MEMOIRS
OF THE
SHAKESPEAR's HEAD.

BOOK I.

CHAP. I.
The Introduction. A Night-Scene in the Shakespear, embellished with the Appearance of an unexpected Guest. His Reasons for the Visit, and his Grievances amply set forth.

A Scholar of Salamanca having made his escape from some very imminent Danger over the Tops of the Houses, broke thr"
the first Sky-light that offered to view, and fell into the Laboratory of a Magician; where, breaking a Phial (on being pressed by an Invisible Voice) he set at liberty the famous little Gentleman, known by the Name of the Devil upon Crutches; who unveil'd to him the most secret Intrigues and Combinations in that City: These are to be found faithfully set down, by Monsieur Le Sage, in his Book intitled Le Diable Boiteaux.

I have mentioned this, because, the strange Accident which occasion'd the Relations, I am about to make, was something similar.

I had supp'd merrily, with a few select Friends, in the Tavern, known by the Name of the Shakespear's Head, when, it growing late, my Companions
nions departed to their several Mansions, while, for my part, I chose to remain till I had emptied my last Pipe, and drawn to the Dregs, the remains of a Bottle of Harry De-lamain's Burgundy.

And now the Bat had ta'en his cloister'd flight,
And to black Hecate's summons the hoard-born Beetle
With its drowsy Hum, had rung Night's yawning Peal.

I nodded over my Flask; nor did I feel interruption from the Noise made in the next Room, by Poll French, Tom Squander, and some other Bucks and Lasses of equal Spirit: Neither was I disturbed, by the hoarse Watchman's bellowing, past one; nor the musical Voice and Art of the fair Tyrolese, who, in the Yard, play'd over such Strains as had a dying Sound. Morpheus had laid his Leaden

B 2    Mace
Mace upon me, and closed my Eyes from care and mortal Coil.

When a hollow, but yet pleasing Voice, sounding in my Ear, at once dispell'd my Slumber, and awak'd me; I rous'd, and, looking round, beheld at my Elbow, a Figure in every Part resembling that we see drawn for ShakeSpear: There ran a sacred Tremor thro' my Limbs, I rose confus'd, and, bowing, own'd the Presence of the laurel'd Shade; then address'd him, in his own Words, as Hamlet does his Father,

*What would thy gracious Figure?*

I would have proceeded, but he interrup'ted me, and thus began.

To you have I chosen to reveal my present Griefs; (for tho' a Spirit
I have my Griefs; which may be something abated in this Confidence) for I know you love me, and my Memory; besides, Nature has endowed you with a Curiosity that will lead you to listen with Patience to my Detail.

You have been informed by those who have written my Life, that in my Years of Nonage and of Folly, I was oblig’d to fly to London, for trespassing in a Park, not far from where I lived; and it has been lately revealed to the World, that my Distress in London, consequent to my Elopement, reduc’d me to the Necessity of holding the Horses of Persons of Quality, who rode to the Play, as was then the Custom; from which Occupation my Diligence rais’d me to the Theatre; of which
which I have since been still'd the Father.

Yet, credit me, my Friend, in this low Scene of Life, which you may be sure press'd hard upon a Fancy so luxuriant; an Imagination so warm as mine: I felt not half the heart-corrodug Cares, that have gnaw'd my Soul, since fix'd the Guardian of this Bacchanalian Temple, a Post allotted to punish me for the Errors of my youthful Conduct. Twenty Years have I here presided; nor will my Probation be completed in twenty more; however at the End of every twenty Years I am allowed a Conference with some one Person. 'Tis your Lot to be the first. Then listen attentively, until I recount such Things, as when revealed, will make my Spirits light as Air; until
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until a Train of newer Scenes arise again to weigh me down.

Lift! be attentive! interrupt me not! except a very necessary Question offers, while I unfold to you many strange Secrets, which will surprise the World. While I strip off their gaudy Plumage, who impeose with the false Lustre of a splendid Outside on the Credulity of Mankind: Observe those whom I shall shew you in their native Characters; mark them as they pass; and you will find the sanctify'd Clergyman, an arch Hypocrite; the bluff Captain, a kick'd Coward; the noble Count, a SwiFt Peasant; the assuming Doctor, an ignorant Quack; and the modest Matron, a most luscious Harlot; some Harlots Women of Virtue, tho' not of Chastity; and the Wo-

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man
man of Chastity the most despicable Character; you will find the Game-
fter often a fair Dealer, and the apparently fair Dealer an arrant Cheat;
the Lord a Sharper; the Gentleman a Mountebank; and a Player a
Gentleman; an honest Man with a bad Character; and the Villain with
the Title of a Man of Honour: These, as they have pass'd before
me, in a regular Succession, for two hundred and sixty Moons past, will
I raise to your View, as they appear'd to me.

But pray, says I, much honour'd Shade, won't some of these heroic
Folks, be for kicking me out of their Company, when they discover
my Intrusion? As for you, you need not fear their Anger, or their
Malice; you have your old Cloak of
of Air, to wrap yourself up in, which will keep you warm and safe. But consider, Sir, I have a handsom Nose, my Limbs are none of the worst, and it would be of no earthly Advantage to me to have these broke, or that flatten'd to my Face; and then, Sir, I have a mortal Aversion to Cyclops, I am so fond of my Eyes.

Hold, Sir, he cry'd, why this unnecessary Interruption? Depend on me, and all your Fears are groundless. Take this Wand, be silent, follow me, and observe; with this thou shalt become invisible to mortal Sight; but let not a single Circumstance thou seest, a Word, I say, escape the Volume of thy Brain. Register it safely; that when we part thou may'st set it forth, and publish
publish it to the wide extended World for Man's Improvement.

The Improvement of Man is indeed a hackney'd Theme; 'tis a Trumpet which every Adventurer in literature now claps to his Mouth, to deceive the unwary, and make Money at their Expence; but alas! how very few are there who keep up to the letter of their Proclamation; how often do we find the suppos'd Advocate for Virtue the real Champion of Vice; the Treatise of Morality, a Defence of Libertinism; the Essay on Religion, a Recommendation of Atheism; and Honour and Honesty specious Names for Villainy and Deceit.

It is generally allow'd, that no Man ever understood the Vestiges of the human Heart better than myself; yet
yet I confess to you, since I have been by cruel Fate destin'd to be the Genius of this House, I have been Witness to Scenes of which I had not the least Notion of; you shall share them with me, and do you apply them as I before ordain'd.