

She was the talk of the day and her praises or deficiencies were discussed by the scandal-carriers of the town; the worn-out dowagers, the superannuated maidens, the "tabernacle gallants," the male members of the tea tables and all the coxcombs, sparks and beaux who haunted the stage door.

The player had every stimulus to appear at her best on this particular evening, for the audience, frivolous, volatile, taking its character from the loose, weak king, was unusually complaisant through the presence of the first gentleman of Europe. As the last of the Georges declared himself in good-humor, so every toady grinned and every courtly flunkey swore in the Billingsgate of that profanely eloquent period that the actress was a "monstrous fine woman."

With rare discretion and spirit had the latter played, a queenly figure in that ribald, gross gathering. She had reached the scene where the actress turns upon her tormentors, those noble ladies of rank and position, and launches the curse of a soul lashed beyond endurance. Sweeping forward to confront her adversaries, about to face them, her troubled glance chanced to fall into one of the side boxes where were seated a certain foreign marquis, somewhat notorious, and a lady of insolent, patrician bearing. The anticipated action was arrested, for at sight of the nobleman and his companion, Adrienne swayed slightly, as though moved by a new overpowering emotion. Only for a moment she hesitated, then fixing her blazing eyes upon the two and lifting her arm threateningly, the