ſhorten its part, and perhaps even carried this precaution too far.

He is cenſured for having admitted mute characters into his drama. Achilles, after the death of his friend, and Niobe, after the deſtruction of her children, appear on the stage, and remain during ſeveral ſcenes motionleſs, with their heads covered with a veil, and without uttering a word ; but if their eyes had overflown with tears, and they had poured forth the bittereſt lamentations, could they have pro­duced an effect ſo terrible as this veil, this ſilence, and this abandonment to grief?

It was not ſufficient that the noble and elevated ſtyle of tragedy ſhould leave in the minds of the auditors a ſtrong impreſſion of grandeur ; to captivate the multitude, it was requiſite that every part of the ſpectacle ſhould concur to produce the ſame effect. It was then the general opinion that nature, by beſtowing on the ancient heroes a more lofty ſtature, had impressed on their perſons a majeſty which procured them as much reſpect from the people as the enſigns of dignity by which they were attended. Æschylus therefore raiſed his actors on high ſtilts or buſkins. He covered their features, which were frequently diſagreeable, with a maſk that concealed their irregularity. He clothed them in flowing and magnificent robes, the form of which was ſo decent, that the prieſts of Ceres have not bluſhed to adopt it. The inferior actors were alſo provided with maſks and dresses ſuited to their parts.

Inſtead of thoſe wretched ſcaffolds which were formerly erected in haſte, he obtained a theatre furniſhed with ma­chines, and embelliſhed with decorations. Here the sound of the trumpet was reverberated, incenſe was ſeen to burn on the altars, the ſhades of the dead to ariſe from the tomb, and the furies to ruſh from the gulphs of Tartarus. In one of his pieces theſe infernal divinities appeared, for the firſt time, with maſks of a horrid paleneſs, torches in their hands, ſerpents intertwined in their hairs, and followed by a nu­merous retinue oſ dreadful ſpectres. It is ſaid that, at the sight of them, and the sound of their terrific howlings, ter­ror ſeized on the whole aſſembly, women miſcarried, and children expired with fear ; and that the magiſtrates, to prevent ſimilar accidents in future, commanded that the chorus ſhould consiſt only of fifteen actors inſtead of fifty.

The effect of ſo many new objects could not but aſtoniſh the ſpectators ; nor were they leſs ſurpriſed and delighted at the intelligence diſplayed in the performance of the actors, whom Æschylus almoſt always exerciſed himſelf. He regulated their ſteps, and taught them to give addition­al force to the action by new and expreſſive geſtures.

The progreſs of the art was extremely rapid. Æschylus was born 525 years before Chriſt, 11 years after Theſpis had acted his Alceſtis. He had for competitors Chœrilus Pratenas, and Phrynichus, whoſe glory he eclipsed, and Sophocles, who rivalled his own. Sophocles was born about the year 497 13. C. about 14 years before Euripides. These carried tragedy to the higheſt perfection to which it attain­ed among the Greeks. Æschylus painted men greater than they can be, Sophocles as they ought to be, and Euripides as they are.

Invented towards the 50th Olympiad (about 580 B. C.), and adapted to the rude manners of the ruſtics, comedy ven­tured not to approach the capital ; and if by chance ſome companies of actors, who were unconnected with any others, found their way into the city, and performed their indecent farces, they were leſs authorised than tolerated by the go­vernment. It was not till after a long infancy that this ſpecies of drama began ſuddenly to make a rapid improve­ment in Sicily. Inſtead of a ſucceſſion of ſcenes without connection or tendency, the philoſopher Epicharmus intro­duced an action, all the parts of which had a dependence on each other ; and conducted his ſubject, without wandering from it, through a juſt extent to a determinate end. His pieces, ſubjected to the ſame laws as tragedy, were known in Greece, where they were conſidered as models ; and co­medy ſoon ſhared with her rival the ſuffrages of the public, and the homage due to genius. The Athenians, eſpecially, received her with the ſame tranſports as they would have teſtified at the news of a victory : many of their poets exerciſed their genius in this novel ſpecies of compoſition ; and their names adorn the numerous list of writers who have been diſtinguiſhed in comedy from the time of Epicharmus. Such were, among the more ancient, Magnes, Cratinus, Cra­tes, Pherecrates, Eupolis, and Ariſtophanes. They all flouriſhed in the age of Pericles.

It we peruſe the comic pieces which have come down to us, we ſhall be convinced that the ſole object of the authors was to pleaſe the multitude. The gods and heroes were traveſtied, groſs and obſcene language was often employed, and virulent invectives were often thrown out againſt indi­viduals of the firſt rank for genius and virtue. Towards the end of the Peloponneſian war the licentiouſneſs of co­medy was reſtrained. The chorus was laid aſide, becauſe the rich citizens were alarmed, and would no longer contri­bute money to ſupport it, nor provide maſks with portraits for expoſing individuals.

The poets being thus reſtrained from mentioning names of living perſons on the ſtage, invented false names. They ſtill expoſed real and known characters ; and thus gave a more exquiſite gratification to the spectators, who were highly amuſed with finding out the perſons intended. The conſequence of the law was only to make that done with delicacy which was formerly done in the moſt indecent and ſcurrilous manner. Ariſtophanes, in ſome of his lateſt pie­ces, has given us ſome good examples of this kind of come­dy, which is ſometimes called the middle comedy.

Comedy was ſtill liable to abuſe, and therefore required farther reformation. As the uſe of real names had former­ly been prohibited, real subjects were alſo forbidden ; and comedy from that time was no longer a fury armed with torches, or a firebrand ſcattering miſchief, but a pleaſing and inſtructive companion. This is called the new comedy. The moſt eminent among the Greeks in this improved ſpecies was Menander. His writings are now loſt ; but we may form a good eſtimate of their merit from the comedies of Terence, which are ſaid to have been borrowed from Me­nander, and to have nearly reſembled the original, though interior in that *vis comica* by which the elegant Grecian was diſtinguiſhed. The comedy of Menander is that which has been cultivated in modern times.

To give ſome idea of a Grecian theatre, we ſhall deſcribe very ſhortly the theatre of Bacchus in Athens, which was built by the famous architect Philos in the time of Pericles. The part intended for the ſpectators was of a ſemicircular form, at the diameter of which was erected the ſtage. The orcheſtra occupied the ſpace where the pit in modern the­atres is ſituated, where the music, the chorus, and the mimi were placed. It was four feet elevated above the ground. The ſpectators were arranged in three galleries round all the ſides of the orcheſtra except that next the ſtage, each gallery containing eight rows of ſeats. At the farther end of the orcheſtra, where the ſtage is erected in modern the­atres, stood the thymele or logeon, but projecting a little towards the audience@@. It was a little higher than the or­cheſtra, and did not extend the whole breadth oſ it. In ſome theatres it was only ſix feet ſquare. Here the prin­cipal part of the chorus made their recitations, and in co­mical interludes the mimi performed. Behind the thy-

@@@[mu] Gentleman's Magazine for 1760.