

DL Manners and Moral: It's often acted now a daies, and by the help of the Author's own good action, it pleases to this Day.

Monday 13 YB CONCERT. Mr Purcel's Farewel, set by Mr Finger, with other variety of Musick (*Post Boy*, 9 Jan. 1695/6).

Tuesday 21 COMMENT. Robert Shirley to Thomas Coke, Chartly, 21 Jan. 1695/6: I must agree with you that Wit and Sense seem this winter to have suffered an eclipse, and the dramatic writers more especially have showed how little they consulted either. I do assure you, I have not of late met with more of both than in your ingenious diverting letter to me, so that I am satisfied Wit is not retired out of town, but has only forsaken the stage. We that live in these northern parts are forced to range over fields and woods to find subjects of diversion, for in the frozen season of the year, there is nothing that is more so in the country than conversation. In my last ramble, either my own innate fancy, or the aversion I had to see such plays wrote in English as would hardly bear the reading, made me imagine I met with one of the Muses that had left the town, and by her discourse seemed to be Patroness of Dramatic Poetry. You know, Sir, to meet with a Nymph in the desert was no rarity in some countries heretofore, but yet I vow and swear between us, I asked her the occasion of her leaving the town, to which she made this sudden answer:

*Neglected Wit is silent at a time
When puns, or bombast, stuff each doggrill rhyme.
In comic strain when they'd describe a fool,
The author proves the only ridicule.
In tragic verse while others fain would boast,
Landing some thousand Romans on the coast,
In what they would express themselves are lost,
Make Romans cowards, and make English great,
And make Bonduca valiant, to be beat.
Would Congreve or would Blackmoor now engage,
They might with manly thoughts reform the stage:*

. . . As for Mr Southern's play, I have not yet seen it, so that I cannot at present give you my thoughts on it (HMC, 12th Report, Appendix, Part II, Cowper MSS., II, 359-60).

Thursday 30

A FAST DAY FOR THE MARTYRDOM OF CHARLES I

February 1696

LIF THE HUSBAND HIS OWN CUCKOLD. [By John Dryden Jr.] Edition of 1696: Prologue, Written by Mr Congreve, Spoken by Mr Betterton. No actors' names. Epilogue, Spoken by Mrs Bracegirdle, Written by Mr Dryden.

COMMENT. Betterton's Company. The date of the première is not known. The Dedication to the play, written in Rome, is dated 20 Aug. 1695 N.S., and the advertisement of the play in the *London Gazette*, No 3200, 9-13 July 1696, represent the limits on its production. In a letter, dated (probably) November 1695, Dryden refers to the forthcoming appearance of his son's play, and on 26 May 1696 he negotiates with Tonson for its publication (*Letters of John Dryden*, pp. 79, 82). Probably the play appeared early in 1696, and certainly not much later than April 1696.

John Barnard, "The Dates of Six Dryden Letters," *Philological Quarterly*, XLII (1963), 400-401, believes that Dryden's letter was written ca. 26 May 1695 and that the play was probably acted in late 1695.