

COLLEY CIBBER: THE ORIGIN OF EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY SENTIMENTAL COMEDY

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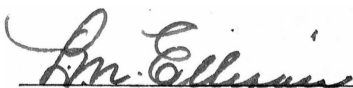
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I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared
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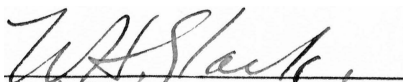


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PREFACE

It happens often that minor authors in the history of literature afford a clearer idea of the influences that are at work and the trends which determine the future than do the major writers themselves. For this reason the dramatic and theatrical career of Colley Cibber seems deserving of careful study. As a further justification for a detailed study of Colley Cibber in relation to English dramatic history, it might be observed that he has been studied heretofore in a partial and casual fashion only. It is proposed in this study to subject his work, both as a dramatist and theatrical manager and player, to a careful scrutiny with a view to determining the degree to which he was the product of forces already existent in the drama, and the extent to which he inaugurated influences and tendencies which determined the course of English dramatic history for the ensuing century. After prolonged study of Cibber's work, it is this writer's belief that his importance as a dramatic innovator has not heretofore been sufficiently recognized. It will be the purpose of this thesis, therefore, to show that although Cibber was subservient to the ideals and standards of pure Restoration comedy, he was also quick to sense opportunities for directing public taste to newer forms of dramatic appeal;

and that, for this reason, he becomes a figure of greater importance in the history of English drama than the intrinsic merit of his work would indicate.

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CHAPTER I

A REVIEW OF THE RESTORATION COMEDY OF MANNERS

The period of years extending from the ascendancy of Charles II to the throne of England in 1660 to the year of production of Congreve's "The Way of the World" in 1700 will be taken in this study as the era of Restoration comedy. The spirit of this type of comedy came into England with the return of Charles II, though it was some time before a play of the kind was written. Once the vogue had been set, however, it lasted many years. It is generally said that the last play which was truly Restoration in spirit was "The Way of the World." Restoration comedy, however, must not be thought of as merely the comedy of the era of Charles II; it is a comedy of highly distinctive qualities, rare in English dramatic literature. In fact, practically at no other time in the history of the English drama has comedy of this kind found favor.

Some have contended that the particular kind of comedy now under consideration came into England through French influence upon Charles II while he was in exile. Indeed, its similarity in style to the work of Moliere is obvious, but its spiritual affiliation with certain Elizabethan and Jacobean plays is also apparent. It appears to this writer, however, that Restoration comedy,

or more particularly, the Restoration comedy of manners, is the natural and authentic production of the gay, witty, immoral circle that constituted the court of Charles II. The intellectual and social conditions which produced this comedy were restricted to the court and to a limited section of the British nobility. The mood of cynicism and disillusionment which it expresses, its sophisticated and heartless gaiety, was emphatically not the mood of the nation. Nor is Restoration comedy, in any true sense, a national production. Its spirit is alien to the national genius; and since the intellectual and social conditions which produced it have, at no other time, existed in England, Restoration comedy remains a unique product in English dramatic literature. But by the beginning of the eighteenth century influences were at work that were destined to change the taste of the theater-goer to the point that he would no longer relish the old comedy of manners. It is evident, therefore, that the vogue of the Restoration comedy of manners is marked by very definite chronological limits.

With few exceptions the writers of the Restoration comedy of manners stood in close and intimate relationship to the Court. The most representative of those writers are Sir George Etherege (1635-1691), William Wycherley (1640-1716), William Congreve (1670-1729),

George Farquhar (1678-1707), and Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726). There are other important writers of dramatic comedy during the period, to be sure, but the comedy of manners is chiefly the work of these writers.

In order to convey to the reader just what are the qualities that characterize the Restoration comedy of manners, an analysis will be made of two plays. The first of these is the play which introduced the type, and fixed the conventions which marked the type: "The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter,"¹ by Sir George Etherege, produced in 1676.

The plot of "The Man of Mode" is like the plots of other plays of its kind in being weak, unimportant, and only a vehicle for the wit and brilliant dialogue. It is more easily followed, however, in this play than in many others of the period and the type. Very early in the drama it is evident that Dorimant is the vacillating lover who changes easily from one love affair to another. He is immoral, surely, but the reader is not repelled by his wickedness. In fact, one finds oneself according him a certain measure of approval and admiration. He is attracted to Harriett while he is plotting with his current paramour, Bellinda, to be rid of his old mistress, Mrs. Loveit. By the time his plot has succeeded, Harriett has handled him

¹H. F. B. Brett-Smith (ed.), The Dramatic Works of Sir George Etherege, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1927), II, 181-288.

so wisely that he really is in love with her, and he drops Bellinda without compunction. Between Dorimant and Harriett there is an exchange of wit that is hard and brilliant. They never express emotion, and their cynicism is noticeable for its lack of any crudeness. Their love-affair is carried on with no intimation that either would care if it did not end in marriage, yet the author has been subtle in giving the reader a feeling that they really do care for each other, at least, for the time being. Harriett is a young lady of so easy a conscience that she can see Dorimant deceive her mother without a murmur. Lady Woodvil, the mother, knowing Dorimant only by his evil reputation, has forbidden him ever to come into her house. But Dorimant, under the name of "Mr. Courtage," goes anyway; and he is so successful in gaining the old lady's favor that Harriett remarks, "He fits my Mother's humor so well, a little more and she'll dance a Kissing game with him."² By this time it is only a matter of Dorimant's making himself known to Lady Woodvil. With a little coaxing she forgives the lovers, accepting Dorimant as a prospective member of her family with good grace.

In the meantime, there has been running through the comedy the plot of the two lovers, Young Bellair and Emilia. Old Bellair, being himself in love with Emilia,

²Ibid., p. 245.

wants the young man to marry Harriett. Old Bellair is a character seen often in the comedy of manners. He is a typical lover who is properly past the age of romance. His function is usually to keep a pair of lovers from being married until the end of the play. It requires the entire course of the play to surmount so trivial an obstacle as this; that is, go to the parson and be married. In the end, however, the audience finds they have done so when Old Bellair brings the parson upon the stage to perform the ceremony for himself and Emilia; but when the clergyman sees the prospective bride, he refuses to perform the ceremony for the very good reason that he has already rendered this service to the young lady and her lover off-stage. Old Bellair feels injured, to be sure, but finally forgives the young couple, and the play ends with general good humor and a dance. It should be said, perhaps, that the solution to the Dorimant-Harriett problem could not have been thus simple because of the matter of Harriett's inheritance. In many Restoration comedies the complications of the plot arise when some guardian holds the purse strings, and the fortune of one of the lovers depends upon how well the young man or woman pleases the guardian in marriage. This is the case with Harriett; she must please Lady Woodvil or lose her inheritance. One reads few Restoration comedies in which some variation

of this convention does not supply the complications.

In the preceding summary there has been no occasion to mention the most colorful character in the play, Sir Fopling Flutter. He is the "fop," a stock character who appears again and again in Restoration comedy. He is fastidious in dress, talks of his tassels, admires the cut of his coat, and draws attention to his French manners. The only necessary part Sir Fopling plays in the development of the plot is that of pretending to be attracted to Mrs. Loveit so that Dorimant, pretending a jealous rage, will have excuse to abandon her. In the typical comedy of manners the fop usually serves the purpose of slightly entangling the plot, as does Sir Fopling here, and of bringing color and life into the play. He is never seriously involved, and always leaves the stage without a wrinkle in either his beautiful costume or his self-complacency.

The conventional comic hero of Restoration comedy makes his debut in this play. He takes up one love affair, dropping it readily for another. Though Dorimant is seriously in love with Harriett at the end of the play, there is no intimation, or any likelihood, of his reform. He admits to Loveit that Harriett's money has had some part in the capturing of his heart, and to Bellinda he expresses the hope that they will meet again later.

As Dorimant is the typical Restoration hero, so is Harriett the typical Restoration comic heroine. Her conversation is sparkling, her wit brilliant. She is a type of comic heroine rare in our literature. She vanishes from the English stage with the decline of the Restoration drama, and only reappears two hundred years later in the novels of George Meredith. Harriett is clever enough to make Dorimant sorry for any indiscretion of which he may be guilty, and the reader feels no regret in seeing her marry such a worldly young man. This status of equality between the sexes does not survive the Restoration period.

As "The Man of Mode" marks the beginning of the Restoration comedy of manners, it would seem desirable to examine a play that marks the culmination of the type. For this reason "The Way of the World"³ (1700), by William Congreve, is chosen as the second of the plays to be reviewed here. This play is usually supposed to represent Restoration comedy in its perfection.

Because of the many ramifications of the plot, "The Way of the World" is difficult to read, and the play was not popular at the time of its production. But it is an admirable play in its purely representative character, because in it Congreve achieves the wit,

³Alexander Charles Ewald (ed), William Congreve (New York: Scribner's, 1927), pp. 291-385.

brilliance, and cynicism which all the writers strove for.

The plot is not highly original. Mirabell is supposed to be in danger of losing his inheritance. Millamant's fortune depends upon her marrying with the approval of Lady Wishfort, who dislikes Mirabell for having pretended a passion for her. The complication arises when Fainall, wishing Mirabell to displease Lady Wishfort since the estate would then go to Mrs. Fainall, resolves that, by fair means or foul, and by the assistance of his Mistress, Mrs. Marwood, he will get the estate. The intrigue is supported by Foible, Waitwell, and Mincing, servants of Mrs. Wishfort, Mirabell, and Millamant, respectively. Foible and Mincing have seen certain disgraceful conduct upon the part of Marwood and Fainall, and have sworn secrecy. It is amusing, however, when they decide that since they took the oath upon a volume of poems instead of the Bible, they are at liberty to tell what they know. This knowledge sets Mrs. Fainall's conscience at ease and makes Lady Wishfort favorable to Mirabell when he prevents Fainall from obtaining the estate of his wife. Mirabell does this by producing papers and witnesses to prove that Lady Wishfort's daughter, prior to her becoming Mrs. Fainall, has deeded her property to Mirabell in trust.

The plot, as is readily seen, is largely conventional; its motivation is obscure and its evolution awkward

and confusing. The reader--still more, the auditor--is confused by the maze of plotting and counterplotting. A summary of the play as in its entirety would be a difficult task, and perhaps not worth reading were it done. But all this is of little significance. Congreve has written a play that is unsurpassed for wit, brilliance, and subtle characterization.

Millamant is the realization of the ideal Restoration heroine. A scintillating personlity she is. From the time she comes "full sail, with her fans spread, and streamers out, and a shoal of fools for tenders,"⁴ she is the center of attraction. Her verbal combats with Mirabell conceal any hint of sincerity, and when the two enumerate in the fourth act the qualifications for a happy marriage, Congreve is at his best. Millamant, like all Restoration heroines, is never crude or immoral. Congreve subtly portrays her as one whose worst sin is that of participating in cabal-nights,⁵ and yet as one who knows the nature of man and of the way of the world. She is that emancipated creature who is well able to care for herself, but who is still thoroughly feminine and lovely.

⁴Ibid., p. 322.

⁵Ibid., p. 300. On cabal-nights a group sits until late gossiping about all who are not present.

Mirabell, too, is perhaps the best--because the most complete--of Restoration heroes. Like others of his kind, he boasts of his many illicit love affairs, but in the end he carries off the beautiful Millamant with the plaudits of his creator, if not of the audience who have been witnessing his triumphs.

It is impossible to convey, by mere criticism and analysis, a sense of the inner spirit of the Restoration comedy of manners. Only a reading of the plays themselves can give an insight into the hard, cynical humor, the lack of emotion, the complete sophistication, and emancipation from social and moral restraint. Its more external characteristics, however, may be summarized as follows:

1. The plot in Restoration comedy is of far less consequence than the wit.

2. The dialogue is hard and cynical, and unrestricted as to subject-matter. There is an air of refined cynicism over the whole production, but a noticeable lack of crude realism.

3. There is always a pair of witty and quite unemotional lovers--the man an unscrupulous libertine; the woman completely emancipated but personally unstained.

4. The male characters boast of their amours, dropping one affair as readily as they take up another; and in true Restoration style there is no repentance for

past sins.

5. The fop is a usual character in the play. He is rarely essential to the plot, but he is welcomed because of his colorful costume and his absurdly modish manners.

6. Most of the servants that appear on the stage are essential to the plot. They are almost without exception extremely witty and clever.

7. All the characters (except the servants) are courtiers, idlers, fine ladies and gentlemen, who have no pursuits save elegant intrigue and the indulgence of wit and repartee.

CHAPTER II

SENTIMENTALISM IN CIBBER'S COMEDIES

Though the period from 1660 to 1700 is the era of the Restoration comedy of manners, it must be noted that before 1700 influences were at work which were definitely at variance with the Restoration comedy of manners. In the first place, it is the present writer's contention that the new feeling of democracy, and the consequent rise of the middle class, was a contributing factor in the decline in popularity of the Restoration comedy of manners. Restoration drama, written as it was by aristocrats for people of the same class, would not be enjoyed by the class who had no time for intrigues and "cabal-nights." Furthermore, the dramatists of the new school themselves were not in as close relationship to the court as formerly. Of the famous quintet of writers of the Restoration comedy of manners, Farquhar alone was not a courtier; but writers after the period of the Restoration, including Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele, while having knowledge of court life, were not courtiers in spirit.

To this same class belongs Colley Cibber (1671-1757). Though he had been official escort to the Princess Anne in his youth and had spent some time with royal personages, even becoming poet-laureate in his

later years, he was not imbued with enough of the spirit of the aristocrat to keep him from representing the real tastes of the people. Jeremy Collier in his bitter attack entitled A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage (1698), has been given credit for creating the furor which led to the change in dramatic practices at this time. It appears, however, that although his treatise did effect some changes, the pamphlet was an expression of tendencies already at work. In support of this statement it should be noted that Cibber's "Love's Last Shift" and the same author's "Woman's Wit"--plays of an entirely different mood and temper from the typical Restoration comedy--both antedate Collier's diatribe. Cibber was a shrewd producer as well as manager; it is not likely, therefore, that his first dramatic endeavors would be experiments. Instead, he was quick to sense the popular taste, and he introduced a type of drama that has held the stage to the present day.

The new quality which Cibber introduced into his plays is known as sentimentality. "Sentimentality," of course, means pertaining to, or dependent upon, sentiment. Sentiment is derived from Latin sentire, meaning to feel. It is defined by the new Oxford Dictionary as follows:

A mental feeling, an emotion. Now chiefly applied, and by psychologists sometimes restricted, to those feelings which involve an intellectual element or are concerned with ideal objects. In 17th and 18th centuries often spec. and amatory feeling or inclination. In general use: Refined and tender emotion; exercise or manifestation of 'sensibility,' emotional reflection, or meditation; appeal to the tender emotions in literature or art.

Sentimentality, as thus defined, is a conspicuous quality in most of Cibber's comedies.

This discussion will be concerned chiefly with Cibber's comedies. Of his twenty-eight separate works, only the comedies are of value. His poetry would be better left to sink into oblivion. Most of his tragedies are poor adaptations of the work of others. His operas and pastorals are worse than his tragedies, and almost as bad as his poetry. In the Apology he has left an invaluable commentary upon the stage of his time. But of all the work from his pen, it is his comedies that English literature could least afford to lose. Though many of them were successful at the time of their presentation, the value of Cibber's comedies lies not so much in their intrinsic worth as in the position they occupy in the history of sentimentalism. It will be the purpose here to analyze the comedies of Colley Cibber with a view to showing that while they are Restoration in flavor, they introduce innovations which give direction and purpose to the major part of dramatic activity in England

during the eighteenth century. Chief among these innovations was the introduction of sentiment and moralizing into the comedy of manners.

Cibber's natural love for the stage made an actor of him; his need for parts to suit his own peculiar talents made a writer of him. It was after he had played some twelve or more parts that he discovered his needs, and wrote his first comedy in the effort to meet them. His career of at least a half a century in connection with the stage is an interesting one. He occupied the stage at a momentous period in the affairs of the theater, and his influence upon them is far from negligible. As the greatest comedian of his day, as a pioneer in the development of sentimental comedy, and as a dominant personality in theatrical management, he left the stage in a better condition than he found it; and in a great measure, credit for improved conditions is due to him. Since this discussion is chiefly concerned with Cibber's position in the history of sentimentalism, a detailed study of him and his times has no place here. However, a brief examination of the experiences that led to his becoming a writer is worth while.

With his penchant for making enemies Cibber seldom received all the credit due him. The fact that he started on his dramatic career while still in his

early twenties seems due to luck rather than to any other factor. For example, his first salary was paid him as the result of his having angered the great Betterton. He had been loitering around the stage for some weeks in the hopes of getting something to do when he was given the opportunity to play the part of Sir Gentle's servant in "Sir Anthony Love"--Sir Gentle being Thomas Betterton. Though he had only one line to speak, he spoke it so badly that the scene was ruined. Betterton was greatly angered, and ordered that Cibber be fined. When told that Cibber was not on the payroll, Betterton commanded that he be paid a salary of ten shillings and forfeited five.

Inauspicious as his first performance was, young Colley still believed in his ability as an actor, and was finally given the opportunity that he felt was worthy of his talents, that of the Chaplain in Otway's "The Orphan." Apparently his own faith in himself was well-founded because his performance merited the compliments of the old actor Goodman. However, it was chance that gave him his next important role, that of Lord Touchwood in Congreve's "Double Dealer," a part usually played by Kynaston, who at this time was ill. Cibber memorized the part in a few hours, and the play was well received in its command performance before Queen Mary the next day. His performance was rewarded by an advance in

salary from fifteen shillings to twenty shillings a week.

He also won the patronage of Congreve, an honor in itself.

But, as he remarks,

....this favourable opinion of Mr. Congreve made no farther impression upon the judgement of my good masters; it only served to heighten my own vanity; but could not recommend me to any new trials of my capacity; not a step farther could I get, till the company was again divided; when the desertion of the best actors left a clear stage, for champions to mount, and show their best pretensions to favour.⁶

The division to which he refers, and the consequent "trial of his capacity" for which he yearned, came about in this manner. A period of financial stress and enforced economy led the management of the theater to lower the salaries of the players. To do this tactfully, in the pretence of bringing players forward the management gave several of Betterton's and Mrs. Barry's chief parts to young Powel and Mrs. Bracegirdle. Not only did this action displease the older actors themselves, but the audiences refused to accept the young, inexperienced players when their favorites were in good health and idleness. The result of it all was that Betterton gathered forces, and with public subscription, erected a theater within the walls of the Tennis-court in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

⁶Edmund Bellchambers (ed.). An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1822), p. 196. Robert W. Lowe has prepared another edition of Cibber's Apology, in two volumes, bearing the title Days of the Dandies (London: Grolier Society, 1889). In this study citations to this edition are to Days of the Dandies.

With competition lessened, Cibber was getting the opportunities he needed. At Drury Lane was being presented Mrs. Behn's "Abdelazar; or, the Moor's Revenge," a poor play which, by the end of the second performance, was being given to an empty house. It was decided that the play needed a new prologue, which Cibber wrote, and determined to speak. It was thought, however, that a performance by Cibber would be worse than having no prologue; so the writer had to sell it for two guineas, and suffer agony when he heard young Powel speak it. His pain at not being able to speak it himself was heightened when Powel was applauded, because the vain Cibber was sure that all the applause was for the content of the poem, and not for Powel's rendition. Cibber's writing of the prologue, however, was beneficial to him in one respect, at least: the company looked upon him with less contempt. By this time the conflict between the two theaters was open battle, and Cibber's great opportunity was given him.

Naturally, rivalry was great between the new Lincoln's Inn House and the old Drury Lane Company. It was announced that on Tuesday Lincoln's Inn would present "Hamlet." Drury Lane, thinking to do the most damage possible, let it be advertised that it would present "Hamlet" on Monday. Not to be outdone, Lincoln's Inn

determined to give "Hamlet" on Monday also; whereupon Powel called a council of war. It was decided that the "Old Bachelor," a play Lincoln's Inn had originally intended to present on Monday, would be presented at Drury Lane in the place of "Hamlet." The handbills were changed, and at the bottom was affixed the note to the effect that the part of the Old Bachelor would be performed in imitation of the original, or, in other words, Powel would mimic Betterton. With only a few hours until time for the performance, it was discovered that no one had taken the part of Alderman Fondlewife, a role that Dogget had played with great success. Since Cibber was the last resort, he was given this part. Fondlewife was exactly the role best fitted to his talents. The applause, according to Cibber himself, was great: "After one loud plaudit was ended," he says, "and sunk into a general whisper, that seemed still to continue their private approbation, it revived to a second, and again to a third, still louder than the former."⁷ With this ovation as evidence Cibber knew that Fondlewife was the type of character he should play.

When he searched for similar parts, however, he saw they were not to be found; neither could he induce

⁷Ibid., p. 215.

anybody to write one for him. This drove him to the point of writing his own, and "Love's Last Shift," written when he was only twenty-four years old, was the result. Sir Novelty Fashion was a character that fitted Cibber's "meagre person," "dismal, pale complexion," and high pitched voice to perfection. Audiences were delighted with Sir Novelty's affected air which Cibber represented so well. He was a new kind of beau, and remained Cibber's favorite role until his retirement. Vanbrugh used him as a model for his Lord Foppington in "The Relapse," and asked Cibber to play the part. Sir Novelty held the stage until he was reincarnated as Lord Dundreary in Tom Taylor's "Our American Cousin" (1858).

As for the play itself, it was no less popular than was Sir Novelty. The public, always loath to give Cibber his due, could not believe the work was his, being sure a play of his would not be worth seeing. Cibber vigorously affirmed his authorship, and prepared to show the skeptical public what he could do. He knew public taste; and he knew his colleagues so well that he could fit them with parts nicely suited to their talents. Thus, though his plays might read badly in the study, they ran easily upon the stage. Congreve said of "Love's Last Shift" that it only had in it a great many things that looked like wit, but in reality were not wit--a criticism

that Cibber conceded readily.⁸ And Cibber himself said concerning it, "[It] has a great deal of puerility, and frothy stage-language in it, yet by the mere moral delight received from its fable, it has been in a continued and equal possession of the stage for more than forty years."⁹

It is continually a source of surprise that a youth of twenty-four years, who had never shown any particular moral inclination in his everyday life, should have set a precedent by writing a successful play with an elaborately painted moral. It might be contended that it was merely by chance that he hit upon a device which pleased the public so readily--a premise that might be allowed had not other writers followed so quickly in the same vein. Also, if more information were available concerning Cibber's early life and training, some interesting facts might be forthcoming upon this subject. He mentions that his father had hopes of Colley's becoming a bishop, an achievement he might have accomplished had he not fallen in love with the stage while waiting in London for aid in this project from the Earl of Devonshire. His early training may have had a

⁸Ibid., p. 223.

⁹Ibid.

lasting influence upon his ideals of what was morally right, even if he did not live an exemplary life. It seems fair to say, however, that there is no real evidence to prove that Cibber ever did lead a wholly debauched life; in fact, material available points to the contrary. It is true that he neglected his wife, but there is no record of his ever being unfaithful to her. In the midst of his quarrel with Pope he related a shameful incident in the poet's life, to which Pope could only reply with a single general accusation--a sin that, as Cibber said, would have been committed by the first ten thousand men one met in that day. That he was theoretically as well as practically an adherent of the view that the dramatist has moral ends to serve is proved by the following:

I cannot allow the most taking play to be intrinsically good, or to be a work upon which a man of sense and probity should value himself: I mean when they do not, as well prodesse, as delectare,--give profit with delight. The utile dulci was, of old, equally the point; and has always been my aim, however wide of the mark I may have shot my arrow.¹⁰

Whether Cibber was wholly sincere in his lofty proclamation about the supremacy of virtue and the beauty of true love will perhaps never be known. His true character is the subject of much dispute among students

¹⁰Ibid., p. 258.

and critics. That he fell far short of perfection is undeniable. His Apology contains much evidence of his vanity, a characteristic that probably made him enemies. Perhaps also the rather bad odor that attaches to his memory is due to the dislike felt for him by Samuel Johnson and Pope, two men who never failed to express their antipathies with vigor. However, even the enmity of these great men could not destroy the career of one who wrote the best stage history of his time, who created a new type of comic character, who was so popular as an actor that he was paid the highest salary any member of that profession had received up to his time,¹¹ and who was happy with a long list of successful comedies to his credit. Elsewhere than in his comedies he appears to have had a genuine interest in pointing a moral. The "tender-mindedness" of Cibber is suggested by the following story. It is said that in the conclusion to Richardson's book Clarissa the author had resisted many appeals to spare the life of his heroine. Among them was one from old Colley, who is reported to have said that she must not die. He cursed Richardson in the event Clarissa should die, and declared that he could no longer believe that "Providence, and Eternal Wisdom, or Goodness,

¹¹John Dennis, The Age of Pope (1700-1744) (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1924), pp. 196-197.

governed the world if merit, innocence, and beauty were to be destroyed."¹²

Whatever conjectures are advanced as to the reason for Cibber's early use of sentimentality, the simple fact is that the times were ripe for the expression of sentiment in life and literature. It is a tribute to Cibber's shrewd knowledge of human nature that he recognized the trend before anyone else had discovered it, and turned it to good account in a great stage success. "Love's Last Shift" was the first, as it is one of the best, of Cibber's plays.

Love's Last Shift; or, A Fool in Fashion¹³(1696)¹⁴

There is little that is amateurish in Cibber's first play; in fact, several of his later comedies are less ably written than is this one. It is more easily read than most of the comedies of the preceding period--as it perhaps would be more easily followed when seen upon the stage. The leading character, with his apparent disregard for what fate may do to his life,

¹²Oliver Elton, A Survey of English Literature, 2 vols. (1730-1780) (New York: MacMillan Co., 1928), I, p. 174.

¹³The Dramatic Works of Colley Cibber, 5 vols. (London: 1777), Vol. I. Throughout this study citations to Cibber's plays are made to this edition.

¹⁴The year of production of this play and those to follow are as given in The Dictionary of National Biography, art. "Cibber." The plays are reviewed here in chronological order.

intrigues the reader at once, and the interest holds until the end of the play. Likewise, the other characters hold the reader's interest to a greater degree than do those of most first-plays.

Loveless, who has deserted his wife, squandered all his money in travel beyond the sea, and is now starving himself and his servant, Snap, returns to London. Having heard that his wife Amanda is dead, he has no hesitancy in returning to his old home with the purpose of persuading Sir William Wisewoud to lend him five hundred pounds upon the mortgage Wisewoud already holds on Loveless' estate.

Narcissa, heiress and daughter to Sir William Wisewoud, and Young Worthy are in love with each other. Sir William, however, desires his daughter to wed Young Worthy's brother, Elder Worthy (who is really in love with Sir William's niece, Hillaria), and he proposes to endow his daughter with five thousand pounds when the wedding is consummated. Young Worthy plots to get both Narcissa and the five thousand pounds. He is able to further his plans by pretending to be taking messages to her from his brother. The greatest trouble he has, however, is that of keeping his brother and Hillaria on pleasant terms with each other so that he will have time for his own courtship. He is further annoyed by

Narcissa's caprices; being much like Harriett and Millamant, she pretends jealousy, anger, dislike, or love--anything to keep him uncomfortable and yet keep his interest. In spite of these things, however, Young Worthy finds time to dabble in the affairs of everybody, including those of Amanda and Loveless.

Amanda, contrary to rumor, is not dead, but is living in London, and through the years has been faithful to her husband, whom she loves in spite of his sins. At Young Worthy's suggestion she determines upon a ruse whereby she hopes to regain her faithless husband's affections. Sending her servant to invite Loveless to her house, she behaves as his mistress. He does not recognize her as his wife, and falls in love with her, at which time she discloses her identity. Her virtue and constancy, together with her charm, have such an appeal that he decides he stills loves her. Whereupon, he declares his own unworthiness of her, and determines to reform.

By this time Young Worthy has succeeded in his plot. Sir William signs a marriage bond, believing it to be that of Elder Worthy and Narcissa. The old gentleman forgets for the time that Young Worthy's name is William, and so really he unwittingly gives his consent to the marriage of his daughter and Young Worthy. At first he is angry when he discovers that he has been tricked not

only into consenting to the marriage but also into giving the couple the five thousand pounds. When Young Worthy offers to return the money, however, saying that he has enough when he has Narcissa, Sir William relents, letting him keep both the girl and the money.

In reading the play one recognizes at once the flavor of the Restoration comedy of manners. The familiar milieu is further recognized through certain of the minor characters. Sir Novelty Fashion is as good a fop as ever existed. Sir William Wisewoud, after the pattern of Old Bellair, "fancies himself a great master of his passion, which he is only in trivial matters," as Cibber describes him in the Dramatis Personae. Loveless is as worthless a rake as can be represented. Mrs. Flareit is openly the mistress of Sir Novelty Fashion, who is made happy by an excuse to abandon her. Young Worthy and Narcissa are typical hero and heroine, though perhaps Narcissa stays in character better than does Young Worthy. Even the plot is largely traditional.

However, in spite of the characters and incidents that mark "Love's Last Shift" as Restoration in spirit, the reader soon recognizes the presence of something new. Though Restoration comedy contains examples in plenty of young men who, like Loveless, have led debauched lives, none of them have, like him, repented. One could never

imagine Millamant grieving openly for Mirabell, but Amanda mourns the absence of a faithless husband eight years.

Loveless' speech of reformation, and Amanda's acceptance of his contrite apology, are obviously a new note in English comedy:

Loveless. I have wrong'd you, basely wrong'd you. And can I see your face?

Amanda. One kind, one pitying look, cancils those wrongs for ever. And oh! forgive my fond presuming passion; for from my soul I pardon and forgive you all; all, all but this, the greatest, your unkind delay of love.....

Loveless. Oh! thou hast rous'd me from my deep lethargy of vice: for hitherto my soul has been enslav'd to loose desires, to vain deluding follies, and shadows of substantial bliss.... Thus let me kneel and pay my thanks to her, whose conquering virtue has at last subdu'd me. Here will I fix, thus prostrate, sigh my shame, and wash my crimes in never-ceasing tears of penitence.¹⁵

Young Worthy shows his kinship in spirit to Dorimant when he falls in love with Narcissa, possible heiress to an income of one thousand pounds a year; and when in addition, he contrives to get the proposed dowry of five thousand pounds. However, he shows an entirely new characteristic when, after his plot has succeeded, he offers to return the dowry:

....therefore, Sir William, as the first proof of that respect and duty I owe a father, I here, unasked, return your bond, and will henceforth expect nothing from you, but as my conduct may deserve it.¹⁶

¹⁵Cibber's Works, I, 86-87.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 94-95.

In fact, the remainder of the conversation illustrates the flavor of sentimentality.

Amanda. This is indeed a generous act; methinks 'twere pity it should go unrewarded.

Sir William. Nay, now you vanquish me; after this, I can't suspect your future conduct: there, sir, 'tis yours; I acknowledge the bond, and wish you all the happiness of a bridal bed. Heaven's blessings on you both: now rise, my boy; and let the world know 'twas I set you upon your legs again.

Young Worthy. I'll study to deserve your bounty, sir.¹⁷

Perhaps the reader has noticed that sentimentality, of necessity, created new characters. Amanda is entirely lacking in the spirit that gave Harriett and Millamant sophistication and freedom.

Woman's Wit; or, The Lady in Fashion (1697)

Cibber's second play, "Woman's Wit; or, The Lady in Fashion," did not meet with the same good fortune as did his first. He does not mention it in his Apology except to say that it was so bad he would not tell its name, and that he did not include it in the 1721 edition of his plays. But according to other sources of information¹⁸ it was produced at Drury Lane and damned.

In the preface to "Woman's Wit" Cibber details the excuses for its failure. The first of these was want of time. His first play had been spontaneous, but rather than lose a winter, his next one was forced; a criticism

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸"Colley Cibber," Dictionary of National Biography, (1908), IV, 352-362.

that appears just when one reads the play. The second excuse he offers, however, the reader does not accept so readily. Cibber says that the unfavorable reception of the play was in part due to the fact that he "made too nice observation of regularity," not including enough incidents. This may have been a hindrance to its success upon the stage, but "Woman's Wit" appears more interesting to the reader than does "Love's Last Shift," mainly because it is more unified and is stronger in plot. He gives as further excuse for its failure the fact that he wrote it, "to the middle of the third act," during a temporary secession to Lincoln's Inn Fields (a bit of history he fails to mention in his Apology); and before he had finished it, he had returned to Drury Lane, thus changing the actors for whom he meant the parts.

In spite of the unfortunate history of this play, it is worthy of analysis for its documentary value in the history of sentimentalism. Keeping in mind that this is the second play in which Cibber definitely breaks with Restoration tradition by the introduction of a sentimental moral strain into the comedy of manners, the reader will see its significance.

The spirit of sentimentality in "Woman's Wit" is most ably portrayed by Longville and his sister Emilia. The fraternal love and loyalty originated in this play make a pattern in dramatic characterization that has been

used repeatedly since the time of Cibber.

Longville is engaged to his sister's friend, Olivia. Emilia is secretly in love with her brother's friend, Lord Lovemore; secretly, because Lovemore is in love with Leonora. That Leonora is a coquette and unworthy of so estimable a gentleman as his friend, Longville knows; and his attempt to prove this provides the plot for the play.

Lord Lovemore, who believes implicitly in the goodness of Leonora, accompanies Longville to the home of Leonora and her mother, Lady Manlove. Here he secludes himself in such position that he can watch while Longville pretends to make love to Leonora in a most tempestuous fashion. Truly, she is a coquette. She denies ever having had any love for Lovemore; furthermore, she declares her love for Longville, and tells him that had she not vowed to live a single life, she would marry him. Lord Lovemore, recognizing this declaration as one she has also made to himself, at this point comes into the room. Leonora is a woman of quick wit. She regains her composure rapidly. When she discovers she has been the victim of a plot, she turns it to her own advantage with the statement to Lord Lovemore that she has been obeying a request of Longville. The plan, she appears to confess, has been that when he hears her declare her love for Longville, Lovemore will become angry and leave her to Longville. Lovemore believes her story; and Longville loses not only the love

of his friend, but also of his fiancée. Apparently the only friend Longville has left is his sister. Although she cannot understand all that has happened, she is convinced that her brother would do no wrong. With blind faith she enters the plot to prove his innocence.

Emilia faces Leonora with the statement that Longville does not love her, and that he does love Olivia. As if to prove that she is sure of her claims, Leonora proposes that she and Olivia each write Longville for an appointment in half an hour. Leonora asks that he meet her at Mrs. Siam's house, while Olivia requests that he meet her at her father's. Secretly, Leonora changes Olivia's letter so that the meeting place is to be at Mrs. Siam's; and her own letter she instructs her servant to deliver into the hands of Lovemore, as if by mistake. Her ruse is successful. Longville, thinking he is to meet Olivia, goes eagerly to Mrs. Siam's. Lord Lovemore, believing he has gone to meet Leonora, follows him. And Olivia, waiting past the appointed time at her father's house, goes with Emilia to see if he is meeting Leonora as she requested. Upon reaching her destination, and finding them all together, Emilia prudently locks the door so there can be no escape, and Longville is given the opportunity to explain his position. He produces Olivia's letter in proof that she requested his presence

at Mrs. Siam's. Olivia realizes that her note has been changed and that her lover is innocent. Thus through the faithfulness and love of Emilia, her brother is completely vindicated, and Leonora's real character is revealed. Lord Lovemore is so grateful for having been prevented from making the wrong marriage that the reader feels he will be more appreciative of the love Emilia can offer him.

It is evident that the main plot is largely sentimental in character. The love that Longville and Emilia display has no counterpart in the Restoration comedy of manners. As in "Love's Last Shift" it is the minor characters in the play that give this production its Restoration characteristics. Major Rakish and his son Jack, though inseparable companions, slander or cheat each other unmercifully. Lady Manlove is the feminine counterpart of Old Bellair. Lettice and Trifle, the servants, are active in the true Restoration manner. It will be noticed, however, that while these characters behave like Restoration comedians, none of them are aristocrats. In fact, nowhere in the play is found the sophistication that appealed to audiences that witnessed "The Man of Mode" and "The Way of the World."

Love Makes the Man; or, The Fop's Fortune (1701)

Several years were to elapse between the time of

Cibber's writing "Woman's Wit" and his next comedy; chiefly, because he was trying his talents in producing tragedy. His "Xerxes" (1699) lasted only one performance in spite of the superb acting of Mrs. Betterton and Mrs. Barry. Undaunted by this failure, the next year he produced "Richard III," frankly admitting its alteration from Shakespeare. Cibber himself took the title role, apparently with success; at least, in spite of the play's poor quality when compared with the original, it was Cibber's "Richard III" and not Shakespeare's that held the stage until 1821. In his Apology he states that the Master of Revels, the censor of the plays in that day, became unusually watchful after the publication of Jeremy Collier's pamphlet, and deleted his whole first act from the play. The reason for this was not so much because of immorality as because the distresses of King Henry the Sixth, who is killed by Richard in the first act, would put weak people too much in mind of King James, then living in France. The criticism is far-fetched, of course, but the ruling held.¹⁹

Luckily, Cibber did not continue to occupy his time with tragedy, but turned again to the type of drama in which he could write acceptably. In his "Love Makes the Man; or, The Fop's Fortune" he gave himself another good

¹⁹Apology, p. 266.

acting part and the stage another sentimental drama. Clodio, the pert fop, is even better than Sir Novelty Fashion, and Cibber must have been highly entertaining in this role. From the standpoint of the reader, this play is more interesting than either of his other comedies. It is a play full of incidents and good humor. As proclaimed in the prologue, the play has something in it to please everybody in the audience. Cibber says that for the critics he has innumerable faults, a quality that will surely please them. He describes his fop very accurately as "fool, beau, wit, and rake." The author makes provision for the ladies by introducing a love theme. For the "masks" he provides scandal, and for beaus, French airs. Even the galleries have been cared for by the antics of William Pinkethman in the role of Don Lewis.

A critical analysis of "Love Makes a Man" brings out the improbable situations, the crudities in character, and the various incongruities in the play; but such faults are not unique with this comedy. They are a common characteristic of the moralizing literature of the time. Dispensers of sentiment appear to have felt justified in permitting absurdities to creep into their work so long as they were able to point a moral.

This play is a combination of Beaumont and Fletcher's "The Custom of the Country" and "The Elder

Brother."

Antonio has two sons, Carlos, a student, and Clodio, a pert coxcomb. It is his wish that one of them marry Angelina, daughter of Charino. He is willing to deed his property to the one Charino chooses as his son-in-law. Clodio, with his brilliant conversation, makes the better impression and is chosen. Don Lewis, uncle of the young men, is greatly incensed at this procedure, because he knows the superior character of Carlos; and Sancho, servant of Carlos, sings the praises of Angelina into the ear of his master. Up to this time Carlos' real love has been his books, but Don Lewis and Sancho are successful in arousing his interest in the beautiful Angelina. She also falls in love with Carlos, and they elope before Carlos can acquiesce to his father's demands that he sign the paper giving his inheritance to Clodio. Upon receiving the news of the elopement, the fathers and Clodio follow, hoping to overtake them; Clodio, however, shows much more concern in having his snuff-box well filled than he does in catching his brother.

The scene changes to Lisbon. Here are seen Don Manuel and his sailors who have captured the small boat in which the lovers and Don Lewis were fleeing, and have taken Angelina captive. Carlos and Don Lewis fought bravely to prevent the capture, but when it was evident

they would fail, they both plunged into the sea. Angelina is sure they have been drowned, and she is resigned to her own fate, which Don Manuel controls. This worthy sea-officer makes an unusual demand of Angelina: he asks her to act as personal maid to Louisa, whom he loves dearly, and help him win her heart. Angelina promises to do what she can.

Contrary to Angelina's belief, Don Lewis and Carlos were not drowned, but were picked up by a boat and dropped in Lisbon--penniless but alive. They go to the church to pray, and are seen there by Louisa, who is greatly attracted to Don Carlos. When he will not accept her advances, she contrives to have him and Don Lewis brought bodily to her home, where she tells Don Carlos of her love. He still repulses her, and leaves the room. Outside the room he finds Angelina, and the scene here is overheard by a servant who reports it to Louisa. She hears them plan to escape, and in her anger she decides to kill Angelina. When she gives the lovers this information, however, their great love strikes a sympathetic note in her nature making her decide not to kill Angelina. Instead, she confesses, and begs their forgiveness. At this point, Antonio, Charino, and Clodio come into the room, demanding that Carlos sign the paper giving Clodio his inheritance.

In the meantime, Clodio has been meeting certain exciting events of his own. He has met with Don Duarte,

an ill-tempered young man, and has fought with him, injuring him so badly that he is thought to be dead. Clodio flees, and comes to the house of Elvira, Don Duarte's sister, and throws himself on her mercy. The two do not know each other, and Elvira, thinking of him as being in the situation that her brother may be in, promises to protect him. The police bring in the body of Don Duarte, and, though she thinks he has killed her brother, she remains true to her promise and keeps Clodio concealed in the closet in her room until the departure of her visitors, when she allows him to flee. The egotistical Clodio is certain that Elvira has fallen in love with him; she could not otherwise, he thinks, give him such generous treatment. He cannot understand the promptings of an honest heart. Don Duarte does not die, and when he arouses from his stupor, he feels nothing but gratitude for the punishment that has shown him the error of his ways. He is determined to cease being an ill-tempered ruffian, and to give up all his sins. He wishes to know whether his sister, who still believes him to be dead, loves him better than this Clodio; and he puts her to the test by delivering a letter to her, supposedly from Clodio, asking for a meeting with her. At once she conceives the design of using this meeting as a means of turning the supposed murderer over to the police. When Clodio receives her

letter granting him a meeting, he is with the group that awaits Carlos' signature of the release of his inheritance. Upon reading the letter, Clodio is so certain that it is expressive of Elvira's love for him that he generously tells Carlos not to sign the release. He is thinking that Elvira's inheritance will be so much larger that he will not need the money from his brother. Elvira is on the point of turning Clodio over to the police when her brother appears upon the scene. She is so overjoyed at finding her brother alive and well that she begs the forgiveness of Clodio.

Clodio is a very happy choice of a character. He always meets his fortunes lightly, and shows more variety in his nature than any fop of the Restoration period. He even has the promise of a serious love affair with Elvira when the play closes. With this incident in mind it appears that Clodio marks a transition, displaying qualities of the former Restoration dandy whose most serious thought is concerned with the loss of his snuff-box that cannot be duplicated anywhere except in Paris, and yet showing entirely new characteristics in having a real love affair with an admirable woman.

Expressions of sentimentality in this play are plentiful. The love affairs are all conducted on a plane quite different from the witty, cynical give-and-take of

Restoration comedy. Pure sentiment rules in the love of Angelina and Carlos; the friendship between Carlos and Don Lewis; the love for Louisa shown by Don Manuel, the rugged sea-officer who can capture boats and people, and yet be so helplessly in love with a woman; the reformation in Louisa's nature when she witnesses the deep love of Angelina and Carlos; the reformation of Don Duart; the love between Elvira and her brother. In the preceding year (1700) Restoration comedy of manners had reached its zenith in the wit and cynicism of Congreve's "The Way of the World." Cibber is here creating a popular taste for a type of play that is as superior in moral tone to Congreve's masterpiece as it is inferior to its style and characterization.

She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not; or, The Kind Impostor (1702)

During the year in which "She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not" was first produced Cibber was joined by a powerful ally in moral reform through sentimental methods. Sir Richard Steele, who is often, though incorrectly, referred to as the first of the sentimentalists, in this year produced his first play, a comedy entitled "The Funeral, or Grief á la Mode." It is the sentimental story of the defunct Lord Brumpton who is kept secretly alive all through the play in order to shame his worldly widow's

enjoyment of affluence and freedom, and to reward his daughter's two suitors. Though this is Steele's first play, it is not his first assumption of the functions of the preacher. The year preceding, he published his booklet The Christian Hero, a work that attempted to persuade educated men into accepting the Bible as a moral counselor. It should be carefully noted, however, that this is Cibber, and not Steele, to whom belongs the historical distinction of having imported sentiment into the English comedy of manners.

"She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not" is one of Cibber's most frequently mentioned plays. Most critics agree that it is one of his best, though some commentators--notably Mrs. Inchbald²⁰ censure it severely. Among the more favorable opinions is that recorded in Doran's Annals of the Stage:²¹

This excellent comedy contrasts well with the same author's also admirable comedy, the "Careless Husband." In the latter there is much talk of action; in the former there is much action during very good talk. There is much fun, little vulgarity, sharp epigrams on the manners and morals of the times, good humored satire against popery, and a succession of incidents that never flags from the rise to the fall of the curtain....taken as a whole, it is a very amusing comedy, and it kept the stage even longer than did Steele's "Funeral."

²⁰Mrs. Inchbald, The British Theatre; or, A Collection of Plays, 25 vols. (London: Long, Gurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), Vol. IX, "Remarks."

²¹Dr. Doran, Annals of the English Stage, 3 vols. (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), I, 280-281.

Whatever the opinion of the reader concerning "She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not," he must see at once that the play possesses at least two qualities not found in the Restoration comedy of manners. These are, first, sentimentality, and, second, plot unity. It is completely lacking in unrelated minor sub-plots such as are seen in most comedies of the period, including Cibber's own. There is only one minor intrigue, that of the servants Trappanti and Viletta, and this action is made an organic part of the play. That the dramatist was consciously striving for better structure is evidenced in the prologue.²²

View then in short the method that he takes;
His plot and person he from nature makes.
Who for no bribe of jest he willingly forsakes,
His wit, if any, mingles with his plot,
Which should on no temptation be forgot:
His action's in the time of acting done,
No more than from the curtain, up and down.
While the first music plays, he moves his scene
A little space, but never shifts again.

From his design no person can be spar'd
Or speeches lost, unless the whole be marr'd:
No scene of talk for talking's sake are shown,
Where most abruptly, when their chat is done,
Actors go off, because the poet--can't go on.
His first act offers something to be done,
And all the rest but lead the action on;
Which when pursuing scenes i' th' end discover,
The game's run down, of course the play is over.

In this play sentimentality is expressed through several characters. Hypolita and her brother Octavio have deep affection for each other; Don Philip and Octavio are dear friends; and the love affair of Hypolita and Don Philip, while full of spirit, is quite different from that

²²Cibber's Works, Vol. I.

of Mirabell and Millamant.

Hypolita and Don Philip love each other. Hypolita, however, believes that a young lady must practice disdain and coldness toward the object of her affections in order to keep his interest. She has succeeded so well in her pretense that Don Philip, despairing of ever winning her affections, leaves with the decision to marry a young woman whom he has never seen. She is Rosara, the daughter of Don Manuel, and has been betrothed to Don Philip by her father in agreement with his dear friend, the father of Don Philip.

Almost at once Hypolita regrets her action, and determines upon a ruse to win her lover back. It is at this point that the play opens. Hypolita and her friend Flara are discovered wearing men's attire. She has hired a servant to steal the portmanteau containing the papers of identification of Don Philip; and, disguised as a young man is determined to present herself to Don Manuel and Rosara as Don Philip, marry Rosara so that Don Philip cannot do so, disclose her identity, dissolve the marriage, dress in her own attire, and marry Don Philip in her own character.

The plot works out very much as she has planned except for one contingency; she learns that her dearly beloved brother Octavio is the lover of Rosara. He has planned to elope with Rosara, not knowing that her

betrothed is his own dear friend. Of course, the arrival of Hypolita upon the scene circumvents the elopement, and gives her the added goal of securing her brother's happiness with the consent of Don Manuel.

Hypolita goes through the wedding as she had planned. She contrives to have a servant convey to Don Manuel the knowledge that he has given his daughter and her large fortune to an impostor. She then proposes that if he will give his consent to the marriage of Octavio and Rosara, together with the promise of the dowry, she will return the money he has given her and will give up Rosara. With her brother's happiness assured, Hypolita turns her attention to Don Philip. By this time he has decided that her love is genuine, and all ends happily.

The Careless Husband (1704)

Much of the success of Cibber's characterization is due to the fact that he wrote nearly all of his plays with certain actors and actresses in mind for the various parts. Perhaps the best woman character he ever created was that of Lady Betty Modish in his "Careless Husband," who was animated by the no less charming Anne Oldfield. Cibber had written "The Careless Husband" the summer before its production, but had discarded it because he knew of no one capable of portraying Lady Betty. Mrs. Oldfield had proved her worth in

the meantime, giving him a new call to finish the play, which was presented in 1704. He generously gives the credit for the success of the play to Mrs. Oldfield:

Whatever favourable reception this comedy has met with from the public, it would be unjust in me not to place a large share of it to the account of Mrs. Oldfield; not only from the uncommon excellence of her action, but even from her personal manner of conversing. There are many sentiments in the character of Lady Betty Modish, that I may almost say, were originally her own, or only dressed with a little more care than when they negligently fell from her lively humour.²³

As Mrs. Inchbald found herself lacking in words to express her contempt for "She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not," in the same way she calls upon most of the language at her command to praise "The Careless Husband." She no doubt would agree with Horace Walpole, who includes this play with the Apology as deserving of immortality. When Walpole made this statement, however, he was not remembering that not every age could produce a Wilks as Sir Charles Easy, a Mrs. Oldfield as Lady Betty Modish, or a Colley Cibber as Lord Foppington. The characters in the play are as individual as were the players themselves. Likewise, too, the manners, theme, and allusions have become obsolete too soon for the play to be left in the class with the immortal.

²³Apology, pp. 288-289.

Cibber was given the idea for the main plot of "The Careless Husband" by his good friend, Mrs. Brett, whose husband was a joint patentee with Cibber at the time of the union of Drury Lane and Haymarket theaters. Mrs. Brett supervised every scene of the play, and told him the main incidents as a story out of her own life. Her husband was a handsome man, and quite a beau. Finding him and her maid asleep in two chairs, she tied her handkerchief around his neck to let him know that he had been discovered. Cibber altered the story very little when he used it in his play.

It is evident from what has gone before in this discussion that Cibber was consciously attempting a new style in English comedy. He, had, however, nowhere expressly declared his intentions in the matter. At this time (1704), he seems to have thought the time ripe for a manifesto. It may have been that the hearty approval by the general public of Collier's attack²⁴ gave him the courage of his convictions; at least, he did not express these convictions until his play "The Careless Husband" came out with the following included in its dedication to The Most Illustrious John, Duke of Argyle:

The best Critics have long and justly
complain'd, that the coarseness of most

²⁴Supra, p. 15.

characters in our late Comedies, have (sic) been unfit entertainments for People of Quality, especially the Ladies: and therefore I was long in hopes that some able pen (whose expectations did not hang upon the profits of success) wou'd generously attempt to reform the Town into a better taste than the World generally allows 'em: but nothing of the kind having lately appear'd, that would give me an opportunity of being wise at another's expense, I found it impossible any longer to resist the secret temptation of my vanity, and so even struck the first blow myself: and the event has now convinc'd me, that whoever sticks closely to Nature, can't easily write above the understanding of the Galleries, tho' at the same time he may possibly deserve the applause of the Boxes.²⁵

The statement earlier in this discussion that Cibber made innovations because of his genius for discovering public taste seems to be well founded. The similarity of "The Careless Husband" to Cibber's first play, "Love's Last Shift," cannot be overlooked. Both portray a loving wife who forgives a philandering husband, and reforms him by displaying a spirit of forgiveness that puts him to shame.

Lady Easy knows that her husband, Sir Charles Easy, is having illicit affairs, but she is determined to show no jealousy. She resolves to overlook all he does unless something is so evident that she is forced to remark upon it, at which time she intends to forgive him. Though she knows he has affairs with Mrs. Graveairs, she closes her eyes to all she sees; and even when she knows

²⁵Cibber's Works, II, 5-6.

her own maid-servant is his friend, she appears oblivious to it. However, she eventually finds the incident that lets her husband know of her fine spirit. She discovers her maid, Mrs. Edging, and Sir Charles asleep in his room, each in an easy chair, and he without his periwig. She fears he will become ill as a result of sleeping with his head uncovered, and so taking a scarf from around her own neck, she places it over his head for protection, and leaves the room. When Sir Charles awakes and realizes that his wife has seen him in his ungraceful position, he is thoroughly ashamed. When she does not reproach him later, he knows his unworthiness, and begs her forgiveness.

Even a cursory glance would identify this plot at once as inviting sentimental treatment. But a sentimental flavor is also carried over into the other plot of the play, and to modern taste, at least, in a more graceful fashion. "The Careless Husband" is prevented from being merely a saccharine preachment by the entertaining plot of the love affair of Lady Betty Modish and Lord Morelove. Lady Betty plays with the affections of Lord Morelove as gleefully as any Restoration heroine. She pretends to be greatly attracted to Lord Foppington, one of the best of fops. It is only when Lord Morelove, at the suggestion of Sir Charles Easy, pretends love to Lady Graveairs, that Betty realizes her own love for Lord Morelove. It

is then that she steps out of the character that Millamant might have played and portrays a character that could nowhere be found in Restoration comedy of manners. Lady Betty is unquestionably one of Cibber's best characters. Her type is developed with a deftness that is not evident in many other characters in the play. Her witty speech and apparent lack of emotion could easily fit her into Restoration comedy, but her final reformation and her pretty expression of her love for Lord Morelove give her a definite place in the history of the development of sentimentality.

The School-Boy; or, The Comical Rivals (1707)

The ill-fated "Woman's Wit" Cibber altered into a new play which he named "The School-Boy; or, The Comical Rivals." This play was published in 1707, but when it was first played and how it was received are matters of dispute. One authority²⁶ states positively that it was played at Drury Lane, October 26, 1702; and another²⁷ says that it held the stage until the closing years of the eighteenth century; still another²⁸ asserts that its

²⁶Days of the Dandies, Vol. II, p. 293.

²⁷Malcolm Eliwin, Handbook, pp. 198-9.

²⁸DNB

date of production is uncertain and the manner in which it was received is unknown. While Cibber alludes to "Woman's Wit" in his autobiography, he makes no mention of "The School-Boy."

The play has little significance apart from its interest to the student of the history of sentimentalism. From this point of view, however, it is worthy of study.

In the alteration of his "Woman's Wit" into the "School-Boy," Cibber discards the characters Longville, his sister, his friend, and his fiancée. The entire play is concerned with Major Rakish and his son; Lady Manlove, who in this play has a son, Master Johnny; Lettice, servant to Lady Manlove; and Friendly, faithful adherent of Young Rakish. The Rakish pair follow the same pattern of behavior they did in the original play. In the "School-Boy," however, the reader's sympathy lies with the fortunes of Young Rakish, while in "Woman's Wit" the reader has no particular interest in the outcome of the conflicts between the two; only passive and amused curiosity is provoked by their antics.

Major Rakish gives his son a short allowance, and then cheats him of that. Young Rakish finally reaches the point of rebellion, confiding his troubles to Friendly. The two enter into a conspiracy to gain for Young Rakish the rights which have been denied him. The major is in

love with Lady Manlove, but since she can love any man that appears attracted by her, Young Rakish knows that with the advantages of youth he can win her for himself if he tries. It is his plan to bargain with his father to give up Lady Manlove to him, if the father in return will settle upon him four hundred pounds a year. The father is not convinced that his son would be a real competitor in affairs of the heart, however, and it falls to Young Rakish to prove his powers. Naturally, with his youth and attractiveness he does have an appeal that his father no longer has, and Lady Manlove agrees to marry the young man secretly, and to embarrass his father before the whole company at the house of Friendly. When his father is properly chagrined at this demonstration that he is no longer the beau he once was, Young Rakish tells him that the wedding was a deception, and that he will allow his father to have Lady Manlove if he will pay a proper allowance. Naturally, Lady Manlove does not feel complimented at this turn of affairs, and tells the major she will marry him if he will promise to pay his son no allowance at all. In the meantime, events have been transpiring that help Young Rakish to meet this situation to his advantage.

Lady Manlove's son, Master Johnny (a part played by Cibber), is in love with her maid, Lettice. Although

his mother is much opposed to such a union, he is determined upon marriage as soon as Lettice gives her consent. At the time when he is feeling most rebellious against his mother's authority, Young Rakish comes upon the scene. Seeing an opportunity to gain his own ends, Young Rakish courts the favor of Johnny; at last, gaining his confidence, he tells Johnny that he is going to have a new father--none other than Young Rakish himself! He proposes that Johnny give him the necessary papers making him his legal guardian and that he will see to the removal of all obstacles in the way of his marriage with Lettice. To this plan Johnny readily consents. When Lady Manlove makes her proposal to Major Rakish, Young Rakish tells her that he has been made guardian of Johnny, and that her son is marrying Lettice. If, however, his father will sign the settlement he requires, he will return Johnny's guardianship papers to her, and furthermore, he will annul the marriage of Johnny and Lettice. Naturally, this procedure profits Young Rakish as he desires. To carry out his own part of the bargain concerning the annulment of Johnny's marriage, he discloses that the priest who married them was really the footman, and therefore the ceremony was not legal. At first, Johnny is very angry, but Young Rakish soon mollifies him and sets him on the way of winning his mother's approval of his marriage. The play ends with

this airy note:

Young Rakish. Sir, I wish you joy, and thank you for my settlement; though it's an hundred to one, the world will think you have given it to me, because you could not help it.

Major Rakish. Ay, and I warrant, Dacky, they will be apt to say, too, that thou art as well satisfy'd, as if I had given it to thee with a good will.²⁹

The "School-Boy" is a light, breezy comedy, with a strong Restoration flavor. There are many immoral allusions, as well as much wit and cynicism. There is no show of real love in the play until the end when Johnny and his mother express their love for each other. Major Rakish and his son stay in character until the last. Friendly strikes the note of sentimentalism early in the play by the manifestation of his high regard for Young Rakish, a characterization that is somewhat misplaced because nowhere does Young Rakish reveal his nature as worthy of the esteem shown by Friendly. In this play Cibber has discarded the sentimental plot of "Woman's Wit" and has used the plot that was most typical of the Restoration comedy of manners. It follows, then, that this comedy is decidedly less sentimental than was the original play.

The Comical Lovers; or, Marriage á la Mode (1707)

On February 4, 1707, Cibber's comedy "The Comical

²⁹Cibber's Works, Vol. V, p. 141.

Lovers, or Marriage á la Mode" was presented. This play combines the comic scenes of Dryden's "Secret Love" and "Marriage á la Mode." Its kinship in style with the Restoration comedy of manners is more noticeable than is usually the case with Cibber's plays. But this is due, of course, to the fact that he took the plot from one of the outstanding writers of the Restoration period. He uses Dryden's characters and retains something of the spirit of his dialogue, but he deftly turns the plot to his own style in the end. "The Comical Lovers" is an excellent example showing the freedom and unlicensed behavior of Restoration comedy together with the new spirit of sentimentalism.

The plot is negligible. It is concerned with Rhodophil, captain of the royal guard, and his witty, brilliant wife Doralice; with Palamede, a courtier, and his betrothed, Melantha; with Celadon, a courtier and brother to Doralice, and his many love affairs. Rhodophil and Doralice have tired of each other merely because they are married--a Restoration convention--and their attentions are wandering to other attractive objects for their affections. Palamede and Melantha are betrothed by their fathers, and they also are, at the time, uninterested in each other--again the Restoration motive. As would be expected, then, Palamede and Doralice become greatly attracted

to each other, as do Rhodophil and Melantha. This gives rise to dialogue throughout the play that is unrestricted as to subject-matter. Immoral allusions are numerous, and freedom in behaviour on the part of the men characters is spoken of frequently. All of this, of course, is the traditional style of the time of Dryden. Near the end of the play the characters become Cibberian. Rhodophil becomes jealous, thus coming to his senses and making Doralice realize that he still loves her. They pledge their love anew, and vow eternal faithfulness. At the same time Palamede and Melantha also make promises of lasting love and fidelity to each other.

The characters Celadon and Florimel more nearly stay in type than do the others in the play. Celadon was played by Cibber himself, and Florimel by Mrs. Oldfield, parts that must have suited them admirably. Florimel is much the same kind of person as is Millamant, and perhaps would be better appreciated on the stage than would Millamant. The manner in which Celadon proposes marriage to Florimel and is accepted is typical of the behavior of these two. She scorns his suggestion that they be married; yet when she is asked to mention someone whom he can marry, she finds fault with all the possibilities except herself. However, marriage is such a bug-bear to her, she says that she would like to find some way of

facing it with more ease; whereupon, as did Millamant and Mirabell, they enumerate the conditions of a happy marriage. They decide that they will be very affectionate as long as it is natural to be so, and confess the truth when they can love no longer. They will never be jealous of each other, and when Celadon has been gambling she must never inquire as to his losses, just as when Florimel has been away from home, he must never inquire as to the company she kept. They will always be honest with each other as far as it is conducive to a pleasant relationship. And they end by agreeing that their adventure into matrimony may not always be pleasant, but they had rather make the venture with each other than with anyone else.

There are many absurdities in the play; for instance, Doralice dons man's attire and is not recognized by her own husband, and Florimel also remains unknown to any of her friends when her only disguise is man's clothing. Nevertheless, taking the play as a whole, it is good. Presented as it was at a time when the people would not have countenanced an unadulterated comedy of manners in the Restoration style, it was accepted because of the sentimental ending.

The Double Gallant; or, The Sick Lady's Cure (1707)

About the time of the presentation of his "Comical Lovers" Cibber was making a change from Drury Lane

to the Haymarket Theatre. Within two years, however, due to the influence of his friend, Col. Brett, a shareholder in Drury Lane, Cibber returned to his old theater; and soon became a part owner when Brett made over his share to Wilks, Estcourt, and Cibber. While he was still at the Haymarket he produced two plays, "The Double Gallant; or, The Sick Lady's Cure" (November 1, 1707) and "The Lady's Last Stake; or, The Wife's Resentment" (December 13, 1707). In his Apology³⁰ Cibber remarks that the Haymarket building was too large for plays to be heard; hence the lack of complete success with the last-mentioned comedies. When these plays were later presented at Drury Lane with the same actors, however, they were much more successful.

"The Double Gallant" is a compilation from Mrs. Centlivre's "Love at a Venture" and Burnaby's "Lady's Visiting Day." It also owes something to "Le Galant Double" of Thomas Corneille, 1660. Cibber says that:

it was a play made up of what little was tolerable in two or three others that had no success, and were laid aside as so much poetical lumber; but by collecting and adapting the best parts of them all into one play, the "Double Gallant" has had a place, every winter, amongst the public entertainers, these thirty years. As I was only the compiler of this piece, I did not publish it in my own name; but as my having but a hand in it could not be long a secret, I have been often treated as a plagiarist on that account: not that I think I have any right to complain of whatever would detract from the merit of that sort of labour. Yet a cobbler may be allowed to be useful, though he is not famous; and

³⁰ Apology, p. 311.

I hope a man is not blamable for doing a little good, though he cannot do as much as another. But so it is; two-penny critics must live, as well as eighteen-penny authors.³¹

This play presented another excellent opportunity for Cibber to display his talents as an actor. Mr. Atall, though not as exaggerated as Clodio, nor as comic, is another in the long line of beaus that began with Sir Novelty Fashion and lasted well into the nineteenth century. "The Double Gallant" is a sentimental comedy, somewhat less saccharine than is "The Careless Husband." Atall as the beau, Lady Sadlife as coquettish old lady similar in nature to Old Bellair, certain examples of the racy dialogue, and the major portion of the chief plot, all point to the Restoration comedy of manners. But sentimentality is the chief interest, as developed in the actions of the lovers Atall and Sylvia, Clerimont and Clarinda.

Mr. Atall (played by Cibber) has rescued Sylvia from drowning, fallen in love with her, and given her his name as Freeman. Since meeting Sylvia, he is determined more than ever not to marry the woman his father has chosen for him, even though he has not seen her. Under the name of Colonel Standfast he has been having a love affair with Clarinda. She is loved by Clerimont, and she would return the affection if she were not infatuated with Atall.

³¹Ibid.

Clarimont and Atall are friends, and neither knows of the other's relationship to Clarinda.

Atall has a situation to face when he arrives at the address Sylvia has given him and finds therein not only Clarinda and Sylvia, but also Lady Sadlife, whom he has met in the park, and with whom he has had a light flirtation. He stands his ground, however, pretending not to know Clarinda at all even when left alone with her. In talking with Sylvia he finds that she is not married or in love, but that she has been promised in marriage by her father to a young man whom she has never seen. After Atall's departure the girls argue as to his identity; Clarinda contending he is Col. Standfast, and Sylvia just as sure he is Mr. Freeman. They hit upon the idea of sending letters, Clarinda addressing hers to Col. Standfast, and Sylvia addressing hers to Mr. Freeman, each requesting him to meet her at Mrs. Sadlife's at seven o'clock.

The ruse is transparent to Mr. Atall, and he meets the situation in an interesting fashion. First, he comes to the meeting place as Col. Standfast, followed shortly by his servant, Finder, who brings regrets to Sylvia that Freeman is late. He explains that Freeman was pounced upon by men who said they had a warrant for his arrest. He resisted arrest and was hurt; the men then discovered that he was not the man they wanted, but that Standfast

was. The police come in at this point and arrest Standfast, thus giving him the opportunity to leave the presence of the girls and return as Freeman.

Clarinda persists in her belief that she is being fooled, and goes off to see Standfast in jail, where, of course, she is not admitted. Before she has proof of Atall's duplicity, she realizes her love for Clerimont, and is faced with the problem of winning him over from the coolness her flirtation has caused. To do this she poses as a young man, and in talking with Clerimont, insults Clarinda, provoking a fight. When she sees he still loves her, she reveals her identity. In the meantime Atall and Sylvia discover that fate has been working for their happiness. Their fathers have always intended they should marry, and have betrothed them in their early childhood. The couple have fallen in love, and all ends well.

Atall is reminiscent of the Restoration comic hero until he falls in love. Then he becomes as transported with joy as the most sentimental of heroes. His conversation with his father before he knows Sylvia was meant for him shows how his nature has changed from what it was in the beginning of the play:

Sir Harry Atall.what's the reason pray, that you have had the assurance to be almost a fortnight in town, and never come near me; especially when I sent you word I had business of some consequence with you?

Atall. I understood your business was to marry me, Sir, to a woman I never saw; and to confess the truth, I durst not come near you, because I was at the same time in love with one you never saw.....You may treat me, Sir, with what severity you please; but my engagements to that lady are too powerful and fix'd, to let the utmost misery dissolve 'em.

Sir Harry. What does the fool mean?

Atall. That I can sooner die than part with her.

Willful. Hey!--why is this your son, Sir Harry?

Sir Harry.did you not know that before?

Atall. O Earth! and all you stars! is this the lady you design'd for me, Sir?.....Not life, health or happiness are half so dear to me.....O transporting joy!³²

The Lady's Last Stake; or, The Wife's Resentment (1707)

As stated above, "The Wife's Resentment" was presented at the Haymarket theater during a secession there from Drury Lane. It is a comedy showing kinship to Burnaby's "Reformed Wife." It contains one interesting bit of stage history that the present writer has not found in other plays of this period. Mrs. Hartshorn, a servant in the family of Lady Wronglove, refers to having witnessed a performance of "The Careless Husband" showing currently at the theater.³³ The fact that this servant could attend the theater was due to a custom

³²Cibber's Works, Vol. III, pp. 93-94.

³³Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 252-253.

started by Christopher Rich. He craftily hit upon the plan of encouraging attendance at his plays by opening the upper floor of the theater to all servants free of charge. Heretofore they had been allowed to attend after the end of the fourth act. In this way he hoped to gain the goodwill of the household to whom the servants belonged, and also to gain encouraging applause for the players upon the stage. He succeeded, especially in the latter; the gallery would be filled with uproarious cheering while the lower floor would be "in the utmost serenity."³⁴The obvious disadvantages of this system led to its abolition soon after Cibber became the Drury Lane manager.

The dedication of this play makes reference to another important incident in the history of the stage. The theaters had been meeting with such poor fortune that steps were taken to unite the two under one management; a wise step except for the fact that Rich and Swiny, the managers, could never agree. Finally, it became necessary for the two companies to separate; but this left the problem of what to do for Swiny, the manager who would be left with no actors. A fortunate turn of events solved this problem. It had already been suggested that the two theaters be divided; and that one present opera and the other the plays. About this time the noted Italian singer, Nicolini,

³⁴Apology, pp. 232.

announced his intention of coming to England--knowledge that set the aristocratic circles astir. With this evidence of interest in opera to encourage him, Swiny volunteered to take over the Haymarket theater for the presentation of opera. A royal edict ordered the division of the company, with plays to be presented at Drury Lane and operas to be given at the Haymarket, neither to encroach upon the ground of the other upon penalty of being silenced.³⁵ Opera was further encouraged by the regulation that no plays could be presented on Wednesday so that more people would go to the Haymarket. It might be mentioned in passing that opera flourished for a short time, but by the end of three seasons interest had flagged, and Swiny had fled to Italy to escape a debtors' prison.

"The Wife's Resentment" is interesting from yet another point of view. A large portion of the dedication and the prologue is taken up with moralizing. Not content to teach a lesson merely in the action of the play, Cibber now elaborates upon the moral before his play starts. The dedication he addresses to The Most Noble, the Marquis of Kent. He says:

....I did not intend it should entertain any that never come with a Design to sit out a Play; therefore, without being much mortified, am content such Persons should dislike it. If I would have been less instructive, I might easily have had a louder, tho' not a more valuable Applause. But I shall

³⁵Days of the Dandies, I, 50.

always prefer a fixt and general Attention before the nousy (sic) Roars of the Gallery. A Play, without a just Moral, is a poor and trivial Undertaking; and 'tis from the Success of such Pieces, that Mr. Collier was furnish'd with an advantageous Pretence of laying his unmerciful Axe to the Root of the Stage. Gaming is a Vice that has undone more innocent Principles than any one Folly that's in Fashion; therefore I chose to expose it to the Fair Sex in its most hideous Form, by reducing a Woman of Honor to stand the presumptuous addresses of a Man, whom neither her Virtue nor Inclination would let her have the least Taste to. Now 'tis not impossible but some Man of Fortune, who has a handsome Lady, and a great deal of Money to throw away, may, from this startling hint, think it worth his while to find his Wife some less hazardous Diversion. If that should happen, my end of writing this Play is answered.³⁶

In the prologue Cibber still further elaborates upon the moral utility of his play:

....Our Author once drew you the Life
Of Careless Husband and Enduring Wife,
Who by her patience (tho' much out of Fashion)
Retriev'd at last, her Wanderer's Inclination.
Yet some there are who still arraign the Play,
At her tame Temper shock'd, as who shou'd say--
The Price for a dull Husband was too much to Pay.
Had he been strangled sleeping, who shou'd hurt ye?
When so provok'd--Reveng had been a Virtue.
--Well then--to do his former Moral Right,
Or set such Measures in a fairer Light,
He gives you now a Wife, he's sure in Fashion,
Whose Wrongs use modern Means for Reparation.
No Fool, that will her Life in Sufferings waste,
But furious, proud, and insolently chaste;
Who more in Honour jealous, than in love,
Resolves Resentment shall her Wrongs remove:
Not to be cheated in his civil Face,
But scorns his Falsehood, and to prove him base,
Mobb'd up in hack, triumphant dogs him to the Place.
These modish Measures, we presume you'll own,
Are oft what Wives of Gallantry have done;
But if their Consequence should meet the Curse
Of making a provok'd Aversion worse,

³⁶Cibber's Works, Vol. II, the Dedication.

Then you his former Moral must allow,
 Or own the Satire just he shows you now.
 Some other follies, too, our Scenes present;
 Some warn the Fair from Gaming, when extravagant.
 But when undone, you see the dreadful Stake,
 That hard press'd Virtue is reduc'd to make;
 Think not the Terrors you behold her in,
 Are rudely drawn t' expose what has been seen;
 But, as the friendly Muse's tenderest way,
 To let her Dangers warn you from the Depth of Play.³⁷

The plot wherein Cibber answers critics of "The Careless Husband" concerns Lady Wronglove and her husband, Lord Wronglove. The Lady is jealous of her husband, and with good cause. His transparent attempts to pretend his innocence only serve to heighten her jealousy. Though her friends tell her that her jealousy will cause her to lose her husband, Lady Wronglove fails to heed their warnings, and she expresses her feelings freely. Even her servant, Mrs. Hartshorn, remonstrates with her; and in so doing, she reviews "The Careless Husband," a play she saw the evening before at the theater, and points the moral of the comedy. But still Lady Wronglove does not heed. Events reach a climax when Lady Wronglove, hearing of the approaching meeting of her husband and his mistress, speeds to their rendezvous. She reaches the place only to see her husband, who has been warned of her coming, hurrying to leave the scene before her arrival. This is the last thing she can countenance. When he comes home, she upbraids him for his inconstancy, making him so angry they decide to

³⁷Ibid., the Prologue.

part. They agree upon the selection of their friend, Sir Friendly Moral, to help decide upon fair terms of separation. Sir Friendly, however, determines to prevent them from taking the drastic step they contemplate, and he talks with each of his friends suggesting they should not separate. In speaking to Lady Wronglove of her husband he says, "By that sincerity you trust in, I know him of a softer nature, friendly, generous, and tender; only to opposition, obstinately cool; to gentleness, submissive as a lover."³⁸ Furthermore, he advises her to be patient, and to show unusual affection for her husband. Convinced by his eloquence, she decides to act upon his suggestion; whereupon, Lord Wronglove repents of his wrongdoing.

The principals in the plot designed to show the evils of gambling are Lady Gentle and Lord George Brilliant. Lady Gentle owes Lord George a gambling debt of a thousand pounds. She borrows that sum from her friend, Mrs. Conquest (who is in love with Lord George), and pays him. She then plays with him again in the hope of winning enough to pay Mrs. Conquest. Again she loses, making her debt now two thousand pounds. Lord George suggests a way out. They will make a single cut of the cards, and if she wins, the debt will be cancelled; if he wins, her love

³⁸Ibid., p. 278.

is at his demand. When he does win, however, Lady Gentle cannot bring herself to the point where she can stain her virtue. He is about to demand that she keep her bargain when Mrs. Conquest enters, disguised in man's attire; and a series of events serves to save Lady Gentle.

Lord George, shortly after Mrs. Conquest interrupted the scene between him and Lady Gentle, is attacked by four men, and is being handled roughly when Mrs. Conquest, still in disguise, appears to take his part. Her gun misses fire, and, apparently, the ruffians shoot her. Lord George and his friends are very grateful, of course, to this young man who, it appears, has lost his life in the attempt to aid Lord George. When she sees their gratitude, still pretending to be in a grievous state, Mrs. Conquest discloses her identity, saying she was in disguise in order to show her love for Lord George. Being overcome by this evidence of such great devotion, Lord George realizes his own love and declares it before all present; whereupon, Mrs. Conquest springs from the chair in which she was lying, showing that she is unharmed, and that the battle was only a part of her plot. Of course, by her cleverness, Mrs. Conquest not only gains the end she desires, but she also saves Lady Gentle.

Sentimentalism is clearly evident in this play. The moralizing note, the love stories, and the reformation

of Lord Wronglove and his wife are all qualities that are not found in the Restoration comedy of manners. The nearest approach to the Restoration manner is found in the characters of Mrs. Conquest and Lord George Brilliant. Parts of their dialogue are slightly reminiscent of comedy of the preceding century, but even that soon loses its identity before the end of the play.

The Rival Fools (1710)³⁹

Cibber does not mention "The Rival Fools" in his autobiography, doubtless because he was not particularly proud of having written it. Another⁴⁰ source of information states definitely that it was an unsuccessful play. This is not surprising when one considers that it is remarkably lacking in sentiment. With public taste accustomed to sentiment, as it was by the time of production of this play, it would only be surprising to find that the comedy had been successful. In spite of its kinship to Beaumont and Fletcher's "Wit at Several Weapons," it was much too hard in tone for public taste at the time of its presentation.

Though Sir Oliver Outwit has lived a thoroughly profligate life, he feels that it has been a profitable way of living, and he would like to have evidence to

³⁹Days of Dandies, p. 293, gives date as Jan. 11, 1709.

⁴⁰DNB

prove that his son, Young Outwit, could also live by his wits. He makes the proposal that if the son can prove his ability to make his own way in the world, he will give the young man property at his own terms. Sir Oliver also wants his niece wed to the wealthy Sir Gregory Goose, because in that event one fourth of Sir Gregory's property will go to Sir Oliver. He announces his plans quite cold-bloodedly: "....if I can marry my niece to Sir Gregory Goose, and by that means secure one fourth of her fortune to my own use, which he has compounded for; I'll e'en shake hands with the world, give over business, and when I can cheat no longer, turn honest, and fall fast asleep in my great chair."

Sir Oliver's niece, Lucinda, however, has her own plans for her future. She and Cunningham love each other, though, in the Restoration style, they will not admit it. Their romance is in a fair way to succeed when he makes her jealous by pretending to be attracted to her governess; whereupon, she pretends love for Sir Gregory Goose. Naturally, this is very pleasing to Sir Gregory and Sir Oliver. She is offended by Sir Gregory's over-confidence in her love for him, however, and changes her tactics by pretending that she has been attracted by his servant, Samuel Simple. This young man is a capital character. The reader obtains an adequate impression of him through the

descriptive quality of his name coupled with the acting ability of Cibber, who played this role. He is, indeed, a simple fellow; and when he thinks he has won the love of so worthy a young lady as Lucinda, he becomes quite a beau. The scene wherein he decides that he is too good to work longer for Sir Gregory is highly amusing. By the time Lucinda has tired of playing with the affections of Cunningham, Young Outwit has brought events to pass that cause true love to take its course.

Young Outwit has undertaken to prove his ability to live by his wits. He decides that the best way to prove his worth is to trick Sir Oliver, which he does in three ways. First, he has a confederate disguised as a beggar come into the presence of himself, his father, and Sir Gregory Goose. Pretending to be moved by a generous gesture, he gives the confederate a considerable sum of money, thus encouraging his father and Sir Gregory to do the same; then he and his friend meet and divide the money thus gained, and plan the next fleecing of the old man. Upon the second occasion the confederate is Lady Gentry, who comes upon the scene dressed as a man. Young Outwit and his brother, Credulous, rob her, whereupon she goes to Sir Oliver with her tale of woe. To save his sons from getting into trouble, he pays her the value of her reported losses--money which, of course, Young Outwit

pockets. The third trick involves the lovers as well as Young Outwit. He, his confederates, and Cunningham trick Sir Gregory into marriage with Mirabell, daughter of the governess. Sir Oliver, not knowing this, is told that Lucinda has angered Sir Gregory. This infuriates Sir Oliver, who offers his son a sum of money if he will bring Lucinda into his presence. Young Outwit promises to bring her to his father, and when he does, he collects the reward his father offered. It is then made known that Lucinda has married Cunningham off-stage. One would naturally expect Sir Oliver to be angry, but he soon recovers his good-humor when he learns that his son can rival him in trickery. Even in his prime of youth Sir Oliver was not able to do as well as Young Outwit has just done. He is happy, then, to keep the bargain which he made in the beginning of the play.

This play is more nearly typical of the Restoration comedy of manners than any other of Cibber's comedies. Except for the undercurrents of love and affection running through the play, there is never a feeling of sentiment. The Outwits are rascals, and they will never be anything else. Cunningham and Lucinda, while really in love with each other, do not make an admission of it upon the stage. They pretend indifference, but the reader knows that they are as much in love as Mirabell and Millamant ever were.

Sir Gregory Goose is the regulation beau. The significance of this play in the history of sentimentalism lies in the fact that by the time of its production, sentiment was so firmly entrenched in the theater, that a pure Restoration comedy of manners could not survive.

The Non-Juror (December 6, 1717)

"The Non-Juror" is one of Cibber's most poorly written comedies, and yet, of all his works, its writing had the most far-reaching influence upon his career. It is a sentimental comedy with the sole purpose that of satirizing the non-jurors, that is, the Jacobites who would not take the pledge of allegiance to the government of England. It is this expose, together with the expression of Whig principles and the dedication to the king, that caused Cibber to be given the position of poet-laureate (1730) over several rivals that were more able poets.⁴¹ The play ran for eighteen nights, and in addition Cibber was given a present of two hundred guineas by George I. Numerous "keys" to "The Non-Juror" appeared during the year of its production. Belkchambers remarks that "so popular was this play, that Lintot gave an hundred guineas for the copyright of it, though Rowe's

⁴¹More able poets included Gay, who had produced his Beggar's Opera in 1728; Pope, who was at the height of his fame in 1730; Thomson, writer of the Seasons; and Young, author of The Universal Passion. Pope, who was a Roman Catholic, was not in a likely position to be given the office, but there were poets living who were certainly more capable than Cibber.

tragedies of "Jane Shore," and "Lady Jane Gray," only a few years previous to this purchase, had jointly produced but one hundred and twenty-two pounds."⁴² It is the story of "Tartuffe" with the main character turned into an English priest who incites rebellion. It is Cibber's use of "Tartuffe" that is the subject for the Dunciad's sneer: "The Frippery of crucify'd Moliere."

Of course, the production of "The Non-Juror" made Cibber many enemies. It provoked the animosity of Jacobite and Catholic factions, and, possibly, was the beginning of Pope's hostility. Mist's Weekly Journal for about fifteen years following the presentation of "The Non-Juror" scarcely ever failed to attack Cibber. He relates one amusing incident concerning one of Mist's entries in the journal. It was after the play had gained considerable popularity that Mist had the following short paragraph in one of his journals: "Yesterday died Mr. Colley Cibber, late comedian of the theatre royal, notorious for writing the 'Non-Juror'." Though this was an untrue statement, it came near being true because Cibber had been ill for several weeks. Upon seeing the entry he managed to leave his bed and go to the theater. Here he quietly appropriated his old role of the Chaplain in the "Orphan" and

⁴²Apology, footnote on p. 444.

appeared on the stage that evening. The story continues in the author's own words:

The surprise of the audience at my unexpected appearance on the very day I had been dead in the news, and the paleness of my looks, seemed to make it a doubt whether I was not the ghost of my real self departed: but when I spoke, their wonder eased itself by an applause which convinced me they were then satisfied that my friend Mist had told a fib of me. Now, if simply to have shown myself in broad life, and about my business, after he had notoriously reported me dead, can be called a reply, it was the only one which his paper, while alive, ever drew from me.⁴³

As further evidence of the enmity won by the production of "The Non-Juror" the story of the reception of "The Provoked Husband" is interesting. On the first day of "The Provoked Husband," ten years after "The Non-Juror" had appeared, a group of the author's enemies resolved to see the play ruined. Not only by their behavior at the theater, but by the articles that appeared in the journals of the day, it seemed for a time as if they had succeeded in their design. Nevertheless, the play held the stage for twenty-eight consecutive nights, and earned something more than a hundred and forty pounds. Gibber reasons that since the play proved by its record that it was a successful comedy, there must have been another cause for the action taken against it; and he

⁴³Apology, p. 443.

concludes that it was because he, the author of "The Non-Juror," had written it.⁴⁴

"The Non-Juror" scored another success when it was revived at Drury Lane by Isaac Bickerstaff in 1768.

"The Non-Juror" is lacking in the broad comedy that is found in all of Cibber's other comedies. There is no fop, clown, or comic situation in the entire drama. The author himself played the part of Dr. Wolf, the churchman, a villainous character that is very different from the humorous parts usually taken by him.

Dr. Wolf, with the prestige of the church behind him, has exerted such power of personality and trickery as to have Sir John Woodvil entirely under his control. While Woodvil's family can see that Dr. Wolf is a rogue, Woodvil himself is unaware that he is not the honest churchman that he pretends to be. He trusts the rascal so implicitly that he has surrendered papers that will eventually give the priest all of Woodvil's property, thus disinheriting the Woodvil family, including Lady Woodvil, Colonel Woodvil, the son, and Maria, the daughter. As if fleecing his friend of his property were not enough, Dr. Wolf also has designs to gain Lady Woodvil for himself. He pretends to be wanting Maria, and Sir John has undertaken to force her to give her consent to marry him. She is in

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 443-444.

love with a very worthy young man named Heartly, however, and being a young lady of perspicacity, she sees the doctor for what he is, and is not responsive to her father's demands. It is Maria's concerted efforts that reveal the churchman's real nature and save her father from ruin. Maria faces Dr. Wolf with the fact that she does not love him. He reminds her that she must receive his consent for whatever marriage she does make, and adds that for the sum of two thousand pounds he will give his consent for her to marry Heartly, and also promises to make her father favorable to the match. She pretends to agree with the plan.

In conference with her mother and brother, the group agrees that the mere telling of the doctor's duplicity to Woodvil would not convince him of the villainy; they must arrange for Sir John to see the doctor's behavior for himself. With this in mind they contrive to have a meeting between the doctor and Lady Woodvil. They know that he will make love to her, and they plan to have Woodvil witness the scene. At the opportune time Maria brings her father so that he can see the violent love-making of the doctor. It is a staggering blow to the faith of Woodvil, but his anger saves his reason. At first, the doctor seeks to intimidate Sir John by reminding him that all the Woodvil property is his; but Maria

produces the papers that were signed, showing that she changed the original papers for some in which appear the name of Colonel Woodvil in every place where the doctor's was in the original, a detail the two men failed to notice when they signed the papers. The doctor's poise is shattered, and when a messenger comes in with the evidence proving that the villain is an emissary of Rome, that he is actually a priest in the popish orders instead of a representative of the established church as he pretended to be, he is completely vanquished.

There are few noticeable qualities of the Restoration comedy of manners in "The Non-Juror." This seems to be a significant fact when one realizes that Cibber was destined to write only two more comedies after this one, one an adaptation of a play by Moliere, and the other in cooperation with Vanbrugh. It would be likely, therefore, that these two plays would contain much that is typical of seventeenth century comedy. Nevertheless, Cibber was an exponent of sentimentalism throughout his career. He had two purposes in writing "The Non-Juror." First, it is satire upon an evil of the day, and, second, he wished to show that the theater could be put to laudable uses.

The only character that ever approaches the Restoration flavor is that of Maria. At the beginning of the play when young Heartly is so hopelessly in love

with her, she pretends great indifference to him. Still the reader knows she returns his love, as she later proves when she declares it before all assembled. She is a sprightly, well-drawn character. Dr. Wolf and Sir John Woodvil are also clear-cut individuals. The one way in which this play differs from the other sentimental comedies of Cibber is that Dr. Wolf, the chief character in the play, gives no indication that he will reform. His personality is too villainous to allow him an opportunity to repent of his wrongdoing. Sir John Woodvil, however, who has been neglecting his family to follow after this impostor, repents when he sees how he has been deceived, and expresses his love for his family.

"The Non-Juror" is a coarse play, inferior to others written by Cibber; but it met a need of the times; and was successful at the time of its production.

The Refusal; or, The Lady's Philosophy (1721)

"The Non-Juror" must have met with some degree of the success that its author desired for it, because he tried a similar venture in "The Refusal." The character of the South Sea Director, Sir Gilbert Wrangle, has historical interest somewhat like "The Non-Juror." The year of the South Sea Bubble (1720) was a time of disaster for speculators, among whom, it is not unreasonable to suppose, may have been Colley Cibber--at least,

he was an inveterate gambler. Nevertheless, whether Cibber was personally concerned or not, it was a year of disaster for the stage. It even led to the adoption of drastic means for attracting audiences to the theater, among the chief new diversions being that begun by John Rich and quickly taken up by other managers, that of harlequinades and pantomimes. This practice brought forth a storm of protest, and much humorous comment. Cibber is known to have used pasteboard swans pulled by stage carpenters along the scenic Nile in his tragedy, "Caesar in Egypt," (1724) thus giving Pope an excellent opportunity to have great fun at Cibber's expense in his paper on the Poet Laureate. As an example of the extent to which these pantomimes bordered on the ridiculous, The Spectator gravely asserted that there was at one time a design to cast the play of "Dick Whittington"; but Rich had been forced to give up the idea because the large number of mice which would have been necessary would have thereafter infested the house, and would have frightened the ladies in the theater. This story smacks of over-exaggeration, but it is true that the theaters, under the management of Rich at the Haymarket and Cibber at Drury Lane, were going through perilous times, with competition between the two houses as great as when Cibber first became acquainted with the stage.

"The Refusal" is taken from Moliere's "Les Femmes Scavantes," and was played at Drury Lane February 14, 1721. There is no information available as to its fortunes upon the stage; but there is no reason to suppose that it was not successful, because it is sentimental, easily followed, and humorous--all qualities that contributed much toward the success of a comedy. Cibber outlines his purpose in the prologue of the play:

Follies to-night, of various kinds we paint,
 One, in a Female Philosophic Saint,
 That wou'd by Learning Nature's Laws repeal,
 Warm all her Sex's Bosoms to rebel,
 And only with Platonic Raptures swell.
 Long she resists the proper Use of Beauty,
 But Flesh and Blood reduce the Dame to Duty.
 A Coxcomb too of modern Stamp we show,
 A Wit--but impudent--a South-Sea Beau.
 Nay more--our Muses Fire (but pray protect her)
 Roasts, to your Taste, a whole South-Sea Director.
 But let none think we bring him here in spite,
 For all their Actions, sure, will bear the Light;
 Besides, he's painted here in Height of Power,
 Long ere we laid such Ruin at his Door:

....
 He'll almost honest on the Stage appear.⁴⁵

Sophronia, the leading woman character in the play, Cibber has described well in the prologue. She is a poetess and a woman of much learning; she thinks of all natural human emotions as vulgar, and even the youthful good humor of her sister, Charlotte, she thinks crude and coarse. When she sees Frankly, a very worthy

⁴⁵Cibber's Works, Vol. IV.

young man, making love to her sister, she is horrified, and determined to break up the match. She decides the best punishment would be for Charlotte to be forced to marry Witling, the beau of the day (as would be expected, Cibber played this part). This choice would be punishment for Frankly because Witling is his rival, and it would be punishment for Charlotte because she dislikes him. She tells her mother, Lady Wrangle, what has happened. Lady Wrangle is a coquettish woman, and is jealous of her daughter's charms. She also thinks Witling would be the best choice of husband for Charlotte. The father, Sir Gilbert Wrangle, could be easily coaxed into a refusal of his daughter to Witling, but his refusal would cost him twenty thousand pounds, that being his obligation to Witling. Things are brought to a happy end when Granger, who understands Sophronia better than anyone else does, woos her with poetry and high-sounding phrases with such success that her responses are no longer platonic. Being in love herself, she ceases her objections to Frankly. By this time Charlotte has contrived to cause Witling, in a boastful moment, to tear up the contract which makes her father his debtor for twenty thousand pounds, leaving her free to marry Frankly. She does it so cleverly that Witling sees the situation as great fun, and gives the couple his blessing.

From the standpoint of sentimentality, it is important to notice one character whose real nature does not show in this brief summary. Sir Gilbert Wrangle is a rogue; as the South Sea Director he sells stock that is virtually worthless. Witling tells of having seen him in the cemetery taking names off the tombstones to swell his list of apparent contributors so he can get more victims to buy stock. He has sold Frankly and Granger some of the worthless stock, but at the end of the play he repents of it, as shown in the following quotation:

And now you are Part of my Family, Gentlemen,
I'll tell you a Secret that concerns your Fortunes--
Hark you--in one Word--sell--sell out as fast as
you can: for (among Friends) the Game's up--ask
no Questions--but, I tell you, the Jest is over--
but Money down! (d'ye observe me)--Money down!
don't meddle for Time: for the Time's coming, when
those that buy will not be able to pay; and so the
Devil take the hindmost, and Heaven bless you all
together.⁴⁶

Lady Wrangle likewise makes resolutions to stop being the over-bearing wife, and to allow her husband to be the head of the house.

The Provok'd Husband; or, The Journey to London (1728)

In the list of the famous exponents of the type of comedy known as the Restoration comedy of manners is

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 99.

always included the name of Sir John Vanbrugh. It was he who wrote "The Relapse," giving Cibber the character of Lord Foppington as an early addition to his list of successful characterizations. It was he who was one target for the vituperative darts of Jeremy Collier, and it was he who was active in dramatic affairs and was associated with Cibber until his death in 1726. Two years after Vanbrugh's death Cibber produced a play that he credited largely to the pen of his friend. Vanbrugh, he said, had originally intended the play to be produced under the title of "A Journey to London," but as he left it unfinished, it fell to Cibber's lot to complete it and add to the original title a phrase that would describe the main plot in the play; thus it became better known as "The Provok'd Husband." This comedy met with well deserved success.

Perhaps it should be noted that the comedy was successful in spite of the fact that when Cibber produced it, he was a very unpopular man. Here was the author of "The Non-Juror" presenting a play that his bitter enemies were determined to destroy.⁴⁷ Having a desire not to offend the memory of Vanbrugh, they came resolved to hiss the part that gave evidence of Cibber's authorship off the stage, and to applaud Vanbrugh's lustily. This they did,

⁴⁷Supra, p. 75, footnote 44.

but they made one mistake that was fatal to their purpose. Even with such plays as "Love's Last Shift" and "The Careless Husband" to guide them, they were mistaken in the characters they chose as the product of Cibber's efforts, and made themselves ridiculous. It is true they chose the inferior portions of the play to deride, but they were mistaken in the authorship. Cibber later published the play with the distinction made as to the parts he and Vanbrugh wrote, and it was Vanbrugh that originated the Wronghead family, the weakest characterizations in the play.⁴⁸

One of Cibber's enemies who found opportunity to have sport upon the publication of "The Provoked Husband" was Henry Fielding. The name of Fielding is not mentioned in the Apology, but the expression "broken wit"⁴⁹ doubtless refers to him. He satirized Cibber upon many occasions, his Joseph Andrews being written with the chief purpose of making the dramatist ridiculous. In the preface to Tom Thumb Fielding makes a very amusing parody upon Cibber's style. "The Provoked Husband," both in its dedication to the Queen and in its preface addressed to the reader,

⁴⁸Inchbald: Vol. IX, p. 5. This may be the same incident to which Cibber himself refers in his Apology. Supra, p. 75.

⁴⁹P. 274.

contains many phrases that are so absurd in style and substance that the writer soon became the butt of the town. "The English theatre," so reads the dedication, "throws itself with this play at Your Majesty's feet, for favour and support"; Cibber tells the reader he wishes to "give this play a chance to be read when the people of this age shall be ancestors"; and in lauding the actors, he remarks that Mrs. Oldfield "out-did her usual out-doing."⁵⁰ These and other expressions of Cibber's had been ridiculed in an article contributed to "Mist's Weekly Journal" for February 24, 1728. Fielding takes them all up again with added humor in his preface to Tom Thumb, working them in one by one as he imitates the very manner of Cibber, answering his critics, praising himself and the actors down to the mutes and the music, and finally throwing "little Tom Thumb on the town" in the way Cibber had thrown "The Provoked Husband" at the feet of her Majesty.⁵¹ Cibber treated this attack in his usual manner by making no reference to it. It might be mentioned in this connection that Fielding published other attacks upon him, one being his Tryal of Colley Cibber (May 14,

⁵⁰Later editions changed this expression to "out-did her usual excellence," as it appears in the edition used here.

⁵¹Wilbur L. Cross, The History of Henry Fielding, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), I, 89-90.

1740). The two were not always at daggers points, however, as at one time Cibber and his son, Theophilus, and his daughter, Mrs. Charke, all played in Fielding's "The Modern Husband" (1732), a play for which Cibber wrote the moralizing epilogue that was replaced by a gayer one by Fielding after the fifth performance. The two men made peace with each other when Fielding and his company went over to Drury Lane, and Cibber, being now poet-laureate, retired in favor of his son.

"The Provok'd Husband" is one of Cibber's best plays, perhaps because it represents the type of domestic conversation-piece he excelled in writing. At once the reader perceives that the treatment is thoroughly sentimental. As in his "Wife's Resentment," Cibber announces his moral purpose at the first opportunity--in his dedication and preface. Addressing the Queen, he says that his intention in writing the play is to "expose and reform the licentious Irregularities that, too often break in upon the Peace and Happiness of the married State." He retained as much of Vanbrugh's original design as possible except for one thing: Vanbrugh had become so provoked with Lady Townly by the time he had finished creating her that he intended actually to have her husband turn her out of his house. When the play came into the hands of Cibber, however, he thought that while this

would be the thing to expect in real life, such punishment would really be too severe; and that a surprise ending for the play could be achieved by having Lady Townly reform and be received again into the good graces of her husband. "Therefore with much ado (and 'twas as much as I could do with Probability)", writes Cibber in the preface to the play, "I preserv'd the Lady's Chastity, that the Sense of her Errors might make a Reconciliation not impracticable."

The plot of "The Provok'd Husband; or, A Journey to London" is easily followed. The two parts of the title accurately designate the two main lines along which the evolution of the action proceeds. The provoked husband is Lord Townly, a very admirable, worthy gentleman who is grieved over the behavior of his wife. Lady Townly is a pleasure-mad woman who never stays at home, and who gambles away all the money her husband will give her. She meets all remonstrations with sprightly good humor, and continues her social whirl blithely. A contrast with her in character is furnished by her sister-in-law, Lady Grace. Lady Grace has a long conversation with Lady Townly concerning the proprieties a good wife should observe, but Lady Townly only answers with witty remarks. She asks Lady Grace what a wife should do to occupy her time, to which her sister-in-law replies:

I would visit--that is, my real Friends; but as little for Form as possible----I would go to Court; sometimes to an Assembly, nay, play at Quadrille--soberly: I would see all good Plays; and, (because 'tis the Fashion) now and then an Opera--but I would not Expire there, for fear I should never go again: And lastly, I can't say, but for Curiosity, if I lik'd my own Company, I might be drawn in once to a Masquerade! and this, I think, is as far as any Woman can go--soberly.⁵²

Lady Townly answers only lightly and dismisses the subject. She is brought to her senses shortly, however.

A tradesman calls for payment of money the Townlys owe him for some service rendered. Lady Townly has received from her husband the money with which to pay him, but she has gambled with it and lost. She tries to send the man away unpaid, but he remonstrates so loudly that Lord Townly comes upon the scene. He feels that this is insult added to injury, and in his anger he declares his intention of securing a right to separation from his wife. Lady Townly, realizing the unhappiness her behavior has caused, begs the forgiveness of her husband and announces her resolution to reform. Lord Townly is happy to forgive her, and they express to each other their deep and abiding love.

The second part of the title of the play concerns the Wronghead family. Lord Wronghead, newly elected to parliament, has borrowed two thousand pounds upon his

⁵²Cibber's Works, Vol. IV, pp. 165-166.

estate--already heavily mortgaged--and has come into town from the country with his socially ambitious wife, his daughter Jenny, and his son Squire Richard. They soon encounter the wily Count Basset, who contrives to place Lady Wronghead in such position that she must pay him all the money she can obtain. Lord Wronghead's woes are increased by the impending marriage of his daughter to the worthless Count, and of his son to a servant, Myrtilla. With the aid of his kinsman, Manly, however, he is saved from ruin; the Count is revealed to be a scoundrel, and the Wronghead troubles are smoothed out. Lord Wronghead immediately tells his wife to pack their clothes, and they announce their intention of returning to their home in the country.

There is little in this play that is reminiscent of the Restoration comedy of manners. The only character that bears something of the Congrevian stamp is the Count, but he is a rascal, and has to pay the price--something that never happens to the beau in the comedy of manners. It is reasonable to suppose that had Vanbrugh finished the play, it would have had a great deal more of the Restoration flavor than it has. As it is, Cibber's hand is readily seen in the moralistic air of the comedy.

The entire play is sentimental. One character whose real nature can only be hinted at in a summary of the plot is Manly. Perhaps he can be best described to

the reader by an excerpt from the dialogue between him and Lord Townly. Lady Wronghead has just been discovered by Manly as the author of slanderous attacks upon him.

Lord Townly. You are very generous to be so solicitous for a lady that has given you so much uneasiness.

Manly. But I will be most unmercifully reveng'd of her: for I will do her the greatest Friendship in the World--against her Will.

Lord Townly. What an uncommon Philosophy art thou Master of? to make thy Malice a virtue!

Manly. Yet, my Lord. I assure you, there is no one Action of my Life gives me more Pleasure than your Approbation of it.⁵³

As another example of the sentimentality that is to be found in this play, is the scene wherein Lady Townly repents of her sins. She regrets that sterner measures have not been taken with her before now. But henceforth she will follow exemplary paths:

Lady Townly.And, though I call myself ungrateful, while I own it, yet, as a Truth, it cannot be deny'd--That kind Indulgence has undone me! it added strength to my habitual Failings, and in a Heart thus warm, in wild unthinking Life, no wonder if the gentler Sense of Love was lost..... What I have said, my Lord, is not my Excuse, but my Confession! my Errors (give 'em if you please a harder Name) cannot be defended! No! What's in its Nature wrong, no Words can palliate, no Plea can alter. What then remains in my Condition, but Resignation to your Pleasure? Time only can convince you of my future Conduct: Therefore, 'till I have liv'd an Object of Forgiveness, I dare not hope for Pardon--The Penance of a lonely contrite Life were little to the Innocent: but to have deserv'd this Separation, will strow perpetual Thorns upon my Pillow.

⁵³Ibid., p. 168.

....
Lord Townly. No, Madam! Your Errors thus
 renounc'd, this instant are forgotten! So deep,
 so due a Sense of them, has made you, what my ut-
 most wishes form'd, and all my Heart has sigh'd
 for.⁵⁴

Although "The Provoked Husband" was Cibber's last comedy, it was by no means his last literary work. In two years he was made poet-laureate, and besides occupying his time with the duties of that office he wrote two tragedies, two operas, a theatrical dialogue, a prose treatise upon The Character and Conduct of Cicero (1745), and his Apology before his death. Besides this literary work he continued to act, his last role being that of Pandulpho in his own "Papal Tyranny," on February 26, 1745. His death, December 11, 1757, brought to a close a long life of eighty-six years, at least fifty of which had been spent in activity concerned with the stage. Although he is generally considered a minor figure in the history of English dramatic literature, he does have the significance of a pioneer in a new field. He is of great importance as innovator, particularly in the field of sentimentalism.

In closer consideration of the foregoing discussion certain external characteristics of Cibber's comedies become evident. The most outstanding of these may be summarized as follows:

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 201-202.

1. In contrast to the Restoration emphasis upon style and characterization, the chief interest in Cibber's comedies is in the plot.

2. The play has a high moral tone--usually expressing great love which is triumphant over all obstacles; it may be a love that compels reformation in a wandering husband or wife, or it may be a love that expresses the abiding faith which secures for a misunderstood brother or friend the happiness he richly deserves.

3. Virtue, constancy, and faithfulness in love are always rewarded.

4. The rake may win the love of an admirable woman, but repentance must precede the enjoyment of his conquest. His moral regeneration is effected through the power of the example with which her virtue supplies him.

5. Cibber's heroines, though often less than perfect, are never so depraved as the men. His men may go to any lengths in their wickedness, and still be accepted and forgiven upon the utterance of a tearful speech of reformation. The women, however, must confine the worst of their sins to gambling and going to parties. Their chastity must remain unstained if they are to be forgiven when they reform.

6. Not infrequently in Cibber's comedies, there is a license of speech and incident as marked as that of

Restoration comedy at its worst.

7. His servants, in particular, are much given to obscenity in speech.

8. All characters, either actually or in general tone, are bourgeois. Even the men and women of rank are thoroughly "middle-class" in their behavior.

9. The fop is a conventional figure in Cibber's comedies. However, as a beau, he shows more individuality in his nature and is more essentially a part of the play than his predecessors of Restoration comedy.

10. Cibber's comedies are greatly superior in unity to the plays of the Restoration period. Some of his plays are remarkably free from the numerous sub-plots of the Restoration comedy of manners.

11. Although Cibber's comedies contain much that is comic, it is seldom, if ever, to be called "high comedy." For this reason, his plays would have for almost every age a more popular appeal than most of the Restoration comedies.

CHAPTER III

CIBBER'S RELATION TO THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF SENTIMENTALISM

In order to see Colley Cibber in his true light as a sentimentalist, it has been necessary in this study to view him in relation to his predecessors as well as his contemporaries. Writing as he did at the beginning of the eighteenth century, or, as is sometimes said, the beginning of modern England, he is the connecting link between a very definite type of comedy, known as the Restoration comedy of manners, on the one hand, and an equally clear type of drama known as sentimental comedy, on the other. He is of particular significance as the first of the sentimentalists, and coming as he did at a time when the comedy of manners was the only accepted vogue in drama, he assumes a place of unusual importance.

Although the Restoration comedy of manners began with the ascendancy of Charles II to the throne of England, there were influences at work previous to this time which helped to make the new type of comedy popular. The ascendancy of the Puritans, while giving the middle class an influence it never entirely lost, also gave rise, indirectly, to a type of comedy that is unique in English literature. The personal charm of the king, together with the fact that upon his reopening of the theaters he became virtually a patron saint of the stage, naturally

made him the man of the hour; and the unpopularity of the Cromwell regime only served to heighten the acclaim with which Charles was received. In contrast to the austerity of Puritanism, the brilliance and extravagance of the court fascinated the people; but when the intolerance and narrowness of the Puritans was lifted, England entered into the lowest depth of immorality the nation has ever known. The dramatists, writing as they did to please the taste of the king and his court circle, naturally put into their comedies all the animalism and unmuzzled passions the plays could contain. However, it must not be thought that immorality is the only distinguishing quality of the Restoration comedy of manners. Other characteristics are the wit that runs throughout the play, the appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions, the brilliance, the heartless cynicism, the artificial manner. Since this comedy was for aristocrats, there would be no place for the bourgeoisie, and therefore the subject-matter could only deal with a limited range of topics. These would naturally concern court life and interests; but whatever the subject, it was treated in such a manner that the whole of the play is the representation of unlicensed behavior. The Restoration comedy of manners is a unique kind of comedy; more especially is it unique in Anglo-Saxon countries. Its intellectual appeal and its judicial

tone and critical temper grew out of Restoration social life. When the social life changed, it was inevitable that there would come a change in the type of comedy.

At no time in the history of the English race has it been true that all of life is unlicensed behavior. And so, at this time, beneath the surface, the normal life of the average Englishman was continuing its quiet way, and the national temper which brought the Puritan principles to the fore was still living. As the seventeenth century drew to a close, the influence of the middle class began once more to make itself felt. This was furthered by the Revolution of 1688, which definitely placed the power of the government in the hands of Parliament. However, the supremacy of the middle class is not to be seen wholly in the political history of the era, because it was some time before this class really was well represented in the government; it is rather to be seen in the improved economic conditions of the period. By the latter part of the seventeenth century it was discovered that the money of the nation was being concentrated in the hands of the business and professional men--and money was the new measure of wealth. The increase in foreign trade had aided many members of the middle class to gain economic security. Another noticeable change was taking place. There was a growing tendency to denounce the moral laxity

of the day. Social life was gaining decency and dignity. Men and women were beginning to bridle their speech and behavior, and to place a value on grace and ease of bearing. Influences were working that would cause coarseness on the stage and in society to pass out of fashion, and, where once was seen an affected license in manners and speech, now was being displayed an elaborate decorum. The popularity of the coffee-houses attested to the new-found leisure and the delight in social groups for conversation. With the rise of the middle class naturally grew the spirit of democracy, or, in other words, feeling for the common people. Jeremy Collier's pamphlets were published in protest against the immoralities of the stage, and the "man in the street" was given a place in the Tatler and Spectator, periodicals that were being published by Addison and Steele at this time.

It is this writer's contention that the new feeling of democracy gave rise to sentimentalism as it appeared first in Cibber's comedies, and continued for over a century. It is the same spirit that gave rise to humanitarianism, the growing sympathy for the helpless and the unfortunate.⁵⁵ Sentimentalism is an abstract term which is difficult to define. It can be understood best, perhaps, when contrasted with the hardness and cynicism of the

⁵⁵In 1774 was organized the Royal Humane Society of England.

Restoration comedy of manners. Sentimentalism displays a tendency to be governed by emotion rather than reason, while Restoration comedy makes its appeal to the intellect, and is lacking in any emotional application. Sentimentalism suggests open display of the tender emotions, while Restoration comedy carefully represses every expression of feeling. Sentimentalism tends to make ideal situations and characters, as opposed to the realistic representation of normal human experience. Sentimentalism expresses itself more frequently, perhaps, in amatory feeling or inclination than in any other way. This expression of love, always striving for the ideal as it does, manifests itself in pointing a moral or in the reformation of less than perfect men or women. It is also often seen giving itself in great sacrifice for either a worthy, though misunderstood, person, or for a worthless, but penitent, person. Sentimentalism does not express an emotion that quietly asserts itself at the proper time; it rather projects itself always into the reader's consciousness, unfortunately to the point, sometimes, of mawkishness or weak emotionalism.

Colley Cibber wrote his first play when Restoration comedy was at its height. Congreve was actively writing at the time, and was soon to give the world the most perfect type of the comedy of manners of the period.

Considering this fact, and taking note of the complete lack of any previous expression of sentiment in Restoration literature, Cibber takes on great importance. In his work is seen the union of the old and the new kind of comedy. He retains many of the qualities of the Restoration: much of the old deviltry, the immoral speech, and the general immoral tone is there. Yet regarding his work from the point of view of the sentimentalist, his plays take on a new tone. There are several reasons why this is true. In the first place, Cibber was not an aristocrat, and therefore could not have the point of view that Congreve had. Only an aristocratic spirit could have produced the Restoration comedy of manners. In the second place, Cibber was compelled by financial straits to be a shrewd judge of popular taste. Throughout his career, in spite of his personal unpopularity, he showed his ability to give the public what it wanted at the theater; and without a doubt, the public was ready at the beginning of the eighteenth century for a new kind of comedy. The fact that other writers, notably Collier, Steele, and Addison, followed Cibber's early writings so quickly with works pointing to the new era in literature seems to prove that the times were changing.

That Cibber's comedies are a link between those

of the Restoration period and the sentimental comedies of the eighteenth century is most clearly evident when they are compared with the work of Steele. Though Cibber's work preceded that of Steele by only a few years, and though he is unquestionably the pioneer in the field of sentimental comedy, he is the link between the Restoration comedy of manners and the pure sentimental comedy of Steele. For example, a comparison of Steele's "Conscious Lovers" (1722) with Cibber's "Love's Last Shift" shows that Steele's play is lacking in the immoral tone of the Restoration comedy; there is little that is improper in the play. Cibber's comedy, except for the sentimental threads running through the plot, is licentious and risqué. Young Bevil, the hero of "The Conscious Lovers," is the ideal young man throughout the play, while Loveless, of "Love's Last Shift," is as profligate a rake as the Restoration ever produced, even though he does reform by the end of the play.

This similarity of Cibber's plays to those of the Restoration period is noticeable throughout. Not only in the immoral tone of his dialogue and characterization, but also in other particulars do his comedies show their kinship to the plays of the previous century. Restoration characteristics are seen in conventional plots; in some of his comic characters, particularly

that of the man of fashion; in his heroines, who are always lively, witty, brilliant and sophisticated; in the creation of rakish characters; and in the creation of old men and women who still pursue the baubles of romance. It is worthy of notice, however, that the plays which are most nearly like the Restoration comedy of manners were the least successful upon the stage.

It is soon evident to the reader of Cibber's plays, however, that they contain much that is new to English comedy. Though his fops, or men of fashion, have their predecessors in the plays of Etherege and Congreve, before Cibber had retired as a dramatist, he had created a much more substantial character than any fop of the Restoration. Cibber showed himself adept in creating the witty, apparently unemotional heroine, but before the play ends she becomes the soft, sweet creature of the new era. He also created some entirely new characters. His amazingly loving and patient wives, who remind one of the Patient Griselda of early literature, have no counterparts in Restoration comedy; and in the same way there cannot be found in earlier comedy the strong friendships that affect the outcome of the play, nor the saccharine love of a brother and sister. The most outstanding innovation which Cibber introduces, however, is the usual moralizing tone of the play. It was always his purpose he said, "to give

profit with delight," and after the first few successful efforts, he presented plays with the avowed purpose of teaching a lesson. Even such preliminaries as the dedication, the prologue, and the preface are used to emphasize the moral.

It is surprising that Cibber has not been given the place he deserves in the history of sentimentalism. It is a fact that the first work of his youth introduces the innovations of sentiment and moralizing into English comedy. However, he has numerous other claims upon attention. He was a sparkling and successful dramatist, a comedian of high mark, a singularly capable and judicious manager, upon whom, to a certain extent, Garrick is said to have modelled himself, and an unequalled critic of drama.

It is possible that favorable contemporary opinion is to be explained by his personal unpopularity. Cibber lived at a time when nobody veiled his antipathies; it was a day in which the journals were liberally sprinkled with replies and counter-attacks for real or fancied wrongs. A man had only to make one irritating move, and by the next day he and all the world knew that he had made an enemy. Cibber was in such position as to find it difficult to keep from making enemies: as a comedian he found that he could delight his audiences by mimicking well-known people; as

a manager he found it necessary for the good of his business to deny many their wishes; as poet-laureate he was an object of jealousy; as a satirist of Roman Catholics and Jacobites he naturally became the subject of attacks. Besides this he seems to have had a personal aptitude for making enemies. His mannerisms, together with his egotism, probably inspired much uncomplimentary comment. The most bitter enemy he had, and probably the one who did his fame the most lasting harm, was Pope. Though Cibber came out decidedly the better in the quarrel between himself and the poet, it did his memory no good to be represented to posterity as the hero of the Dunciad. Besides having Pope as an enemy, he incurred the dislike of Samuel Johnson and of Henry Fielding--and these were literary men who were in position to give voice to their antipathies. Those who liked and respected him, his associates in the theatrical world, made no record of the fact.

Cibber always took criticism philosophically.

Only rarely did he lose his temper or show that unfriendly remarks touched him in any way. In his biography he says:

This so singular concern which I have shown for others may naturally lead you to ask what I feel for myself when I am unfavorably treated by the elaborate authors of our daily papers. Shall I be sincere? and own my frailty? Its usual effect is to make me vain! For I consider if I were quite good for nothing these piddlers in wit would not be concern'd to take me to pieces, or (not to be quite

so vain) when they moderately charge me with only ignorance or dulness, I see nothing in that which an honest man need be asham'd of.....

When they confine themselves to a sober criticism upon what I write, if their censure is just, what answer can I make to it? If it is unjust, why should I suppose that a sensible reader will not see it, as well as myself?....Or (to make both sides less considerable) would not my bearing ill language from a chimney-sweeper do me less harm than it would to box him, tho' I were sure to beat him? Nor indeed is the little reputation I have as an author worth the trouble of a defence. Then, as no criticism can possibly make me worse than I really am, so nothing I can say of myself can possibly make me better.⁵⁶

As a comedian and creator of a new comic character, Cibber is worthy of remembrance. As a historian of the stage and commentator upon his contemporaries, his work is invaluable. But as a pioneer in the field of sentimental comedy he is most noteworthy. He gave first expression to sentiment at a time when the comedy of manners was in vogue, and he inaugurated an era in dramatic writing that has lasted well-nigh to our own day. When he quit the stage, he left it much better than he found it. Its moral tone and its moral had been immeasurably improved.

⁵⁶Days of the Dandies, I, 98.

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