

LampeterCorpus

THE LIFE OF Mr. James Spiller, THE LATE Famous Comedian. In which is interspers'd much of the Poetical History OF His own Times.

By George Akerby, *Painter*.

[...] THE LIFE OF Mr. *James Spiller* .

THE transmitting to Posterity the Lives of Persons who have render'd themselves, in any Manner, or Science, whatsoever, ornamental to a Commonwealth, is a Work that is not only due to deceased Merit, but redound to the Honour of the Person who undertakes and executes it with Truth and Ability. On this Account, *Plutarch* still lives, and participates the Renown of those illustrious Persons, whom his victorious Pen has rescued from the Triumphs of the Grave. The Present Age is acquainted with, and admires alike *Suetonius*, and the *Twelve Caesars*; And the *British Heroes* of the ROAD communicate a Share of their own Glory to *Captain Alexander Smith*, the learned *Preserver* of their Exploits and immortal Fame.

Under the Encouragement of such notable Examples, I have ventured on the following Piece of *Biography*, and flatter myself, that as the *Hero* of my Discourse was a Person of important Consideration in *Great Britain*, I shall derive to myself no small Portion of his Merits and universal Applause, by the honest and pious Regard which I have shew'd to his Memory.

Mr. *James Spiller* was born in the Year of our Lord 1692, of honest and reputable Parents. His Father was indeed no better than the *Gloucester* Carrier; but having scraped a pretty handsome Sum of Money together, by his own Industry, and having but this one Son, he was resolv'd to breed him a Gentleman, if Persons may be allow'd to be such, who practice the Liberal Arts, and if Painting may be accounted one among them: He accordingly put him Apprentice to Mr. *Rossa* Landskip Painter, in whose Business, having alway a very lively Genius, he grew tolerable Proficient in a short Time; but as a sedentary Life being, by no Means, agreeable to his natural Gayety and Vivacity of Temper, he betook himself very young to one more suitable to his Inclinations, tho' not altogether so genteel or profitable, and went with a Company of Strolling Players, into several Parts of *England*: and so well qualified was he for this Employment, that into whatever Place he came, or in whatever Play he acted, he was, at all Times, the Life of the Performance, and the greatest Support of the *Company*; but although he pleas'd his own Humour by this Way of Living, yet it was so much against the Will of his Father, that he was hardly ever prevail'd upon to do anything for him afterwards. So difficult a Task it is for young Men to curb their headstrong Desires, tho' check'd by the strongest Ties of Duty and Interest!

The Parts he usually appear'd in, were those of low Comedy, not, but that sometimes, in the Country, where Heroes are not very plentiful, he has represented *Alexander* the Great, *Mithridates* King of *Pontus*, although it must needs be confessed, excellent as he was in his own Way, these Parts were but burlesqu'd by him; but when he came upon the Stage for *Hob*

in the *Country Wake*, the Widow *Lackit's* foolish Son, *Daniel* in *Oroonoko*, *Costar* *Pairmain* in the *Recruiting Officer*, and many others of the like Sort: His Looks, his most significant Shrugs and Gestures, would oftentimes set the whole Audience a laughing before he had spoke one Word.

Notwithstanding by the Liberality of several Persons of Condition to Mr. *Spiller*, who were willing to encourage One, who had so much Merit in his Profession, he was set above the Necessity of the Rest of his strolling Companions; yet he was often -times pretty much in Arrear, especially at the Tap; (for Mirthis sometimes thirsty as well as Grief) and meeting at a certain Place, (I think it was at *Stamford* in *Lincolnshire*) with a Landlord, who had no great Share of Faith, he was suddenly seized by two Bailiffs, one Evening, for Three Pounds, Eleven Shillings, just as he was going upon the Stage. He begg'd them might perform his Part, and when that was over, he would go with them wherever they pleas'd. They told him they did not care to part with him now they had got him. No more you need, replied he, For you shall both go upon the Stage, and act a Part with me, if you please, that you may be sure I will not go out of your Sight. How can that be? said the Bailiffs, We don't know how to act or speak before so many People. O! answer'd the other, Here are two Parts in this Play, wherein there is Nothing to do or say. In short, he was to act, that Night, the Country Squire in the Comedy called *Æsop*; and he prevailed with the Bailiff to lead in his two Hounds for him; and finding an Opportunity to get to that Side of the Stage which was near a Door into the Street, he got clear off, and when he was quite out of Danger, could do nothing but laugh to think how he had given each of the Bayliffs *a Dog to hold*.

It was not long ere the Master of the Company found the Want of him, by the Receipt of his House, and took all the Ways she could think of to recover him, but all to no Purpose, for he was soon got into another very distant Part of the Kingdom, and in the Year [...] came up to *London*, and was receiv'd into the Play-house in *Drury-Lane*, which was, at that Time, under the Management of that great Genius, *Aaron Hill* Esq; and one Mr. *Collier*, a learned Attorney at Law; some of the principal Actors being then at the *Hay-Market*, but there was left a very good Company at the Old House, among which were Mr. *George Powell*, Mr. *Booth*, Miss *Santlow*, Mr. *Bullock*, Mr. *Norris*, Mr. *Pack*, nor was Mr. *Spiller*, the Subject of our present Discourse, the most despicable among them. He was well receiv'd at his first Appearance, and every Day gain'd on the good Opinion of the Town. The first Part for which he was very much taken Notice of, was that of *Corporal Cuttum* in the *Walking Statue*, written by the above said Mr. *Hill*. It would be an Injustice to that illustrious Poet, if we were not to take Notice of the grateful Sense Mr. *Spiller* always expressed of the Favours he had received from him, in so much that when he has happened to be mentioned in his Company, he would ever grow wanton in his Praise. It is to the fostering Kindness of this worthy Gentleman that the Town is indebted for some of its greatest Geniuses! Such is that Phoenix in her Way, Mrs. *Eliza Haywood*; the most inimitable Mr. *Richard Savage*; and that sweet Bud of Poetry, who was out of fin the Spring of his Life, Mr. *Thomas Patterson*. It is Spirits like these that adorn the Age and Country they live in, and who, as that ingenious Lady, the Author of Mr. *Savage's* Life says, have something in the Force and Sprightliness of their own Imaginations, which more than makes amends for their Ignorance of the Classics; for what was *Sapho* if compared to the first, or *Homer* and *Virgil* to the latter!

But to resume the Thread of our Discourse: the two Companies in the *Hay-Market* and *Drury-Lane* being again united, the Manager thought fitt to dismiss Mr. *Spiller*, who, as they would have it, could act no Parts but such as were in Mr. *Pinkethman's* Way; and they had always received too much Profit from *Pinkey's* Phiz, to encourage any Body to put *that* out of Countenance.

Mr. *Spiller* forced again to return to the Strolling -Trade, made himself as happy as possible, and the more so, by marrying Mrs. *Elizabeth Thompson*, a good pretty Woman, and one who might have made a tolerable Figure on the Stage, was it not for a little too much Affectation; but it is the Misfortune of a great many fine Women as well as she, when Nature has made them perfectly agreeable, to marry her Handywork, and make themselves the Reverse, by their own Distortions of Body and Features.

The Desire of several Persons to have Mr. *Spiller* on the Stage again, who had seen him there before, and the Report that was made of his excellent Performance in the Country, made the Managers of both Houses, (for now *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* Theatre was opened) send pressing Invitations for him to come to *London*; and indeed it must be own'd he had partly made an Agreement with the Master of the New House to come to him, notwithstanding he went for a short Time to *Drury Lane*; but when the first, as he is himself a most religious Observer of his own Word, sent a Friend to him to put him in mind of his Promise, he went away that Instant, although he was already dress'd for his Part in the *Emperor of the Moon*. His Wife came with him hither, but I cannot learn that she was very remarkable for any Thing but speaking in Men's Cloaths a Prologue to that incomparable Tragedy call'd *Mangora, King of the Timbusians*, a Play, of which no Part of the Town were capable of tasting the Beauties; nay, some ill judging Criticks have ventured to say, that it abounded with Faults, tho' I think there have been no printed Remarks upon the Plot, the Manners, the Sentiments, and Diction of it; No, no, they knew it would be a hard Task to go so far as that: But however they went far enough to provoke the Honourable Author to write a Defence of his Play, which he set forth in that facetious Pamphlet, entituled the *Mus Muzzled*, which, egad, did their Business for them, and smote them all Hip and Thigh. This *Mus Muzzled*, was to be found one every Bulk and Stall in Town, and was not dispersed in such a clancular Manner as the New Edition of the *Dunciad*: But why should we wonder at any Thing done by a Person, whomakes no Bones of the brightest Men of the Age, by one, who can attempt to render contemptible such an amiable Character as that of Mr. *Edward Ward*, when all the World must own his Hudibrastic Verse has put Mr. *Butler* as much out of Countenance, as Mr. *Charles Johnson's* and Mr. *Odingsell's* Comedies have eclipsed the Names of *Congreve* and *Wycherly*. Nay, the very *Laureat* himself cannot escape him, tho' I would fain know on which of his Predecessors Mr. *Eusden* thinks that Title was more deservedly bestowed than on himself, notwithstanding *Spencer*, *Ben Johnson*, and *Dryden* were of the Number. Nor is even the Grave a Shelter, or Shield from the Edge of this Gentleman's Satyr, but poor Mr. *Durfey* is raised again from the Dead to be maul'd in the *Dunciad*. I would here attempt the Character of that great Lyric Poet, but that I fear the ill-natur'd will say, I am like my *Lord P lausible*, commending every Body; but I hope the Judicious will see that I have not given Praise to anyone but who is truly worthy of Praise. No one can charge me with lavishing my Compliments upon the late Mr. *Addison*, or the present Dean of St. *Patrick's*: I have wasted no idle Ink in a Panegyric upon the *Beggar's Opera*; and as for the *Dunciad*, I don't in the least doubt but in a few Years it will be as much forgotten, and as little admired as the *Dispensary*.

Before I quit this Author, I must take Notice of his barbarous Usage of that Father of *English* Criticism, Mr. *John Dennis*. Are his Labours to be wedged in between *Ward* and *Tibbaldson* the Back of his Ass? Oh Envy! Envy! What would he turn the most Venerable of all Criticks into Ridicule? Has not the Force of his fine Reasoning, nor his tremendous Aspects sufficient Power to awe him? Will he not take his own Word, that no Author now living has done so much for the *British Stage*, or defended so manfully the *Cause of the British Muses*? And is not the first Cause of our Country? What do our Armies fight for, what do our Senates debate about, if Poetry be suffer'd to languish? This awful Bard has by the Harmony of his own Numbers, shewn himself fit to judge of the Performance of others,

he alone
Should censure freely who has written well.

I will boldly venture to affirm, notwithstanding all that Mr. *Pope* and his Adherents can say, that there are some of this Gentleman's Plays not to be equal'd by any that have come after him, I will hardly except the afore-mentioned excellent Tragedy of *Mangora*. Not only his own Country, but all *Europe* have confess'd their Admiration of his Play call'd *Liberty Asserted*; and the late Majesty's Ministers at *Utrecht*, found such Difficulties in their Negotiations upon Account of that Play, that sure it is not so long ago, but every one may remember how much the Peace was retarded thereby, because they could not be brought to consent to the sacrificing so valuable a Person as the Author of it, to the Fury of the *French*. As we are now in strict Alliance with that Nation, I would not trip up old Sores, nor mention their fitting out a Privateer to spirit him away from the Coast of *Sussex*, but only to shew of what Consequence this Gentleman has been esteem'd in the World; and now in his Decline of Life, to be treated like one who never wrote any Poetry worth reading himself, and yet has made severe and senseless Remarks upon other People, is inhumane to the last Degree. The Character these his Enemies give of him, puts me in Mind of a certain old Gentleman I have heard of somewhere about *Charing-Cross*, whose *eldom* leaves the Tavern till Morning, but is constantly railing at late Hours and Debauchery.

If the Malice of the Author of the *Dunciad* continues, I shall shortly expect to see the sacred Names of Mr. *Edward Biddle*, and Mr. *Pickering Rich*, used with as much Contempt as any of those he has been already pleas'd to satyrize. Nay, who knows but in Time he may take it into his Head to call in Question the Merits of Mr. *Giles Jacob*, and Mr. *Bazaleel Morrice*. The great Estate and Titles of the Author of *Love in a Hollow Tree*, it is to be hoped will be a sufficient Defence against this Lash; but it must be allowed by all Men, that he has made free with some who are but little inferior in Genius to that wise and learned Peer.

Now begging Pardon of my Readers for this long Digression, let me remember where I left Mr. *Spiller*, 'twas at *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* Play-House, in full Possession of the Applause of the Town, and in full Pay. In the Year 1715, Mr. *Rich*, the Patentee of the House, having resign'd the Use of his Theatre for four Nights in a Week to Mr. *Keene*, and Mr. *Christopher Bullock*, Mr. *Spiller* was caress'd by these new Partners, if possible, with more Fondness than by their Predecessor in the Management. From the Grace in which he stood with the Town, those Gentlemen drew no small Presages of the large Advantage they should gain in their Contract, by the Merit and Applause of his Performances. In pursuance of this Prospect, they thought it for their Interest to get up all the Plays in which he could play any Part. Nay, I am inform'd, that they have even procur'd Plays to be wrote on Purpose, that he might have an Opportunity of displaying his facetious Talents for the Entertainment of the Town. As the first Instance of which, I shall mention a Comedy call'd, *The Woman's Revenge: Or, A Match in Newgate*; which at this Day bears a very good Character, and brings considerable Audiences, wrote by Mr. *Christopher Bullock*, one of the above-nam'd Managers, and dedicated to Mr. *Spiller*, by that Gentleman, in Gratitude for the happy Figure he made in it. Which Dedication, upon the Account of fit's Humour, I shall take the Freedom to transcribe.

Tom my merry Friend, and Brother Comedian, Mr. James Spiller. Dear Jemmy,

My Choice of you for a Patron, will acquit me of those detestable Characters which most of our modern Authors are obnoxious to, from their fulsome Dedications; I mean a Mercenary, and a Flatterer: My prefix in your Name to these Sheets will clear me of the Former, and there is no Fear of incurring the Scandal of the Latter, since the greatest Encomiums which

my humble Pen could draw out, come far short of your just Praise. I could expatiate on your many excellent Vertues, your Chastity, your Temperance, your Generosity, your exemplary Piety, and your judicious and fashionable Management in your Conjugal Affairs: But since I am so well acquainted with your Aversion to Reading, I shall content myself with mentioning the many Obligations I have to you, particularly for your good Performance in this Farce, especially in your last Part; I mean that of *Padwell*; in which you was a shining Ornament to the Scene of *Newgate*: And you must not think I flatter you, when I tell you, you have a natural Impudence proper to the Character, and became your Fetters as well as any that ever wore them. And I am sorry I could not, without giving Offence to the Criticks, and deviating too far from the Rules of Comedy, bring you to *Tyburn*, for the better Diversion of the Audience; but I hope you are satisfied with my good Wishes, and will give me leave to subscribe myself,

You obliged
Humble Servant ,
 Christopher Bullock.

His grateful Sense of the Compliment paid him in this dedicatory Epistle, (which certainly carries the same Air of Truth, as the greatest Part of those Dedications which do Honour to the Majority of the richest of our *Commoners* and the whole *List* of four *NOBILITY*) he has frequently express'd, amongst his most intimate Companions, but delay'd, by unforeseen Accidents, making his Acknowledgement in Print, 'till the first of *March* 1728, which he did under the Character of *Peter Padwell*, upon the Account of the unreasonable Success of Mr. *Gay's Beggar's Opera*, which he affirms was stole from Mr. *Bullock's* aforesaid Comedy, of *The Woman's Revenge, Or The Match in Newgate*, as the Reader will perceive by the following Letter of Mr. *Spiller*'s to Miss *POLLY PEACHUM*; which I think it may not be improper to insert here.

To Pretty Miss Polly Peachum. Pretty Polly say,
 What makes Jonny Gay,
 To call, to call, his *Newgate* -Scenes,
 The Beggar's Opera?
 Silly wretched Man,
 Such a Flame to Fan,
 To think of quenching Lover's Pains,
 That any Dungeon can.

BUT hold me, dear *Duck*, whither am I running in *Musical Notes*, when my only design is to forewarn and admonish thee in *Mournful-guise* of the great Danger we are in, from this Damn'd *Thieve's Opera* we are so merry about.

pray retain in your Memory what the honest Cobler says in Sir *Pol Ale and History Master Fopling Flutter*, &c. for which Reason, take Notice, my Girl, if we are put into the *Crown Office*, and after that into Jail, for the Sins of other People, I here enter my *Protest* in *Form* against these *Treasonable Scenes*,

As they are fully prov'd to be,
 By Phil. Harmonicus's Key.

In the Days of that immortal Stuart, King *James* the First, there liv'd one Mr. *John Marston*, who wrote Eight Plays. One of which, call'd *The Dutch Curtezan*; was Printed in the Year

1605, and eight and Twenty Years afterwards, 1633, it was reviv'd with great Success, under the Title of *The Revenge: Or, A Match in Newgate* And in the Year 1715, being the *Second Year* of King George the *First*, (God bless his Memory) our dear Brother Mr. *Christopher Bullock*, Rerevived this Comedy, and call'd it *A Woman's Revenge: Or A Match in Newgate*.

And now you see, in the *First Year* of King George the *Second*, that Mr. *John Gay*, who turns the Transactions of all the World into *Fables*, has *Metamorphos'd* Mr. *John Marston's* Dutch *Curtezana* and your Mother act the Part, and does not prove her Marriage. , into the Dutchess of

Ev'ry Page Gay has writ,
Tho'tis stuff'd up with Metre;
y and Parliament, Points out P
God bless the Speaker.

In short the Truth thought to be told, our Brother *Bullock's Match in Newgate* is a harmless, inoffensive Farce,

And Dedicated wastome,
As you may very plainly see.

The *Beggar's Opera* Mr. *Gay* stole from Mr. *Bullock*, who only borrowed it of Mr. *Marston*, and the Law says, The Receiver is as bad as the Thief: Besides it is most certainly a Libel against the K

And we shall all be sould for our Folly,
Lockit, Macheath, Padwell, Peachum, Polly,
By other Folks Crime, Let us learn to Beware.
And keep our own Noddles, Girl, out of the Snare.
Paddington.
St. David's Day,
1728.
Peter Padwell.

Nor did Mr. *Spiller*, in a less generous Manner testify his Acknowledgements to Mr. *Keene* and Mr. *Christopher Bullock*, his constant Friends, at a Time when ev'ry new Performance drew the whole Attention of the Town to *Drury-Lane Theatre*, and the *Cobler of Preston*, a Farce, wrote by the ingenious Mr. *Charles Johnson*, who is celebrated for many other applauded Pieces, besides the *Masquerade* and the *Village Opera*, the last so strenuously recommended by Caleb D'Anvers, Esq; than by getting into Company with his Brother *Pinkethman* one Evening at the *Gun-Tavern at Billingsgate*, who had the Part of the *Cobler*, then in Rehearsal, in his Pocket. These Gentlemen, who had with an equal Warmth the Honour and Interest of the *British Stage at Heart*, soon gave up the Animositie that generally arise between the Comedians of Rival Theatres, and enter'd into a free, and entirely mirthful Conversation, shewing themselves, what Mr. *Addison* says of the late Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene, in the two following Lines in his excellent Poem of the Campaign,

Great Souls by Instinct to each other turn,
Demand Alliance, and in Friendship burn.

But Mr. *Spiller*, (I wish I could cast a Veil over this Part of his Life,) had a sinister View, which neither of those *Two Great Generals* were capable of; he meditated the Dishonour of the Men he convers'd with, and taking the Advantage which he had waited for, of Mr. *Pinkethman's* being overtaken with Liquor, without any Regard to the Laws of Society, Honesty and Justice, stole the Part of the *Cobler* out of his Pocket, and discharging, (as he was always exceeding Generous, when he had, as he used to call it, *The Cole upon him*,) the Reckoning, took his Leave of the Tavern, left his Brother *Pinkethman* drunk and asleep, and went immediately with his Prize to his Friend and Patron, Mr. *Christopher Bullock*; who being a Person of an admirable quick Turn of Thought, and one who always knew what would make for his Interest, embraced Mr. *Spiller* and his invaluable *Piece of Theft*, with all the Transport that naturally arises in a truly Poetical Bosom on such an Occasion: He instantly fell to work, and by the Hints given him by *Pinkethman's* Part of the *Cobler*, was able to bring upon the Stage a Farce of the same Title as Mr. *Johnson's*, a Fortnight before the *other House* could present theirs, through the above-mentioned Advantage taken of Mr. *Pinkethman* by Mr. *Spiller*, the former not being able to recover his Part, though he used the greatest Application in less than that Time.

Now I would have the *Reader* to observe, that Mr. *Bullock*, who always prided himself upon his Attachment to the Principles of *Toryism*, not only robb'd the above-mention'd ingenious Mr. *Charles Johnson* of great Part of the large Profits which he expected from the Run of a *Farce*, which was wrote, so much to the Support, and the Defence of the *Succession H*, but wrote his own Farce, call'd *The Cobler of Preston*, likewise in quite another Manner, turning into Burlesque and Ridicule all Mr. *Johnson's* Thoughts and Designs, and giving Spirit to that Party which Mr. *Johnson* had rendred contemptible and Spiritless. To this, the *Gentleman* who is the Subject of my present Discourse, may be said to be accessary, and his Principles with respect to the Government, may be brought into Dispute, as he not only knew his Brother *Pinkethman* to be a fervent Friend to the *Interests* y, and his Administration, but was satisfied that his Patron, Mr. *Bullock*, for whose Sake and Interest he was guilty of so felonious an Act, as picking Mr. *Pinkethman's* Pocket, was a Person whose Hopes depended entirely on the Favour of a contrary *Party*.

To strengthen our Suspicion of Mr. *Spiller's* t, and to shew the mutual Confidence that seemed to subsist between Mr. *unhappy Sentiments*, with regard to the *Christopher Bullock* and him, I shall now take Notice of another Farce, call'd *The Perjuror*, wrote likewise by the above said Mr. *Christopher Bullock*, which was acted in Opposition to the Nonjuror, a Comedy written by that undoubted *Lover* of, and *Ornament* to his Country, Mr. *Colly Cibber*, and in which Mr. *Spiller* bore a considerable Part, and spoke a Prologue to it, which gave Mr. *Cibber* and the *Court-Party* no small Chagrin. No Body will wonder if this *Farce* had a considerable Run, to very large Audiences of Persons who went under the Censure of being disaffected to the Government, since Mr. *Spiller* was the Comedian, who, next to the *Party-Jokes* in it, gave, by his Performance, a Life and Spirit to it.

The Liberty I have taken with Mr. *Spiller's* Character in these Reflections on his Moral and Political Conduct, may, perhaps, seem very surprizing to those who are acquainted with the Intimacy that has been between us for near twenty Years: But the Regard I have to Truth, and my own Reputation as a Historian, compels me even to break through the Bands of Friendship; nor can I leave such a Chasm in my History, as omitting a Circumstance of such Moment to the curious Reader, as that, of his going from Mr. *Rich's* Theatre, (for Mr. *Keene* and Mr. *Bullock* were both dead,) in the Year 1720, to *Ireland*, immediately after his Benefit Night, when he received through the Generosity of the Town, an *Hundred and Seven Pounds in Money*, out of the Office belonging to the *Play-House*, and did not give any of his

numerous Creditors the Favour of a Visit. Hestay'd theretill his Pockets were quite drain'd, or, (as he himself term'd it,) he was *Seedy*; and being requested by Mr. *Richt* to return to his *House*, thought it no disagreeable Invitation, and accordingly accepted of it, and came to *London*, and was re-established in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* Theatre; but such are the Charms of good Liquor and good Company, that four Pounds a Week were not enough to keep him out of the Hugster's Hands; and having mortgaged his Pay, and taken up several Sums of Money at extravagant Interest, he was forced in the Year 1722, to take Shelter in the *Mint*, and being droveto very great Straits, he was reduced to have a Play acted for his Benefit in that Place; but the *South-Sea* Business having brought a little better Company therethan usual, he made a Shift to scrape together about Twenty Pounds: The Play was *The Drummer: Or, The Haunted House*, to which, upon this Occasion, he himself wrote the following Epilogue, which has been already printed in a Paper that came out at that Time, called *The Whitehall Journal*, but from a very incorrect Copy, above Ten Lines being omitted in That, which are here in their proper Place.

EPILOGUE

Written and Spoken by Mr. Spiller, for his own Benefit, in the Mint. OUR Journalshaveso
much your Minds engrost,
From Mist and Cato, down to Heathcot's Post,
With strange Adventures in the Church and State,
And sometimes on the Stage new Turns of Fate;
That to divert you in your proper Sphere,
I'll shew my Fortune's Revolution here.
Odd may it seem indeed, a very Joke,
That Players should complain of being broke;
But so it is. I own it, void of Shame,
Since all this worthy Circle are the same.
I perhaps mistake the Matter, But Pardon
You mayn't have all Occasion for Mint Water:
Were't so, our Fate we need not much deplore,
For Men of Note have made this Tour before.
Since South-Sea Schemes have set the World amadding,
Some topping Donshave hither come agadding.
Pall-Mall no longer cansome Sparks delight,
And Covent-Gardengrowstoounpolite,
Thesemuch renown'd in Stocks, and some in Print,
Have learnt to shift their Lodgingsto the Mint:
Whoin'Change-Alley cannolonger meet,
Now keep their Cash in mimick Lombard-Street.
The Wits indeed find no great Change of Fare,
Air. They still enjoy their usual Diet
and What brought me to this Place, Next to myself
'Twas neither Stocks, nor Wit, nor too much Grace.
You needs must read the Reason in my Face;
'Twas owing Money, that eternal Plague,
And Dread of ¹Duel, Morrice, and of Hague.
But here we're snug from all such merc'less Wretches,
Fenc'd round by fragrant, Baily-dipping Ditches.
'Tis true, their Waters are not quite so clean
As those which flow from Poet's Hippocrene,
But, like Red Seas, they keep the Ægyptians from us,

And safely guard us in this Land of Promise.
And faith they have some Inspiration too,
For 'till this Night my Pen I never drew,
But such their Pow'r, this Epilogue will show it,
By Them, or Poverty, I'm made a Poet.
A Virgin Muse, Gallants, should find some Grace,
She may prove kind in Time: She's in a hopeful Place.

This was the first Piece of Poetry my Friend Mr. *Spiller*, as he assur'd me himself, was ever guilty of; It is very certain, notwithstanding all the Care I have taken to give the Publick as exact an Edition of it as possible, there are many obscure Lines in it, which must arise from the Carelessness or Interpolations of Copyists, but the learned World may shortly expect to see the Genuine Text restored by that elaborate and circumstantial Critick Mr. *L.T.* who, as I am told, has spent some Time about it, and design to publish it with such ample Notes, as will make, with the Prolegomena, Testimonia Authorum, and Appendix, two Volumes in a handsome Octavo: This is a Work which, it is to be hoped, for the Usefulness of it, will meet with Encouragement from the *Publick*, the Subscription not being above 25 Shillings in Sheets, and as to the time of its being delivered to the Subscribers, every Body knows how punctual this Gentleman has always been in this Particular.

As it is impossible for any Man, how inoffensive so ever in his own Behaviour, to pass through the World without making some Enemies, so Mr. *Spiller* was not without those who maliciously and groundlessly reported this *Epilogue* was not of his own Writing, but that he was assisted therein by the great and admir'd Author of that *Never-to-be-forgotten Dramatick Opera* called *Penelope*.

I must own I have here a strong Desire to enter upon the Character of those immortal Poets, who never had met with a Parallel in the Dramatick Way, if Mr. *Johnson* had not come from *Cheshire*, to oblige the Cities of *London* and *Westminster* with his *Hurlothrumbo*, or News from *Terra Australis Incognita* at the same Theatre, but that I have already tired my Readers by too long Digressions, and should I once begin upon so copious a Subject, and give the proper *Eulogiums* due to each of those memorable Bards, I must swell my Volume much beyond the Size I propose, and make a bound *Folio*, or a *Quarto* at least: Besides, I can the more easily put the Restraint upon myself, since I am inform'd that Capt. *Alexander Smith*, the renowned Biographer, whom I have mention'd in the former Part of this History, has undertaken to write the Lives of the modern Poets, with the same Accuracy and Elegancy of Stile, as he has shewn in the Lives of the Highwaymen, and in this intended Work, no Doubt, Justice will be done to two Authors whom I maintain so considerable a Rank in the Commonwealth of Letters.

The Applause Mr. *Spiller* receiv'd from his Friends and Companions upon the Account of the above-mention'd *Epilogue*, encourag'd him to try his Genius in several other Pieces of Poetry: And tho' Mr. *Christopher Bullock* in his above-printed Dedication of *The Woman's Revenge, Or, A Match in Newgate*, to him, was pleas'd to compliment him upon his being an Enemy to Reading, I have it in my Power to assert the contrary upon my own Knowledge, I myself having at his Desire, borrow'd *Bysshe's* and *Gildon's Arts of Poetry* for his Assistance, from whence having learn'd the Rules of Measure, and furnish'd his Head with as great a Competency of Jingles for the Ends of Verses, as most of our Squab-Poets about Town can make Boast of, he brought forth several very pretty Pieces, with which he frequently entertain'd his Friends in private, though his Modesty would not give him Leave to make them public, he once ventured so far as to translate the Third Ode of the Ninth Book of *Horace*,

from an old Translation, which he bought for Two -pence in *Duck-Lane*, after the following manner.

HORACE. While I was welcome here, and thee
Not any dearer Youth caress'd;

Me thought not *Persia's* King could be

So with his whole *Seraglio* bless'd.

LYDIA. While you could feel no other Flame,

Nor *Lydian* next to *Cloe* love;

Your *Lydia* was a greater Name ,

Than Mistress' enof *Mars* or *Jove*.

HORACE. I'm now the *Cretan Cloe's* Slave,

Shesings and plays, Oh charming fine!

And would the Fates her Life but save,

I would not fear to lay down mine.

LYDIA. Me, *Calais, Ornith's* Son and Heir,

Does with a mutual Passion heat;

To die, and die again, I'd dare,

Would that redeem the Boy from Fate.

HORACE. But say; should yet old Love revive,

And link us in a firmer Chain;

If charming *Cloe* out I drive,

And take a cast *Lydia* in again.

LYDIA. Though *He*; a gentle So uland civil,

Gay, generous, doting -fond, and true;

Thou whimsical, thou testy Devil,

Ie'en would live and die with you!

The writing these Verses was occasioned by a Quarrel and Reconciliation between him and one Mrs. *Stratford*, dwelling in *Wild-Street*, with whom, after his Separation from his Wife, he lived for some Time in great Intimacy. And here it may not be improper to give the Reader a Notion of Mr. *Spiller's* Taste of Beauty, by describing the Person and Perfections of this Lady, who had the Happiness to captivate his Heart. She was in Stature just rising to that Height where the Graceful can only begin to shew itself, of a lively Aspect; and a Command in her Mien, that liketh the principal Figure in the finest Paintings, first seizes, and longest delights the Eye of the Spectator. Her Voice was shrill, strong and piercing; her Pronunciation indeed a little too Voluble, and her Emphasis always placed with great Spirit in her Periods. She had one peculiar Happiness from Nature, she look'd, and maintain'd the Agreeable a Time, when other fine Women only raise Admirers by their Understanding. 'Tis true she could not boast much of her *Paraphernalia*, her best Gown being a *Coventry Yard Wide*, a pretty deal the worse for wearing; but Mr. *Spiller*, while he is Amour continued with her, did the utmost in his Power to see her dress'd according to her Condition, and, even when he was on the other Side of the Water, allow'd her *Fourteen Pence a Week*, and gave her *Three Shillings and Six -Pence at one Time, to buy her a Hoop at Rag -Fair*: And not long after this, upon *Valentine's* Day, he sent her, as she assured me herself, the following Copy of Verses, with a new flourish'd Apron.

To Mrs D. S. Health, Sense, and Virtue, Gifts Divine!

Still bless my lovely *Valentine*!

She, who would truly bright appear,

Must be as prudent as she's fair.

An unaffected Modesty,
 Hath lasting Charms, which far outvie
 The finest Shape, the sparkling'st Eye.
 Beauty alone may Conquests gain,
 'Tis Virtue must secure her Reign.
 There are who each Perfection prize,
 The Amorous *This*, and *That* the Wise.
 But when we both united find,
 The Body fair, and bright the Mind,
 What Words can so much Worth unfold?
 The Diamond is set in Gold!
 Alike the Grave and Gay admire,
 All burn, but with an hallow'd Fire.
 In you, fair *Dinah!* with Delight,
 I see those different Charms unite;
 And thus, with Ribbons, Fans and Gloves,
 Whilst others *Valentines* their Loves
 Regale, the Tributethat I send,
 Bespeak the Lover and the Friend.
 This flow'ry Linnen has Pretence
 To grace thy blooming Innocence.
 O! guard it safe! Let nor rude Hand
 Stray o'er, and soil this spotless Band?
 Now, pure in it's own Snow, how fair,
 How like yourself does it appear!
 When once 'tis rumpled, stain'd and torn,
 It may disgrace, but can't adorn.
 Away the worthless Thing you'll throw,
 Just as lewd *Bd* did you know who.

By the foregoing Verses, it may be imagin'd that Mr. *Spiller's* Passion for Mrs. *Stratford* was purely Platonick, by talking so much of her Virtue, and indeed, altho' she admitted Visits from him, she was cold to all Mankind besides, and rather than suffer another to share those Raptures which she preserv'd alone for him, or prostitute herself for Gain, she has condescended to several Employments much below the Dignity of one whose sometimes lay by the Side of so great a Man; such as dealing, at one Season of the Year, in *Asparagus*, and at another in *Rumps, Burs*, and hot bak'd *Faggots*.

Now I am upon the Topick of Mr. *Spiller's* Amours, I cannot omit that which he carry'd on with Mrs. *D* the Duke of *R*'s Mistress, which lasted for a considerable Time, but ended, at last, in a great Quarrel between them, and the utter Ruin of Mrs. *D* in the Duke's Favour, through Mr. *Spiller's* inadvertent Discovery of the Intrigue for a Joke; For being dress'd a little cleaner than ordinary, and the Duke happening to be behind the Scenes, could not help taking Notice of it. "Yes," (says *Jemmy*) "my Linnen is not only clean, but as fine as any of your Grace's." "That's impossible," reply'd the Duke, upon which the others shew'd his Grace the Coronet and his own Mark upon his Shirt, it being one Mrs. *D* had, that Day, lent him. The Duke, by this Circumstance being convinc'd of what he had some slight Suspicion of before, from that Night would never have anything to say to her; so that the Lady lost a very good Keeper, and poor *Spiller* an Opportunity of appearing so spruce as she oftentimes made him. He thought himself so happy in her good Graces, 'till this Piece of Folly ruined

him, that they often wish'd their Inclinations for each other might be as lasting as their Lives, as you may see by the following Verses he sent her a little before their Quarrel.

You say, my Dear, in the soft Hour of Love,
You wish our mutual Flames may constant prove,
Kind Heav'n, if from thy Heart those Wishes came,
Grant it to end but with our vital Flame.

Whatever Opinion the World may have of Mr. *Spiller* as a Poet, I am sure Nobody will refuse him the Praises due to a good -humour'd Fellow and a most facetious Companion. Mr. *Spiller* was not only esteem'd by the Managers of the House, as one on whom much of their Interest depended by all the Frequenters of that House, for the constant Diversion in his humorous Behaviour on the Stage afforded them; but in private Conversation, by many of the smartest and prettiest Fellows about Town, who acquired that Character of ten times by retailing his merry Conceits to their Companions: Nay, some Persons of the first Rank have not thought an Evening ill spent in so good Company: the late Duke of *Wharton* particularly took much Pleasure in passing some of those Hours he devoted to Mirth, in the Company of honest *Jemmy*; a Familiarity with a Man of such Quality is certainly to be look'd upon as a great Honour done to a Person of his low Station of Life, but it happen'd quite otherwise at a certain Time to poor *Spiller*, for his Grace having, one Evening, an unaccountable Frolick come into his Head of obliging every Man in Company to disrobe himself every Health that was drank, of some Part of his Covering, first a Peruke, then a Coat, and afterwards a Waistcoat. Poor *Jemmy*, when they came to the last, made a Thousand Excuses, but all to no Purpose, for the Duke insisting upon having his Toast pledg'd in the same Manner he had drunk himself, he was forced to own that having mislaid his Shirt he had forgo't to put it on that Day, and so was expos'd in his *Buff* to the whole Company, which, you may imagine occasion'd not a little Laughter; therefore how much happier had it been for him to have contented himself that Evening, with the humble *Conundrums* of some of the Peers of his own House, whom might have been in the same Condition with himself. But this cursed Ambition leads a Man into numberless Inconveniences.

Mr. *Spiller's* free and expensive Manner of Living still continuing, and not having the Convenience of his usual Sanctuary in Cases of Extremity, the *Mint*, that Place being put down by Act of Parliament, he became a Victim to the Resentment of his mercyless Creditors, and a wretched Property to Bailiffs and Spunging Houses, by whom, after they had drain'd his Pocket to the last Half Penny, he was ungenerously deliver'd up to Goal. But in this Place it was his peculiar good Fortune to experience, contrary to the usual Custom of those Places, a great Indulgence and Civility, upon the Account of the pleasant and facetious Temper which he preserv'd in those unhappy Circumstances; and particularly when he was thrown into the *Marshalsea* Prison, at a certain Time, at the Suit of several Persons, his jocose Conversation sowon upon the Good -Nature of the Person who was then *Deputy-keeper* of the Goal, that he found a very sincere, generous and serviceable Friend in him ever after; not only assisting him at that Juncture, to make his Affairs easy with his Plaintiffs, and appear in the World again, but continuing the same good Office to him, whenever it was his Fate to come under his Hands as a Prisoner again. In short, by the Management and unwearied Industry of this Person, Mr. *Spiller's* Circumstances were, a few Months before the World was depriv'd of him, brought into so easy and comfortable a Situation, that he could not only, on a common Week Day, venture out of the Play -house, which was made a Sort of Garrison by those of his Brother Comedians who went under a small Suspicion of Debt, to pay his Friends a merry Visitor so, but even was able to give his Acquaintance the Enjoyment of his Company, whole Days and Nights together, without the least Apprehension of Danger, at the House of his

above-mentioned Friend, who being of too generous and humane a Temper to continue in the Office of a Goaler, and live in Luxury by the Misfortunes of Wretches who were committed to his Custody, quitted that mercenary Employment, and took a publick victualling House near *Clare-Market*; where, His Sign, though seemingly well adapted for the *Place*, was judg'd too vulgar and unpolitet to countenance the Resort of such Gentlemen of *Taste* and *Consequence* as Mr. *Spiller's* Mirth and influence invited thither, was, by the concurrent Desire of an elegant Company, who were assembled there over a Bowl of Arrack Punch, one Evening, (about Three Months before Mr. *Spiller's* Death) and by the generous Offer of Mr. *Legar*, who was one of the Company, and a excellent Master in the Science of *Painting* as *Musick*, chang'd from the *Bull and Butcher*, to Mr. *Spiller's* Head; and drawn by the said Mr. *Legar*, gratis, in a Manner, and with a Pencil, that equal the proudest Performances of those who have acquired the greatest Wealth and Reputation in the *Art* of *Painting*.

To prove that he was an exceeding good Punster, pray take the following Specimen of his Wit in that Way. It was a Time when the Town gave but very little Encouragement to *Lincoln's-Inn-Theatre*, which forced the Master of the House to be a little behind-hand with his Actors. They being met as usual at Rehearsal on a *Saturday* Morning, with Hopes of receiving some Part of their Pay, young *Bullock*, who had always a strict Friendship with Mr. *Spiller*, after having been at the Office, comes upon the Stage against his Friend, with a sorrowful Countenance, *Faith, Jemmy, there's no Cole*, said he; *Cole* you must understand is a *Cant-Word* for Money. *Why*, then reply'd the other, *if there is no Cole, we must burn Wood*. You are likewise to remark here, that *Wood* was the Name of the Man who was to pay them.

Mr. *Spiller's* Wit was not the Effect of Wine; for he was the same over humble Porter; it he same when he drank nothing; nay, like that arch *French* Wag *Scarron*, he would sport in the midst of Pain; for being one Night great Torture with the Tooth-*Ach*, a Barber that was behind the Scenes, desired that he would let him draw his Tooth for him, *No*, said he, *I can't spare one now, Friend, but you may draw them all after the 10th of June if you please, for I shall have no Occasion for them then*; meaning when the Company gave over playing, he should have nothing to eat.

Going one Day through *Rag-Fair*, he cheapen'd a *Leg of Mutton*, for which they ask'd him Two Shillings; *No*, says *Jemmy*, *I can't afford to give you Two Shillings for a Second-Hand Leg of Mutton, when I can buy a New One in Clare-Market for Half a Crown*.

An certain Officer of the Army, who was very much addicted to enlarge his Narratives beyond the Bounds of Truth, was, one Night, diverting the Company behind the Scenes with an Account of a Pike that he saw alive, which was above *Five Foot long*. *Pish*, replied *Spiller*, *That's nothing, I myself have seen a Half-Pike six Foot long, that has not been worth Two pence*.

When he lay ill of the Small-Pox some Yearss since, an Acquaintance coming to see him, and bewailing the Misfortune of his being at that Time Blind, *Oh*, said he, *I shan't be so long, for Puppies you know always see at the End of Nine Days*. Nay, but a few Days before he died, being carried up to lie in a Room on the same Floor with Mr. *Walker* at the Play-House, with whom he had had some little Dispute not long before, *You see* Tom, said he, *I have kept my Word; Itold you I would be even with you before long*.

To mention all the numerous Circumstances that attended the Life of this valuable Member of our Common-Wealth, Mr. *Spiller*, is a Task which I am perswaded, his dearest Friends, and those who are most religiously tender and careful of his Memory, will excuse me from

undertaking. Let it suffice, that during the Run of the *Beggar's Opera*, which was the longest that any Dramatick Piece that ever yet appeared upon the *British Stage* met with, he made his last important Figure as a *Comedian*, in the Character of *Matt of the Mint*, which seem to be the next in Rank to that of *Macheath*, and *outdid his usual Outdoings* to such a Degree, that whenever he sung the following *AIR*S, which I shall take the Liberty to transcribe, he executed his Part with so truly sweet and harmonious a Tone, and in so judicious and ravishing a Manner, that the Audience could not avoid putting his Modesty to the Blush, by repeated Clamour of *Encore, Encore*.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Matt of the Mint at a Tavern near Newgate, in Company with the rest of his Gang.

AIR XIX. Matt. Fill ev'ry Glass, for Wine inspires us,
And fire us

With Courage, Love and Joy.

Women and Wine should Life employ:

Is there ought else on Earth desirous?

AIR XX. In the same SCENE. Matt. Let us take the Road;

Hark, I hear the Sound of Coaches?

The Hour of Attack approaches,

To your Arms, brave Boys, and load.

See the Ball hold,

Let the Chymist stoil like Asses,

Our Fire their Fire surpasses,

And turns all our Lead to Gold.

I am not insensible that those Persons are not wanting, who either want only or maliciously report that Mr. *Spiller's* doings so much Justice to this his Part of *Matt of the Mint* to be attributed to the Fondness she frequently shew'd of resorting, in Company with his Brother *Pinkethman*, and other Comedians of the same Note for a polite Taste, to the *Taphouses*, or *Lodges* of most of the Goals in *London*, and the particular Esteem which he always express'd for the instructive and elegant Conversation of Mrs *Spurling*, whose inspiring Liquor have encourag'd such Numbers of *Newgate* Heroes, to laugh both at the Law of their Country, and the Ordinary's pious Exhortations at the *Gallows*.

But as I am ambitious only how to render this my Account of his Life worthy the Perusal of these date, virtuous and well-meaning Part of my Countrymen, I shall not descend to sacrifice the Character of my *Hero*, by giving into any such foolish or disingenuous Suggestions, but conclude that he always thought himself bound in Honour, to do every Author who brought a Play upon the Stage, and obliged him with a Part in it, the strictest Justice imaginable, and upon that Principle only, prevail'd upon himself to enter into this particular Part with so much Sprightliness and Vigour, in Defiance of our common *Laws, Decency, or any other*, to all which he, at other Times, profess'd the most zealous Submission and Adherence.

This was the last Part, as I observ'd before, in which he appear'd on the *British Theatre*, truly like a Comedian, and like Mr. *Spiller*; not that he did not act in several other Parts besides, in the same Season, but that the Master of the House, biggotted to a Performance by which he had got so much Money, was loath to take off the good Impression which it had made on the Town, and therefore thought proper to represent no other Plays, during the Intermission of its Run, than such, as by frequent Use, were grown stale, and incapable of recovering the Taste and Senses of the People, and in which Mr. *Spiller* could not appear with his usual Advantage.

Let me desire the *Reader* now (having gone through all the material Circumstances of his Life, which I was acquainted with, either by my own particular Knowledge, or the Information of those who were most intimate with him, with the greatest Impartiality) to view him in his last melancholly Scene, (melancholly Retrospection indeed, to all the Friends of Wit, Humour, and good Acting!) His Departure from the *Stage*, not only of *Lincoln's Inn-Fields* Theatre, but of Life itself.

Being always ready to discharge his Duty to the Play -House, in whatever Manner he should be appointed, on the 31st Day of *January*, when His Royal Highness the Prince of *Wales* had commanded a Play to be acted, to which the Entertainment of *Pluto* and *Proserpin* was to be added, and in which he was to perform a very important Part, he would by no Means, notwithstanding he found himself out of Order, give an Interruption to the Business of the House, by publishing his Illness, but ventured on the Stage, where, in the Midst of the Part he was to perform, he was seized with a Sort of an Apoplectick Fit, and carried off the Stage, to have the Assistance of a Surgeon, who, notwithstanding heus'd all his Art, could not give a longer Respite to his Life, than till the 7th Day of *February*, when he expired in the very same Room which occasioned that *Pun* before - mention'd, which he made to Mr. *Walker*.

Having thus done Justice, I hope to the Memory of my deceased Friend, I shall only add, that he was buried at the Expence of Mr. *Rich*, the Master of the Theatre, by Mr. *Hawkins*, an Undertaker, living in St. *Clement's* Parish, in the Church -Yard belonging to the said Parish, three Days after his Death, in a very decent Manner, in the 37th Year of his Age, and that the following Epitaph was dedicated to his Memory by a Butcher of *Clare-Market*, who had frequently partaken the Pleasure of his most agreeable Company, at the House which was honour'd with his *Sign*.

An EPITAPH on Mr. James Spiller. Written by a Butcher of *Clare -Market*.
DOWN with your Marrow-Bones and Cleavers all,
And on your Marrow -Bones, ye Butchers fall;
For Prayers from you, whomever pray'd before,
Perhaps, poor Jemmy may to Life restore.
What have we done? the wretched Bailiffs cry,
The only Man by whom we liv'd, should die!
Enrag'd they gnaw their Wax, and tear their Writs
While Butcher's Wives fall in Hysterick Fits.
For, sure as they are alive, poor Spiller's dead!
But, Thanks to Jack Legar, we've got his Head.
Down with your Ready Cole, ye Jovial Tribe,
And for a Metzot into Cuts subscribe.
The Market straverse, and surround the Mint,
It shall go hard, but he shall be in Print.
For
He was an inoffensive, merry Fellow,
When Sober, hipp'd, blith as a Bird, when mellow.
FINIS.

1. Three Bailiffs.