

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
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The Theater (1720)

John, Sir Falstaffe

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: John, Sir Falstaffe

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-5639-8

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INTRODUCTION

The Theatre, by "Sir John Falstaffe", is according to its author a continuation of Richard Steele's periodical of the same name. Shortly after Steele brought his paper to a close on April 5, 1720, the anonymous author who called himself "Falstaffe" appropriated his title; or if we prefer Falstaffe's own account of the matter, he was bequeathed the title upon the decease of Steele's "Sir John Edgar". At any rate, the new series of *Theatres* was begun on April 9, 1720, and continued to appear twice a week for eleven numbers until May 14. On Tuesdays and Saturdays Falstaffe entertained the town with a pleasant essay in the tradition established by *The Tatler*.

But the paper of April 9, the first of the new *Theatres*, was only nominally the first of a series; Falstaffe, who numbered the paper "sixteen", had already written fifteen papers called *The Anti-Theatre* in answer to Steele's *Theatre*. The demise of Steele's periodical merely afforded him an opportunity of changing his title; his naturally became inappropriate when Steele's paper was discontinued and the shorter title was probably thought to be more attractive to readers. Falstaffe made no attempt to pass his papers off as the work of his famous rival, to gain popularity for them through the reputation of Steele. Indeed, the antagonism which existed between the two men would have made such an act of deception an unlikely one.

Steele's *The Theatre*, his last periodical, had been written for a controversial purpose; by his own admission he wrote it to arouse support for himself in a dispute in which he was engaged with the Lord Chamberlain, the Duke of Newcastle. Steele, who by the authority of a Royal Patent was governor of the Company of Comedians acting in Drury Lane, insisted that his authority in the theatre was not respected by the Lord Chamberlain, the officer of the Royal Household traditionally charged with supervision of theatrical matters. Newcastle intervened in the internal affairs of Drury Lane and, when Steele protested, expelled him from the theatre. Steele could do nothing but submit, though he retaliated with a series of bitter attacks on the Duke in *The Theatre*.

Newcastle found defenders, of whom one of the strongest was Falstaffe, who wrote in direct opposition to Steele's "Sir John Edgar", openly attempting to provoke that knight to a journalistic contest. But Edgar gave scant attention to his essays, though they were vigorously written and presented strong arguments in defense of the Lord Chamberlain's intervention in Drury Lane affairs. Steele acknowledged the first number of *The Anti-Theatre* (it appeared on February 15, 1720) in the fourteenth number of his own paper, praising Falstaffe for his promise not to "intrude upon the private concerns of life" in the debate which was to follow, but thereafter he all but ignored his new rival. With the exception of a brief allusion in *The Theatre*, No. 17 (an allusion which Falstaffe was quick to take up), Steele made no more references to the other periodical. For a time Falstaffe continued to answer the arguments Steele advanced in protest against the Lord Chamberlain's action, but finding that he was unable to provoke a response, he gave up the debate. After his ninth number of March 14, he had little more to say about Steele or Drury Lane.

Falstaffe, however, did not stop writing when he ceased defending Newcastle's action. *The Anti-Theatre* continued to come out twice a week until the fifteenth number appeared on Monday, April 4. And in that paper there was no indication that the periodical was to end or was to be changed in any way. But on the day after, April 5, Steele issued *The Theatre*, No. 28, signed with his own name, which he announced would be the last in the series. As no more *Anti-Theatres* were known to have appeared after the fifteenth, it has generally been assumed (though as we now know, erroneously) that Falstaffe took his cue from Edgar and abandoned his own series.

But there has long been some reason to believe that Falstaffe did not cease writing completely after the fifteenth *Anti-Theatre*. Though nothing was known of his later work, a newspaper advertisement of his *The Theatre* was noted. But lacking any more definite information, scholars have doubted the existence of the periodical. A volume in the Folger Shakespeare Library, however, removes the doubt. There, bound with a complete set of the original *Theatre* by Sir John Edgar, are the ten numbers of the later *Theatre* which are reproduced here. These papers include the entire run of Falstaffe's

"continuation" with the exception of one number, the nineteenth, which has apparently been lost. So far as is known, the copies in the Folger are unique.

The continuation of *The Theatre* bears little trace of the controversial bitterness present in Steele's paper of that name or in some of the early numbers of *The Anti-Theatre*. Except in the mock will in No. 16, there is no reference to Steele's dispute with Newcastle in the entire series. Nor, in spite of the title, is there any discussion of theatrical matters. As a source of information about the stage, it is virtually without value. But if it be accepted as merely another of the gracefully written series of literary essays which were so abundant in the early eighteenth century, its value and charm are apparent. The unidentified author was an accomplished scholar, and he wrote on a variety of subjects which have not lost their appeal. The interest aroused by the essays is perhaps inseparable from our historical interest in the life and manners of the time, but it is none the less genuine. Perhaps nowhere more than in the personal essays about subjects of contemporary importance—of which these are examples—is there a more pleasing record of the social and intellectual life of a period.

Of the ten essays reproduced here, probably the first (No. 16) is the only one which contains allusions which will not be generally understood by scholars. In this paper, in the account of the death of Sir John Edgar and in the transcript of Edgar's will, there are references to Steele's dispute with Newcastle over the control of Drury Lane Theatre. Falstaffe facetiously recalls several points which were debated in the journalistic war provoked by Steele's loss of his governorship, but in themselves the points are of too little significance to merit explanation.

The several allusions to the South Sea Bubble in these essays will be easily recognized. In Nos. 21, 22, and 26, Falstaffe considers the absurdities engendered by the Bubble (as he had previously in *The Anti-Theatre*, Nos. 10, 11, 12, and 14), exhibiting a healthy distrust of the fever of stock-jobbing then at its height. Though less extreme than Steele in his criticism of the South Sea Company, Falstaffe shows himself to have understood several months in advance of the

crash the fundamental unsoundness of the wave of speculation produced by the company's policies.

The essay on duelling (No. 17) was probably suggested to Falstaffe by a bill then pending in Parliament to make the practice unlawful. No other of his essays resembles more closely those of his predecessor, Steele, who during a lifetime of writing carried on a personal campaign to arouse opposition to duelling. In Steele's own *Theatre*, there are two essays devoted to the subject (Nos. 19 and 26).

One of the most interesting of Falstaffe's papers is his twenty-fourth: his discussion of the recently published memoirs of the deaf and dumb fortuneteller, Duncan Campbell, memoirs which we know to have been written by Daniel Defoe. And from Falstaffe's conspicuous reference to *Robinson Crusoe* in the paper, it seems evident that he also knew the identity of the author. What we have then is, in effect, a contemporary review of Defoe's book. Maintaining an air of seriousness, Falstaffe examines the extravagant assertions made so confidently by Defoe, ironically suggesting the implausibility and absurdity of some of them. Falstaffe's matter-of-fact comments are well adapted to exposing the incredibility of the similarly matter-of-fact narrative of Defoe.

Who Sir John Falstaffe was we do not know. No clue to his identity has been discovered. But from the essays themselves we learn something of his tastes and predilections. A strong interest in classical antiquity is apparent in numerous allusions to ancient history and mythology, allusions particularly plentiful in *The Anti-Theatre*; an intelligent reverence for the writings of Shakespeare may be observed in a series of admiring references; and from his repeated remarks about Spain and Spanish literature, both in *The Anti-Theatre* and in *The Theatre*, we may probably conclude that he had some special knowledge of that country and its literature. But all of this can be but speculation. We know nothing positively about Falstaffe except that he wrote a series of engaging essays.

Falstaffe's *Theatre* is reproduced, with permission, from the papers in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

John Loftis
Princeton University

Numb. XVI

THE

THEATRE.

By Sir JOHN FALSTAFFE.

To be Continued every Tuesday and Saturday.

Price Two-pence.

I am Myself, but call me What you please.

South. in Oroon.

Saturday, April 9. 1720.

Men, that like myself, set up for being Wits, and dictating to the World in a censorial Way, should like Oracles endeavour to be barely heard, but never have it distinguish'd from whence the Voice comes. *Faith* and *Reputation* have ever been built on *Doubt* and *Mystery*, and sometimes the Art of being *unintelligible* does not a little advance the Credit of a Writer. There are many Reasons why we, who take upon Us the Task of Diurnal or Weekly Lucubrations, should be like the River *Nilus*, sending abroad fertile Streams to every Quarter, and still keeping our Heads undiscover'd. But why should I be compell'd to give Reasons for every thing? *Were Reasons as plenty as Blackberries*, as my worthy Ancestor was wont to say, *I would not give a Reason upon Compulsion.*

I have confess'd to the World I am a *Knight* (nor am I asham'd to own it, tho' 'tis a Condescension as Knighthood goes;) and my Name is *John Falstaffe*; must they have too a Tree of my Pedigree, and a Direction to my Lodgings? 'Tis ill-Manners to pluck the Masque off, when we would not be known: besides that, Curiosity has lost Men many a Blessing, and plung'd the Discoverers into signal Calamities; as witness *Oedipus*, and the Oracle, *Lot's Wife*,

Orpheus and *Eurydice*, and several other *true* and *ancient* Histories, which I have something else to do than think of at present.

It was an Opinion growing apace in the Town, that Sir *John Edgar* and I were one and the same Man: but from what Tract or Circumstance this Notion sprung, I can neither learn nor guess. I mounted the Stage as the Adversary, and he accepted my Challenge: upon which I attack'd him with such Weapons as Men of Learning commonly use against one another, yet he declin'd the Combat. I was by This in Generosity compell'd to desist from pursuing him, yet every now and then I took upon me to reprimand him, when I observ'd him too free in the Use of certain Figures in Rhetorick, which are the common Dialect of a Part of the Town famous for *good Fish* and *Female Orators*. Thus he continued his Course of Writing, sometimes very obscure, sometimes too plain: according as either Vapours, or Spleen, or Love, or Resentment, or *French Wine* predominated; which I, by my Skill in Natural Philosophy observing, thought it advisable to leave him to himself, till the Court of Chancery should appoint him a proper Guardian. I cannot deny, but that we shook Hands behind the Curtain, and have been very good Friends for these eight Papers last, have been merry without any Gall, he regarding me as a Gentleman Philosopher, and I looking upon him as an inoffensive Humorist.

I confess that it contributes much to my Peace of Soul, that we were reconcil'd before his Departure from this Stage of Business and of Life. The Reader will hereby understand that Sir *John* is dead: It is for this Reason that I appear in his Dress, that I assume his *Habit de Guerre*, for Sir *John* chose me, from among all Men living, to be his sole Executor. The Printer had no *black Letter* by him, otherwise this Paper (as in Decency it ought) should have appear'd in Mourning: however I shall use as much Ceremony as the Time will allow; and, as *Hob* did in the Farce by the Man that hang'd himself, *I take up his Cloak, and am chief Mourner*.

We never can do the Memory of a Great Man more Justice, than by being particular in his Conduct and Behaviour at the Point of Death. Sir *John*, tho' a Wit, took no Pains to shew it at his latest Hour, that is, he did not dye like one of those *prophane* Wits, who bid the Curtains be drawn, and said *the Farce of Life was ended*. This

is making our Warfare too slight and ludicrous: He departed with more Grace, and, like the memorable Type of his Prudence, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, where he perceiv'd his Sand was running out, he repented the Extravagance of his *Knight-Ernantry*, and ingenuously confess'd his *Family Name*. He seem'd entirely dispos'd to dye in his Wits, and no doubt, did so: tho' by Intervals, 'tis thought he was a little delirious, talk'd of taking Coach to *Fishmongers Hall*, broke into imperfect Sentences about *Annuities* and *South-Sea*, and mutter'd something to himself of making Dividends of *Ten per Cent* at least *six times a Year*.

If Sir *John* appear'd by all the Actions of his Life a Friend to Mankind, he certainly did so in a great Measure at his Death, by the charitable Disposition of what he died possess'd. I have given an Abridgment of his Will, that the World may see he left his Legacies only where they were truly wanted: Neither Favour nor Prejudice had any Influence over him in his last Minutes, but he had nothing more at Heart than the Necessities of his Legatees.

In Nomini Domini, Amen. I John Edgar, &c. Knight, being sound in Body, but imperfect of Mind and Memory, do make this my last Will, &c.

Item, As to such personal Estate which I have the good Fortune to leave behind me, I give and dispose thereof, as follows: And, best, I give and bequeath all and singular my *Projects* to the Society of *Stockjobbers*, Share and Share alike, because I am sure they will be never the better for them.

Item, I give and bequeath all my Right, Property and Share in the *transparent Bee-hive* to my indulgent Friend and Patron, his Grace the Duke of — —, because he has taken such a particular Fancy to it.

Item, I give and bequeath the full *Profit* of all those *Plays* which I have *Intentions of writing*, if it shall happen that I live to the Poor of the Parish in which I shall dye: desiring it may be distributed by my Executor, and *not come into the Hands of the Church-wardens*.

Item, I give and bequeath my *Goosequilt*, with which I demolish'd *Dunkirk*, to such Person as shall appear most strenuous for the Delivery of *Port Mahon* and *Gibraltar* to the *Spaniards*.

'And as to such *Qualifications* wherewith I am endow'd, which have always serv'd me in the Nature of *personal Estate*, I dispose thereof as follows; First, I give and bequeath my *Politicks* to the Directors of the *Academy of Musick*, my *Religion* to the Bishop of B— —, my *Eloquence* to the most distrest Author in *Grubstreet*, who writes the *full Accounts of Murthers & Rapes, and Fires*, and my *Obscurity* to somebody that is inclin'd to turn *Casuist in Divinity*.

Item, I give my *Beauty* to Mr. *Dennis*, because he had a Mind to steal it from me while I was alive.

Item, I give my *Wits* to my Friends at *Button's*, my *Good Manners* to the *Deputy Governors of Drury Lane Theatre*; and my *Charity* to the *married and unmarried Ladies* of the said Theatre; and lest Disputes should arise about the Distribution thereof, it being too little for them All, my Desire is, that they be determin'd in their Shares by Lot.

'And I make and appoint Sir *John Falstaffe*, Knight, my full and whole Executor, and residuary Legatee, desiring him to continue my Paper of the *Theatre*, but after his own Stile and Method; and desiring likewise that the Sum of Forty Shillings may be given to the Boys of the *Charity School* of *St. Martin in the Fields*, to write me an *Elegy* any Time within *Eighteen Years* after my Decease.'

He left several other Legacies to the Theatrical *Viceroy*s, whose Interest he had always so much at Heart, such as, his *Humility*, his *Learning* and *Judgment in Dramatick Poetry*; but these being Things which they always lived without, and which we are assur'd, they will never claim, we thought it needless to insert them.

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Numb. XVII.

THE

THEATRE.

By Sir JOHN FALSTAFFE.

To be Continued every Tuesday and Saturday.

— *Animasque in vulnere ponunt.*

Virg.

Tuesday, April 12. 1720.

The Incident of a late *Prize* fought at one of our Theatres, has given me some Occasion to amuse myself with the Rise, and Antiquity of *Duelling*; and to enquire what Considerations have given it such Credit, as to make it practicable as well in all Countries, as in all Times. Religion and Civil Policy have ever declar'd against the Custom of receiving *Challenges*, and deny that any Man has a Right, by a Tryal at *Sharps*, to destroy his Fellow-Creature. History, 'tis true; both sacred and prophane, is full of Instances of these sort of Combats: but very few are recorded to have happen'd between Friends, none on the light and idle Misconstruction of Words, which has set most of our modern *Tilters* at Work. The *Athenians* made it penal by a Law so much as to call a Man a *Murtherer*: and the Detestation of Antiquity is so plain to this inhuman Kind of Proceeding, that when *Eteocles* and *Polynices* had kill'd each other upon the important Quarrel of disputed Empire, the Government order'd the Challenger's Body to be thrown out as a Prey to the Dogs and Birds, and made it Death for any one to sprinkle Dust over it, or give it the least honorary Marks of Interment.

The *Duelling* so much in Fashion for a few late Centuries is so scandalous to *Christianity* and *common Understanding*, and grounded

upon none of those specious Occasions which at first made it warrantable, that it is high Time the Wisdom of Commonwealths should interpose to discountenance and abrogate a pernicious Liberty, whose Source springs alone from Folly and Intemperance. Sir *Walter Raleigh* has very wisely observ'd in his *History of the World*, that *the acting of a private Combat, for a private Respect, and most commonly a frivolous One, is not an Action of Virtue, because it is contrary to the Law of God, and of all Christian Kings: neither is it difficult, because even and equal in Persons and Arms: neither for a publick Good, but tending to the contrary, because the Loss or Mutilation of an able Man, is also a Loss to the Commonweal.*

Yet vile and immoral as this Custom is, it has so far prevail'd as to make way for a *Science*, and is pretended, like Dancing, to be taught By *Rule* and *Book*. The Advertisements, which are of great Instruction to curious Readers, inform us, that a late Baronet had employ'd his Pen in laying down the *solid Art of Fighting* both on *Foot* and *Horseback*: by reading of which Treatise any Person might in a short time attain to the Practice of it, either for the Defence of Life upon a just Occasion, or Preservation of Honour, in any accidental Scuffle or Quarrel. That is, if I may have Permission, without being challeng'd, to divest the Title of its Pomp, this solid Art would soon put one in a Capacity of killing one's Man, and standing a fair Chance of bequeathing one's Cloaths and Neck to the Hangman. It is observable, that Mr. *Bysshe*, in his Collection of agreeable and sublime Thoughts, for the Imitation of future Poets, when he comes to the Topick of *Honour*, ingeniously refers his Readers to the Word *Butcher*; tacitly implying that the Thoughts upon both Heads have a *Coherence*, as the Terms themselves are *synonomous*. In short, your Practitioners in Duelling are so barbarous in their Nature; that their whole Study is picking up Occasions to be engaged in a Quarrel. They are a sort of *Quixots*, whose heads are so full of mischievous Chivalry, that they will mistake the *Sails* of a *Wind-mill* for the *Arms* of a *Gyant*; and it is fifty to one, if the most innocent Motions, Looks, or Smiles, are not, by their Prepossessions, construed *Airs* of Defiance, Offence, or Ridicule. There is a Passage in *Hamlet*, which never fails of raising Laughter in the Audience; 'tis where the Clowns are preparing a Grave for *Ophelia*, and descanting on the Unreasonableness of her being buried in Christian Burial, *who willfully sought her*

own Salvation. Will you ha' the Truth or on't? says one of them wisely, *if this had not been a Gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of Christian Burial. Why there though say'st it;* replies his Fellow, *and the more is the Pity that great Folk should have Countenance in this World to drown, or hang themselves more than us poor Folk.* The Application is so easy, that I shall leave it for everyone to make it for himself.

Next to my first Wish, that *Duelling* were totally restrain'd, methinks, I could be glad that our young hot *Bravo's* would not be altogether *brutal*, but quarrel mathematically, and with some Discretion. I would recommend the Caution, which *Shakespear* has prescrib'd by an Example, of offering and accepting a Challenge. In one of his Plays, there is an hereditary Quarrel betwixt two Families, and the Servants on each Side are so zealous in their Masters Cause, that they never meet without a Desire of fighting, yet are shy of giving the Occasion of Combat. The transcribing a short Passage will give the best Idea of their Conduct.

Samp. *I will bite my Thumb at them, which is a Disgrace to them if they bear it.*

Abra. *Do you bite your Thumb at Us, Sir?*

Samp. *I do bite my Thumb, Sir.*

Abra. *Do you bite your Thumb at Us, Sir?*

Samp. *Is the Law on our Side, if I say, Ay?*

Greg. *No.*

Samp. *No, Sir; I do not bite my Thumb at you, Sir; but I bite my Thumb, Sir.*

The most beneficial Things to a Commonwealth will have some of its Members who will think them a Grievance. I have just now receiv'd the following Letter from a *Fencing-Master*, who is very apprehensive of Business falling off, if the *Act* against *Duelling* should take place.

"Sir,

"As you are both a Knight and a Gentleman
(which now-a-days don't always meet in one Man)

I will make bold to Expostulate with you upon a Bill depending in the House of Commons, I mean that against *Duelling*. Every good Subject has a right of dissenting to any Bill propos'd, either by petition, or Pamphlet, before it passes into a Law; and this concerns the Honour of all Orders of Men from the Prince to the private Gentleman. I make free to tell you in a Word, if this passes, there's an End of *good Manhood* in the King's Dominions. How must all the Important Quarrels, which happen in Life, among men of Honour, be decided? Must a heedless sawcy Coxcomb frown, or tread upon a Gentleman's Toes with Impunity? No, I suppose, the great Cause of Honour must be determined by the womanish Revenge of Scolding; and when two Peers or Gentlemen have had some manly Difference, they must chuse their *Seconds* from *Billingsgate* or the *Bar*—Consider, Sir, how many brave Gentleman have comfortably kept good Company, and had their Reckoning always paid, only by shewing a *broad Blade*, and cherishing a fierce Pair of *Whiskers*. Good Manners must certainly die with Chivalry; for what keeps all the pert Puppies about Town in Awe, but the Fear of being call'd to Account? Don't you know that there are a Set of impertinent Wretches, who are always disturbing publick Assemblies with Riots and Quarrels, only upon a presumption of being hinder'd from fighting, by the Crowd? There will be no end of such Grievances, if this Law takes Place. Besides, Sir, I hope it will be consider'd, what will become of us Brothers of the Blade; the Art we profess will grow of no Use to Mankind; and, of Consequence, we shall be expos'd to Poverty and Disgrace. Consider, Sir, how many bright Qualifications must go to the finishing one of us; we require Parts as elegant, generous, and manly, as any Profession whatsoever; therefore, I hope, that some publick Spirit in the House of Commons, who is a Lover of

his Country, and a Friend to Arts and Sciences, will start up and distinguish himself against this Bill. You know that our Profession is justly call'd the Noble *Science of Defence*, and makes a considerable Branch of the *Mathematicks*; if the Ignorant should gain this Point against us, they won't stop here; no doubt, their Design is to attack all Arts and Sciences, and beat them one by one quite out of the Nation; the *Assault*, 'tis true, seems only made against us; but wise Men foresee that all Learning is in Danger. Our Adversaries are upon the *Longe* with their Swords just at our Breasts, I desire therefore your Advice and Assistance, in what *Guard* we must stand to *parry* this fatal *Thrust*. Yours,

"FLANKANADE."

* * * * *

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Numb. XVIII.

THE

THEATRE.

By Sir JOHN FALSTAFFE.

To be Continued every Tuesday and Saturday.

Price Two-pence.

*Totum hominem Deus adsumit, quia totus ab ipsô est; Et
totum redimit quem sumpserat, omne reducens Quicquid
homo est, istud Tumulis, ast istud Abyssô.*

Prudent.

[Greek: Phthenxomai hois themis osti, thuras d'
epithesthe bebêlois.]

Orpheus.

Saturday, April 16. 1720.

The Person, who confines himself to the Task of writing a Paper of Entertainment, is not thereby obliged to be continually ludicrous in his Composition, or to expect that his Readers should always be upon the broad Grin. The *rational*, as well as *risible*, Faculties are to be exercised; and if I think fit to be too precisely serious to Day, my good-natur'd Customers will give me an Indulgence, and believe that I will make it up to them with Mirth on *Tuesday*.

As I devoted the spare Hours of yesterday to Meditation, I could not help reflecting, what little Notion we have at this Time of *Prodigies* and *Phenomena*, that are not in the common Course of Nature. We are grown *Epicureans* in our Principles, and force our selves to believe, that it is Fear, Superstition, or Ignorance, to fancy that Providence sends the World a Warning in extraordinary Appearances: