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THE
A C T O R S
 REMONSTRANCE,
 O R
 COMPLAINT:

FOR
 The silencing of their profession, and banishment from their severall *Play houses*.

In which is fully set downe their grievances, for their restraint; especially since Stage-plays, only of all publike recreations are prohibited; the exercise at the Beares Colledge, and the motions of Puppets being still in force and vigour.

As it was presented in the names and behalves of all our London Comedians to the great God PHŒBUS-APOLLO, and the nine Heliconian Sisters, on the top of PERNASSUS, by one of the Masters of Requests to the MUSES, for this present month.

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The Actors Remonstrance or Complaint, for the silencing of their Profession, and banishment from their severall PLAYHOUSES.

OPpressed with many calamities, and languishing to death under the burthen of a long and (for ought wee know) an everlasting restraint, we the Comedians, Tragedians and Actors of all sorts and sizes belonging to the famous private and publike Houses within the City of London and the Suburbs thereof, to you great Phoebus, and you sacred Sisters, the sole Patronesses of our distressed Calling, doe we in all humility present this our humble and lamentable complaint, by whose intercession to those powers who confined us to silence, wee hope to be restored to our pristine honour and imployment.

First, it is not unknowne to all the audience that have frequented the private Houses of Black Friers, the Cock Pit and Salisbury Court, without austerity, wee have purged our Stages from all obscene and scurrilous jests; such as might either be guilty of corrupting the manners, or defaming the persons of any men of note in the City or Kingdome; that

we have endeavoured, as much as in us lies, to instruct one another in the true and genuine Art of acting, to repress bawling and railing, formerly in great request, and for to suite our language and action to the more gentile and naturall garbe of the times; that

we have left off for our owne parts, and so have commanded our servants, to forget that ancient custome, which formerly rendred men of our quality infamous, namely, the inveigling in young Gentlemen, Merchants Factors, and Prentizes to spend their patrimonies and Masters estates upon us and our Harlots in Tavernes;

we have cleane and quite given over the borrowing money at first sight of punie gallants, or praising their swords, belts and beavers, so to invite them to bestow them upon us; and to our praise be it spoken,

we were for the most part very well reformed, few of us keeping, or being rather kept by our Mistresses, betooke our selves wholly to our wives; observing the matrimoniall vow of chastity, yet for all these conformities and reformations, wee were by authority (to which wee in all humility submit) restrained from the practice of our Profession; that Profession which had before maintained us in comely and convenient Equipage; some of us by it meerely being inabled to keepe Horses (though not Whores) is now condemned to a perpetuall, at least a very long temporary silence, and wee left to live upon our shifts, or the expence of our former gettings, to the great impoverishment and utter undoing of our selves, wives, children, and dependants;

besides which, is of all other our extremest grievance, that Playes being put downe under the name of publike recreations; other publike recreations of farre more harmfull consequence permitted, still to stand in statu quo prius, namely, that Nurse of barbarisme and beastlinesse, the Bear Garden, whereupon their usuall dayes those Demy-Monsters, are baited by bandogs, the Gentlemen of Stave and Taile, namely, boystrous Butchers, cutting Coblers, hardhanded Masons and the like, rioting companions, resorting thither with as much freedome as formerly, making with their sweat and crowding, a farre worse stinck than the ill formed Beasts they persecute with their dogs and whips, Pickpockets, which in any age are not heard of in any of our Houses, repairing thither, and other disturbers of the publike peace, which dare not be seen in our civill and well-governed Theatres, where none use to come but the best of the Nobility and Gentry; and though some have taxed our Houses unjustly for being the receptacles of Harlots, the exchanges where they meet and make their bargaines with their franck chapmen of the Country and City, yet we may justly excuse our selves of either knowledge or consent in these lewd practices, we having no propheticke soules to know womens honesty by instinct, nor commission

to examine them; and if we had, worthy were these wretches of Bridewell, that out of their owne mouthes would convince themselves of lasciviousnesse:

Puppit plays, which are not so much valuable as the very musique betweene each Act at ours, are still up with uncontrolled allowance, wnesse the famous motion of Bell and the Dragon, so frequently visited at Holbourne bridge; these passed Christmas Holidayes, whither Citizens of all sorts repaire with far more detriment to themselves then ever did to Playes, Comedies and Tragedies being the lively representations of mens actions, in which, vice is alwayes sharply glanced at, and punished, and vertue rewarded and encouraged; the most exact and naturall eloquence of our English language expressed and daily amplified;

and yet for all this, we suffer, and are enforced, our selves and our dependants, to tender our complaint in dolefull manner to your great Phoebus, and you inspired Heliconian Virgins: First our Housekeepers, that grew wealthy by our endeavours, complaine that they are enforced to pay the grand Landlords rents during this long Vacation, out of their former gettings; in stead of ten, twenty, nay, thirty shillings shares which used nightly to adorne and comfort with their harmonious musique, their large and Well-stuffed pockets, they have shares in nothing with us now but our misfortunes; living meerly out of the stock, out of the interest and principall of their former gotten moneyes, which daily is exhausted by the maintenance of themselves and families.

For our selves, such as were sharers, are so impoverished, that were it not for some slender helps afforded us in this time of calamitie, by our former providence, we might be enforced to act our Tragedies:

our Hired men are disperst, some turned Souldiers and Trumpeters, others destin'd to meaner courses, or depending upon us, whom in courtesie wee cannot see want, for old acquaintance sakes.

Their friends, young Gentlemen, that used to feast and frolick with them at Tavernes, having either quitted the kin in these times of distraction, or their money having quitted them, they are ashamed to look upon their old expensive friends.

Nay, their verie Mistresses, those Buxsome and Bountifull Lasses, that usually were enamoured on the persons of the younger sort of Actors, for the good cloaths they wore upon the stage, beleeving them really to be the persons they did only represent, and quite out of sorts themselves, and so disabled for supplying their poore friends necessities.

Our Fooles, who had wont to allure and excite laughter with their very countenances, at their first appearance on the stage (hard shifts are better than none) are enforced, some of them at least to maintaine themselves, by vertue of their bables.

Our boyes, ere wee shall have libertie to act againe, will be growne out of use like crackt organpipes, and have faces as old as our flags.

Nay, our very Doorekeepers, men and women, most grievously complaine, that by this cessation they are robbed of the priviledge of stealing from us with licence: they cannot now, as in King Agamemnons dayes, seeme to scratch their heads where they itch not, and drop shillings and half Crowne pieces in at their collars.

Our Musike that was held so delectable and precious, that they scorned to come to a Taverne under twentie shillings salary for two houres, now wander with their Instruments under their cloaks, I meant such as have any, into all houses of good fellowship, saluting every roome where there is company, with Will you have any musike Gentlemen?

For our Tiremen, and other that belonged formerly to our wardrobe, with the rest, they are out of service: our stock of cloaths, such as are not in tribulation for the generall use, being a sacrifice to moths.

The Tobaccomen, that used to walk up and downe, selling for a penny pipe, that which was not worth twelvepence an horseload; Being now bound under Tapsters in Inns and Tippling houses.

Nay such a terrible distresse and dissolution hath befallen us, and all those that had dependance on the stage, that it hath quite unmade our hopes of future recoverie.

For some of our ablest ordinarie Poets, in stead of their annuall stipends and beneficiall second dayes, being for meere necessitie compelled to get a living by writing contemptible penny-pamphlets in which they have not so much as poetical licence to use any attribute of their profession; but that of Quid libet audendi? and faining miraculous stories, and relations of unheard of battles. Nay, it is to be feared, that shortly some of them; (if they have not been enforced to do it already) will be encited to enter themselves into Martin Parkers societie, and write ballads.

And what a shame this is, great Phoebus, and you sacred Sisters; for your owne Priests thus to be degraded of their ancient dignities.

Be your selves righteous Judges, when those who formerly have sung with such elegance the acts of Kings and Potentates, charming like Orphens the dull and brutish multitude, scarce a degree above stones and forrests into admiration, though not into understanding with their divine raptures, shall be by that tyrant Necessitie reduced to such abject exigents; wandring like grand children of old Erra Paters, those learned Almanack-makers, without any Maecenas to cherish their loftie conceptions, prostituted by the misfortune of our silence, to inexplicable miseries, having no heavenly Castalian Sack to actuate and informe their spirits almost confounded with stupiditie and coldnesse, by their frequent drinking (and glad too they gan get it) of fulsome Ale, and hereticall Beere, as their usuall beverage.

To conclude, this our humble complaint great Phoebus, and you nine sacred Sisters, the Patronesses of Wit, and Protectresses of us poore disrepected Comedians, if for the present, by your powerfull intercessions we may be reinvested in our former Houses, and settled in our former Calling, we shall for the future promise, never to admit into our sixpenny-rooms those unwholesome inticing Harlots, that sit there nieerely to be taken up by Prentizes or Lawyers Clerks; nor any female of what degree soever, except they come lawfully with their husbands, or neere allies: the abuses in Tobacco shall be reformed, none vended, not so much as in threepenny galleries, unlesse of the pure Spanish leafe.

For ribaldry, or any such paltry stuffe, as may scandall the pious, and provoke the wicked to loosenesse, we will utterly expell it with the bawdy and ungracious Poets, the authors to the Antiodes. Finally, we shall hereafter so demeane our selves as none shall esteeme us of the ungodly, or have cause to repine at our action or interludes: we will not entertaine any Comedian that shall speake his part in a tone, as if hee did it in derision of some of the pious, but reforme all our disorders, and amend all our amisses, so prosper us Phoebus and the nine Muses, and be propitious to this our complaint.

FINIS.