesti anche gli oggetti in cui risplende.
Questa l'alma più tarde
Solleva al ciel, come solleva il sole
Ogni basso vapor. Questa a' mortali
Della penosa vita
Tempra le noje, e ricompensa i danni.
Questa in mezzo agli affanni
Gl'infelici allegra: in mezzo all'ire
Questa placa i tiranni: i lenti sprona,
I fugaci incatena,
Anima i vili, i temerarj affrena;
E del suo dolce impero,
Che letizia conduce,
Che diletto produce ove si stende,
Sente ognuno il poter, nessun l'intende.

The light divine of beauty's heav'nly ray
Gives power celestial wherefoe'er it shines;
The sluggish soul it renders light and gay,
As vapours gross the sun to mount inclines.

The ills of life it tempers, clears its gloom,
And pays the labour of the hardest toil;
Affliction cheers in fate's severest doom,
And sooths the horrors of defeat and spoil.

The fiercest tyrant's rage it soon can quell,
Can spur the slow, and chain the fugitive;
Can animate the dull, the rash repel,
And joy ineffable to all can give.

ASTREA PLACATA. For the Empress's birth-day, 1739. Set by *Predieri*.

IL NATAL DI GIOVE. For the Emperor's birth-day, 1740. Set by *Bonno*.

L'AMOR PRIGIONIERO. Vienna, 1741. Set by *Reutter*.

IL VERO OMAGGIO. Set by *Bonno*, 1743.

AUGURIO DI FELICITA. A cantata. Set by *Reutter*, and performed by three Arch-dutchesses, 1749.

LA RISPETTOSA TENEREZZA. For the performance of three Arch-dutchesses, on the Empress queen's birth-day, 1750. Set by *Reutter*.

TRIBUTO DI RISPETTO E D'AMORE. Performed by three Arch-dutchesses, on the Emperor's birth-day. Set to music by *Reutter*.

LA GARA. Performed by an Arch-dutchess, and two Ladies of the Imperial court, on the birth of the Arch-dutchess MARIA ANTONIA, afterwards queen of France, 1755. Set by *Reutter*.

IL SOGNO. Performed by the Arch-dutchess Marianna, and two Ladies, 1756. Set by *Reutter*.

LA

LA RITROSIA DISARMATA, Peevishness disarmed. Written for the court of Spain, 1759.

ALCIDE AL BIVIO. Written for the nuptials of the Arch-duke Joseph, 1760, and set to music by *Hasse*.

L'APE, or the Bee. Written for the court of Spain, 1760.

L'ATENAIDE, OVVERO AFFETTI GENEROSI. Written for the performance of five Arch-dutchesses. Set by *Bonno*, 1762.

EGERIA. Set by *Hasse*, for the coronation of Joseph II, king of the Romans, 1764.

IL PARNASO CONFUSO. Set by *Gluck*, and performed by four Arch-dutchesses, at the second nuptials of Joseph II, 1765.

LA CORONA, a drama of one act, for the performance of four Arch-dutchesses. Set by *Gluck*, 1765.

LA PACE FRA LE TRE DEE, a festal entertainment, written for the court of Spain, 1765.

PARTENOPE ditto, written at Vienna, for the marriage of FERDINAND IV, king of the two Sicilies, with the Arch-dutchess MARIA JOSEPHINA, 1767. Set by *Hasse*.

In these compositions, however short, we always find vivacity in the action and dia-

logue, grandeur and truth of character, a happy delineation of the affections, clearness, spirit, a melodious arrangement of the words and phrases, force in the recitatives, and elegance in the airs; the most sound philosophy in the sentiments, and fancy and good taste in the decorations and machinery. So that it is manifest, that it was the poet's wish at once to feed the imagination, delight the ear, enlighten the understanding, and move the heart.

These festal pieces, though too short for operas, or a whole night's entertainment, may be compared to the French *petites piéces*, or our short dramas (not farces) of one, two, or three acts.

It has been observed by an Italian critic (*d*), that, "In these short pieces the poet has frequently treated of serious and philosophical matters, too profound and complicated for a mixt audience in a public theatre: such as the immortality of the soul, harmony of the spheres, or of creation; but in all, we find the purest principles of virtue and morality given to the interlocutors, who

(*d*) Giamb. Aless. Moreschi.

were

were generally Arch-dukes and Arch-dutcheſſes."

Court poems, birth-day odes, &c. uſed to be compoſed of ſuch childiſh mythology, and nauſeous flattery, as no man of good taſte and ſound judgment would even deign to read; but theſe feſtal compoſitions of Metaſtaſio are ſuch, as not only the lovers of poetry, but moral philoſophers, will read with equal pleaſure.

CANTATAS.

The firſt cantatas which our author ſeems to have written, were twelve, which he produced expreſsly for Porpora, before he left Italy. Saverio Mattei avers that he has found a copy of theſe cantatas at Naples, with the muſic, in the hand writing of Porpora, who calls them twelve *Cantate dell' Abate Metaſtaſio.* In 1735, while this compoſer was in England, he publiſhed his muſic to theſe cantatas, in 4to, and dedicated them to his Royal Highneſs FREDERIC PRINCE of WALES. I have a copy of this work now before me; and though time has robbed the airs of ſome of their priſtine

novelty and grace, the recitatives are still admirable. Indeed, the Italian recitative, which received its last forms and polish chiefly from the elder SCARLATTI (Alessandro) and PORPORA, seems as fixed and permanent as a dead language; and, while melody is as fluctuating as the waves of the sea, recitative seems in stability to resemble *terra firma.*

The poetry of some of these cantatas was improved and polished by Metastasio, and published with others, in editions of his works, which, late in life, he superintended. Seventeen cantatas appear in the last Paris edition, which have been set by Sarti, Mortellari, and the principal composers of the present times.

Besides these, there appear in the *Nice* edition, two cantatas of a comic cast:

LA CIOCCOLATA,

ED

IL TABACCO,

Supposed to be written in his early youth; with two others, for two voices, in dialogue:

LA DANZA

ED

IL CICLOPE.

And

And the five following short pieces, written for the Imperial Court, which are likewise stiled CANTATAS:

I. LA VIRTUOSA EMULAZIONE. 1751. Set by *Reutter*.

II. L'AURORA, & L'ESTATE. Set by *Wagenseil*, 1759.

III. L'INVERNO, OVVERO LA PROVIDA PASTORELLA. 1760. Set by *Wagenseil*.

IV. IL QUADRO ANIMATO. 1760. *Wagenseil*, for two voices.

V. L'ARMONICA. 1769. Set by *Hasse* (e).

CANZONETTE.

CANZONETTA, for a dance of rustics, set by *Bonno*, in 1740, for the Arch-dutchess of Austria, Maria Theresa, afterwards Princess of Lorain, and other ladies of the Imperial Court.

I. LA PRIMAVERA, Spring. Written at Rome, 1719.

(e) This cantata was written by sovereign command, for Miss CECILIA DAVIES, to *sing* at the Imperial Court to the accompaniment of her sister, on the *Harmonica*, or *Glasses*.

II. L'ESTATE,

II. L'ESTATE, or Summer, 1724.
III. LA LIBERTÀ, à Nice. Written at Vienna, 1733.
IV. PALINODIA, à Nice, 1746.
V. LA PARTENZA. 1749.

SONNETS.

On the celebrated musical composer, GASPARINI, at Rome, 1719.
With Twenty-eight more, on various subjects and occasions.

Metastasio owns, in one of his letters, that he does not think his genius happily formed for a *Sonnetteer*; and it *does* seem, as if he had felt the restraint and difficulty of its construction. His sonnets being by no means so superior to those of other lyric bards, ancient and modern, as many of his more happy productions.

COMPLIMENTI.

These are short poetical felicitations, which were set to music by Hasse, Wagenseil, and Reutter, and performed at Court on birth-days,

days, by the Arch-dutcheſſes, before their Imperial Majeſties. They appear in the *Nice* edition, for the firſt time, among the poſthumous works of our author, eight in number, ſome for one, and ſome for two voices.

STROFE PER MUSICA,

DA CANTARSI A CANONE;

OR SHORT STANZAS TO BE SUNG IN ROUNDS, OR CANONS.

Theſe amount to Thirty-five, many of them appear in the Italian Collection of Catches, Rounds, and Canons, brought to England, by Boroſini, and publiſhed by Walſh, about the year 1748. Metaſtaſio is ſaid to have ſet thirty of them himſelf, in three parts, which are ſuppoſed to be in the poſſeſſion of his executors, the family of Martinetz.

INTERMEZZI.

Theſe, two in number, were written by our author in 1724, to be performed (as was

then the fashion) between the acts of his DIDONE ABBANDONATA. The dialogue is carried on with a considerable degree of humour, between a fantastical and capricious *Primadonna* (or first woman) and an absurd *Impresario* (or manager) of an opera.

SIFACE.

This is an old musical drama, of the last century, which was new written by Metastasio for the use of his friend and music-master, Porpora, at Venice, where it was performed, in 1725. We have an ample account of this labour in one of our author's letters.

These are his chief works that were written for music.

Of GIUSTINO, a tragedy, produced at fourteen years of age, on the Greek model, it has already been said, that it was not intended for music or recitative in the dialogue, though the choruſſes, which terminate each act, require measured melody. The resemblance observed (Vol. I. p. 7) between an incident in this tragedy, and Shakspeare's *Romeo* and *Juliet*, cannot ge-

 nerate

nerate a ſuſpicion of plagiariſm in Metaſtaſio, if it be remembered, that the plot of Shakeſpeare's tragedy was taken from Arthur Brooke's imitation of the Italian ſtory of *Giulietta*, by *Luigi da Porto* (*f*); and it was more likely for Metaſtaſio to copy this affecting circumſtance from his countryman, than from Shakſpeare, whoſe name, at this early period of his life had probably not arrived at his knowledge; and who had not availed himſelf of all the advantages of this afflicting incident, but let Romeo die, before Juliet revives. And, upon examination, it appears, from Metaſtaſio's own declaration, that the whole plot of his *Giuſtino* was taken from the *Italia liberata* of *Triſſino*.

Giuſtino, with all its imperfections, is perhaps the moſt grave, regular, and adcurate drama, that has ever been produced at ſo early a period of life.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

NOT INTENDED FOR MUSIC.

1. LA STRADA DELLA GLORIA. *Sogno.* The Path to Glory; a Dream. Written at Rome,

(*f*) See Malone's Edition of Shakſpeare, 8vo. 1790, Vol. IX.

in

in 1718, on the death of his Preceptor and Patron, *Gravina*; and read by the Author, at a public meeting of the Academy of the Arcadi.

II. LA MORTE DI CATONE. The Death of Cato.

III. L'ORIGINE DELLE LEGGI. The Origin of Laws. An Elegy.

These three Poems are written in *Terza Rima*, the versification of DANTE.

EPITALAMI.

I. On the Nuptials of the PRINCE and PRINCESS DI BELMONTE. Written at Naples, 1720.

II. On the Marriage of Signor D. Giambatista FILOMARINA, 1722.

III. On the Nuptials of Signor D. Francesco GAETANO, and Donna Giovanni SANSEVERINO. 1723.

IDYLLIUMS.

I. IL RATTO D'EUROPA.

II. IL CONVITO DEGLI DEI.

III. TETI

III. TETI, E PELÈO.

IV. ODE on the Imperial Residence at Schonbrunn.

V. I VOTI PUBBLICI, per Maria Teresa, Imperatrice Regina, 1766.

VI. LA PUBLICA FELICITA. On the Empress Queen's Recovery from the Small-pox. 1767.

VII. LA SCOMESSA. The Wager. 1755.

This Quatrain was written, by desire, on the following occasion:——The Empress Queen, when pregnant of her youngest daughter, afterwards Queen of France, laid a wager with Count DIETRIECKSTEIN, that the promised offspring would be an Archdutchess. As soon as brought to bed, her Imperial Majesty sent word to the Count, that *a Princess was born, and that two drops of water did not more resemble each other, than the Mother and her Child.* The Count paid his lost bet with a figure in porcelaine, representing his own person, kneeling on one knee, and holding in his right-hand the following verses, written on a small slip of paper:

Io perdei: l'Augusta Figlia
A pagar mi ha condanata;
Ma s'è ver che a Voi somiglia,
Tutto il mondo ha guadagnata.

The

The Wager's loſt—a Daughter's given!
And I ſubmit with joy unfeign'd;
For if like You this gift of Heaven,
The world entire a prize has gain'd.

VIII. VERSETTI. Lines ſent with ſome prints of the Poet's head, to the Marcheſa ZAVAGLIA.

Queſte poche immaginette
Sono, è vero, opre imperfette
D'un Artiſta dozzinale;
Ma per me gran pregio avranno
Se impedirvi almen ſapranno
D'obbliar l'Originale.

'Tis true theſe little off'rings ſeem
Unworthy objects of eſteem,
Thus clumſily engrav'd;
Yet bleſſings I ſhall on them ſhower,
If from oblivion, by their power,
Th' original is ſav'd.

IX. Madrigal for Prince HILBERGHAUSEN, to ſend to the QUEEN of ENGLAND, with an ivory ſhuttle, turned by himſelf.

TRANSLATIONS.

I. Tranſlation of a Greek Epigram.
II. ——— of the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, in Blank Verſe, with notes.

III.

III. Tranſlation of the Sixth Satire of the Second Book of Horace, in *Terze Rime*.

IV. ——— of the Fifth Epiſtle of the Firſt Book of Horace, in Stanzas.

V. ——— of the Third Satire of Juvenal.

The *Treatiſe on the Italian Theatre*, which Metaſtaſio promiſed *Bettinelli*, the Printer, ſoon after his arrival in Vienna, ſeems to have ended in his *Eſtratto della Poetica d'Ariſtotile*; of which, as it is his ſole work in Proſe, if we except his Letters, and being poſthumous, but little known, we ſhall terminate the Catalogue of his Works by ſome account.

VI. ESTRATTO DELL'ARTE POETICA D'ARISTOTILE, *e Conſiderazioni ſu la Medeſima*. An Abſtract of Ariſtotle's Art of Poetry, with Remarks.

Metaſtaſio's Introduction, to explain the object of this Abſtract, is the following:

" The reputation of Ariſtotle, eſtabliſhed and defended by the univerſal conſent and veneration of twenty-two centuries, if not due to the wonderful extent of his ſublime talents, and the immenſity of his acquaintance

with every ſpecies of ſcience, would have ſufficient weight to command the reſpect and gratitude of all ſubſequent times, if it were only remembered, that he was the firſt Philoſopher in all antiquity, that we know of, who was able to form a clear, minute, and indiſputable analyſis of human reaſon; and who, furniſhing it with diſtinctions and diviſions, as ſo many ſecure and neceſſary beacons, has diſcovered the road by which we may moſt ſafely and courageouſly travel in the ſearch of truth. The having recourſe, therefore, to ſuch an oracle in our doubts is laudable, eſpecially for Poets, whom he has particularly ſupplied with the rules of their art.

"Perſuaded from my earlieſt youth of this indiſpenſible duty, I propoſed to acquaint myſelf, fundamentally, with the poetical doctrines of ſuch a maſter; and for this purpoſe, it appeared to me, that the ſafeſt and moſt certain way to obtain this knowledge pure and uncorrupted, would be from the original fountain itſelf, whatever labour it might coſt me: but, perplexed every moment in the courſe of my labour, ſometimes with doubts concerning a rule which admitted of two ſenſes, ſometimes by the obſcurity of an ex-

preſſion which to me appeared myſterious; now by one precept being apparently contradictory to another, now by a new definition of the ſame ſubject, totally different from that which had preceded it, and by a hundred difficulties at every ſtep, wholly inſuperable to my limited faculties; I perceived, at length, with infinite mortification, that, with the inconſiderate temerity of a young man, I had unadviſedly plunged into difficulties, and purſued an intricate road, without companion or guide.

" I had recourſe, therefore, to the moſt learned and eminent critics and commentators of Ariſtotle's Poetics; and I ſhould be ungrateful if I did not confeſs myſelf indebted to them for the literal ſenſe of many obſcure paſſages in the text: but I ſhould likewiſe be very inſincere, if I did not declare, at the ſame time, that, after all my laborious reſearches, I found myſelf, to my great mortification, much leſs enlightened, nay, rather infinitely more perplexed, indetermined, and confuſed, than I was before. And, indeed, who could avoid being confounded by the conſtant diſagreement of men ſo reſpectable for their learning? Who could help being tired with ſeeking inſtruc-

tion in ſo many uſeleſs and prolix metaphyſical and ſcholaſtic treatiſes, in which the art they promiſe to illuſtrate is ſuffocated? Who could refrain from indignation, when ſearching in the Greek dramatiſts, and in Ariſtotle himſelf, for the paſſages cited by the moſt renowned critics as the foundation of their ſovereign deciſions, he finds them (as has frequently been my caſe) *diametrically oppoſite*, for the moſt part, to their opinions? And, beſides this, who could ſafely rely on men, however ſkilful in languages, that were totally without experience in theatrical matters, and yet convinced of their own infallibility?

"To extricate myſelf in the beſt way I was able, from ſo many doubts, and not entirely to loſe the fruits of my ſtudy and application, I determined rigorouſly to examine myſelf, and to re-peruſe, from the beginning, Ariſtotle's whole Poetics, extracting, chapter by chapter, whatever I could clearly underſtand; and confeſſing my ignorance and uncertainty as to the reſt; pointing out ſuch precepts as, though uſeful perhaps when given, the enormous change of manners, in ſuch a long period of time, has rendered impracticable; and diſcovering what

rules

rules have erroneouſly been aſſigned by modern legiſlators of the drama to the Greek tragedians, and even to Ariſtotle himſelf; and by this means form for my own uſe, from the text, a clearer and more diſtinct idea of the nature of *Poetry*, *Imitation*, and *Probability*, than is commonly received.

"The indiſpenſible duties of that employment to which I had for ſo many years been fortunately deſtined, had not, till now, allowed me ſufficient leiſure to execute this taſk as completely as I wiſhed: but ſince, I have not neglected, at ſhort intervals, to meditate on the ſubject as much as my neceſſary occupations would allow, and to collect together all the materials I was able towards the intended edifice. The day is at length come, when an unuſual repoſe has finally been granted me by my moſt gracious Sovereign; and I have now, as far as my powers would enable me, fully and exactly terminated my deſign.

"But Heaven forbid that I ſhould have the preſumption to think of forming by this extract a new Art of Poetry! The ſeducing rank of inventor has already produced more Arts of Poetry than will ever be read, or at leaſt ſtudied and put in practice: indeed,

they are more than ſufficiently numerous to confound, diſcourage, and wholly render dry and arid, the moſt happy, courageous, bold, and fertile genius, which the wiſdom of beneficent nature can produce.

"The ſole object of my labour, was, as much as poſſible, to juſtify my own conduct to myſelf, who am naturally (for my misfortune) the leaſt circumſpect of all my judges; and to procure the ſelf-conſolation of being convinced, that all thoſe defects from which an uninterrupted experience of more than fifty years, and the inceſſant endeavour to inſtruct myſelf, have not been ſufficient to exempt me, ſhould be numbered among the painful and inevitable conſequences of human weakneſs."

The title of our author's firſt chapter, is the following:

CHAP. I. "That Poetry is one of the arts of *Imitation*. In what it differs from other arts. Explanation of the terms *Metre*, *Rhythm*, *Harmony*, *Melody*, and *Modes*. Refutation of the opinion, that compoſitions written in proſe, can be called Poems. That it is not ſufficient for a poetical production to be harmonious, and in meaſure; it ought, likewiſe, to be noble and elegant."

His

His definitions of the technica of ancient music, particularly attracted my attention; and I was flattered to find that they generally agree with those that have been given in the *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients.* He likewise is of opinion, that the Greeks meant by *Armonia*, what we mean by *Melody*, founding his opinion upon a passage in Plato: *The regulation of the movement is called* RHYTHM; *but the regulation of the* voice (with respect to high and low) *is called* Harmony (*g*).

And this is Padre Martini's opinion: *Harmony*, with the ancients, meant the regulation of a single voice, with respect to the intervals of a given scale or key.

Melody, indeed, is not defined as in the Dissertation above-mentioned: Metastasio makes it only a more airy and elegant *kind* of melos; but Aristotle, in a passage which he has quoted from him (*b*), does not oppose *artificial* and *florid* melody to *simple* and *plain*, but *music sung* to *instrumental music*: for ψιλη μουσικη, or ψιλον μελος, *naked* music, seems always to imply *instrumental* music, or

(*g*) *De Legib.* Lib. ii.

(*b*) Τὸν δὲ μουσικὸν πάντες ἴσως φαμεν τῶν ἡδεσιν καὶ ψιλῆν ἁρμονίαν καὶ μετὰ μελῳδίας. Arist. Polit. Lib. viii. Cap. 5.

music without words. *Melodia*, is *melody sung*; that is, poetry sung.

Metastasio thinks *modo* sometimes confined to key, and sometimes to measure. Our old writers on music, down to Morley and Ravenscroft, applied the word *mood* only to time or measure; but the word *modo*, in Italian, always means key. To the terms *modus*, *tonos*, *tropos*, Metastasio gives great latitude, and refers to Padre Martini for more minute information. He seems of opinion, that, in antiquity, there was no poetry without *numbers*, or without *singing* (*i*). The *diverbii* of the ancient Romans, he calls *recitative*; and supposes that in the *cantici*, strophes, antistrophes, and epodes, as well as in the chorus when sung by all, or by a single actor, melody (or as we call it *air*) was used.

CHAP. II. Here our author treats "Of the different objects of imitation. Difficulty of determining what Aristotle meant by dividing imitable characters into *best*, *worst*, and *middle* class of good and bad."

(*i*) In modern times, however, in the church, and in many of our oratorios, prose is sung to measured music.

CHAP.

CHAP. III. "Of the various ways in which Poets may avail themſelves of the means and ſubjects of Imitation. In what reſpects Homer and Ariſtophanes reſemble each other. Reaſons aſſigned by different people of Greece, for arrogating to themſelves the invention of the drama."

CHAP. IV. Poetry is deduced "from the natural inclination which men have to imitation and ſong. Proofs of this opinion produced by Ariſtotle: other proofs not given by him, with regard to muſic, which, perhaps, he did not think neceſſary. Differences between an *imitation* and a *copy*; the ignorance of which diſtinction, produces the greateſt abſurdities. Indiſpenſible neceſſity of ſong (muſical tones) in ſpeaking to the public. Proofs that all dramas, comedies, as well as tragedies, were ſung throughout by the Greeks and Romans, are given by Metaſtaſio from ten different ancient authors. Examination of the opinion of Ariſtotle, that Sophocles perfected tragedy, by the introduction of a third perſonage on the ſtage."

Our author has manifeſted much learning and ingenuity in the courſe of this chapter. He is, in general, clear and intelligible on

the ſubject of Imitation: allowing a natural tendency in human creatures, above all other animals, to imitation. "On the ſtage, we imitate all kinds of characters, good and bad. We can even imitate the noiſes of inferior animals."

His Eloge of Muſic, after ſaying that the love of it is a natural inſtinct of humanity, entirely coincides with my own.

"Who can doubt (ſays he) of the efficacy of Muſic on our minds? Who is it, that has not felt its effects on himſelf, and obſerved them in others? Who ſees not that our paſſion for this art has introduced it into all human actions? In the ſervice of religion, in feſtive aſſemblies, in funeral pomp, and even in military fury, muſic has a conſiderable ſhare. The moſt barbarous and ſavage nations are pleaſed with it: infants liſten to it even in the cradle, before the ſenſes are perfect, and it calms their complaints. The criminal in a dungeon, the ſlave in chains, ſeeking alleviation from their affliction and labour, find it in ſong (*k*)."

(*k*) See Preface to *Preſent State of Muſic in France and Italy*, publiſhed twelve years before theſe extracts appeared, and anterior to the author's interview with Metaſtaſio.

Crura

Crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus.
Tibull. L. ii. Elig. 7.

—— The fetter'd slave, the drudge of fate,
Sings, shakes his irons, and forgets his state.
GRANGER.

Metastasio gives further reflections from "the ingenious and acute Castelvetro," on the necessity of addressing persons at a distance, in musical tones (*l*). His proofs from Aristotle, Cicero, Livy, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Suetonius, Donato, &c. have almost all been previously cited in the *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*, from the same places, in favour of the opinion, that all the ancient dramas, tragic and comic, were entirely sung, and accompanied by instruments.

Dramatic poetry is not only the *imitating* the characters and manners of men, but the imitation of another art: that of music. As, according to Metastasio, "there is no poetry without music: the arrangement of words, and different metres, is music." In painting, indeed, an artist has natural objects to copy; in poetry, he has them to

(*l*) See *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*.—Chap. on Dramatic Music.

describe;

deſcribe; but what, it may be aſked, has a muſician, in *nature*, to *imitate*? Does muſic, in its nature, imitate poetry? I never could clearly underſtand Ariſtotle's meaning, as to muſic being an *imitative art*. Is it an imitation of poetry, in its meaſures and rhythm; and in the tones of ſpeech, lengthened, poliſhed, and impaſſioned?

But my learned and excellent friend, the Rev. T. Twining, in the Second Diſſertation prefixed to his Tranſlation and Notes on ARISTOTLE'S TREATISE ON POETRY, has cleared this matter up more to my ſatisfaction than Metaſtaſio, or any of Ariſtotle's commentators that I have ſeen.

The title of my friend's Diſſertation is this: "On the different Senſes of the Word *Imitative*, as applied to Muſic by the Ancients and Moderns." In which he confines muſical *imitations*, to the raiſing *emotions* and *ideas*. And I think the former will include the *paſſions*. There are mere inſtrumental movements, which awaken ideas of *joy*, *ſorrow*, *tenderneſs*, *melancholy*, *ſolemnity*, *contrition*, *military ardor*, &c. Thus far it may be allowed the title of an *imitative art*. As to muſic *imitating* human ſpeech, which Dr. Beatie denies, but which Mr. Twining ſeems

to

to have eſtabliſhed, as much as a matter that depends on fancy, feeling, and preſent humour, *can* be eſtabliſhed; it is an opinion to which I ſubſcribe (*m*).

Indeed,

(*m*) Mr. Twining, in his Second Diſſertation, p. 51, ſpeaking of the *imitative* powers of muſic, with admirable ingenuity, has aſſigned a uſe for the ancient *enharmonic genus*, which ſeems more probable than any thing which has hitherto been ſuggeſted on that dark ſubject. "*Dramatic* muſic (ſays he) is often *ſtrictly imitative*. It imitates, not only the *effect* of the words, by exciting correſpondent *emotions*, but alſo the *words* themſelves *immediately*, by tones, accents, inflexions, intervals, and rhythmical movements, *ſimilar* to thoſe of ſpeech. That this was peculiarly the character of the *dramatic* muſic of the ancients, ſeems highly probable, not only from what is ſaid of it by ancient authors: but from what we know of their muſic *in general*; of their ſcales, their *genera*, their fondneſs for *chromatic* and *enharmonic* intervals, which approach ſo nearly to thoſe ſliding and unaſſignable inflexions (if I may ſo ſpeak) that characterize the melody of ſpeech."

It may be thought too fanciful, perhaps, but it ſeems to me, as if dancing, muſic, and poetry, were reciprocally imitations of each other; it is certain, at leaſt, that they are nearly connected, and reſemble each other; muſic imitates the ſteps of a dance, and the numbers of verſe. Hence poetical proportions are, perhaps, called *feet*, and muſical, *rhythm*. Muſical meaſures, times, accents, and bars, are equally wanted by all the three arts; and all three mutually aſſiſt each other in the Italian *ballata* (whence our word

Indeed, I have long experienced and allowed, that by ſlow, quick, gay, and ſorrowful movements, muſic, without words, can excite ſenſations of various kinds, and remind us of former events and feelings. Farther than this, muſic does not ſeem an *imitative art*. If it imitates any thing human, important, and impreſſive, it is perhaps, the cry of paſſion, whether of joy or ſorrow. It can laugh and be gay; it can grieve and lament, with a little help of imagination. When it has words to expreſs, it ſhould be the compoſer's and performer's ambition to lengthen and tune the tones of ſpeech and paſſion; to imagine what tones of voice, in a certain ſituation, would beſt, in the language of muſic, excite and enforce the ideas to be expreſſed.

The movements in muſic, and meaſures in poetry, have ſo great an affinity, that their rhythmical effects ariſe from the ſame cauſe. An heroic verſe, in grave and ſolemn ſubjects, reſembles muſical movements in *adagio*, *grave*, and *largo*, in common time. This may be purſued to a much greater

word *ballad*) which originally implied an air that was ſung to words, and danced at the ſame time.

extent

extent than we have room for here (*n*). But as far as concerns Ariſtotle's doctrine, Mr. Twining's extenſive learning and reading, joined to his knowledge, practice, and experience in muſic, have enabled him to explain this hitherto dark and unintelligible ſubject, better than a mere ſcholar, or muſician, however deep in his particular faculty, could poſſibly have done.

CHAP. V. of Metaſtaſio's *Eſtratto*, treats "Of comedy and its authors. Of *comédie larmoiante*, or ſentimental comedy. In what particulars epic poems and tragedies agree, and in what they differ. Of the *unity* of *time*, of *fable*, and of *place*." In this chapter, the *unities* are admirably explained, and their doctrine, to my comprehenſion, well confuted, and relinquiſhed, by Metaſtaſio; who has proved, that the Greek tragic writers themſelves had no ſuch narrow limits. He gives the *time* and *place* of the chief dramas of antiquity, Greek and Latin, in all which theſe unities are violated. The unity of action or fable, ſeems more particularly

(*n*) M. Marpurg, of Berlin, has written a Treatiſe in German, on the comparative length and accents of muſical notes, and lingual ſyllables. *Anleitung zur Singcompoſition*, 4to. 1758.

recom-

recommended by Ariſtotle, and more conſtantly obſerved than either of the other two, by the ancients. This precept, Metaſtaſio tells us, he has himſelf obeyed, as much as poſſible: "as the fixing the attention of the ſpectator upon one illuſtrious and intereſting character, muſt produce a more ſenſible and perfect effect, than when divided." But even this rule, he ſays, muſt be conſtrued with diſcretion and exceptions, or elſe what would become of the beautiful epiſodes of Homer and Virgil, and the ſecondary characters in the ancient dramas? Metaſtaſio, in his more than fifty years ſtudy and experience, has by his works, diſcovered what *can* be practiſed with effect, and what ought to be avoided, better than all the poetics of mere theoriſts, can ever teach to dramatic writers (*o*).

CHAP.

(*o*) Mr. Twining, in a liberal and comprehenſive note on that part of Ariſtotle's poetics which treats of the UNITIES, after proving that Dacier, and other commentators, have erroneouſly aſſerted that the Stagirite literally and rigorouſly meant by the *unity of time* to confine the action of a tragedy to the limits of a *ſingle day*, or nearly ſo; and that the Greek tragic writers *have always adhered to this rule*, ſays: "For this, and other inſtances of the ſame kind, I muſt content myſelf with referring the reader

to

CHAP. VI. " Definition, division, and explanation, of the several parts of tragedy. Purgation of the passions considered—and whether it is produced only by means of terror and compassion?"

CHAP. VII. " Of the component parts and length of tragedy."

CHAP. VIII. " The unity of hero (the principal character) does not imply unity of action."

CHAP. IX. " Difference between a poet and an historian. A piece in verse, though the subject is neither epic nor dramatic, is nevertheless a poem. Of episodic fables. Of surprize, and its different degrees."

CHAP. X. " Division, and explication of fables. Defence of Corneille."

to the sensible and well written *Estratto della Poetica d'Aristotile*, published among the posthumous works of Metastasio, and which did not fall into my hands, till all my notes were written. It contains many ingenious and sagacious observations. The subject of the dramatic unities, in particular, is discussed at large; and, I think, in a very masterly and satisfactory way. And, with respect to the strict unities of *time* and *place*, he seems perfectly to have succeeded in shewing, that no such rules were imposed on the Greek poets by the critics, or by themselves—nor *are* imposed on *any* poet, either by the *nature* or the *end* of the dramatic imitation itself."

CHAP. XI. "Of discoveries and revolutions, and their different kinds and effects. Of passion. Doubts concerning the modern French rule, of not shedding blood on the stage."

CHAP. XII. "Of the length and proportion of the several parts of tragedy. Of the chorus. Of the number of acts and personages. Of the airs in modern operas."

The chorus, for the loss of which the enthusiasts for antiquity make such heavy complaint, was originally a religious hymn to Bacchus, at the time of vintage. The acts of the drama were long called *episodes*, after they became of more consequence than the chorus itself; but the public, long used to them, would not suffer a drama to be performed without a chorus, even when it had no connexion with the fable. At length, it became so vulgar and uninteresting, that, like a company of modern psalmodists in a country church, the choral singers were left in the midst of their performance by the audience, at the end of the piece, who would not stay to hear them longer than they could help. But though Metastasio censures the absurdity of this permanent chorus to every drama, he does not think it necessary to

banish

baniſh every ſpecies of chorus from the ſtage. "The theatre would loſe the privilege of availing itſelf with dignity, delight, and probability, of a chorus in ſacrifices, triumphs, feaſts, and on many ſimilar occaſions, in which it is extremely natural to ſuppoſe, that many perſons may concur in the ſame ſentiments, and expreſs themſelves in the ſame words." He gives many other inſtances, where a chorus may be introduced with propriety.

He then proceeds to conſider the number of acts, into which a dramatic fable ſhould be divided; and diſputes the rule which ſeems to be laid down by Horace for five acts; ſhewing, from a paſſage in one of Cicero's letters, that the uſual number of acts in that orator's time, was three. And this was ſo long eſtabliſhed into a law for operas in Italy, that ſeveral attempts at five acts, were there much diſcountenanced. The late philoſopher, Diderot, was of opinion, that three acts would be the beſt diviſion of every drama: as they furniſhed a *beginning*, a *middle*, and an *end* (*p*). However, to ſave the expence and trouble of a third DANCE

(*p*) This diviſion includes the perfect *whole*, required by Ariſtotle.

(at present the most attractive part of an opera) the whole business of musical dramas, whatever it may be, must constantly be huddled into *two acts*. Metastasio candidly and liberally says, that "the number of acts in every drama should more depend on the business to be transacted, than on rule and custom." But that operas, originally written in three acts, like all those of this poet himself, should be cut, mangled, and *crushed*, rather than compressed, into *two acts*, for no better reason, is treating the remains of the venerable bard with the utmost indignity, not to say stupid barbarity.

After an ample discussion of the chorus and number of acts and characters, in the ancient tragedy, Metastasio says: "Before we quit these subjects, it may be necessary to enquire into the *Revolutions* of the chorus, and to what end its different motions were established; sometimes moving to the left, like the *primum mobile*; sometimes revolving, like the planets, to the right; and sometimes remaining stationary, like the earth. But of the use and beauty of these astronomical representations, invented by the ancients, or ascribed to them by the ingenuity of modern critics, let every one judge

for

for himſelf. All that ſeems neceſſary for us to ſay on this ſubject, is, that (in performing the odes) the ſongs or ſtanzas which the chorus ſung in theſe revolutions, took the names of *ſtrophe*, that is, *revolution*; *anti-ſtrophe*, *counter-revolution*; and *epode*, *addition to the ſong*. That the poet, in writing theſe ſtrophes, antiſtrophes, and epodes, compoſed them in a different meaſure from the reſt of the tragedy; ſometimes quitting the Iambic, availing himſelf of the more quick and lively anapæſtic and trochaic feet; connecting together a certain determinate number of verſes, adapted to a particular periodical melody, which might be often repeated to other words in the ſame meaſure and cadence: that this more artificial muſic, which took its name from the revolutions above-mentioned, was not only ſung by the chorus alone, but ſometimes by turns with the actors, and ſometimes by the actors without the chorus. And finally, it is obſervable, that theſe determinate melodies, which may be repeated to different words, are exactly of the ſame kind as the odes, ſongs, and canzonets, in Italy, which have been faithfully preſerved in their form and name, being ſtill univerſally called *ſtrofe* and *ſtro-*

fette. Now what elſe are the AIRS of our muſical dramas, but the ancient *ſtrophes* (*q*)? And why ſuch an out-cry againſt theſe viſible and manifeſt relics of the Greek theatre; and from thoſe very learned folks, who are always recommending to us the imitation of it?

CHAP. XIII. "Of the Protagoniſtes, or principal character, and of the unhappy cataſtrophe, recommended by Ariſtotle."

CHAP. XIV. "Of terror, compaſſion, and the wonderful. Of the different kinds of tragical actions."

Ariſtotle allows of but four events, that are proper ſubjects for tragedy. The *firſt* is when the principal perſonage knows the evil which he or ſhe is perpetrating: as Medea, when ſhe murders her children.

The *ſecond*, when the hero or heroine is ignorant of the atrocious deed, till after it is committed: as Oedipus, Alcmœon, and Telegonus.

(*q*) This deſcription ſeems almoſt to fit our old opera ſongs, in times of *da capo*, if the ſtrophe and antiſtrophe be imagined the firſt and ſecond ſtrain of the air, and the epode, *the addition to the ſong.* And a number of verſes to the ſame periodical melody, reſembles our ballads, or ſongs of many ſtanzas, to each of which the ſame air is repeated.

The

The *third*, when the perſonage, through ignorance, is on the point of committing ſome horrid action, but is prevented by a ſudden diſcovery, as Merope and Iphigenia.

The *fourth* (which Ariſtotle regards as the worſt and moſt contemptible) when a character is about to commit a crime, but ſtops ſhort at the inſtant he is going to execute his deſign: as Hæmon, in the Antigone of Sophocles, who was determined to kill his father.

" Now this fourth tragic circumſtance (ſays Metaſtaſio) which is ſo much diſapproved by Ariſtotle, appears to me (with all due deference to ſo great a maſter) capable of being excellently treated. If Hæmon, for example, when in the laſt agonies near his dying Antigone, ſhould have ſuddenly ſeen his father Creon appear, who had ſo unjuſtly and barbarouſly been the cauſe of her death, and in a blind impetus of paſſion had determined to kill him, but in the very act of giving the blow, overcome by the paternal looks and voice, which he had been accuſtomed to reverence, had found himſelf unable to ſummon courage ſufficient to overcome the compunctions of nature and long habits; and, therefore, being unable to ſave

his wife, or to avenge her death, in the violence of his rage and despair, if he had killed *himself*, the catastrophe would have been one of the most spirited and affecting, that can be imagined: since it would express at once the highest degree of interest, which love, nature, rage, and despair, united, could produce. Nor would there be wanting the indispensible Aristotelian *pathos*, that is, the emotion which arises from the view of the dying and the wounded."

With respect to confining all the sensations excited by tragedy, to terror and pity, Metastasio says: "All the just respect which I feel for this great philosopher, is not sufficient to convince me, that tragedy, in its operations, can avail itself of no other instruments than Terror and Compassion. It appears to me, that the admiration of virtue, under a thousand different aspects; as friendship, gratitude, patriotism, fortitude, generosity to foes, and innumerable other modifications; as well as the abhorrence of the vices of the human heart, which often impede and oppose these virtues; all these, I say, appear to me efficacious, and fair means of affording delight and instruction, without eternally condemning the spectator

to

to tremble with horror, or weep with affliction."

From this paſſage, and from the whole tenour of his life and writings, it is manifeſt, that Metaſtaſio was no *terroriſt*. And though Ariſtotle, in the thirteenth chapter of his Art of Poetry, has pronounced, " *that* to be the beſt conſtructed tragedy which ends *unhappily*;" yet Mr. Twining, in his notes on this chapter, after allowing that " nothing ſeems more juſt, or more accurately expreſſed, than Ariſtotle's idea of the end of tragedy; that it is *to give that pleaſure, which ariſes from pity and terror, through* imitation" — *την ἀπο ἐλεης και φοβε δια μιμησεως ἡδονην παρασκευαζειν*—Cap. xiv. (Tranſl. P. II. ſect. 13.) very much to my ſatisfaction, adds, " but the Greek tragedians will be thought, I believe, by moſt modern readers, to have ſometimes puſhed this principle rather too far, and to have excited a degree of horror, which even the charms of imitation cannot well be conceived to have ſoftened into pleaſurable emotion; and it appears to to me, that Ariſtotle himſelf inclined to this opinion, and that he intended this chapter as a leſſon of caution to the poets againſt this exceſs. He ſeems plainly to have conſidered

the *actual* murder of a mother, a ſon, a brother, and the like, as incidents rather too horrible to be exhibited in *any* way. If the deed *muſt* be done, let it, he ſays, if poſſible—if the ſtory will permit it—be done ignorantly. But it will be ſtill better, if you can avoid doing it entirely; if you can contrive to make the *expectation*, combined with the *atrocioufneſs* of the event expected, anſwer your purpoſe, by raiſing as much anxiety, commiſſeration and terror in the ſpectator, as may conſiſt with the *pleaſure* which is the end of tragedy, and then relieving him at laſt, by prevention, at the very moment of execution." And this has been almoſt invariably the practice of Metaſtaſio.

The excellent interpreter and commentator of Ariſtotle, juſt quoted, has cited a paſſage from Rouſſeau, againſt the exceſs of *tragical terroriſm*, which ſeems perfectly in uniſon with Metaſtaſio's opinion on the ſubject. In concluding his *Nouvelle Eloiſe*, the citizen of Geneva ſays: "I am unable to conceive what pleaſure the authors of many of our tragedies can take, in imagining characters ſo full of wickedneſs and horror, and *putting themſelves in the place of thoſe they repreſent*,

repreſent, making them act and ſpeak ſuch things, as it is impoſſible to ſee or hear without ſhuddering."

With reſpect to the uſual practice of terminating operas *happily*, it may afford ſome gratification to the curioſity of thoſe who intereſt themſelves in ſuch exhibitions, to trace it from the firſt dramas of modern times, that were recited in muſic.

Rinuccini, author of *Eurydice*, the firſt regular opera, treated the well-known ſtory of Orpheus differently from Virgil, in order to terminate his piece *happily*. In this drama, Orpheus obtains Eurydice from the ſhades, by the power of ſong, *unconditionally*: indeed, the author apologizes to his patroneſs, Mary of Medicis, in celebration of whoſe nuptials with Henry IV of France, in 1600, it was written, for having dared to alter the termination of the fable of Orpheus; juſtifying himſelf by its being a time of jubilation; and adding, that it was the practice of the Greek poets in other fables: Sophocles, in his Ajax, had deviated from Homer in a ſimilar manner. Rinuccini, eight years after, wrote a ſecond opera, ARIANNA, which he calls a tragedy, though this likewiſe terminates *happily*, by comforting the unfortunate

unfortunate princeſs, who had been abandoned by Theſeus, with a celeſtial ſpouſe, in the character of "Bacchus, ever fair and young."

Theſe two firſt muſical dramas, perhaps, ſerved as models for ſubſequent exhibitions of the ſame kind: for in examining a complete collection of all the operas that have ever been performed at Venice, from 1637 to the preſent time, "Medea's murdering knife" ſeems never to have been uſed; and the Protagoniſtes, contrary to the precept of Ariſtotle, generally proceeds from *bad* to *good*, and not from bad to worſe, or from happineſs to miſery (*r*).

Not one of Apoſtolo Zeno's numerous operas, has an unhappy cataſtrophe; and out of twenty-ſix dramas of Metaſtaſio, only three, *Dido*, *Cato*, and *Atilius Regulus*, terminate in a diſaſtrous manner. When Cato was firſt performed at Rome, in 1728, and killed himſelf in the third act, the piece

(*r*) Indeed the modern *Pyramus* and *Thiſbe*, died like two ſwans, in an opera of that name, in 1774; they were half an hour in the tuneful agonies of death: and the performers *Rauzini* and the *Schindlerin*, being reſuſcitated by an *encore*, delighted the audience with their own *death-ſong*, a ſecond time.

was

was ill-received; and the next day, an advertiſement was found on the ſtatue of Paſquin, "inviting the company of death to the funeral of Cato, who lies *extinct* in the Theatre *delle Dame*."

It has been ſaid that the emperor Charles VI, having an utter averſion to terrific terminations of the dramas that were performed at his court, and wiſhing to ſend the audience home in good humour from the theatre, Stampiglia, the imperial laureat, and his ſucceſſors, Apoſtolo Zeno, and Metaſtaſio, to gratify the taſte of their patron, reverſed the Ariſtotelian canon, and changed the fortune of their heroes from *bad* to *good*. But this ſeems to have been the general practice of much more ancient lyric poets than theſe. In all Metaſtaſio's beſt dramas, which terminate with the happineſs of the principal characters, there are previous ſcenes of infinite diſtreſs and pathos, ariſing from events and ſituations of ſuffering virtue. To ſee a magnanimous and virtuous character, after great trials and ſufferings, by which he has gained our affection, paſs from miſery to a ſtate of happineſs, is more inſtructive, as well as more grateful, to the human heart, than the death of villains, or of thoſe

who,

who, like Oedipus, ſuffer every ſpecies of woe for inevitable crimes, committed through ignorance. It is rather *danger* than *terror*, which awakens our pity in the tragedies of Metaſtaſio.

The cavalier Planelli (*s*), one of the beſt Italian writers on the melodrama, or opera, ſays: that "the diminiſhing the horrors of tragedy, whatever *Miſanthropes* may ſay, is a certain proof of the progreſs which urbanity, clemency, and benevolence, have made in modern times. The ancient Greeks, deſcended from the barbarous and ferocious nations which firſt inhabited that country, retained, in their moſt civilized cities, a taſte for terrific and ſanguinary exhibitions. The tragedies which remain of the three great models, all breathe that national ſpirit. The characters, indeed, in theſe dramas, are magnanimous and grand; but, at the ſame time, impetuous and inhuman. To move a people, accuſtomed to horror, it was the buſineſs of tragedy to adopt fables, full of the moſt atrocious and diſaſtrous events, or little attention or ſucceſs could be expected from their repreſentation. But modern tra-

(*s*) *Dell'Opera in Muſica Trattato.* Napoli. 1772. 8vo.

gedy,

gedy, cultivated by a people many ages civilized, friends to commerce, hospitable to strangers, and professing a religion which inspires charity, mildness, peace, compassion, and beneficence, if it did not diminish atrocity, would disgust, beyond the power of poetry and music to suppress."

Metastasio certainly meant this *Estratto* and commentary as an apology for deviating from the Stagirite in his own practice, though he had not the courage to publish it. But in writing for modern music, he surely had powerful reasons for extending the subjects of his dramas beyond mere terror and compassion, to which Aristotle, and his implicit followers, think all tragedy should be confined. Our poet has, indeed, successfully violated this canon of the ancient dramatic legislator, by exciting an interest in the sufferings and rewards of every public and social virtue: subjects more appropriated to musical expression, than the terrors excited by atrocious crimes and dire calamities. This is still adhering to another assertion of Aristotle: that the chief end of tragedy is *to purge the passions*. The mental cathartics indeed of the modern lyric bard are not violent, but rather lenient and anodyne, than

cauſtics or ſtimulants. The ridicule frequently thrown upon ſinging in pain, diſtreſs, and miſery, by perſons ignorant that ancient tragedies, with all their terrors, were conſtantly *ſung*, was a ſufficient motive to Metaſtaſio to try to enlighten the public, by his remarks on particular doctrines of Ariſtotle. Indeed, thoſe who either hear or peruſe the dramas of Metaſtaſio, with a determination to allow him no merit, but that to which he is intitled by his implicit obedience to the decrees of Ariſtotle and of French critics, or the ſervile imitation of the ancient Greek poets, rob him of much juſt praiſe, and themſelves of pleaſure, in not giving way to their own reaſon and feeling, inſtead of judging by line and rule. The delight which he has excited on the ſtage, with the aſſiſtance of muſic, and in the cloſet, with that of unbiaſſed taſte and ſenſibility, ſeems juſtly to intitle him to more praiſe as an *original* writer, than *could* be due to him for mere claſſical larceny or imitation. What but oblivion, did his learned preceptor Gravina acquire by his tragedies, written exactly on the Greek model? Our countryman, Mr. Maſon's tragedies on that plan, will ever be

admired

admired, in perusal, for the exquisite beauty of the poetry; but it is yet a doubt, whether they will ever have due justice done them on the stage, for which, indeed, he never intended them, nor did he expect they could succeed in representation, as originally written.

It has been said, that Mr. Gray used to dispute the merit of Metastasio; and would not allow his dramas to be legitimate tragedies, or any thing more than mere sketches, or outlines of tragedy, compared with the expanded dramas of his favourites, Racine and Voltaire. His friend, Mr. Mason, has lately been more liberal, in acknowledging the merit of the Italian lyric poet, in a note (p. 102) of his ingenious *Essays on English Church Music.* "How great a dramatic writer (says he) would Metastasio have been, if not compelled, in subserviency to his musical composers, to furnish them only with *Libretti!* It must, however, be allowed, that his lyrical dramas, as originally written, in respect to theatrical contrivance, and judicious developement of the story, infinitely excel the generality of our modern tragedies."

 But

But besides the merit allowed him by Mr. Mason, the beauty of Metastasio's sentiments and poetry, have been the admiration of all Europe, for more than fifty years.

Modern music is, perhaps, too florid for narrative poetry. The airs certainly impede the business of the drama, and usurp an attention of another kind. It is doubtless true, that if music had been out of the question, Metastasio's dramas might have been easily more expanded, and rendered fitter for declamation, and, perhaps, perusal. But one of the greatest difficulties which Metastasio had to encounter, and for the vanquishing of which he has been the most admired by those who have studied the musical drama, was the compressing the fables he chose, into so small a compass, yet rendering all his plots clear, his principal characters strongly marked and consistent, and his sentiments tender, nervous, or philosophical, as occasion required.

If Metastasio, in writing for music, had expanded sentiment in such long speeches, as those of which Mr. Gray has left us examples, in the Fragment of his *Agrippina*, his dramas might have been called *fine tragedies*, but would never have succeeded as *operas*, in which sentiment is expanded by

vocal

vocal expreſſion, ariſing from ſituation, more than by *verbal articulation* (*t*).

Regarded as pieces for *declamation*, the characters and ſentiments are not ſufficiently expanded; but, as *muſical dramas*, they are in all reſpects the moſt perfect that have ever been produced.

(*t*) *Giulio Strozzi*, one of the early lyric poets of Venice, in his *Delia*, an opera performed in that city, 1639, entirely in recitative, ten years before any thing like an *air* was attempted; after ſaying, in an advertiſement at the end of the *Libretto*, that he had cut out more than 300 verſes in the repreſentation of his opera, that he might not abuſe the patience of the audience, adds, that "it is the duty of a poet to relinquiſh his *flouriſhes* and *diviſions (ſue Gorghe)* which are his digreſſions and epiſodes, to make room for the diviſions *(paſſaggi)* of the ſingers." No time is kept in recitative; ſo that the ſinger was allowed to dilate and embelliſh ſentiment, *ad libitum*. A poet was then more at the mercy of the ſinger, than of the compoſer; and when vocal powers are great, and (as often happens) out-run propriety and diſcretion, the performer will not wait for moments of paſſion to diſplay his taſte, execution, and expreſſion, but will riot in *florid ſong*, whenever a liquid ſyllable or open vowel ſhall occur. Marcheſi has revived this primitive cuſtom of *gracing recitative*, not more to the ſatisfaction of the poet, or favourable to the buſineſs of the drama, perhaps, than *long introductory ſymphonies*, or *aric di bravura*, of which the admirers of ſimplicity in the narrative muſic of the drama, ſo much complain.

 "In

"In every work regard the writer's end,
Since none can compaſs more than they intend."

Mr. Gray's ſeverity of deciſion concerning the merit of Rouſſeau's *Nouvelle Eloiſe*, is little leſs ſurpriſing than his blindneſs to the merit of Metaſtaſio. Among all the citizen of Geneva's faults and ſingularities, *inſipidity* and want of intereſt, we believe, has never been laid to his charge, by any other writer.

The reſt of the chapters of Metaſtaſio's *Abſtract*, which, in all, amount to twenty-nine, are replete with learning, ingenuity, good taſte, and, above all, with *good ſenſe*; which, according to Horace, is the firſt qualification of every writer:

Scribendi recte, ſapere eſt et principium et fons.
A. P. v. 309.

It was intended to have concluded theſe Memoirs, with a tranſlation of the whole *Eſtratto*, not only as a ſpecimen of our author's ſtyle in *proſe*, but abilities in criticiſm; but the great number of his letters which have been inſerted, will not allow ſufficient ſpace for a work of ſo conſiderable a length, in the preſent publication. And as for the

additional

additional three volumes of his inedited works, mentioned in the Preface, and of which I was extremely ambitious of being the first to give a detailed account to the English admirers of Metastasio; after employing every probable means which my eagerness to be in possession of them, previous to the publication of these Memoirs could suggest, I have, at length, had the mortification to hear from Vienna, that the printing the work which Mademoiselle Martines had reason to expect would be ready for publication in April last, has been impeded by the death of the Italian printer, *Alberti*. And now the same Vienna correspondent writes word, that on the 23d of last month (December) to his further enquiries, he had only received for answer, that "the work would be published early in the next month: the same answer which had been given for seven months past." So that, for the present, I must content myself with giving my readers the opinion of an excellent Italian critic on the most interesting article among these posthumous pieces, which he has seen in manuscript.

"Besides the *Abstract* of the Poetics of Aristotle, another precious monument exists

of Metaſtaſio's profound ſtudy of the Greek dramatic writers. A manuſcript is in the poſſeſſion of his executors, ſuperſcribed with his own hand: *Eſame di tutte le Tragedie e Commedie Greche per ſoccorſo della mia memoria, e non per pubblicarſi.* By the friendly kindneſs of the learned counſellor Martinez, I have been indulged with the peruſal of this MS. in which the remarks are extended to the *terra incognita* of ordinary critics; here we ſee reaſons aſſigned for apparent defects, which the practice of the times rendered neceſſary; and here we have a moſt exact parallel of the whole pieces and their conſtituent parts, drawn up with the moſt captivating clearneſs and ſagacity. And here we may perceive, that it was not from the writings of Calderon (as has been careleſsly and erroneouſly aſſerted) but from the Greek poets, that he learned the art of weaving his plots, and the exquiſite reflexions, maxims, and political principles, with which his dialogues are embelliſhed, and which, to common judges, ſeem ſcattered at random; but which were drawn from the pureſt and deepeſt ſprings, and with a moſt maſterly

œconomy,

œconomy, always appropriated to different climates, ages, laws, and cuſtoms (*u*)."

TO THE SHADE OF METASTASIO.

IF ſtill allow'd to liſten, honour'd ſhade!
And mortal ſorrows reach the happy dead,
Oh! hear with ſenſibility my ſtrain,
Nor humble tears, nor heart-felt grief diſdain!
No views ſiniſter now ſuſpicions raiſe
That adulation miniſters thy praiſe;
Thy worth and virtues precious to mankind,
Have long with veneration fill'd my mind.
Thy lenient ethics mitigate each ſmart,
And, while they flatter, purify the heart,
The furious paſſions are at thy controul,
And each emotion of the human ſoul.
Loſt muſt that mortal be, who hears in vain
Thy moral leſſon, or thy pious ſtrain!
To LOVE thy pen could dignity impart,
Devoid of vice and each inſidious art;
Nor haſt thou ever deign'd *his* cauſe to plead,
Unleſs when worth and honour claim'd the meed.
The friend of virtue in a gay diſguiſe,
Which captivates alike the weak and wiſe;
The diſſolute and lawleſs patient hear
Thy tale of woe, and drop a pitying tear.

(*u*) *Oſſervazioni ſopra Metaſtaſio dell' Abate Bertola.* Baſſano, 1784. 8vo.

The ſons of Epicurus learn to feel,
The wounds of ſuff'ring worth, and wiſh to heal;
Inſenſibly the hardeſt hearts dilate
At noble deeds, and fain would imitate.
  Benignant pow'r! humanity to charm,
And all its vile propenſities diſarm;
Not by harſh rules, which ne'er convince the mind,
Nor pious cant, of more inſipid kind:
More ſweet thy moral ſong, in virtue's praiſe,
Than ſporting ſirens could to pleaſure raiſe;
Nor for the ſtage, was virtue ever dreſt,
In ſuch a pleaſing, ſuch alluring veſt.
  Long may thy precepts regulate the heart,
And joy ſeraphic to mankind impart!
Long may thy dulcet meaſures Muſic guide,
And taſte and feeling over art preſide!
While intellectual radiance beams around,
And to the heart points each impaſſion'd ſound!

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

AFTER the preceding ſheets were printed, and the preſs was cloſed, I accidentally heard, that previous to the publication of the *Three Volumes of Metaſtaſio's Poſthumous Works*, at Vienna, an itinerant German *Colporteur*, or book pedlar, hearing of the ſolicitude with which theſe books had been ſought by the Engliſh, in that city, during many months, contrived to get the ſtart of the trade by procuring, by ſome unknown means, the poſſeſſion of ſeven or eight copies of each impreſſion of the work, with which he arrived in England a fortnight ago; during which time he had been hawking his *ineſtimable* little bale of Metaſtaſian goods, without

out ſucceſs; owing to the price he ſet upon it being ſo enormous, that no importer of foreign books would venture to deal with him; nor would he part with a *ſingle* ſet, on any terms. However, by the favour of a perſon in whoſe hands they were left for a day or two, I obtained a ſight of them for juſt three hours; during which ſhort period, I made the following haſty remarks, with which I preſent my readers, as *addenda* to the Memoirs of the Poet's Life and Writings.

The firſt volume contains his Obſervations on the Greek Dramatiſts, to which there is no other preface or introduction, than the following:

Nota di alcuni oſſervazioni da me fatte ſopra tutte le Tragedie e Commedie Greche che ci rimangono, per ſoccorſo della mia memoria. "Minutes of ſome obſervations which I have made on all the Greek Tragedies and Comedies that are come down to us, to aſſiſt my memory."

He begins with the Tragedies of ÆSCHYLUS; ſeven of which only have been preſerved, out of ninety-ſeven which he is ſaid to have written. Metaſtaſio's analyſis of *Prometheus chained*, the firſt of Æſchylus's dramas, was the only one of theſe ſhort articles

articles which I had time to read. Of this he ſays:

" It is difficult to characterize this drama, it is ſo extravagant and fantaſtical. The ſcene is a *horrid rock*. *Force* and *Violence*, perſonified, order Vulcan, in the name of Jupiter, to chain Prometheus to this rock, for having too much favoured human kind. Vulcan executes the command, though with much reluctance; and not only binds every part of the culprit's body to the rock with iron chains, but faſtens his breaſt to it with adamantine nails. Prometheus, after this, is left alone to curſe the tyranny of Jupiter. In the mean time, the daughters of Thetis arrive on the wings of the winds, to form the chorus. They tell him, that they had heard the ſtrokes of the hammer in their grotto at the bottom of the ſea, and were come to conſole him, and to learn the occaſion of his diſgrace. Prometheus, in the dreadful ſtate in which they found him, relates in a circumſtantial manner, the benefits which he had conferred on mankind. Saying, that Jupiter, the uſurper of Saturn's kingdom, was a tyrant, and would be dethroned by another, whom he (Prometheus) knew, but whoſe name he would not reveal.

The

The chorus counſels him to ſubmiſſion; but he refuſes to comply. At length *Oceanus* arrives on a winged monſter, neither deſcribed nor named, on a viſit to the ſufferer: pities him, and offers his interpoſition: it is rejected, and after a long debate, he departs to the ſound of Triton's trumpet. The chorus weeps, and adviſes him to be calm and ſubmiſſive; but all in vain. They are interrupted by the arrival of a furious cow; that is, by the daughter of the river Inachus. Prometheus, in ſpite of the nails in his breaſt, manifeſts much curioſity to know the hiſtory of this cow. She, with great eloquence, ſatisfies him; and he, in correſpondent terms, tells her her fortune. A fit of madneſs agitates the cow, and ſhe quits the ſtage. Prometheus, ſtill obſtinate, continues his imprecations. Mercury enters, and by command of Jove, orders him to declare who it is that will dethrone him, on pain of a violent encreaſe of his torments. Prometheus laughs at his threats; inſults Jupiter and his meſſenger, when the heavens grow dark, and a furious ſtorm of wind, thunder, and lightning, enſues. Prometheus cries out, invoking Themis (or Juſtice) to terminate the tragedy.

"Father Brumoy will not abſolutely allow,

allow, that Io appears in the form of a cow; but the author, at verſe 590, calls her Βόκερω, *bubulis prædita cornibus*: and at verſe 675, Κεράεις, *cornuta*; and the ſcholiaſt explains Ἰης εἰς βοῦν μεταβληθείσης.

" There being only a ſingle character chained to a rock, who receives a few viſits, it would have been difficult not to preſerve the *unity* of place. But Pere Brumoy thinks Æſchylus wonderful in having invented this unity."

Being, at length, in poſſeſſion of a copy of this poſthumous publication, over which my power is unlimited, I ſhall extend my extracts of the poet's remarks on the Greek dramatiſts, and give a ſhort account of the reſt of the contents of theſe volumes.

" *The ſeven chiefs againſt Thebes.* This tragedy can hardly be called a drama, conſiſting only of extreme long choral odes, and a ſhort narrative. The ſtyle is extremely lyrical; full of metaphor and imagery, particularly in the choruſes. The fable finiſhes at the 823d verſe, with the death of the two hoſtile brothers. The reſt of the play conſiſts of weeping and wailing, and a decree of the people concerning the funeral rites of the ſlain, granted to Eteocles, and denied to Polynices. Antigone wiſhes to bury the latter;

latter; but is oppoſed by the herald, and the tragedy ends, without the audience knowing how it will be determined. So that the unity of action is violated, and the fable left unfiniſhed. There is a ſcene between Eteocles and the chorus, againſt the importunity of fearful women, which is long, uſeleſs, and comic.

" *The Perſians.* It is difficult to ſay what is the real ſubject of this tragedy. The repetition of the narrative of the defeat of the Perſians at the battle of Salamis, and the perpetual lamentations of the chorus of aged Satraps, compoſe the whole drama. Atoſſa, the mother of Xerxes, by a kind of magical incantation, evokes the ſhade of Darius her huſband, to give her counſel and news of her ſon Xerxes. The ghoſt knows nothing of what has happened, and has it to learn. But afterwards tells her, that Xerxes was ill-adviſed to contend with Greece. And ere he diſappears, gives the following advice to the old men.

' My ancient friends, farewel: and 'midſt theſe ills
' Each day in pleaſure bathe your drooping ſpirits,
' For treaſured riches nought avail the dead.'

POTTERS.

" Atoſſa

"Atossa hearing of the great slaughter of the Persians, and the shameful flight of her son, says:

'Unhappy fortune, what a tide of ills
'Bursts o'er me! Chief this foul disgrace, which shews
'My son divested of his *rich attire*,
'His royal robes all rent, distracts my thoughts.
'But I will go, chuse the most gorgeous vest,
'And haste to meet my son.'

POTTER.

"At length, Xerxes appears with a list of the slain; exhorts the chorus to tear his hair, beat his breast, rend his garments, and join with him in loud lamentations. And with this alternate symphony, the tragedy ends.

"*Agamemnon.* This is unanimously allowed by the literary world, to be the most difficult and obscure of the tragedies of Æschylus, abounding with distorted and daring metaphors, with figures and ideas that only belong to lyric poetry. The plot is the assassination of Agamemnon, by Clytemnestra and Ægisthus. The person of Agamemnon is little seen; he only appears once, and what he says, is not sufficient to furnish an idea of his character. That of the false, perfidious, and cruel Clytemnestra, is well drawn. The chorus is animated, obscure,

and

and lyrical: the enthusiastic predictions of Cassandra are of the same kind. The tragedy begins with a watchman, or sentinel, who speaks from the top of the royal palace. Clytemnestra having placed him there to discover when a lighted flambeau was to be seen, which would discover the ruin of Troy. And this was to be communicated by persons placed at equal distances from mount Ida and Argos. The flambeau is seen, and soon after a messenger arrives, as swift as lightning, with the news of the taking of Troy.

"In this, as well as in other Greek tragedies, at the opening of a door in the scene, the dead body of the person slain is discovered, and often of many persons, not very easy to comprehend. In like manner, the words and cries of persons are heard in the street or square, who are killed in the interior palace. In this tragedy, the murderers remain unpunished.

"The *Choephoræ*, or *Bearers of Libations.* The subject of this tragedy is the same as that to which Sophocles and Euripides have given the title of Electra. Æschylus styles those damsels *Choephoræ* who were in the service of Clytemnestra, but partial to

Electra; and who follow her with the libations to be made to the tomb of Agamemnon. The ſtyle, as uſual, is tumid and figurative to exceſs; but the conduct, in general, ſimple and natural.

"In all the three Electras, probability ſeems wanting for the ſucceſs of Oreſtes's enterpriſe; but in this, more than in the others. Oreſtes, alone, unknown in the royal palace of his enemy, kills his mother, and the tyrant, without a ſingle guard, domeſtic, or any one crying out or oppoſing him. The ſcene in which Oreſtes barbarouſly obliges his mother to enter the palace for him to murder her on the dead body of Ægiſthus, is ſuch an atrocious act of inhumanity, that Pere Brumoy himſelf, who uſed to be tranſported with every thing concerning the golden age of Athens, is obliged to confeſs this tranſaction to be inſupportable.

"Clytemneſtra, at verſe 893, in order to move her ſon to compaſſion, that he might not kill her, opens her breaſt, and reminds him of the milk which he had ſucked from it. And a little before, verſe 754, the nurſe of Oreſtes, having thought him dead, weeps over him, and reminds him of the fatigue

 which

which ſhe had had in bringing him up; not forgetting to mention the inconvenience which he had put her to, during his little natural wants.

" To enjoy theſe beauties, we ſhould be enabled to tranſport ourſelves to thoſe venerable ages, when ſuch things were admired, as profane moderns are unable to comprehend.

" The *Eumenides*, or *Furies*. The action of this drama is the trial or abſolution of Oreſtes. It begins in the temple of Apollo at Delphos. At the opening, the old Pythia appears, who makes a long invocation to all the preſaging divinities, and retires to place herſelf on the tripod; but is ſeen no more throughout the tragedy, nor is it known why ſhe appeared, nor why ſhe did not return.

" At v. 93, Oreſtes, conducted by Mercury, quits the temple of Delphos, to go to that of Minerva at Athens.

" At v. 117, the Furies in a deep ſleep in the temple of Delphos, anſwer, while they are ſnoring, the ſhade of Clytemneſtra, who wiſhes to wake them, that they may purſue Oreſtes; and the ghoſt ſays: What! do you ſnore? So eager is the author that the audience ſhould know and admire his invention.

"At v. 235, Oreſtes appears in the temple of Minerva at Athens: and the Furies, after a few verſes, join him. A manifeſt and conſiderable breach of the unity of place. For if this is not a change of ſcene, what is it? And yet Ariſtotle does not reſent the ſacrilege. It is well for Æſchylus, that he was born ſo many ages before M. d'Aubignac, who, I know not how, has diſſembled this enormity of the father of tragedy, or let it eſcape his obſervation.

"At v. 663, Apollo ſays, that the ſon owes not his corporal exiſtence to his mother.

—— She but the nutrient ſoil
That gives the ſtranger growth.
Procreat autem ille, qui inſilet *.

"This is one of thoſe Grecian ſimplicities which modern palates cannot taſte.

"*The Supplicants.* The conduct of this fable has all the ſimplicity ſo much admired

* Euripides ſuſtains the ſame doctrine in Oreſtes:

My father was the author of my being:
Thy daughter brought me forth: he gave me life,
Which ſhe but foſter'd: to the higher cauſe
An higher reverence then I deemed was due.

POTTER.

by the ſevere connoiſſeurs of Grecian theatrical perfection. The fifty daughters of Danaus, to avoid being wedded to their fifty couſins, the ſons of Ægyptus, fly with their father, to demand an aſylum of Pelaſgus, king of Argos, and obtain it. The paucity of events is ſupplied by the extreme inactivity, and prolixity, of the choruſes. The ſcene is near the ſea ſhore, where the images of the gods are placed, who preſide at the Athletic games, not far from the city of Argos.

"From v. 466, the Danaides, in order to induce Pelaſgus to afford the aſylum which he grants, carry on with him the following ingenious dialogue:

Chorus. (the daughters of Danaus).
Seeſt thou theſe braided zones that bind our robes?
Pelaſgus. Ornaments theſe that ſuit your female ſtate.
Cho. Know then the honeſt purpoſe theſe ſhall ſerve.
Pelaſ. What would thy words intend? Explain thyſelf.
Cho. If honour ſhall not guard this female train—
Pelaſ. How can theſe binding zones ſecure your ſafety?
Cho. Hanging new trophies on theſe images.
Pelaſ. Myſterious are thy words; ſpeak plainly to me.
Cho. To tell thee plainly then, I mean ourſelves.

POTTER.

"The elegance of this little dialogue needs no explanation, to thoſe who by dint of learning are become Athenians.

"At

" At the ſight of a ſhip, which Danaus conjectures to be that which conducts the fifty ſons of Ægyptus, he flies to the city to demand aſſiſtance againſt his perſecutors; without its being known, why he leaves his daughters, who being young and active, might have gone on this buſineſs much better than their aged father, and not have been expoſed to the violence of their couſins. The father leaves them, and a ſingle herald from their couſins comes to order them to embark with him. They reſiſt. He offers to force them on board; and they, though fifty in number, can only defend themſelves by their ſcreams.

" But help arrives. Danaus has already been at Argos, and found Pelaſgus; told him their danger, the ſoldiers are embodied, and have marched to the ſea-ſide in the time that a few lines have been uttered.

" The herald being departed, king Pelaſgus invites Danaus and his daughters to come to Argos, aſſigns them habitations in the city, and departs. Danaus, before they ſet out, gives his daughters ſome wholeſome admonition. But the thing which he recommends to them in the moſt anxious and prolix manner, is, *that they do not diſhonour him in a ſtrange land; that they afford no*

opportunity for ſcandal, but remain modeſt, though young women *are much addicted to love*.

" Such an admonition in our times would be uſeleſs and injurious, ſuppoſing that royal princeſſes are incapable of failing in their duty; but in the time of Æſchylus, there were no ſuch ſuppoſitions; and ſimple nature was then repreſented, which is the delight of our literati."

After thus pointing out where the unities are violated, the plots imperfect, the perpetrators of horrid crimes unpuniſhed, and delicacy and propriety wounded, according to modern ideas; Metaſtaſio gives a ſketch of the life of Æſchylus, and apologizes, not only for his imperfections, but for being forced to point them out.

" Æſchylus (ſays he) was doubtleſs the father of tragedy. He firſt put narratives into action, invented the ſtage, tragic dreſſes and maſks; ſo that all the theatrical wonders in ſubſequent times are derived from his ſublime inventions. We therefore owe him infinite gratitude and reſpect, and ſhould exact them from others, if the envious impertinence of pedants, in order to depreciate their cotemporaries, did not ſtupidly and arrogantly

arrogantly exalt beyond measure whatever was reprehensible in him, which, however, ought to be respectfully over-looked, in gratitude for the incomparable merit of a first invention; and if proud of their lamentable observations, they did not erect themselves into legislators of an art of which they are wholly ignorant, and in which they have either had no experience, or when they have had the presumption to attempt to acquire it, have become the objects of public derision. Hence even respectable men have been forced to reflect, and declare to the world how little is come down to us from our predecessors that is valuable; not with a view to diminish their fame, but merely to unmask the livid and false oracles of the poor disfigured Parnassus.

"The style of Æschylus is sublime, figurative, and metaphorical to excess. Terror is always the object which he proposes: his scholiast asserts, that in the representation of the Eumenides, many children died of fright, and many pregnant women miscarried! *Credat Judæus Apella.*"[2]

The remaining seven tragedies of SOPHOCLES; the nineteen of EURIPIDES; and

 the

the eleven comedies of ARISTOPHANES, are analyzed in the ſame conciſe and characteriſtic manner as the dramas of Æſchylus. Many of his reflexions on the Greek dramatiſts have been inſerted in the Abſtract of the Poetics of Ariſtotle. Indeed more inſtances ſeem to have been given by Metaſtaſio of the total inattention to any rule concerning the *unities* in Sophocles, Euripides, and Ariſtophanes, than in Æſchylus; or rather more proofs that no ſuch rule exiſted, when theſe great fathers of theatrical excellence flouriſhed. For when any one of the unities has eſcaped violation in their dramas, it ſeems more to have been by chance, than from any fixed rule or principle: as there is ſcarce any one of their comedies or tragedies where they are entirely preſerved; though there are many which would have been much injured if they had eſcaped violation.

The extreme difference in ancient and modern times, of manners, morals, religion, and even in the conſtruction of theatres, renders cloſe and ſervile imitation of the Greek dramatiſts now inadmiſſible; though the bold, ſublime, and noble ſentiments, the heroic virtues and characters, and the exquiſite

quiſite beauties of the conceptions and morality in the poetry of the choral odes, muſt always excite the wonder and rapture of men of found learning and good taſte, in all ages and countries, where the compoſitions of the ancient Greeks are underſtood in the original, or their true ſpirit is transfuſed into other languages by tranſlation.

In the review of the Andromache of EURIPIDES, Metaſtaſio has pointed out ſuch inſtances in the language and ſentiments of that tragedy, as, if cloſely imitated or tranſlated, would be thought coarſe, indecorous, and far from decent in a modern drama.

The ſtrange events and ſeemingly abſurd and impure language of the heroic characters, would not be difficult for the moderns to copy and adopt; but the ſublime beauties of the poetry, and ſometimes of the ſentiments, will never be made common by theft or open imitation in modern times.

So licentious, ſcurrilous, and not only ſarcaſtic, but malignant a dramatiſt as ARISTOPHANES, was not likely to be treated with partiality by ſo moral, benevolent, and decorous a writer, as Metaſtaſio; yet ſo juſt, diſcriminative, and candid are his reflexions

on

on the remains of this mercilefs enemy of Socrates and Euripides, that his greateft admirers and imitators muft allow him to be treated with that temper and fairnefs, with which Ariftophanes never treated friends or foes, or even the gods themfelves.

After indicating the defects in the plan of his *Plutus*, Metaftafio fays: that "notwithftanding thefe cenfures, the dialogue of this piece is fo natural, full of grace, and the moft acute and poignant wit, that it manifefts the genius, and rich mine of ridicule with which he was poffeffed. In the midft of the moft indecent deformities with which this comedy abounds, we fometimes meet with traits of the moft folid morality; particularly in the defence which *Poverty* makes of herfelf, which is worthy of Plato.

"He regards the *Female Orators*, not like Pere Brumoy, as a fevere fatire on women, but rather as a fatire on the inconftancy and folly of the Athenian people, in perpetually reforming and changing their form of government; adopting the vifions of the moft extravagant projectors, provided they were *new*; and therefore the author recommends that women fhould be placed at the head of

the

the ſtate, as the only revolutionary project left untried. So that this is not the moſt indecent of his pieces, as has been generally imagined, though certainly the moſt diſguſting; as he has not ſcrupled to introduce a magiſtrate eaſing himſelf in the ſtreet; during which time he is extremely witty to the ſpectators, and gives them an ample doſe of Attic ſalt and pleaſantry.

"Ariſtophanes (ſays Metaſtaſio) was a poet of an extraordinary imagination and eloquence; daring, impudent, malicious, and a contemner of all order, decency, humanity, probability, and almoſt common ſenſe, in his allegories and alluſions; provided they gratified his ſpite and ſpleen. Plutarch, among the ancients, and Pere Brumoy, in modern times, have declared this poet to be inſufferable among honeſt and well educated men in any civilized country. He delighted the Athenian mob, by ridiculing every thing that was venerable, and which had long been thought ſacred; and his principal object was the deſtruction of religion and morality, by burleſquing the reaſoning of Socrates, as modern philoſophers do the ſacred writings and the doctrines of the moſt pious and profound theologians."

Among

Among the *Select Letters* which occupy the chief part of this publication, there are several which were not inserted in the five volumes of the Poet's correspondence in the *Nice* edition of his works; but these are neither so long, nor, seemingly, so important, as many that have been omitted. In looking at the index of letters that appear in these additional volumes, I perceived one to the Empress Queen; several to the Princess di Belmonte; three to Goldoni; three or four to Calsabigi; two to the celebrated chief of the Bologna school of singing, Bernacchi; two to Diodati; two to Captain Beninçasa; one to Father Boscovich; one to Mr. Hoole, and one to Cahusac, that are not in the Nice edition.

Of three notes written in French, by the Empress Queen, to the imperial laureat, two have already been inserted in these Memoirs. The inedited poetry is very inconsiderable; and the sketch of his life is chiefly taken from Rezer's epitome.

His WILL, made in 1765, and the CODICIL, dated 1780, inserted at the end of the third volume, caught my attention; and I was very glad to find in them a clear and satisfactory refutation of the want of affection

for

for his family, which has been unjustly laid to his charge *; and which, if true, would have considerably diminished the excellence of his moral character.

It appears in his *Testament*, made 1765, that he bequeaths to his brother LEOPOLD (whom he calls his *amabilissimo fratello*) 500 Roman crowns a year (the interest of 30,000 crowns) and the same to his sister BARBARA. To Mademoiselle Marianna Martinez, he leaves 12,000 florins, with his harpsichord, clavichord, music-books, and book-case; and appoints her residuary legatee, in case she survived her brother Giuseppe.

In the *Codicil*, dated 1780, *his brother and sister being dead*, he made a new and more considerable disposition of his effects in favour of the Martinez family, with whom he had lived in uninterrupted friendship and affection, upwards of fifty years; and to whose care and kindness, during a long series of ill health, he ascribed his longevity.

Another draw-back from his fortitude and philosophy, which has been triumphantly made by those who, unfoundedly, accused

* See Vol. I. of these Memoirs, p. 112.

him of an invincible repugnance to ſpeaking of old age, and death, is taken off; not only by his frequently mentioning both in his letters, with no more horror than other mortals; but by the following paſſage in his laſt will:

"Having been afflicted with a very precarious ſtate of health during forty years, which often rendered life inſufferable, it is my wiſh, after my deceaſe, to have my body opened by a ſkilful ſurgeon, in hopes that ſome diſcovery will be made, that may be of uſe to my ſurvivors." Envy itſelf could faſten no *vice* upon him; and the *frailties* and *infirmities* that have been laid to his charge, ſeem very eaſy for candour to invalidate.

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