

T H E

52

M I M I C:

A

P O E M.

By the A U T H O R.



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T O

SAMUEL FOOTE, Esq;

S I R,

 A S a just admirer of your great merit, both as an author and an actor, I hope you will not be offended at my taking the liberty to prefix your name to the following poem, which is the work of a man of real genius and taste.

That Mimicry is the most diverting species of acting, must be visible to every person,

son, who goes to the theatre, when you condescend to entertain the town by exerting your happy talents in that way.

Nobody, I will venture to affirm, however severe or saturnine in their disposition, ever saw your Cadwallader, your Cole, or your Smirk, without being put into a good humour. These characters demonstrate your abilities as an actor. And is that all? No sure: they also demonstrate, that you are the best comic writer of this age.

But let me say, that Mimicry is not only the most entertaining, but the most difficult species of acting; at least, those who pretend
to

to undervalue it must allow, that it is the rarest endowment our players inherit. We have fifty good actors (simply such) for one good Mimic; for I by no means allow, that Shuter is a good Mimic, because of his *London Cries*; or that it consists, as some other Gentlemen possess it, in squinting and making faces.

The following poem is printed, Sir, not so much as a tribute to your fame, as a rebuke to your enemies; not so much by way of a particular compliment, as a general defence of an art, which, as you very justly observe in your introduction to the *Minor*, the wisest and politest nations have held in the greatest esteem,

esteem, and looked upon as a necessary accomplishment towards perfecting their greatest orators.

With the most perfect sense of your merit, the utmost contempt for your puny antagonists, and, tho' unknown to you, with the warmest wishes for your success in all your ingenious undertakings,

I have the honour to be,

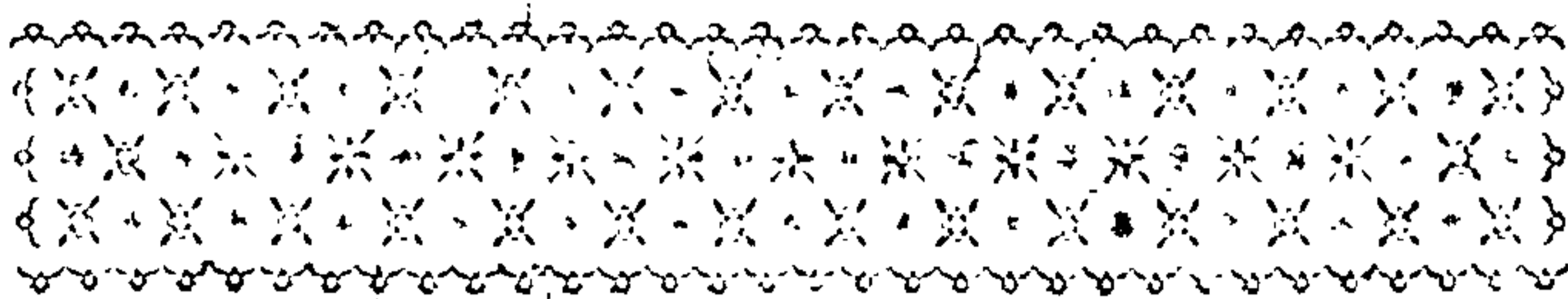
S I R,

Your most obedient,

and most devoted,

humble servant,

The Editor.




T H E

M I M I C :

A

P O E M.


WHAT shall I sing—at this contagious time,
 When ev'ry son of ribaldry and rhyme
 Struts forth, with self-applause, to act his part?
 Up, muse, and chaunt the Mimic's various art.

T

B

That

That human ape, who, mirror-like, reflects
 Our shapes, our faces, beauties, and defects :
 We meet him heedless, but with wonder find,
 That when we part—we leave ourselves behind.

And you, O FOOTE, who, with amazing skill,
 Have wrought your ductile features to your will,
 Who ev'ry man you see can learn by rote,
 And change your person easy as your coat.
 Attend, nor blush, while in unstudied lays,
 I laud the talent, you was born to raise.

Behold, in fight the various man appears,
 But who can fix his figure, or his years?
 Now smoothest charms triumphant youth supplies,
 Laughs in his cheeks, and sparkles in his eyes ;
 But sudden see, the scene is snatch'd away,
 See each inverted feature in decay.

His

His muscles all relax'd, his face o'ergrown,
 Rough and imboft, with wrinkles not his own.

He trails his dangling legs, the wond'ring train
 Laugh at the solemn conduct of his cane.
 Rapt thro' the scenes of life; he drops his prime,
 A cripple fixty years before his time;

Runs in a moment all its ftages o'er,
 And steps from four-and-twenty to fourfcore.

Now he a venerable judge appears,
 And the long garb of lazy purple wears;
 Stuff'd full of felf; his awkward frame how big,
 His head adorn'd with half a ftone of wig,

Then to the sneering crowd he lifts a joke,
 Puns from the law, or quibbles out of Coke;

With fetd'd air, and most judicious face,
 Nods o'er the cubin, counsel, and the case;
 Slumbers, and hears, by starts, the noisy train,
 Catches a period, and drops down again,

And now his hearers, in their turn, to lull,
 Himself stands up, most venerably dull,
 Talks of old times, commends their loyal zeal,
 Their wholesome statutes, discipline, and ale.
 On different themes bestows one common praise,
 The Thames, the streets, the king, the king's highways.

Now see him quit the bench, and strait appear
 A huge old gouty counsel at the bar;
 Bawl for his client, wrest the tortur'd laws
 From their true sense, and mould them to the cause.

Now

Now he, in solem-form, harangues the crowd,
 And hems and coughs emphatically loud.
 Blest art indeed! and glorious eloquence!
 Where empty noise supplies the want of sense.
 For meaning, signs and motions he affords,
 And interjections for the want of words.

Am I deceiv'd, or by some sudden flight,
 A starch'd, tub-preacher, now he strikes the fight;
 Quick the transition, and unseen the art,
 Pale, and intirely chang'd in every part:
 His shorten'd visage, and fantastic dress,
 The mad fanatic to the life express;
 That small silk cap, more puritanic hairs,
 Cropt to the quick, and circling round his ears;
 That rounded face, the mimic here proclaim:
 How very diff'rent, yet how still the same.

Now

Now he, by just degrees, his silence breaks,
 His frantic silence muttering ere he speaks;
 Protracted hums the solemn farce begin,
 And groans and pauses interrupt the scene.
 A while the wavering spirit comes, and goes;
 He works his eyes, and twangs his vocal nose.

Now quick and rapid, and in rage more loud,
 A storm of nonsense, burst upon the crowd.
 His hand and voice proclaim the general doom,
 While this the hour-glass shakes, and that the room.
 On nature's ruins all his doctrines dwell,
 And throw wide open every gate of hell.

What person is to you, O FOOTE! unknown;
 What face, but you adopt into your own?
 At the least hint, fictitious crowds you raise,
 And multiply yourself ten thousand ways.

This

This moment, to indulge the mirthful vein,
 A fool, or doctor's person, you sustain.
 With equal warmth your humour we applaud,
 In the field preacher, and the canting bawd.
 His brazen lungs, her lewd religious leer,
 You shew——then presto——rise an auctioneer.

O! may I ne'er forget that beldam *Cole*,
 How her hands shake, her gog'l'd eye-balls role.
 In whom, strange draught, yet pictur'd from the life,
 The flesh and spirit join, like man and wife.
 Now full of piety, now full of sin,
 Drunk with religion now——and now with gin,

She speaks, just crawl'd from her fanatic den :
 “ I han't a seen your honour, God knows when :
 “ But I'm a tatter'd garment——'tis our lot,
 “ As Mr. Squintum says——old Cole's forgot.

“ Ah!

- “ Ah! Heavens preserve him! he’s a holy man!
- “ But now I think on’t—there’s your fav’rite Nan,
- “ With her black eyes—’gad she’s a charming girl!
- “ A bedfellow, Sir George—for any earl.
- “ But such a reprobate—Oh—there it is,
- “ That pang—my old disease, the rheumatis’.
- “ Knaw, knaw, knaw—never easy night nor day;
- “ It hardly leaves me strength enough to pray.
- “ When I am gone to Heaven, a blessed faint!
- “ What will the house do?—Lord! I’m mighty faint.
- “ Look down, sweet Saviour—Hark you here, my lamb,
- “ See if you han’t got something like a dram.”

Nor let me less remember humourous Smirk,
Ready in every face his face to perk,
Who prates and grins, and wrigles—paultry elf.
And thinks the greatest thing on earth—himself:

“ Ladies

- “ Ladies, take notice—Hand these vases round;
 “ Their fellows cost, last year, a hundred pound.
 “ Observe their colours too—the fine pea-green.
 “ And then those jars——’pon honour right Nankeen.
 “ How natural the wings in that there bird!
 “ Ladies, they’re worth more money, take my word.

 “ But here are boxes, match them if you can:
 “ Finely preserv’d—true Indian—old Japan.
 “ Six guineas—come, we’ll set them up at four;
 “ Five in three places—no-body bid more?
 “ The hammer’s just agoing—now, now, now!
 “ They’re a *most vast curiosity* I vow.
 “ Lord, sure you’re all asleep; ’tis quite a shame.
 “ Five, ten—Well, they’re a bargain—Ma’am, your name?”

Last ***** comes, possess’d, but not inspir’d,
 With zeal for *Christ*, and love of money fir’d:

C

A

A bellowing, furious hypocritic dunce,
 Sprawling and squinting fifty ways at once.

- “ Friends, fathers, mothers, sisters, sons and all,
 “ Shut up your shops, and listen to my call.
 “ With labour, toil, all second means dispense,
 “ And live a rent-charge upon Providence.
 “ Prick up your ears; a story now I’ll tell
 “ Which once a widow and her child befell,
 “ I knew the mother and her daughter well;
 “ Poor, ’tis true, they were; but never wanted,
 “ For whatsoe’er they ask’d, was always granted:
 “ One fatal day the matron’s truth was try’d,
 “ She wanted meat and drink, and fairly cry’d.
 “ [*Child.*] Mother, you cry! [*Moth.*] Oh, child, I’ve got
 no bread.
 “ [*Child.*] What matters that? Why Providence a’nt dead!
 “ With

- “ With reason good, this truth the child might say;
“ For there came in at noon, that very day,
“ Bread, greens, potatoes, and a leg of mutton,
“ A better fure a table ne'er was put on.
“ Ay, that may be, ye cry, with those poor souls;
“ But we ne'er had a rasher for the coals.
“ And d'ye deserve it? How d'ye spend your days?
“ In pastimes, prodigality, and plays!
“ Let's go see Foote! ah, Foote's a precious limb!
“ Old-nick will soon a football make of him!
“ For foremost rows in fide-boxes you shove,
“ Think you to meet with fide-boxes above?
“ Where giggling girls and powder'd fops may sit,
“ No, you will all be cram'd into the pit,
“ And croud the house for fatan's benefit.
“ Oh, what you snivel; well, do so no more,
“ Drop, to attone, your money at the door,
“ And, if I please,——I'll give it to the poor.”

A

A thousand other shapes he wears with grace;
A thousand more varieties of face:
But who, in every shape, can count him o'er,
Who multiplies his person every hour?

What muse his flying features can pursue,
Or keep his wand'ring countenance in view?

Had I a thousand mouths, a thousand tongues,
A throat of brass, and adamantine lungs,
I could not celebrate this Proteus' skill,
Who shifts his figure and his face at will;
Who thousands in one person does include,
A crowd alone; himself a multitude.

F I N I S.