

tority of these facts, there are individuals, who, bearing the character of fathers, lead their children to those haunts of immorality! As a parent, I would raise my loudest voice against those sinks of iniquity, and lead the young and tender mind to a more chaste and innocent amusement. But can it be said that the theatre is a means of inculcating morality and forming virtuous habits? Where is this lesson of morality taught? Is it in the representation of *fictitious* characters and incidents, made pliable to the nod of the stage-poet, or is it in the lives of *real* characters of the worst descriptions, with which theatres are at times favored?

I have spoken of the *sentiments* which generally pervade our plays—I will now speak of the *language* which they contain. And here I have no hesitation in saying that it is equally bad with the sentiment; for can it possibly be denied that our plays are abounding in jests on serious and religious subjects? So sensible do some of our play-poets seem to be of the utility of this method to ridicule Scripture truths that every nerve is strained to accomplish this object; and, as a preparative, they often indulge their anxious auditory with phrases of a double import. Indeed, they well know that drollery is a powerful engine to do mischief to religion. Reason, with all its batteries, has never been able to shake it. Experience concurs with its dictates; and the greatest shrewdness and sagacity have never been able to discover any flaws in its moral principles. But there is no fence against this flail of profane and scurrilous drollery, that, with its apish tricks and buffoonery, is able to render, not only the wisest man in the world, but the most solid and substantial truths, ridiculous. This plan, we know, is practically adopted in many departments of life, in which we see men put off with a jest what they can never answer with all their wit or talent. Do not our plays also, abound in profane oaths? And if these vices I have enumerated be tolerated, as they certainly are, by a crowded auditory, what need is there of further proof that our theatres are great corrupters of public morals?

With respect to the *effect* produced on an assembly by such sentiments and such language, we need only bring to our remembrance the nightly occupation of particular places, where the fallen victim of her own folly and guilt occupies a seat, to catch some unwary youth, deprive him of his property, ruin his reputation, and bring disgrace upon his connections. "Perhaps there is not in the world so compact and concentrated a mass of human depravity to be found, as in the *one shilling gallery* of the large theatres, when any piece of low and indecent buffoonery is to be performed. The very lowest, foulest dregs of fomenting grossness and vice are there, walking in tumultuous ebullition. Satan, certainly, has not on earth another agent so teeming with future evils." This fact is still more important and alarming, in the scale of argument, when we know that "on the lower classes the higher are built. They must stand or fall together. At any rate, if the former fail, the latter cannot keep their places. If you sap or corrupt the foundation, the superstructure must be endangered. Of the lower classes is the foundation of society formed. Here, then, in the theatre, is engendered the dry-rot, which, penetrating the heart of the oak that supports the state, destroys its very nature, and renders it not only useless, but highly insecure and dangerous."

It would be no difficult thing to carry our thoughts to the audience at minor theatres; but confirmation of the above opinion is fully in the consciences of all readers. And now I ask, if theatrical entertainments produce an effect so great, as to bring *such* an assembly together, where can possibly be the advantage of attending on them? for the exhibition must be congenial to the feelings and notions of this auditory, else they would not nightly *pay for their admission*.

I might easily paint the character and practice of some of our performers and playwrights; but I have no wish to say anything of living personages more than this—does their practical comment on the parts they represent to their audience for imitation correspond with the spirit of the doctrines