

The Opening PROLOGUE Paraphras'd in a Familiar
Stile, for the better Conception of the True Meaning, and
for the Particular Use of Mr. Jer. Collier.

Good People,

THIS same Theatre here being intended for Pious and Virtuous Representations, in Opposition to the late Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage, you must understand that the Two most indecent Authors of that Kind are pitch'd upon for its Foundation and Government, upon a prudent Presumption that the greatest Offenders are most likely to become the greatest Penitents and Saints, especially since your Generous Subscriptions to the Undertaking will make Virtue to be literally its own Reward. That we may give you full Assurances at our first Opening, we desire to prepossess you with these following Moral, Religious and Witty Notions. You see what a stately Building we've run up here for you; and we can do no less than tell you that it equals, if not exceeds, the Stupendous Creation of the World, which some simple People make such a Wonderment at. Tho' there are those who reckon your Poets a Set of the most idle and useless Fellows upon Earth, yet we do most religiously assure you that they are all of 'em Creators, Givers of Being, and God Almighty's; nor is there any Odium in such Comparisons: And that we may tell you a new Thing of 'em, which never was said or thought of by any Living Man before the Author of this Prologue, you must know that Monuments which your Poets raise out-last Wood, Brick, Stone and Iron; witness the *May-Pole* in the *Strand*, which is scarce higher than a *Ninepin*; whilst *Chevy-Chace*, and the *Two Children in the Wood*, make their Original Figure in the Hundredth Edition. That we mayn't Bambouzzle you with hard Names, whenever we mention *Venus*, we intend to call her Fair, lest she be mistaken for a *Lancashire-Witch*. That *Minerva* mayn't pass for an *Irish Woman*, we'll call her Learned. In like manner it shall be Red Scarlet, that you mayn't imagine we mean a *Feuille Morte* Colour. We're under a Security that the next Great Wind will scarce be able to blow this House about our Ears, since 'tis Founded by Beauty, and Design'd by Wit; no inconsiderable Insurance. To convince you what a vigorous War we intend to carry on against the Exorbitant Power of Immorality and Profaneness, we must let you into the Secret, that Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion; that the most waste Ground in *England* is where Churches stand; that they had never been Built but for Fools; that Zeal's a Jest, and all Religion Nonsense. This Age, Blessed be God, is grown wiser and wickeder than those Times of Blindness; nor are we without some Hopes that the Citizens Wives may prevail with their Husbands to turn *Paul's* into a *Play-House*. But now we'll tell you the most Poetical and Witty thing you ever heard: You see where these Columns here stand, Pray what can you imagine was here before? Guess; no. —Guess again; no; —again; No. —Why, I vow and protest nothing in the Versal World but a Dunghil: And to carry this elevated Idea yet farther, as sure you sit there alive, in this very Place where you now see our Triumphal Carrs, there was nothing formerly but Hay-Carts. Thus you may see how necessary History may be to a Poet, for from hence this very Street originally took its Name. We must advise you, lest you mayn't know it already, that the Business of a Stage is to represent the Actions and Passions of Mankind. The Goddesses that you see whipping up and down in Machines, you mustn't imagine to be dowdy drabble-tail'd Actresses, but real She-Angels coming from above. And now, most Refulgent Ladies, we will conclude with a fine-spun Complement to you, that your Eyes are much brighter than the Sun or Lightning; which *First* of all we tell you is a perfect new Thought, never us'd before by any Wit Breathing. *Secondly*, It hasn't one Tittle of Truth, Nature, Reason or Sense in it. *Thirdly*, However it may please you, shou'd any Country Squire use it to his Lady-Mother's Chamber-Maid, the Wench wou'd laugh at the Coxcomb. These are some of the Difficulties we patiently chuse to go through, rather than fail to pay you our Respects in the Sublimest manner. And to show that you are foolish enough to be Tickled with such Hyperbolical Nonsense, we hope to see you here to Morrow again, that we may break Mr. Rich and Mr. Eastcourt.

L O N D O N :

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