EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY
EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS

POETRY AND DRAMA

IGHTEENTH-CENTURY
LAYS · WITH AN INTRO-
JCTION BY JOHN HAMPDEN

# INTRODUCTION

To many lovers of English drama Goldsmith and Sheridan are lonely stars, shining out of a darkness which envelops our theatre not only during the eighteenth century, but during the whole period from the decline of Restoration comedy to the advent of Ibsen. There is much truth in this view. Goldsmith and Sheridan are certainly the greatest dramatists of the period, and theirs are the only eighteenth-century plays which readers and playgoers of to-day still keep high in favour—unless exception be made for *The Beggar's Opera*. But it is too easily assumed that Goldsmith and Sheridan stand alone. They differ in degree rather than in kind from their contemporaries. Though it can hardly be maintained that the century produced other dramatic masterpieces, or denied that most of its drama is dead beyond hope of resurrection, there are a number of eighteenth-century plays which can be read with pleasure for their own sake and for their sidelights upon the life and literature of the time. The present growth of sympathetic interest in the eighteenth century may lead to revivals as successful as that of *The Beggar's Opera*.

For the student of English drama, moreover, the period is of permanent interest. Even to understand fully the work of Goldsmith and Sheridan he must study it in its dramatic context, and know something of contemporary playwrights, theatres and audiences, and of those players, with David Garrick and Mrs. Siddons chief among them, who made this the greatest age of English acting and could send their audiences away well satisfied with the worthless plays which they frequently exploited as virtuoso pieces. The student will find, too, that the period was not merely one of degeneration and decay, despite its obvious faults. It clung desperately to worn-out formulas, Jonsonian "humours," pseudo-classical "laws," theatrical intrigues, grotesquely happy endings and a clutter of stage-tricks. It carried sentimental didacticism to nauseous extremes, and spent itself in the inanities of "burletta" and "after-

piece." Shakespeare was accepted in strange perversions. Intervals between the acts of tragedies came to be decorated with hornpipes and harlequinades. Whatever the cause or causes,—the growth of the novel, material conditions in the theatres, or changes in national temper too subtle for analysis—the period suffered on the whole a steady vitiation of taste, until drama was divorced altogether from literature and life. But this is not all. Innovations were made and experiments attempted; forces were set at work which had great influence upon modern European drama and prepared the way for the renaissance that began about fifty years ago. Something, at least, of this will be apparent from the plays in this volume, which have been chosen as representative of the most important forms of eighteenth-century drama.

Our first two plays were produced before Queen Anne was indisputably dead, for the new period had begun—as far as any literary period can "begin"—at the beginning of the century, with the death of Dryden, the disgusted retirement of Congreve, and Jeremy Collier's famous attack upon the immorality of the stage. Of the various dramatic species then flourishing, heroic tragedy must here be passed over in silence. It had its hey-day in the Restoration period, and for the eighteenth century it is perhaps well enough represented by the burlesque of *The Tragedy of Tragedies*. But the decline of the heroic type, all bombast and extravagance, was accompanied by the rise of "classical" tragedy, restrained and formal. Here French influence was the dominant factor, giving strength to a school of criticism which had been faintly heard during the Elizabethan and Restoration periods. While Pope and other poets were perfecting the heroic couplet and establishing the "Augustan tradition," a number of dramatists and dramatic critics were declaring for observance of the three unities and of the other laws which the "classical" critics of France and England held to have governed the classical dramatists. The influence of Racine appeared early, and the first "classical" tragedy to achieve real success, Ambrose Philips's *The Distrest Mother* (1712), was an adaptation of *Andromaque*. ADDISON gave this his blessing in an Epilogue, and as critic he had already done much for this type of tragedy before he himself produced its masterpiece in *Cato* (1713).

The immediate success of *Cato* was due largely to political causes, which affected drama more in the eighteenth century than in any other period. Many a play was condemned unheard, or praised extravagantly, for the sake of the playwright's political opinions, and it is significant that of the writers represented here four held political offices—ranging from Addison, as Secretary of State, to Gay as Commissioner of the State Lottery. *Cato* appeared when Queen Anne's health was failing and the succession was being hotly debated, so that its hero's devotion to liberty was received with violent applause by Whigs and Tories alike. It ran for a month—a long period then—and provoked much discussion. But it was for its own sake, not for political reasons, that the play was performed regularly for many years. Its faults are obvious. It is a conscientious exercise in the dramatic form, carefully observing the "classic" rules, and moved by moral philosophy, not tragic feeling and imagination. It maintains the unity of place only at the cost of absurdity, as the critic John Dennis pointed out in a malignant attack. The characters are lay figures, lifeless abstractions, and this weakness is especially apparent in the love-scenes, which according to Pope were "flung in after, to comply with the popular taste." Dr. Johnson's criticism is just:

> *Cato* . . . is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language than a representation of natural affections, or of any state possible or probable in human life. . . . The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care; we consider not what they are doing or what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say.

But Addison had done the best that could be done with pseudo-classic tragedy, aided by choice of a subject peculiarly suitable, and when the circumstances are considered it is no small tribute to his genius that this "masterpiece of common sense" may still be read with pleasure.

Though many more attempts were made to establish pseudo-classic tragedy, the native tradition of dramatic freedom was too strong. The most notable plays were Johnson's frigid tragedy *Irene*, which Garrick managed to keep alive for nine evenings in 1749; and the work of James Thomson, the poet of *The Seasons*. His *Sophonisba*

# CONTENTS

# CATO

JOSEPH ADDISON, the great essayist, was born on 1 May, 1672, at Milston, Wiltshire, and was educated at Lichfield Grammar School, Charterhouse, and Queen's College, Oxford. As a demy and Fellow of Magdalen he made various essays in literature, and attracted the notice of the Whig leaders. After four years spent on the grand tour of Europe he returned to win sudden fame and an excise commissionership by his poem on Blenheim, *The Campaign*, which was written in 1704. Thereafter he held various political offices, including that of Secretary of State to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which led to his making the acquaintance and earning the friendship of Swift, and in April 1717 he was appointed Secretary of State.

But his political activities are now of little interest compared with his literary work and its humanising influence upon the life and letters of his time. He wrote a good deal for *The Tatler*, which his old friend and schoolfellow, Richard Steele, started in 1709, and when this was succeeded by *The Spectator* (1711–12, 1714), Addison became the leading contributor, writing De Coverley papers and the other essays whose grace and charm and gently ironic humour give him his high place in English literature: for it is as essayist, and not as dramatist and poet, that Addison is rightly remembered.

In 1716 he married Charlotte, Countess of Warwick. This marriage was probably not as unhappy as it was reported to be, but Addison's last years were darkened by failing health and a quarrel with Steele.

He died at the age of forty-seven, on 17 June, 1719, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

# CATO.

A

## TRAGEDY.

As it is Acted at the

THEATRE ROYAL in *Drury-Lane*

BY

Her MAJESTY'S Servants

---

*By Mr. ADDISON*

---

*Ecce Spectaculum dignum, ad quod respiciat, intentus operi suo, Deus! Ecce par Deo dignum, vir fortis cum malâ fortunâ compositus! Non video, inquam, quid habeat in terris Jupiter pulchrius, si convertere animum velit, quàm ut spectet Catonem, jam partibus non semel fractis, nihilominùs inter ruinas publicas erectum.*

Sen. de Divin. Prov.

---

*LONDON:*

Printed for J. TONSON, at *Shakespear's Head* over against *Catherine-Street* in the *Strand*. MDCCXIII.

# PROLOGUE

## By Mr. Pope

SPOKEN BY MR. WILKS

To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
To raise the genius, and to mend the heart,
To make mankind in conscious virtue bold,
Live o'er each scene, and be what they behold:
For this the Tragic-Muse first trod the stage,
Commanding tears to stream thro' every age;
Tyrants no more their savage nature kept,
And foes to virtue wondered how they wept.
Our author shuns by vulgar springs to move
The hero's glory, or the virgin's love;
In pitying love we but our weakness show,
And wild ambition well deserves its woe.
Here tears shall flow from a more gen'rous cause,
Such tears as patriots shed for dying laws:
He bids your breasts with ancient ardour rise,
And calls forth Roman drops from British eyes.
Virtue confessed in human shape he draws,
What Plato thought, and God-like Cato was:
No common object to your sight displays,
But what with pleasure Heav'n itself surveys;
A brave man struggling in the storms of fate
And greatly falling with a falling state!
While Cato gives his little Senate laws,
What bosom beats not in his country's cause?
Who sees him act, but envies ev'ry deed?
Who hears him groan, and does not wish to bleed?
Ev'n when proud Cæsar 'midst triumphal cars,
The spoils of nations, and the pomp of wars,
Ignobly vain, and impotently great,
Showed Rome her Cato's figure drawn in state;
As her dead father's rev'rend image passed
The pomp was darkened and the day o'ercast,
The triumph ceased—tears gushed from ev'ry eye;
The world's great victor passed unheeded by;
Her last good man dejected Rome adored,
And honoured Cæsar's less than Cato's sword.
Britons, attend; be worth like this approved,
And show you have the virtue to be moved.
With honest scorn the first famed Cato viewed
Rome learning arts from Greece, whom she subdued;
Our scene precariously subsists too long
On French translation, and Italian song.
Dare to have sense yourselves; assert the stage,
Be justly warmed with your own native rage.
Such plays alone should please a British ear,
As Cato's self had not disdained to hear.

## *DRAMATIS PERSONÆ*

### MEN

| | |
|---|---|
| CATO | Mr. Booth |
| LUCIUS, *a senator* | Mr. Keen |
| SEMPRONIUS, *a senator* | Mr. Mills |
| JUBA, *Prince of Numidia* | Mr. Wilks |
| SYPHAX, *General of the Numidians* | Mr. Cibber |
| PORTIUS, *Sons of Cato* | Mr. Powell |
| MARCUS, *Sons of Cato* | Mr. Ryan |
| DECIUS, *Ambassador from Cæsar* | Mr. Bowman |

Mutineers, Guards, etc.

### WOMEN

| | |
|---|---|
| MARCIA, *daughter to Cato* | Mrs. Oldfield |
| LUCIA, *daughter to Lucius* | Mrs. Porter |

SCENE—A large hall in the Governor's Palace of Utica

*It will be noted that the first edition, which is followed here, abandons the French method of scene-division after Act I.*

# CATO

## ACT I

### SCENE I

PORTIUS, MARCUS

*Por.* The dawn is overcast, the morning lowers,
And heavily in clouds brings on the day,
The great, the important day, big with the fate
Of Cato and of Rome. Our father's death
Would fill up all the guilt of civil war,
And close the scene of blood. Already Cæsar
Has ravaged more than half the globe, and sees
Mankind grown thin by his destructive sword:
Should he go further, numbers would be wanting
To form new battles, and support his crimes.
Ye gods, what havoc does ambition make
Among your works!

*Marc.* Thy steady temper, Portius,
Can look on guilt, rebellion, fraud, and Cæsar,
In the calm lights of mild philosophy;
I'm tortured, even to madness, when I think
On the proud victor—ev'ry time he's named
Pharsalia rises to my view!—I see
The insulting tyrant, prancing o'er the field,
Strewed with Rome's citizens, and drenched in slaughter;
His horse's hoofs wet with patrician blood!
Oh, Portius! is there not some chosen curse,
Some hidden thunder in the stores of Heaven,
Red with uncommon wrath, to blast the man,
Who owes his greatness to his country's ruin?

*Por.* Believe me, Marcus, 'tis an impious greatness,
And mixed with too much horror to be envied:
How does the lustre of our father's actions,
Through the dark cloud of ills that cover him,
Break out, and burn with more triumphant brightness!
His sufferings shine, and spread a glory round him;
Greatly unfortunate, he fights the cause
Of honour, virtue, liberty, and Rome.
His sword ne'er fell, but on the guilty head;
Oppression, tyranny, and power usurped,
Draw all the vengeance of his arm upon 'em.

*Marc.* Who knows not this? But what can Cato do
Against a world, a base, degenerate world,
That courts the yoke, and bows the neck to Cæsar?
Pent up in Utica, he vainly forms
A poor epitome of Roman greatness,
And, covered with Numidian guards, directs
A feeble army, and an empty senate,
Remnants of mighty battles fought in vain.
By Heaven, such virtue, joined with such success,
Distract my very soul! our father's fortune
Would almost tempt us to renounce his precepts.

*Por.* Remember what our father oft has told us:
The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate,
Puzzled in mazes, and perplexed with errors,
Our understanding traces them in vain,
Lost and bewildered in the fruitless search;
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,
Nor where the regular confusion ends.

*Marc.* These are suggestions of a mind at ease:—
Oh, Portius, didst thou taste but half the griefs
That wring my soul, thou couldst not talk thus coldly.
Passion unpitied, and successless love,
Plant daggers in my heart, and aggravate
My other griefs.—Were but my Lucia kind——

*Por.* Thou seest not that thy brother is thy rival;
But I must hide it, for I know thy temper. (*Aside.*
Now, Marcus, now, thy virtue's on the proof;
Put forth thy utmost strength, work every nerve
And call up all thy father in thy soul:
To quell the tyrant Love, and guard thy heart
On this weak side, where most our nature fails,
Would be a conquest worthy Cato's son.

*Marc.* Portius, the counsel which I cannot take,
Instead of healing, but upbraids my weakness.
Bid me for honour plunge into a war
Of thickest foes, and rush on certain death,
Then shalt thou see that Marcus is not slow
To follow glory, and confess his father.
Love is not to be reasoned down, or lost
In high ambition, in a thirst for greatness;
'Tis second life, it grows into the soul,
Warms every vein and beats in every pulse;
I feel it here, my resolution melts——

*Por.* Behold young Juba, the Numidian prince,
With how much care he forms himself to glory,
And breaks the fierceness of his native temper,
To copy out our father's bright example.
He loves our sister Marcia, greatly loves her;
His eyes, his looks, his actions, all betray it;

But still the smothered fondness burns within him;
When most it swells, and labours for a vent,
The sense of honour, and desire of fame,
Drive the big passion back into his heart.
What! shall an African, shall Juba's heir
Reproach great Cato's son, and show the world
A virtue wanting in a Roman soul?

*Marc.* Portius, no more! your words leave stings behind them.
Whene'er did Juba, or did Portius, show
A virtue that has cast me at a distance,
And thrown me out in the pursuits of honour?

*Por.* Marcus, I know thy gen'rous temper well;
Fling but the appearance of dishonour on it,
It straight takes fire, and mounts into a blaze.

*Marc.* A brother's sufferings claim a brother's pity.

*Por.* Heaven knows, I pity thee. Behold my eyes,
Ev'n whilst I speak—do they not swim in tears?
Were but my heart as naked to thy view,
Marcus would see it bleed in his behalf.

*Marc.* Why then dost treat me with rebukes, instead
Of kind condoling cares, and friendly sorrow?

*Por.* Oh, Marcus! did I know the way to ease
Thy troubled heart, and mitigate thy pains,
Marcus, believe me, I could die to do it.

*Marc.* Thou best of brothers, and thou best of friends!
Pardon a weak, distempered soul, that swells
With sudden gusts, and sinks as soon in calms,
The sport of passions. But Sempronius comes:
He must not find this softness hanging on me. (*Exit.*

## SCENE II

### Sempronius Solus

*Sem.* Conspiracies no sooner should be formed
Than executed. What means Portius here?
I like not that cold youth. I must dissemble,
And speak a language foreign to my heart.

### Sempronius, Portius

Good morrow, Portius; let us once embrace,
Once more embrace, while yet we both are free.
To-morrow, should we thus express our friendship,
Each might receive a slave into his arms.
This sun, perhaps, this morning sun's the last
That e'er shall rise on Roman liberty.

*Por.* My father has this morning call'd together
To this poor hall, his little Roman senate,

(The leavings of Pharsalia) to consult
If yet he can oppose the mighty torrent
That bears down Rome, and all her gods before it,
Or must at length give up the world to Cæsar.
*Sem.* Not all the pomp and majesty of Rome
Can raise her senate more than Cato's presence.
His virtues render our assembly awful,
They strike with something like religious fear,
And make even Cæsar tremble at the head
Of armies flushed with conquest. Oh, my Portius!
Could I but call that wondrous man my father,
Would but thy sister Marcia be propitious
To thy friend's vows, I might be blest indeed!
*Por.* Alas, Sempronius! wouldst thou talk of love
To Marcia, whilst her father's life's in danger;
Thou mightst as well court the pale, trembling vestal,
When she beholds the holy flame expiring.
*Sem.* The more I see the wonders of thy race,
The more I'm charmed. Thou must take heed, my Portius;
The world has all its eyes on Cato's son;
Thy father's merit sets thee up to view,
And shows thee in the fairest point of light,
To make thy virtues or thy faults conspicuous.
*Por.* Well dost thou seem to check my lingering here
On this important hour—I'll straight away,
And while the fathers of the senate meet
In close debate, to weigh the events of war,
I'll animate the soldiers' drooping courage
With love of freedom, and contempt of life;
I'll thunder in their ears their country's cause,
And try to rouse up all that's Roman in them.
'Tis not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it. (*Exit.*
*Sem.* (*solus*). Curse on the stripling! how he apes his sire!
Ambitiously sententious——But I wonder
Old Syphax comes not; his Numidian genius
Is well disposed to mischief, were he prompt
And eager on it; but he must be spurred,
And every moment quickened to the course.
Cato has used me ill; he has refused
His daughter Marcia to my ardent vows.
Besides, his baffled arms, and ruined cause,
Are bars to my ambition. Cæsar's favour,
That showers down greatness on his friends, will raise me
To Rome's first honours. If I give up Cato,
I claim, in my reward, his captive daughter.
But Syphax comes——

## SCENE III

SYPHAX, SEMPRONIUS

*Syph.* Sempronius, all is ready;
I've sounded my Numidians, man by man,
And find them ripe for a revolt: they all
Complain aloud of Cato's discipline,
And wait but the command to change their master.
*Sem.* Believe me, Syphax, there's no time to waste;
Ev'n whilst we speak, our conqueror comes on,
And gathers ground upon us every moment.
Alas! thou know'st not Cæsar's active soul,
With what a dreadful course he rushes on
From war to war. In vain has nature formed
Mountains and oceans to oppose his passage;
He bounds o'er all, victorious in his march,
The Alps and Pyreneans sink before him;
Through winds and waves and storms he works his way
Impatient for the battle: one day more
Will set the victor thundering at our gates.
But tell me, hast thou yet drawn o'er young Juba?
That still would recommend thee more to Cæsar,
And challenge better terms.
*Syph.* Alas! he's lost!
He's lost, Sempronius; all his thoughts are full
Of Cato's virtues. But I'll try once more
(For every instant I expect him here)
If yet I can subdue those stubborn principles
Of faith and honour, and I know not what,
That have corrupted his Numidian temper,
And struck the infection into all his soul.
*Sem.* Be sure to press upon him every motive.
Juba's surrender, since his father's death,
Would give up Afric into Cæsar's hands,
And make him lord of half the burning zone.
*Syph.* But is it true, Sempronius, that your senate
Is called together? Gods! thou must be cautious;
Cato has piercing eyes, and will discern
Our frauds, unless they're covered thick with art.
*Sem.* Let me alone, good Syphax; I'll conceal
My thoughts in passion ('tis the surest way);
I'll bellow out for Rome, and for my country,
And mouth at Cæsar, till I shake the senate.
Your cold hypocrisy's a stale device,
A worn-out trick: would'st thou be thought in earnest,
Clothe thy feign'd zeal in rage, in fire, in fury!
*Syph.* In troth, thou'rt able to instruct grey hairs,
And teach the wily African deceit.

*Sem.* Once more be sure to try thy skill on Juba.
Meanwhile I'll hasten to my Roman soldiers,
Inflame the mutiny, and underhand
Blow up their discontents, till they break out
Unlooked for, and discharge themselves on Cato.
Remember, Syphax, we must work in haste;
Oh, think what anxious moments pass between
The birth of plots, and their last fatal periods!
Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
Fill'd up with horror all, and big with death!
Destruction hangs on every word we speak,
On every thought, till the concluding stroke
Determines all, and closes our design. (*Exit.*

*Syph.* (*solus*). I'll try if yet I can reduce to reason
This headstrong youth, and make him spurn at Cato.
The time is short; Cæsar comes rushing on us——
But hold! young Juba sees me, and approaches!

## SCENE IV

JUBA, SYPHAX

*Jub.* Syphax, I joy to meet thee thus alone.
I have observed of late thy looks are fall'n,
O'ercast with gloomy cares and discontent;
Then tell me, Syphax, I conjure thee, tell me,
What are the thoughts that knit thy brow in frowns,
And turn thine eye thus coldly on thy prince?

*Syph.* 'Tis not my talent to conceal my thoughts,
Or carry smiles and sunshines in my face,
When discontent sits heavy at my heart:
I have not yet so much the Roman in me.

*Jub.* Why dost thou cast out such ungenerous terms
Against the lords and sovereigns of the world?
Dost thou not see mankind fall down before them,
And own the force of their superior virtue?
Is there a nation in the wilds of Afric,
Amidst our barren rocks, and burning sands,
That does not tremble at the Roman name?

*Syph.* Gods! where's the worth that sets this people up
Above your own Numidia's tawny sons?
Do they with tougher sinews bend the bow?
Or flies the javelin swifter to its mark,
Launched from the vigour of a Roman arm?
Who like our active African instructs
The fiery steed, and trains him to his hand?
Or guides in troops the embattled elephant
Loaden with war? These, these are arts, my prince,
In which your Zama does not stoop to Rome.