THEATINES, a religious order in the Romiſh church, ſo called from their principal founder John Peter Caraſſa, then biſhop of Theate, or Chieti, in the kingdom of Naples, and afterwards pope, under the name of *Paul* IV. The names of the other founders were Gaetan, Boniface, and Conſiglieri. Theſe four pious men deſiring to reform the eccleſiaſtical ſtate, laid the foundation of an order of regular clerks at Rome in the year 1524. Pope Clement VII. ap­proved the inſtitution, and permitted the brethren to make the three religious vows, to elect a superior every three years, and to draw up ſtatutes for the regulation of the order. They firſt endeavoured, by their example, to revive among the clergy the poverty of the apoſtles and firſt diſciples of our Saviour, and were the firſt who aſſumed the title of *regular clerks.*

THEATRE, a place in which ſhows or dramatic repreſentations are exhibited.

For the origin of the dramatic art we always turn our eyes to Greece, the nurſery of the arts and ſciences. It may indeed have been known among more ancient nations, but no records remain ſufficient to ſupport this opinion. The different states of Greece aſſerted their claim to the honour of having given it birth, but the account of the Athenians is moſt generally received. It derived its origin from the hymns which were ſung in the feſtivals of Bacchus in honour of that deity. While theſe resounded in the ears of the multitude, choruſes of Bacchants and Fauns, ranged round certain obſcene images which they carried in triumphal proceſſion, chanted lascivious ſongs, and ſometimes ſacrificed individuals to public ridicule.

This was the practice in the cities ; but a ſtill greater licentiouſneſs reigned in the worſhip paid to the ſame divinity by the inhabitants of the country, and eſpecially at the ſeaſon when they gathered the fruits of his beneficence@@. Vintagers, beſmeared with wine-lees, and intoxicated with joy and the juice of the grape, rode forth in their carts, and at­tacked each other on the road with groſs sarcaſms, revenging themſelves on their neighbours with ridicule, and on the rich by publiſhing their injuſtice.

Among the poets who flouriſhed at that time, ſome ce­lebrated the great actions and adventures of gods and heroes, and others attacked with aſperity the vices and abſurdities of individuals. The former took Homer for their model, and ſupported themſelves by his example, of which they made an improper uſe. Homer, the moſt tragic of poets, the model of all who have ſucceeded him, had in the Iliad and the Odyſſey brought to perfection the heroic poem, and in his Margites had employed pleaſantry. But as the charm of his works depends in a great meaſure on the paſſions and motion with which he knew to animate them, the poets who came after him endeavoured to introduce into theirs an action which might excite emotion or mirth in the ſpectators : ſome even attempted to produce both, and ventured certain rude essays, which have ſince been ſtyled indifferently either tragedies or comedies, becauſe they unite the characters of thoſe two dramas. The authors of theſe ſketches have been diſtinguiſhed by no discovery ; they only form in the hiſtory of the art a ſucceſſion of names which it would be uſeleſs to recal to light.

The neceſſity and power of theatrical intereſt was already known. The hymns in honour of Bacchus, while they described his rapid progreſs and ſplendid conqueſts, became imitative ; and in the conteſts of the Pythian games, the players on the flute who entered into competition were enjoined by an expreſs law to repreſent succeſſively the circumſtances that had preceded, accompanied, and followed the victory of Apollo over Python.

Some years after this regulation, Suſarion and Theſpis, both born in a ſmall borough of Attica, named *Icaria,* ap­peared each at the head of a company of actors, the one on a kind of ſtage, the other in a cart @@(a). The former attacked the vices and abſurdities of his time ; and the latter treated more noble ſubjects, which he took from hiſtory.

The comedies of Suſarion were in the ſame taſte with thoſe indecent and ſatirical farces which were afterwards performed in ſome of the cities of Greece. They were long the favourite entertaintment of the country people. Athens did not adopt this ſpecies of exhibition until after it was brought to perfection in Sicily.

Theſpis had more than once ſeen in the feſtivals, in which as yet hymns only were ſung, one of the fingers, mounteed on a table, form a kind of dialogue with the chorus. From this hint he conceived the idea of introducing into the tragedies an actor who, by ſimple recitals introduced at intervals, ſhould give relief to the chorus, divide the action, and render it more intereſting. This happy innovation, together with ſome other liberties in which he had allowed himſelf, gave alarm to the legiſlator of Athens, who was more able than any other perſon to diſcern the value or danger of the novelty. Solon condemned a ſpecies of compoſition in which the ancient traditions were diſguiſed by fictions. “If we applaud falſehood in our public exhibitions (ſaid he to Theſpis), we ſhall ſoon find that it will inſinuate itſelf into our moſt ſacred engagements.”

The exceſſive approbation and delight with which both the city and country received the pieces of Theſpis annd Suſarion, at once juſtified and rendered uſeleſs the ſuſpicious foreſight of Solon. The poets, who till then had only exerciſed their genius in dithyrambics and licentious satire, ſtruck with the elegant forms which theſe ſpecies of compoſition began to assume, dedicated their talents to tragedy and comedy. Soon after a greater variety was introduceed in the ſubjects of the former of theſe poems. Thoſe who judge oſ their pleaſures only from habit exclaimed, that these ſubjects were foreign to the worſhip of Bacchus ; but the greater number thronged with ſtill more eagerneſs after the new pieces.

Phrynichus, the diſciple of Theſpis, made choice of that kind of verſe which is moſt ſuitable to the drama, was the author of ſome other changes, and left tragedy in its in­fancy.

Æschylus received it from his hands enveloped in a rude veſtment, its viſage covered with falſe colours, or a maſk inexpressive of character, without either grace or dignity in its motions, inſpiring the deſire of an intereſt which it with difficulty excited, ſtill attached to the buffooneries which had amuſed its infant years, and expressing its conceptions ſometimes with elegance and dignity, but frequently in a feeble and low ſtyle, polluted with groſs obſcenities.

In his firſt tragedies he introduced a ſecond actor ; and afterward, copying the example ot Sophocles, who had juſt entered on his theatrical career, he admitted a third, and ſometimes even a fourth. By this multiplicity of personages, one of his actors became the hero of the piece, annd attracted to himſelf the principal intereſt ; and as the chorus now held only a ſubaltern ſtation, Æschylus took care to

@@@[mu] Anacharsis's Travels, vol. i.

@@@(a) Suſarion repreſented his firſt pieces towards the year 580 before Chriſt, Some years after, Theſpis made his firſt attempts in tragedy, and acted his Alceſtis in 536,