

anticipates a point or two of defence, namely: one of amusements and recreation, and one of *charity* towards those who live by the stage. As to the first: Is it lawful in the eye of God, (for with *Him* we have to do,) to seek amusements at the expence of the virtue and honour of those who furnish them? Should they, by delighting our minds, and ministering to our pleasures, plunge themselves into moral degradation, and we remain innocent while thus feeding our pampered appetites on the very heart's blood of the self devoted victims? And as to the plea of charity, (should it be made) it would be the same as a defence of hiring assassins to cut our own throats, and run their chance as criminals.

But this may appear as if we assume the position that stage exhibitors are of course the victims of vice. We assume it, because, in the article above inserted, it is most cheerfully, (we had almost said triumphantly) conceded. "It is at all times with reluctance that we allude to the affairs of private life, and particularly of those persons who devote themselves to the stage. They seem, indeed, with a very few exceptions, to have a prescriptive right to act naughtily, without in the slightest degree endangering their reputation, and frequently command, through their peccadillos, an additional portion of public patronage and commendation." Virtue is then prostituted for the gratification of public taste, while the public mind is so completely corrupt, that "an additional portion of public patronage and commendation" is joyfully bestowed on those female prostitutes who have thus become "professional favourites." This broad and unequivocal concession from the patrons of the English stage exhibits a picture of depravity of the most gross and offensive description. It comes in open defiance of the laws of God and man, and acknowledges a "prescriptive right" on the part of those shameless females, whose *personal attractions* are not the least part of their *professional accomplishments*, to make the stage the mart of their *personal charms*, and the medium of intrigue, debauch, adultery and crime.

Without farther comment on a case of so decided a stamp, we will take the liberty of assuming, that the stage is not only, as it now exists, a needless appendage to human society, but a seminary of vice—a sink of debauchery—the slaughter-house and the grave of whatever is valuable in the Christian character, or dear in the purer charities of life, or sweet and lovely in the eye of domestic virtue: and we will proceed in attempting to make an application of some of the principles above laid down.

1. "Righteousness exalteth a nation;" but vice degrades it, and produces a constant tendency towards its destruction. The stage is a corrupter of public morals and a destroyer of individual virtue: therefore the stage is disgraceful to a nation, and dangerous to its prosperity and existence.

2. The stage by producing debauchery produces idleness, which causes a deficiency in productive industry and a consumption of the necessaries of life over proportionate to their production: which, by an infallible law in the constitution of human society, has a direct tendency to pauperism.

3. The more vicious a community is, the more numerous will be its paupers, both from a deficiency of productive labour, and from a disproportionate consumption of the necessaries of life. The stage, by destroying religious feeling in its votaries, fosters unnatural pride—a brutal unfeeling pride, which despises the ordinary occupations of life, and leads to fraud and violence—a pride which destroys that fine feeling of manly independence which chooses to live by *virtuous industry*—a pride which, whatever its sensitiveness on some points, has quenched "the blushes of ingenuous shame," and is reckless of the frowns of indignant virtue.

4. Hence the honest industry of the nation, taken collectively, is, by means of the stage, defrauded of just so much of its proceeds as serves to provide it with actors and then support it, over and above the amount to be deducted on account of the deficiency of their productive labour. It is therefore, as we think, a matter of political wisdom and justice—a debt due by the state to the honest and the good, to put into rigid execution the existing laws against stage exhibitions of all kinds.

5. Vice is re-productive and contagious in a high degree. Stage exhibitions inflame those passions which ought to be held under the sober restraints of religion; and which will, under the best state of public morals, often burst from their barriers, and carry desolation in their course: hence female stage favourites obtain "a prescriptive right to act naughtily, without in the slightest degree endangering their reputation." They "avail themselves of this disposition on the part of the public;" and in proportion as they are countenanced in their shameful conduct by this degraded public, and a little more, do

they exert themselves to corrupt those who pay such marked homage to their polluted names. They exercise their "prescriptive right" in seducing men by their meretricious arts to adultery and crime, and to tearing assunder the dearest connections of life: and this is done in the most open and undisguised manner. Nay, more than this. Of one it is said: "That Lady deserves all the encomiums bestowed on her, and we understand they will not go altogether unrewarded. A noble Lord, long an ardent admirer, awaits but the freedom of widowhood to confer on her the title of Countess."—Now it is impossible, that this noble and high-minded Lord, under such circumstances, and the influence of such Circean charms, might share the fate of the companions of Ulysses, and be transformed into a real monster? Is he proof, while labouring under "ardent" passion for this paragon of stage excellence, against the temptation to shorten his most painful state of expectancy, and hasten his widowhood? What female, we are led to exclaim, who would shrink from the thought of a cup of hemlock or a wet napkin, could think of being the wife of an admirer and paramour of actresses, even though all the noble blood in Europe flowed in his veins, or the riches of India poured into his coffers? And what Editor of a public journal, who has not cast off all sense of shame and set decency at defiance, would gravely write and deliberately publish to the world, such a contemptuous libel on the divine institution of matrimony, and the sacredness of its obligations?

The writer of the above paragraph most feelingly observes, that "It is at all times with reluctance that we allude to the affairs of private life, and particularly of those persons who devote themselves to the stage." It would seem then, that the private character of those females who "have a prescriptive right to act naughtily,"—in other words, who are ACKNOWLEDGED PROSTITUTES, is an object more worthy of tender solicitude and watchful care than the character of those who, by their rank and virtue, are the ornaments of their sex, and the guardians of domestic happiness. And what can be the reason of this? Why truly we cannot tell, unless that the happiness of mankind is more dependent on the patriotic labours of these worthies, who, "having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin," are leagued against chastity and female honour, than upon the virtuous lives, labours, and examples of all the other classes of society put together. For why should superior care be bestowed on that which is of inferior value? 'Tis a clear case, and if the characters of actors and actresses should be, under acknowledged and well merited infamy and execration, more the object of public care and sympathetic concern than that of private and domestic worth and virtue, it must be because it is of more consequence to mankind to uphold the public promoters of debauchery and crime, than to guard from profanation even the sanctuary of Almighty God.

But the stage has been defended on the ground that some of its exhibitions serve to improve the powers of the human mind, and produce and perpetuate classical taste. If this part could even be entirely separated from those accompaniments which have such a decided and sure tendency to profligate wickedness, its utility would still be very questionable. But it cannot, and the experiment cannot be made, because its primary object is, to make money by means of sensual gratifications. Not one in a hundred most probably attend the stage from motives of purely intellectual considerations. If the stage were to exclude those whose object is the gratification of their passions, or what would amount to the same, to have none but intellectual and classical exhibitions, it would instantly cease to exist. It can therefore never supersede the public seminaries of learning. It can neither teach the eloquence of the pulpit, the bar, or the senate. Common life is not tragedy, nor yet comedy; and hence we think the tragedy and comedy of the stage but ill adapted to prepare men for the discharge of the great public duties of life. They are but fiction; or at least they are but the extremes of human conduct and human passions, which in their nature are temporary and of rare occurrence, unnaturally drawn out to a fictitious continuance. They are rather *acted fictions* than natural representations. The mind feels this to be the case; and the passion for the marvellous, which is always diverse from sober reality, is rather gratified than the mind instructed. This we think precludes the result of mental improvement, especially of the more valuable kind. The storms of mimic passion we conclude to be but poorly adapted to convey rational instruction; because that when the passions are strongly excited, the understanding and judgment have but a small chance for exercise. Instruction is best imparted in the cool moments of sober reflection, when the digestive powers of the mind are leisurely employed.

We ought certainly to guard against every thing that would