

As the use of this cheap and extraordinary manure, has now become *very general*, in this state, and as many accurate and judicious farmers are making experiments with it, I doubt not but its advantages, at the end of the season, will be better known than at the present, when I shall be happy to write you again on this subject.

REMARKS UPON THE PRESENT TASTE FOR ACTING PRIVATE PLAYS.

[From the Observer.]

Natis comæda est.

IF the present taste for private plays spreads as fast as most fashions do in this country, we may expect the rising generation will be, like the Greeks in my motto, one entire nation of actors and actresses. A father of a family may shortly reckon it amongst the blessings of a numerous progeny, that he is provided with a sufficient company for his domestic stage, and may cast a play to his own liking without going abroad for his theatrical amusements. Such a steady troop cannot fail of being under better regulation than a set of strollers, or than any set whatever, who make acting a vocation: Where a manager has to deal with none but players of his own begetting, every play bids fair to have a strong cast, and in the phrase of the stage to be well got up. Happy author, who shall see his characters thus grouped into a family-piece, firm as the Theban band of friends, where all is zeal and concord, no bickerings nor jealousies about stage-precedency, no ladies to fall sick of the spleen, and toss up their parts in a huff, no heart-burnings about flounced petticoats and silver trimmings, where the mother of the whole company stands wardrobe keeper and property woman, whilst the father takes post at the side scene in the capacity of prompter with plenipotentiary controul over P's and O P's.

I will no longer speak of the difficulty of writing a comedy or tragedy, because that is now done by so many people without any difficulty at all, that if there ever was any mystery in it, that mystery is thoroughly bottomed and laid open; but the art of acting was till very lately thought so rare and wonderful an excellence, that people began to look upon a perfect actor as a phenomenon in the world, which they were not to expect above once in a centu-

ry; but now that the trade is laid open, this prodigy is to be met at the turn of every street; the nobility and gentry to their immortal honour have broken up the monopoly, and new-made players are now as plentiful as new-made peers.

*Nec tamen Antiochus, nec erit mirabilis illi
Aut Stratoles aut cum illi Demetrius
Hæmo.*

Garrick and Powell would be now no wonder.

Nor Barry's silver note, nor Quin's heroic thunder.

Though the public professors of the art are so completely put down by the private practitioners of it, it is but justice to observe in mitigation of their defeat, that they meet the comparison under some disadvantages, which their rivals have not to contend with.

One of these is diffidence, which volunteers cannot be supposed to feel in the degree they do, who are pressed into the service: I never yet saw a public actor come upon the stage on the first night of a new play, who did not seem to be nearly, if not quite, in as great a shaking fit as his author; but as there can be no luxury in a great fright, I cannot believe that people of fashion, who act for their amusement only, would subject themselves to it; they must certainly have a proper confidence in their own abilities, or they would never step out of a drawing room, where they are sure to figure, upon a stage, where they run the risque of exposing themselves; some gentlemen perhaps, who have been *mutæ personæ* in the senate, may start at the first sound of their own voices in a theatre, but graceful action, just elocution, perfect knowledge of their author, elegant deportment, and every advantage, that refined manners and courtly address can bestow, is exclusively their own: In all scenes of high life they are at home; noble sentiments are natural to them; love-parts they can play by instinct, and as for all the caits of rakes, gamesters and fine gentlemen they can fill them to the life. Think only what a violence it must be to the nerves of an humble unpretending actor to be obliged to play the gallant gay seducer and be the cuckold maker of the comedy, when he has no other object at heart but to go quietly home, when the play is over, to his wife and children and participate with them in the honest earnings of his vocation; can such a man compete with the Lothario of high life?

And now I mention the cares of a family, I strike upon another disadvantage, which