1961

The Life and Work of George Alexander Stevens.

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THOMAS, Robert Blaine, 1934–
THE LIFE AND WORK OF GEORGE ALEXANDER STEVENS.

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1961
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
THE LIFE AND WORK OF GEORGE ALEXANDER STEVENS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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June, 1961
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. John E. Uhler for both his early encouragement of the dissertation and his many suggestions for its development.

Also I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Malcolm Vare for the difficult position he assumed in taking over the work at the last minute and the members of the committee, Dr. Olive and Dr. Sasek, for their considerate and prompt help.
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George Alexander Stevens was a minor literary figure of the middle eighteenth century. His life is an unusual and varied one, for he experienced the extremes of existence in the theatrical world of his day. He attempted successive careers as actor, puppeteer, poet, novelist, dramatist, essayist, and lecturer, achieving popular success only with the latter.

The work of this man has long been forgotten, but this material is of interest because it provides interesting background information on the life and goals of a minor figure of the day. Stevens is clearly a transitional figure: he juxtaposes romantic and neoclassic materials and obviously is striving for popularity. However, it was his misfortune that his own convivial nature, which kept him popular among London club circles, did not extend to his work, so fame and lasting popularity elude him.

Stevens' largest single effort lies in his novels, The History of Tom Fool and The Adventures of a Speculator. These both are rambling, discursive, episodic novels that are in obvious imitation of the successful masters of the genre, Fielding, Richardson, Defoe, and Sterne. Stevens combines neoclassic satire, moralistic sentimentality, and conscious didacticism. The novels are composed chiefly of topical material and satirize the follies of London fashionable society. Stevens is most interested in character appearance. He does not
concern himself much with internal realistic development of personality. This trait reflects his puppeteering experience, and it is in this very area that he scored his greatest success, his dramatic monologue, *The Lecture upon Heads*, itself a series of humorous caricatures. The lecture was further embellished with hand puppet heads.

Stevens was always associated with the theater, and his dramatic work reflects the same characteristics found in his novels. He is constantly concerned with fashionable follies and topical events. His plays are short comical afterpieces and blend serious and humorous elements. Two long plays, *Distress Upon Distress; or, Tragedy in True Taste*, and *The Dramatic History of Master Elyard, Miss Ann, and others...* were unacted and never intended for the stage. His other plays, however, are primarily farcical although they incorporate patriotism, nautical materials, and popular songs. Stevens was well known for his light drinking songs that reflect his philosophy of life. He constantly is concerned with good humor, convivial company, and success.

Stevens is definitely a second rate figure, but he does illustrate the typical minor literary artist of his day. His work provides interesting background material and clearly illustrates neoclassic and romantic characteristics.
George Alexander Stevens is a minor literary figure of the mid-eighteenth century who was quite active in the theater world of London. Stevens was a literary jack-of-all-trades, but it was his misfortune that his great personal charm which made him popular in London club life did not extend to his work. Today, despite the great amount of work he produced, Stevens is virtually forgotten, and his works have never been evaluated.

The eighteenth century was a time of great changes—the early part was neoclassic and the latter part, romantic. Between the two extremes was much shading, and against this varied background appear many minor literary figures. Stevens is definitely a mediocre figure at grips with a great tradition. He is unable to do much that is original, and he follows along established traditions. But his work is clearly typical of the day and blends elements of neoclassicism and romanticism. He is a transitional figure.

In this study I intend to present the biographical facts of Stevens' life and then to devote a chapter to each of the genres he attempted—poetry, the novel, the drama, and finally the lecture. It is my intent to show in this study that George Alexander Stevens, though a minor figure, is representative and typical of the lesser literary figures of his day and that he is, furthermore, a transitional figure, blending neoclassic and romantic traits.
Since George Alexander Stevens was not one of the prominent figures of his age, time has reduced biographical information to a small number of sources. The best biography is The Dictionary of National Biography, in which Thomas Seccombe, the biographer, presents much of the available material; however, Seccombe's account is not complete. A summary of Seccombe's work follows.

George Alexander Stevens was born around 1710 in the parish of St. Andrew's in Holborn, the northwest portion of modern London. His father, himself a tradesman, apprenticed Stevens to a trade which apparently proved unattractive to the boy, for he soon joined a strolling company of players where his convivial temper made him popular with his fellow actors. In this company the stage provided him with a living even though he possessed little talent. In 1750 he belonged to a company which was playing at Lincoln, 130 miles north of London. The following year Stevens suffered a severe illness, and he published "a dismal rhapsody" called "Religion, or the Libertine Repentant," but by 1752 he was acting in Dublin. With his friend, Isaac Sparks, Stevens formed a social club, which they called Nassau Court, and the members held mock trials and enacted other buffooneries. At this time Stevens published pseudonymously his first work, Distress upon Distress: or, Tragedy in True Taste; A
Heroi-Comi-Parodi-Farcical Burlesque, by Sir Henry Humm with notes by Paulus Purgantius. At least one line, "And Common Sense stood trembling at the door," is of interest, for Charles Churchill thought it worthy of incorporation in The Rosciad. 1

In 1754 Stevens appeared at Covent Garden but with no success as an actor. With some recognition as a wit, however, he began an imitation of Pope's Dunciad, The Birth-Day of Folly, 1754; and he was admitted into several clubs, one of which, The Choice Spirits, was located near Covent Garden. For these clubs, Stevens wrote many songs, and he also did songs and speeches for Edward Shuter, a comic actor, and other actors to deliver at benefits. Stevens' "The Choice Spirits' Feast" was published in 1754. This work is supposed to be in imitation of Dryden's celebrated ode, "Alexander's Feast," and Stevens is thought to have performed the piece himself in Ireland. 2 Seccombe calls the work a collection of ditties; and he believes a novel, The Adventures of Tom Fool, which appeared in 1760, is a concealed biography. 3

Although Stevens edited a short-lived periodical, The Beauties of all the Magazines Selected, between 1762 and 1764, he continued his efforts in the theater, and the 1762 interlude, "Hearts of Oak," is credited to him by Baker. Seccombe, however, doubts this, for the main sea song of the same title was first given in Harlequin's Invasion, a Christmas pantomime of 1759, which is attributed to David Garrick. Seccombe believes Stevens would have included the song in his own collection of songs if it were his.

In 1763 Stevens wrote The Dramatic History of Master Edward, Miss Ann, and others, the extraordinaries of these times, a work
Seccombe calls remarkable solely for its quaint woodcuts. The piece is a curious libel (in the form of a dialogue) upon Shuter and his mistress, Nancy Dawson, apparently written because Shuter had refused one of Stevens' dramatic sketches. This sketch was the germ of the Lecture upon Heads, a series of sketches caricaturing the ruling follies of the day. The sketch, enlarged and improved, was presented at the Haymarket in April, 1764, as a lecture; and successful performances in the provinces led Stevens to tour America where he again met with good reception in Boston and Philadelphia. As a lecturer he was supposed to have amassed over 10,000 pounds. Seccombe says that Stevens, despite his stage incompetence, had animation and perception enough to gain a reputation for humor which is not evident in the published work.

In February of 1766, Stevens essayed a "Supplement, being a new Lecture on Heads, Portraits, and Whole Lengths," but the piece did not prove popular. In 1774 he sold the original lecture for a moderate sum to Charles Lee Lewes, who added to it but failed to attain the success of the author. A spurious edition appeared as early as 1770 and was reissued several times with varying title pages. The first authentic version appeared in 1785 with additions by Fredrick Pilon and was edited by Lewes himself, who added an essay upon satire. Subsequent editions appeared in 1787, 1788, 1799, 1800, 1806, 1808, and 1821. An American edition appeared in Baltimore in 1820.

Stevens' first produced drama was The French Flogged, or English Tars in America, acted with little success at Covent Garden in 1761, but not published until 1767 when the author had attained fame as a
le c tu r e r. Ned Shuter played the Irish hero, and Stevens himself acted the minor part of a sailor. In 1767 when Stevens was performing at Whitehaven, a bookseller asked him to mark the best of a manuscript collection of popular songs and, wherever possible, to affix the name of the author. Four years later this material appeared, attributed to Stevens without his knowledge, as The Choice Spirits' Chaplet. Stevens immediately issued an authentic selection of his own songs entitled Songs, Comic and Satyrical, 1772. Two of the more famous songs attributed to Stevens are "Cease, Rude Boreas, blustering raider" to the tune of "Old Hewson the Cobbler" from the ballad opera The Jovial Crew, 1731, by Richard Brome, and "The Vicar and Moses," a ballad suggested by Oliver Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield. Like other songs in the day, these were separately printed and sold by chapmen.

In 1773 Stevens, who had already tried his hand at opera without success, patched together a number of detached scenes in five days to take topical advantage of a recent naval review. The sketch, entitled The Trip to Portsmouth, was successfully presented on August 11, 1773, at the Haymarket Theater, with Charles Bannister and Tom Weston in the leading roles. The Cabinet of Fancy, a volume of selections ascribed to Stevens, appeared in 1780, but Seccombe doubts that Stevens had anything to do with the publication; for when his intellect began to decay around 1780, Stevens retired to the country to live on the meager remains of his savings. He died an imbecile at Hertfordshire at Baldock on September 6, 1784. His final novel, The Adventures of a Speculist, appeared posthumously
in 1788 in two volumes. It clearly reflects the urban interests of
the author, an authority upon city subjects, for it is concerned
with topical and fashionable incidents of London life.\textsuperscript{4}

Seccombe's account, however, is not complete and must be
supplemented with other material. Stevens' own poem, "Religion,
or the Libertine Repentant," for example, appears to be autobiog­
graphical, and the following lines from the piece seem descriptive
of the author:

\begin{quote}
By chance condemn'd to wander from my birth,
An erring exile o'er the face of earth;
Wild through the world of vice—licentious race:
I've started folly, and enjoy'd the chase:
Pleas'd with each passion, I pursu'd their aim
Cheer'd the gay pack, and grasp'd the guilty game;
Revel'd regardless, leap'd reflection o'er,
Till youth, till health, fame, fortune are no more.
Too late I feel the heart-corroding pain
Of sharp remembrance and severe disdain:
Each painted pleasure its avenger breeds,
Sorrow's sad train to Riot's troop succeeds;
Slow-wasting sickness steals on swift debauch;
Contempt on pride, pale want on waste approach.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

But the heart-corroding pains of repentance last only until health
is restored.

Another source of information is the \textit{Biographia Dramatica}.
David Baker credits Stevens with \textit{The Female Inquisition, by a Lady}
\textup{(now lost)}, a 1755 burlesque of Charles Macklin's \textit{The British In­
quision}.\textsuperscript{6} Although the author himself delivered the proemium
and the peroration and Miss Isabella Wilkinson performed on the wire,
the piece lasted but four nights. At this time, Stevens, low in
finances, experienced the extremes of mirth and jollity, want and
dependence; his life was despicable for its meanness and irregularity.
In 1762 Stevens is credited with the authorship of "Hearts of Oak," a piece consisting of "a song and dance of sailors...a temporary affair on the declaration of war with Spain," which met with good success.

Concerning the Lecture upon Heads, Baker reveals that Stevens while acting in the country met there a mechanic who described the members of the company satirically. The idea was developed and resulted in a lecture which was successful in Great Britain, Ireland, and America. Baker says the money Stevens earned lecturing was sufficient to "secure him in affluence" for the remainder of his life.

The "Supplement to the Lecture upon Heads" appeared in February of 1766, but it did not prove popular enough to last more than six nights. A second attempt the following year met with the same fate—after one week the piece was replaced. Stevens' next work was his best full opera, The Court of Alexander, produced at Covent Garden in 1770.

Baker also contributes a long letter revealing interesting biographical information. This letter, described as having "recently appeared in the Morning Chronicle" reveals that Stevens was imprisoned for debt in Yarmouth, a fishing town in Norfolk. Deserted by his company, he sold his clothes for food and luxuries, and was forced to ask a friend for a benefit concert to raise funds to discharge the debt. A reference in the following letter to the scanty amount his wife was able to contribute to his support is the only indication that Stevens ever married:
Dear Sir,

When I parted from you at Doncaster I imagined, long before this, to have met with some oddities worth acquainting you with. It is grown a fashion of late to write lines—I have now, and for a long time have had, leisure enough to write mine—but want materials for the latter part of it. For my existence cannot properly be called living, but what painters term still-life; having since February 13th, been confined in this town gaol for a London debt. As a hunted deer is always shunned by the happier herd, so am I deserted by the company, my share taken off, and no support left; save what my wife can spare me out of hers.

"Deserted, in my utmost need,  
By those my former bounty fed."

With an economy, which till now I was a stranger to, I have made shift hither to victual my little garrison; but then it has been with the aid of good friends and allies—my clothes. This week's eating finishes my last waistcoat and next I must atone for my errors on bread and water.

Themistocles had so many towns to furnish his table; and a whole city bore the charge of his meals. In some respects I (I) am like him, for I am furnished by the labours of a multitude. A wig has fed me two days—the trimmings of a waistcoat as long—a pair of velvet breeches paid my washerwoman, and a ruffled shirt has found me in shaving.—My coats I swallowed by degrees: the sleeves I breakfasted upon for weeks—the body, skirts, etc., served me for dinner two months. My silk stockings have paid my lodgings, and two pair of new pumps enabled me to smoke several pipes. It is incredible how my appetite (barometer-like) rises in proportion as my necessities make their terrible advances. I here could say something droll about a stomach; but it is all testing with edge-tools, and I am sure that is the sharpest thing about me.

You may think I can have no sense of my condition, that, while I am this wretched, I should offer at ridicule: but, Sir, people constituted like me, with a disproportionate levity of spirits, are always most merry when they are most miserable; and quicken like the eyes of the consumptive, which are always brightest the nearer a patient approaches to dissolution. However, Sir, to show that I am not entirely lost to all reflection, I think myself poor enough to want a favor, and humble enough to ask for it. Here,
Sir, I might make an encomium on your good nature, humanity, etc.; but I shall not pay so bad a compliment to your understanding as to endeavor, by a parade of phrases, to win it over to my interest. If you could, any night at a concert, make a small collection for me, it might be a means of obtaining my liberty; and you know, Sir, the first people of rank abroad will perform the most friendly offices for the sick; be not, therefore, offended at the request of a poor (though a deservedly punished) debtor.

G. A. Stevens
To Dr. Miller, P. M. Concaster

Dr. Edward Miller was an organist at the church of Doncaster after 1756 and an amateur historian of the area in which he resided. The general tone and phrasing of the letter seem to indicate that it was written by Stevens; if this is so, it is certainly from an early period of his life, for it seems unlikely that after 1764, as a successful lecturer, he would suffer imprisonment. Pursuing a livelihood wherever he could find it, Stevens must have joined a strolling company sometime between the appointment of Dr. Miller to the position of organist at Doncaster in 1756 and the beginning of Stevens' public appearances in London in 1761.

The earliest edition of Baker states that Stevens was born in Ireland. However, this piece of information must be erroneous; for it is not supported elsewhere, and subsequent editions correct the error. The first edition presents the following interesting account of Stevens' career:

This Gentleman, who is still living, and is well known both as an Actor and Author, but still more so as a Boon Companion, was born in Ireland.—Inclination or Necessity, and probably both, led him early to the Stage, in which Profession he passed some Years in
itinerant Companies, particularly in that whose principal Station is in Lincoln, till at length he seems to have fixed his Residence in London, where he is established by an Engagement at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane. —As a Companion, he is cheerful, humorous and entertaining; particularly after the Manner of his Predecessor Tom D'Urfey, but his Singing, with much Drollery and Spirit, a Variety of Songs of his own Writing, many of which are not only possessed of great Humor, but true Wit, a happy Manner of Expression, and Originality of Fancy, not often exceeded by Authors in that Walk of Poetry. — He has, indeed, been sometimes condemned, and that not entirely without Cause, for having run into too great a Degree of Libertinism in his little Sallies of this Kind.

The reference to an engagement at Drury Lane may also be false, for it appears nowhere else and is omitted in the subsequent edition of 1782. Stevens was primarily associated with Covent Garden and the Haymarket Theaters during his London career.

Concerning Stevens' first play, Distress upon Distress, Baker says "This Piece was never performed nor intended for the Stage, but is only a Banter on the Bombast Language, and inextricable Distress aim'd at by some of our modern Tragi-Writers." 10

The next edition of Baker was edited by Isaac Reed, who continued the original work from 1764 to 1782, supplying deficiencies and rectifying mistakes. That Stevens displayed no talent or merit as an actor and that he was always extravagant, dissipated, and destitute is reiterated. He is revealed as the author of essays in The Public Ledger, a periodical, as well as the editor of his own effort, The Beauties of all the Magazines Selected. Three plays in addition to the unacted Distress upon Distress are listed: The French Flogged; or, The British Sailors in America, a two-act farce written for and acted at Bartholomew Fair, 1759, and Covent Garden, 1760 and 1767; The Court of Alexander, an opera presented at Covent
Garden in 1770; and The Trip to Portsmouth, a one-act sketch presented at the Haymarket in 1773.11

London periodicals provide still further information. The Gentleman’s Magazine, which contains book reviews and obituaries of prominent people, contributes the following account of Stevens’ Distress upon Distress at the time of its publication:

In this piece there is much true humour and just satire, and it is to be regretted that the object of both is combined to the play-house; there are however several inaccuracies which show it rather the production of a wit than a scholar. No judgment can be formed of its merit by an epitome, or an extract. But it cannot fail of entertaining those that are well acquainted with the theatrical state.12

In addition this magazine contains an extensive and flattering obituary for Stevens. The fact that the notice is as long as it is indicates that Stevens must have been well known in London, for he had been secluded in the country for three or four years in a state of imbecility:

At Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, Mr. Geo. Alexander Stevens, author of the celebrated Lecture upon Heads, and of many other humorous pieces. Mr. S. was one of the most singular characters this or any other country ever bred: as an actor, his merit was below mediocrity, yet by extraordinary effort of genius he acquired not only fame but affluence. He is the first instance that can be produced of the same person, that by his writing and reciting, that for the space of four hours did entertain an audience. His Lecture upon Heads, though attempted by several good actors, failed of producing the laugh excited when delivered by Stevens. After exhibiting it with great success all through England, he visited America, and was well received in all the capital towns: at Boston his reception was far beyond what he expected; he was apprehensive that the gloom of
bigoted presbytery would prevent the humour of his lecture from being relished, but crowded audiences for the space of six weeks convinced him of his error; at Philadelphia his reception was equally flattering and profitable. After an absence of two years he returned to England, and soon after paid a visit to Ireland. It cannot be wondered that Stevens and his lecture were admired by people remarkable for their humour. His lecture in the course of a few years produced him near 10,000 pounds the greatest part of which melted from his hands before his death. He was the author of our best classical songs, and of several poetical pieces of merit. The first idea of his lecture he got at a village when he was the manager of a company, and met with a country mechanic, who described the members of the corporation with great force of humour; upon this idea Stevens improved, and was assisted in making the heads by his friend, who little imagined what a source of profit he had established. Mr. Stevens, some years before his death, lost the use of his faculties. The writer of the greater part of this account received his information on the subject from Mr. S.

And finally additional material about the life of Stevens is contained in the short introductory sections to the 1785 edition of The Dramatic History and the 1788 edition of The Adventures of a Speculist.

The account of the last years and some comments upon the deceased author from the 1785 edition of The Dramatic History follow:

It was his misfortune that his mind and body did not keep pace with each other in their decay. He sunk by degrees into a state of all others the most distressing to those who have any connection, either of friendship or consanguinity, with a person so unhappily circumstanced. He retained his bodily powers, and exhibited a miserable spectacle of idiotism and fatuity. At length, after several years remaining in this condition he died at Baldock, in Hertfordshire, September 6, 1784.

The wit of this singular man was most uncommon, but while it was eccentric and extravagant, it had the effect to entertain as well as to surprise. His
knowledge of the world was most extensive; and arose out of the endless variety of his adventures. He penetrated with ease into characters of every description; and he could hit them off with those fortunate touches which proceed only from the pencil of a master. His vivacity disposed him to gaiety; and his powers of humour were various and irresistible. His songs were so pointedly excellent, and so peculiarly his own, that they could not be imitated, and have never been surpassed. His life was devoted to festivities and extravagances of every kind; and his writings, while they exhibit the erratic whimsies of his fancy, hold out to remark, a picture which deserves attention from its wildness and originality.14

The introduction to the 1788 edition of The Adventures of a Speculist reveals that Stevens had served in the navy:

Stevens has often been heard to say, that in the war of (we think) 1739 or 1740, he went aboard a man of war, and used frequently to relate the following story: During an engagement one of his brother sailors was wounded; another sailor took him in his arms in order to carry him to the cockpit, but before he had brought him off the deck, a chain-ball carried away his head, unperceived by the sailor who was bearing him. When the surgeon saw the trunk, he cursed the sailor for bringing him a man without a head. 'Damn me (says the fellow) but he had his head on when I took him up.'15

Stevens' naval background is reflected in his work, for he uses sailors as characters in The French Flogged and The Trip to Portsmouth.

Additional material of interest is supplied about the Nassau Court Club, which was organized in Dublin in 1752 by Stevens and his friend Isaac Sparks. Meetings were held in a tavern on Nassau Street, and the members discussed humorous subjects. Order and regularity were enforced, however, by fining offenders. On one occasion the group tried a nobleman famed for his folly and extravagance for the
crime of wearing a hat at a meeting. The "lawyer" for the nobleman won the case with the argument that his lordship could not be punished for wearing a hat because it was well known that he had no head. 16

Stevens was equally popular in several London clubs. The Adventures of a Speculator contains frequent reference to the group called Comus Court, of which Stevens was president. He comically describes a meeting of the group, and references to the group appear regularly throughout his work. 17 The members of Comus Court were known as Choice Spirits and met to enjoy life, good company, and good ale at Jack Speed's White Horse Tavern in Fetter-Lane; 19 these meetings were "on the same plan as Sadler's Wells, where people might sit and smoke, and drink and hear singing, and see all the posture-makers and tumblers, yet only pay so much for liquor, and have all these comical fancies into the bargain." 20

Very little information is available on the plays that are attributed to Stevens, but some light is shed on them in play lists. Hearts of Oak, the first piece that is credited to him, appears in the Larpent catalog. A comic interlude, it was submitted for license January 13, 1762, by David Garrick and John Lacy, and it was produced at Drury Lane on January 15, 1762. 21 Although the piece is listed as by George Alexander Stevens, it is possible that Garrick altered the piece to conform to his own conception. 

The Mad Captain and The True-Born Irishman, two plays that are attributed to Stevens between 1769 and 1771, are no longer in existence. The Mad Captain was a burlesque, and The True-Born Irishman was a farce. The latter bears the same title as a play which
appeared in Dublin in 1763 by Charles Macklin. Stevens' version was acted at York in 1771, but it was never printed.22

Before Stevens retired to the country in 1780, he seems to have made a final lecture tour of Wales. He appeared in Wrexham Town Hall, December, 1779. Wrexham, a wealthy flannel manufacturing town, which was considered the capital of Wales in the second half of the eighteenth century, was happy to welcome one of the most famous lecturers of the day.23

Stevens' associates are difficult to determine, for few are mentioned directly, and most of these people are even more obscure than Stevens himself. Records of friendship between Stevens and other individuals are few; certainly, after nearly two hundred years, it is difficult to state positively that friendship existed between Stevens and the men associated in some way with the work he produced. One may conjecture with reasonable assurance that members of the theatrical profession of the day were at least known to Stevens and that in certain instances they were his associates. The individuals mentioned in Stevens' work and the actors listed as acting the plays indicate acquaintance, for one must assume that the author was consulted in the production of his dramas.

The letter to Dr. Edward Miller which relates Stevens' imprisonment was published long after it was written, probably after the deaths of both men. Edward Miller was elected to the post of organist of the church of Dorchester in 1756, a position which he held until his death in 1807. Since Miller did not get his degree of Doctor of Music until 1786, nearly two years after the death of
Stevens, it seems certain that the letter was not published at an earlier date. It seems probable that Miller's heirs found the document among his effects and thought it of sufficient interest to warrant publication. Except for this letter, no record connects the two men.

Another close friend of Stevens seems to have been Isaac Sparks, the actor comedian, who is lavishly praised in the preface of Stevens' early burlesque of the theater of the day, *Distress upon Distress*, 1752:

> That if every one, who likes you as an Actor, was to be Witness, like me, of Your Behaviour in private Life, You would, if possible, be much more respected than You are at present. You are very pleasing as an Actor, highly diverting as a Companion, but more praise-worthy as a man. I know You to be a sensible Friend, an indulgent Father, and an affectionate Husband. These are qualities none can exceed, few come up to. When the Sallies of Wit and Humour shall decay, when the Grapes' enlivening Juice becomes Tasteless, and when the best Company ceases to be entertaining, this character shall remain. Then in Your last, in Your latest Voments, shall You enjoy the secret Satisfaction of an Honest well-spent Life.\(^{24}\)

With Sparks, Stevens founded the convivial Nassau Court Club in Dublin in 1751. Sparks was the Lord Chief Justice, and Stevens the Attorney General. *Distress upon Distress* is dedicated to the right comical Lord Chief Justice Isaac Sparks, who contributes greatly to make life amusing;\(^{25}\) but despite Stevens' high praise, Thomas Seccombe calls Sparks a dissolute humorist.\(^{26}\)

The popular and successful *Lecture upon Heads* was sold in 1774 to Charles Lee Lewes, then the principal harlequin at Covent Garden. Stevens was associated with Covent Garden throughout the
major part of his career, and Lewes was there also. Through their connection with the theater, and through the sale of the lecture, it is certain that the two men knew one another. In 1787 Lewes toured with the lecture, appearing with an expanded version in Scotland, India, and Wales. He was popular in Wales, for he was one of the first stars to visit the Welsh stage.27

Frederick Pilon, 1750-1788, who did some additions for the first authentic edition of the *Lecture upon Heads* (edited by Charles Lee Lewes), praises Stevens highly. It is possible that he knew Stevens personally since Pilon was for a time a strolling player. At the time Stevens was at Covent Garden, Pilon was a London hack writer. He was associated with Covent Garden after Stevens retired. Pilon says:

> But here is a head (shows Stevens' head) I confess I have more than once wished on my own shoulders; but I fear my poor abilities will bring a blush on its cheeks. In this head Genius erected a temple to Originality; where Fancy and Observation resided: and from their union sprang this numerous and whimsical progeny. This is the head of George Alexander Stevens, long known, and long respected; a man universally acknowledged of infinite wit and most excellent fancy; one who gave peculiar grace to the jest, and could set the table on a roar with flashes of merriment; but wit and humour were not his only excellencies: he possessed a keenness of satire, that made folly hide her head in the highest places, and vice tremble in the bosoms of the great; but, blessed with that affluence which genius and prudence are sure to acquire in England, the liberal patroness of the fine arts, he afterwards enjoyed that ease his talents had earned, whilst Fame, like an evening sun, gilded the winter of his life with mild, but cheerful beams. With respect, but honest ambition, I have undertaken to fill his place, and hope my attention and zeal to please will speak in behalf of conscious inferiority.28
One of the most eminent men named in *The Dramatic History of Master Edward, Miss Ann, and Others*, was Samuel Foote (1720-1777), the dramatist-actor-manager of the Haymarket Theater. Since he used his considerable talents of mimicry to satirize severely the leading members of the theater, Foote was well known to the theatrical profession. Both Stevens and Foote satirized Charles Macklin's lectures in burlesque performances, and even more indicative of an acquaintance between Foote and Stevens is the fact that the last dramatic work of Stevens, *The Trip to Portsmouth*, was produced at Foote's Haymarket in 1773.

Mr. Warner, the stage manager of Covent Garden, the theater with which Stevens was chiefly associated, seems to have been another friend of Stevens. Stevens mentions that he frequently dined with Warner and that he wrote drolls for Warner's booth and for other puppeteers. Warner was an aloof man who did not associate with his fellow theatrical people, but he kept a good house. Before a fair of consequence, job seekers swarmed to Warner's house to apply for jobs and to seek a free meal. As the actors, clowns, dancers, and singers demonstrated their talents, they watched eagerly the meal that was cooking; but very few were ever invited to partake of the repast. Stevens, however, did probably sup with Warner, for he speaks of the man as a close friend.

Several members of the Cibber family are mentioned by Stevens. Colley Cibber's daughter, Charlotte Charke, an actress-adventuress who led a tempestuous life on and off the stage, is called "...a lady of surprising singularity; but the oddities of the human mind are unaccountable." Unhappily married, Mrs. Charke left her hus-
band to pursue a stage career of her own. Her initial rapid success on the stage did not last. Several quarrels alienated her father, and her last years were, therefore, difficult. She became a strolling player and took any part that was available. It is likely that during her years as a strolling player she became acquainted with Stevens, who at the time was just beginning in the profession. Before she died in 1760, she wrote an autobiography in which she gave a full account of her varied career and mentioned Stevens in the dedication to herself from herself:

Your exquisite Taste in Building must not be omitted: the magnificent airy Castles, for which you daily drew out Plans without Foundation, must, could they have been distinguishable to Sight, long ere this have darken'd all the lower World: nor can you be match'd in Oddity of Fame, by any but that celebrated Knight-Errant of the Moon, G---E A---R St---S: whose Memoirs and yours conjoin'd, would make great Figures in History, and might justly claim a Right to be transmitted to Posterity; as you are, with Exception, two of the greatest Curiosities that ever were the Incentives to the most profound Astonishment.32

Both Charlotte Charke and Stevens were puppeteers,33 and Stevens probably had her in mind when he describes the adventures of the prostitute who, dressed in men's clothing, visits the scenes of London night life. Charlotte was the sort of woman who would participate in such a scheme, and she herself confesses to living in men's clothing for forty years. Furthermore, Stevens himself, since he was a friend and a fellow madcap, could have been her escort. Such an adventure, though presented as fiction, would have been typical of the pair.34
Susannah Cibber, 1714-1766, was a sister-in-law of Charlotte Charke. Originally a singer, she became a great tragic actress but failed utterly at comedy. She seems to have known Stevens, and in The Dialogue in The Shades, 1766, she mentions him: "After having served two apprenticeships to the stage, he found himself as deficient in the point of acting as at the first setting out."35

Charles Macklin, 1697-1797, a comic actor, dramatist, and stage manager, is mentioned in The Dramatic History as having befriended Stevens by a loan and an offer to tutor him in the art of acting.36 Macklin was the originator of The British Inquisition, a series of lectures designed to inform the populace of the finer cultural values as interpreted by Macklin himself. Stevens parodies Macklin's elaborate rhetorical methods in his "An Introduction to the Preface of a 'Dissertation Upon Oratory'" which occurs in The Adventures of a Speculist, a parody of the methods of The British Inquisition.37 Having begun as a strolling player in 1713, Macklin retired from the stage in 1753. In March of 1754, he opened a tavern; and in November he started his lectures on subjects like "The Comedy of the Ancients," "Shakespeare's Plays," "The Stages of Greece and Rome," and other similar topics. By 1775 he was forced into bankruptcy and returned to the stage. These lectures inspired Stevens to do The Female Inquisition, "by a Lady," in parody of Macklin; Samuel Foote also did a series of cruel burlesques on the conceit of Macklin.38

Well known to Stevens also was Edward (Ned) Shuter, 1726?–1776. Shuter was famed for his comic roles, and from 1753 he appeared at Covent Garden, where he met Stevens. In 1761 both
appeared in Stevens' play, *The French Flogged*; Shuter starred, and Stevens played a minor role. Shuter commissioned Stevens to write comic songs and droll speeches for delivery at benefits. In fact, Shuter even performed a benefit for Stevens at Covent Garden on March 21, 1765, delivering a parody of Shakespeare's seven ages of man speech, elaborated upon by Stevens; the piece is given in *The Adventures of A Speculist.* The same year, however, after Shuter rejected Stevens' latest sketch, which was revised to become the celebrated *Lecture upon Heads,* Stevens wrote *The Dramatic History of Master Edward, Miss Ann, and others* to satirize Shuter and his mistress, Nancy Dawson, who had also appeared in the 1761 production of *The French Flogged.* The slander of the piece seems not to have affected the friendship of the two men, because Shuter appeared in Stevens' *The Court of Alexander* in 1770.

Shuter's mistress, Nancy Dawson, was a celebrated dancer, and her hornpipe was for a few years the toast of London. For her, Stevens wrote the following "Ballad of Nancy Dawson," set to the music of her hornpipe. Today the tune is known in the nursery as "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush."

Of all the girls in our town,  
The black, the fair, the red, the brown,  
Who dance and prance it up and down,  
There's none like Nancy Dawson:  
Her easy mien, her step so neat,  
She foots, she trips, she looks so sweet,  
I die for Nancy Dawson.

See how she comes to give surprise,  
With joy and pleasure in her eyes;  
To give delight she always tries,  
So means my Nancy Dawson:
Was there no task t'obstruct the way,
No Shuter droll, nor house so gay,
A bet of fifty pounds I'll lay
That I gain Nancy Dawson.

See how the op'ra takes a run,
Exceeding Hamlet, Lear, or Lun,
Tho' in it there would be no fun,
Wasn't not for Nancy Dawson.
Tho' Beard and Brent charm every night,
And female Peachum's justly right,
And Filch and Lockit please the sight,
'Tis crowned by Nancy Dawson.

See little Davy strut and puff,
P—on the op'ra and such stuff,
My house is never full enough,
A curse on Nancy Dawson:
Tho' Garrick he has had his day,
And forc'd the town his laws t'obey,
Now Johnny Rich is come in play,
With the help of Nancy Dawson.26

The ballad expresses Garrick's discomfiture at the success of the re-vival of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera at Covent Garden. John Rich was the manager of the theater, and the piece was acted by Nancy Dawson, John Beard as Captain MacHeath, and Charlotte Brent as Polly Peachum.

Thus we can see through Stevens' biography his close connection with the London theater and his association with some of the foremost figures of his day. This is important, for Stevens' work is concerned with city topics—the fashionable follies and the current events of the London scene. Stevens is imitative of the successful literary figures, and he is definitely striving for popular success through imitation of all popular genres. His work, however, remains similar despite the change of genres, for he consistently strives to satirize society and social follies as well as didactically instruct his rea-ders on the values of good conduct, honesty, morality, good humor, and
virtue. To see this, however, it is necessary to examine the work itself.
FOOTNOTES


3. Seccombe here seems to be mistaken, for the novel has no direct relationship with the life Stevens lived. Stevens was associated with the theater throughout his life, but Tom Fool has no connection with the stage whatsoever. The only similarities are that both lead a precarious early life, Stevens as a strolling player and Tom as a picaresque hero. Tom moved from the country through a series of adventures including debtor's prison and a respectable marriage to a lady of quality, to a life in the new world with the woman he loved. Stevens undoubtedly utilized incidents and scenes from his own varied life for the novel; to say, however, that the novel is a concealed biography is to imply far more than is true, for the story diverges completely from the main facts of the author's life.

4. Seccombe retells an anecdote about Stevens to illustrate Stevens' possession of a rough and ready wit. Irritated by an inept insolent waiter, Stevens is supposed to have thrown him out of a window, telling the host to put it on the bill. This vivid incident is amusing but apocryphal, for it is unlike Stevens, a man who is constantly concerned with good humor, to act in such a hasty, impetuous way. Such an episode, however, occurs in Stevens' Lecture upon Heads, when a lusty and impatient squire takes action (1772 ed., p. 23). It would seem that Seccombe jumps to conclusions in assigning the episode to Stevens himself.


7. Ibid., II, 206.

8. Ibid., I, 600-1.

9. David Erskine Barker, The Companion To The Play-House; or, An Historical Account of All the Dramatic Writers (and other Works) that have appeared in Great Britain and Ireland from the Commencement of our Theatrical Exhibitions, down to the Present Year, 1764, 2 vols. (London, 1764), II, a. v. "Stevens, George Alexander."
10. ibid., I, s. v. "Distress upon Distress."

11. David Erskine Baker, Biographia Dramatica, or a Companion to
"Stevens, G. A."

Magazine, XXII (1752), 339.

13. "Obituary of Considerable Persons; with Biographical Anecdotes,"

14. George Alexander Stevens, The Dramatic History of Master
Edward, "Miss Ann, and others, the extraordinaries of these times (London,
1795), x-xi.

15. George Alexander Stevens, The Adventures of a Speculator (London,
1799), I, xvi-xviii.

16. ibid., I, xviii-ix.

17. ibid., II, 15-31.

18. ibid., I, iii; II, 1627; George Alexander Stevens, The Celebrated
Lecture upon Leads (Dublin, 1835), p. 32; Stevens, Dramatic
History, p. 27.


20. ibid., II, 1.

21. Catalogue of the Most Celebrated Plays in the Huntington Library,
Douglas MacMillan, ed. (San Marino, 1939), p. 36.

22. The Stage Cyclopedia of Plays, "Theatre, cont., second

and Early Nineteenth Centuries (Cardiff, 1949), pp. 13-14.

24. George Alexander Stevens, Distress upon Distress; or, Transly
in True Taste; a Caricature of Tragedy-Farce-Caricature Parodies (Dublin,
1752), p. ix.


"Stevens, George Alexander."

27. Price, The English Theater in Tales..., p. 3.

28. George Alexander Stevens, The Works of the Late G. A. Stevens,
This interest in puppeteering is reflected in the puppet shows incorporated in The Adventures of a Speculist and Tom Fool. Furthermore, his Lecture upon Heads is built around puppet material.


31. Ibid., p. 135.


33. Ibid., II, 134f.

35. John Ténest, Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1770 (Oxford, 1832), X, 177.

36. Stevens, Dramatic History, p. 56.


CHAPTER II

The Poetry

Since Stevens' earliest literary endeavor is his poetry, it is convenient to start a consideration of his work with it, although it was his most unsuccessful effort. Stevens attempts unsuccessfully to imitate popular successes of his day. Here, as in all of his work, there is a strange combination of neoclassic form, sentimental moralizing, and romantic subject matter.

Stevens' first poem, entitled "Religion: or, The Libertine Repentant, A Rhapsody," is his "dismal rhapsody" written in 1751 after a severe illness. The piece was published in London by W. Reeve in Fleet Street and was distributed at Grey's Coffee House. It is a rather short piece about 200 lines long. The preface asserts that the lines were written during an illness to amuse the author and were never intended for publication, but since some parts had appeared in print incorrectly and without the author's permission, the whole is presented. It is more likely, however, that this is merely a conventional apology for his defects:

The writer has look'd on life too long, to be anxious for the event of these rhymes: they were wrote neither for profit, nor reputation; if he gets either by them, its more than he expected; or if he offends, its what he never designed.  

The poem itself is in iambic couplets. It opens with the author calling upon religion to bear him to its sacred bower, for
he wishes to seek rest and peace through faith and patience. The author then addresses the "sons of shew," the heedless youths who lightly bound over life's surface pursuing the splendors of a day and who worship the gods of mode and whim. Like the vain birds who fly through the air displaying their painted wings, like the strutting cock, the gallant will find soon that the day comes when idle pleasure ends and the opportunity is wasted. Then, too late, will the idle pleasure seeker turn to the comforts of religion and seek that which he has scorned earlier.

The pretty damsels who inspire love, sugared words, and wanton pleasures are instructed to turn to sedate wives, lest that which feeds their vanities be fed to the worms with the passage of time and the soft ensnaring form that is so effective in enticing the men turn to ugly flesh. The poet urges these women to think before they dare to be vain and to recognize the heavy consequences of the idle and of the wastrel.

Next addressed are the "wealthy slaves of care," those who never have felt the trickling tender tear or the sympathetic sigh, and the "sons of trade," who grub for gold, worshiping only the religion of gain. These people, who have heartlessly pursued money, will never be rewarded with heavenly bliss; for God will turn a deaf ear to their pleading sighs of repentance just as they have ignored the needy on earth. Equally treated will be those high and proud figures of the court, who in the grave will be equal only to the lowest, undistinguished slave, for the worms have no respect for birth. "Courtiers and clowns compose alike his feast (p. 10)."
The sparkle of diamonds, the glare of titles, and the pomp of rank will be of no avail in death, when only the sweet reflection of a well spent life can offer comfort.

Stevens depicts several of the newly dead in their pleas for mercy, including the low wretch raised by ill-made wealth who shakes, shrinks, and begs for mercy, the plaintive groan of the orphan, and the cry of the lust-ruined fair. At doomsday, all the graves will render their dead when the trumpet sounds and the clouds give way. Virtue will be rewarded, and pride will be punished by God, who will hear the cases of all mankind from the statesman to the meanest man.

Through declaring the dictates of the Lord and by following the doctrines of Love, Justice, Faith, and Humility, with the aid of sincere religion and true repentance, eternal reward is assured: "Love was religion; and religion Love (p. 13)." Man must scorn wealth and pride and proclaim the wonders of the Lord, expose the sinners, check the vicious, humble the haughty, and scourge the shameless.

The poem concludes with the lines that are considered autobiographical. The author claims that he has wandered over the earth condemned by chance to the world of vice and folly until youth, fortune, fame and health are exhausted, and sorrow's sad train has succeeded to riot's troop. The poem ends with an address to the Almighty:

Eternal Good! from Thee our hope descends;
With Thee it centers, and in Thee it ends;
To Thee, with shame-torn heart, I trembling kneel;
Heal me with mercy; oh! my Saviour, heal!
Great Lord of life, if daring I request,
Still let me sigh among mankind unblest'd;
Still sickness, shipwrecks, prisons, plagues to know;
Whatev'r my fate is—still my faith's in you:
Still shall my name attune thy suppliant's song;
Still shall thy praise dwell rapt'rous on his tongue:
Wretched or bless'd, still shall I always own,
Whatev'r I feel, Heav'n's holy will be done (pp. 17-18).

The content of the poem is thoroughly sentimental, and it is expressed in a pseudo-realistic, moralistic way. Stevens is consciously appealing to the emotional side of humanity and is striving to evoke from his reader a pitying tear. It is interesting, however, to note that this romantic sentimentality is presented in regular couplets, the neoclassic medium. The poem is slight and of interest only for its quaintness and its rather overdone sentimentality. It presents a hint of the coming graveyard school of poetry in the idea of the need for repentance at the graveside and in the popular idea of the great equalizing power of death.

Two more fragments are appended to Stevens' Distress upon Distress, "The Tombs" and "Tea-Drinking," both written in 1752. "The Tombs" is again a short poem in iambic couplets, but this time the poem is divided into six line stanzas. Again the material is regularly treated. The title reveals the subject matter, and the poem relates to the graveyard school. Like "Religion," this piece warns of the day of doom when all will be judged. The poem opens with a request addressed to the Father of Fate, the being who controls the planets, the comets, the seas, and the winds. The poet seeks aid on the day of doom when Time breaks his glass and Justice avenges Oppression and Pride, rewarding Piety and Virtue.

The poem is set in the graveyard at evening, with flitting bats circling in the sky and gloom settling around the cloisters.
Into this scene comes a black-decked funeral procession. The mourners shed farewell tears over the dismal bier, sigh over the slain, utter doleful dirges, and proclaim the merits of the dead. The hoarse raven croaks, and the bell slowly tolls:

While the hoarse Raven’s death-denouncing Drone,
The dull, slow sounding Bell’s appalling Tone,
The moping Owl, the Beetle’s drowsy hum,
Spread, swelling thro’ the melancholy gloom.

In this grim and sentimental setting the “Teacher” addresses the audience and moralizes that in death all are equal and all must come to death, the splendid, the proud, the wretched and the great:

Dust unto Dust, so pass the Proud away,
Go, sift the shrines for all ennobled Earth,
And teach the Tomb-bred Worm Respect for Birth.

In this sad Scene, the universal Seat,
Here rest the Wretched, and here rot the Great,
Mute moulder here the smooth-tongu’d servile Tribe,
And here Corruption shuns the guilty Bribe,
Dry’d is the famish’d Widow’s fallen Tear,
And pining Merit’s Sighs are silenced here:
Th’ Unhappy here, a sure sad refuge find,
Free from the Farce, or Falsehood of Mankind (pp. 78-79).

To this sad scene comes “The Fair One” bringing beauty and light to the dark dome. To her the sage directs a warning that she, too, will lose her beauty like the moss-covered busts that are cracked and worn with time and decay. On these busts crawl slimy slugs and black spiders. In the same way rich beauty will fade and the fine form will fail; the eye will dim and the tongue will cease; the limbs will no longer act, and the body will be placed beneath the earth to rot with all the others:
How Nice, how Noble once, avails not here,  
The mould'ring Beggar rots as fine as fair.  
Entomb'd the courtly Toast forgets her Pride,  
And patient crumbles by the Peasant's Side.  
Alike the Weeds spread nauseous o'er the Grave  
Of laurel'd Caesar, or the fetter'd slave (p. 80).

The fair one, Lysine, is distressed to learn that all will share the  
same fate, for she cares not to share her shroud with the tradesman  
and the sot and the clown; but the sage, Senecio, assures her that  
soon, too soon, death grips the glittering form, and parts seated  
lovers to feed the worm:

Haply, some Time-beguiling Wit here sleeps,  
Or Viser, buried like his ill-got Heaps.  
Perhaps some tender Maid, or tinsel'd Peer,  
Alas—"A simple sinless Babe lies here."

"Just—on the World, the Infant op'd its Eyes,  
Then closed them quick, and sought his native skies."

Millions below, when Souls to Bodies join,  
Shall wish their Lives had been as short as thine.

The Bud of Infancy; Youth's blooming Fruit;  
Manhood mature; and Age's sapless Root;  
Death equal reaps to fill the vacant Tomb,  
For Life's large field makes but one Harvest-home (p. 81).

Senecio calls upon Lycine to bow before the Lord and seek  
religion to comfort her on the day of doom. She repents her giddy  
ways and calls upon heaven to accept her as a convert. No longer  
will she be governed by caprice and prompted by fashion and fancy;  
from now on she will shun frolic and idle activities to spend her  
time in reasonable activities.

The whole piece is over-done and ineffective. It is overly  
alliterative, and the material is so sentimental and so rocithic that
it becomes silly. Stevens undoubtedly was affected by the tremendous popularity of Gray's "Elegy W ritten in a Country Churchyard," published in 1751 just a year before, and was striving for a similar effect, with the equalizing power of death and the unrealized potential themes. Although Stevens echoes Gray's phraseology, he lacks the restraint of Gray, and his poem becomes macabre and grotesque. The moral and didactic tone of the poem and the neoclassic couplets show his relation to the earlier period, and the complete lack of control and judgment in the content clearly ties Stevens to the coming romantics. The poem is of interest today only for the extremes of taste it reflects. No one could read it for its value as poetry.

"Tea-Drinking," however, is more typical of Stevens. This piece, too, is among his earliest efforts. The poem is a very brief one in quatrains and is rhymed abab. The piece opens with a picture of a lady in a sedan chair on her way to or from a visit. She is preceded by her valet who cries for a way through the crowd. The chair comes to a halt, and the lady emerges:

Along the Pavement grates the swift-stop'd Chair,
Back on its well-oiled Hinges, flies the Gate,
Behind the high-held Hoop, up-springs the Fair,
Rustling in rich Array, and silken State.

And howd'ye ended, the Contest of Place,
And all the fashionable Flutt'ring Toils,
Down, curtseying, sink the Laughter-loving Race,
And undisturb'd one Momen't, Silence smiles.3

Betty, the maid, then serves tea to the lady with elaborate ceremony:

The leading Fair the Word harmonious gives
Betty around attends with bending knee;
Each white-arm Fair, the painted Cup receives
Pours the rich Cream, or stirs the sweetened Tea.
The crystal Sweets in sparkling Fragments view
As slitt'ring Pebbles in disorder lie
Ah! what avails its spangle-candy'd Hue,
Like flake-fall'nm Snow, it must dissolving die.

......

The Odour-spreading Steams repale the Fair,
And breezy fragrance fills the rich-spread Room (p. 92).

At this point, however, the charming and dainty beauty of the picture is marred by the introduction of a moral. A scene of riot is set in contrast to this dainty and pretty scene. Riot's sons profane the silence of the night with noise and waste the day in drunken stupor. These Sons of Thirst are instructed to shun the insidious glass and turn to reasonable activities:

Ere purpled Poisons scorch the pimpled face
And boil the blood in each pulse-wanting vein,
Bloat the bloom'd Cheek, the sparkling Eye-Balls blear,
Make pale the Healthy, and unnerve the Strong,
Swell the small Waist, the Memory impair,
And steal each secret from the stammering Tongue.

Free from Disease the active temperate Feast,
Each dainty Meal, by Exercise they prove,
What Courts may envy they unfated taste,
And Joys of Health, of Liberty, and Love (p. 93).

Returning to the first scene, Stevens likens the tea lamp to the temple fires of the Vestal Virgins and the detailed and exact ritual of the preparation of the tea itself, to a kind of sacrifice. Again the fabric of the piece is torn by a concluding moral addressed to the ladies, warning them of the dangers of scandal and gossip, ill nature and spleen, for these qualities at the tea table profane and destroy the things of beauty including the maid herself: "like
"Tea-Drinking" is typical of Stevens in that it concerns current fashions. The verse is regular, and it is pretty, descriptive, and charming until the heavy didactic and moralistic qualities are added. It is, of course, artificial: but still there is a lightness and an appeal. The conscious teaching element destroys the effect and turns the tone to sentimentality. The lightness is lost, and the piece becomes improbable, heavy, and dull. As long as the poem maintains its fragile and delicate tone, it is, though slight, attractive.

Stevens' next effort is his "Birth-Day of Folly," an imitation of Pope's Dunciad. The poem was not successful, however, so only one book was completed. It was printed for W. Cooper and published in 1755. The poem bears the subtitle "A Heroi-Comical Poem" and is anonymously presented under the pseudonym Peter. The piece is in iambic pentameter couplets and, like Pope's work, contains notes intended to attack dullness, pedantry, folly and personages of the day. It is dedicated to Sir Orlando Furioso, Bart.

The preface, by "Tim," purports to reveal the private history and character of the author, a personage supposed to have been born in the north of England of poor but honest parents, educated at a good grammar school, and apprenticed to a tanner, an occupation that proved distasteful. If this is accurate, it means that the early trade that Stevens was apprenticed to was that of tanner. Then his father died in less than a year, "Peter" ran away and took refuge with a school fellow who educated him in the classics, to the extent
that Peter composed several pastorals and some rural descriptions. Encouraged by his efforts, he endeavored to establish himself in town, but found there poor reception and no income. Conveniently, he fell into a fit of melancholia, declined, and died, leaving the manuscript in a box of his effects.

The poem opens on the first day of April, the fairest day of the year and Folly’s own day, one given to sloth. The night, however, is devoted to mirth in celebration of her birthday. William Lauder, a Scot interested in Milton, is chosen herald and loudly brays a proclamation to the crowd calling upon the dunces and the zanies to attend a meeting in Hart Street at seven in the evening sharp, for then all the sons of dullness must meet to keep Folly’s holiday. Contemporary stage figures are named: Quin who played Brutus, and Macklin, who once played Shylock, and currently was playing the fool with his British inquisition; the orchestra of John Rich’s Covent Garden Theater is to provide the music for the gathering, which will fit the occasion with music like that of the damned in hell.

Folly is presiding over the session, reclining half supine on a sofa made of goose-feathers, the gift of Indolence:

Her little eye twinkles to the light,
But open’d wide, and goggling is her right:
Down from her collar to her bosom bare
Her bells hung pendant like a solitaire:
High o’er her ear, light-wavering to the gale,
She wore the plumage of a peacock’s tail,
Which, nodding o’er her round unmeaningful face,
Gave to her front the French, fantastic grace.
Full fat and fair she waddles in her gate,
And lisps so pretty that she loves to prate;
Her ears she pricks up to herself to lift,
And sputters all her meaning in a mist,
Wise in conceit she seems, for all the while
Her face is dimpled with a foolish smile.
A painted fan her fickleness declares,
Which waving gives the idiot Goddess airs;
She flirts it to a sceptre of command;
And grasps an English Plautus in her hand.  

The feast opens with the hooting of screech-owls and the braying of donkeys, cat-calls, and haranguing. Tall T____r addresses Folly and endeavors to disperse with his art the glaucoma that mists her eyes; adored abroad, in France, Spain, Prussia, Portugal, Poland, Sweden, Germany, Bohemia, Moscovy, and Denmark, he is much the rage in town. He has been knighted by foreign courts and is currently occultist and physician to the Pope. The note reveals what the last information hints at, for this portrait is one of the then celebrated adventurer and quack doctor, Chevalier Taylor. Taylor advises Folly to let him cure her with his wonder-working needle, a needle which is far more efficacious than contemporary popular remedies of tar water and Ward's pills.

Folly, irked by his audacity, replies:

Go on and prosper, great exotic Knight,
Yet show some reverence for thy mother's sight:
Tho' of that glittering pendant justly vain
(alluding to Taylor's decorations)
In France tho' honour'd, and ador'd in Spain;
Tho' Germans, Goths and Huns thy skill admire,
And many a Nurse, and many a rural Squire,
Yet I the greatest of all fools should be,
Tho Queen of dupes, to trust my eyes with thee (p. 7).

Next Folly is addressed by an impudent figure, something between a monkey and a man, who imitates all characters. This seems to represent Samuel Foote, who audaciously attacked most of the prominent figures of his day from the stage. In this portrait the hero
possesses a piercing eye, and a sweet but false smile, and he uses
his charm to cover his sneering and his satire. He prepares to assume
a rostrum to turn auctioneer, but Folly is incensed by his foolish-
ness and dismisses him:

Vile wretch, thou'rt much too silly for my son,
Born on Baeotian bogs,—away, begone,
Go, and reserve the squeezings of thy brains,
To brew small-beer, and feed the pigs with grains (p. 9).

Then Orator Henley addresses .olly utilizing his rhetorical
eloquence. Void of wit and grace and possessed of matchless im-
pudence, Henley opens his address with high-directed hands, embracing
the heavens. He elaborately clears his throat, turns up his eyes,
and bellows in Folly's cause. He presents his latest book to his
queen, for in it he defends folly and attacks her foes as well as his
own. Folly, however, merely laughs at his pomposity, deriding the
boozy orator, but urges him to continue his efforts. For his ser-
vices she promises to make him Bishop of the Blacks for his scorning
of law, reason, and sense.

Folly's final son, N____n (Backlin), the great Inquisitor,
arrives fresh from the Robin-hood, a tavern that in the day was the
center of dispute on various religious and political topics. At the
Robin-hood, Folly's favorite school, all sorts of crack-pot schemes
are discussed under the presiding officer, a baker, who rules with a
hammer. If the speaker goes over his allotted time, the baker strikes
him down with a hammer. To this society belong contemporary figures:
Morgan, a writer on religion who has taken his material from Spinoza;
Mandeville, who wrote the "Fable of the Bees" to prove that vice was
necessary; Toland, an atheist; Tindal, a debauched and blasphemous churchman; Woolston, a madman who wrote against the miracles of the gospel; Bolingbroke, who attacked morality and religion; and Chubb, a writer about infidels. All these men have provided Macklin with his material, and from them he has drawn his lectures on the law, the church, the senate, and the stage, intending to settle all the points in question once and for all.

Folly again is irritated by her son, and, snatching the paper signed by Satan and tinged with brimstone, singes Macklin's face as a cook-maid would singe a goose. Then all her drones gather round to feast on rich wit-dampening foods and liquors. The resulting riot is dispelled by a stout crew of thief-catchers in the service of the public.

Stevens' attempt is on the surface similar to Pope's Dunciad in that it directs its satire to foolishness and folly, but Stevens lacks the depth of Pope. Pope has standards that he is defending, but Stevens is merely being clever at the expense of some of the noted figures of the day. The mode of presentation, too, is inferior. Like Pope, Stevens employs the iambic couplet; but unlike Pope, he is unable to attain depth and variety. Stevens' work is surface work that is stilted, wooden, regular, and ordinary. His "Birth-Day of Folly" met with little success and deserved little, for the interest in the poem is merely that of the slanderous but somewhat clever portraits of contemporary figures.

Stevens' next effort, his "Choice Spirits Feast: A Comic Ode," was printed for J. Tower in London in 1754. Comus delivers
the prologue which reveals the purpose:

Amidst this gay Circle, bright beam's the fair Race,
Each Form's rich with Gesture, each Gesture with Grace;
Love laughs in their Looks: Youth blooms in each Cheek,
Sense speaks when they smile, and Wit smiles when they speak.
Gay dress'd Daughters of Beauty, ye Sons of True Taste,
This Evening accept of a Choice Spirits Feast.

I've called them together, this Sect I've selected,
By Comus this Evening Collation's directed;
Great Bacchus the gay God of Bumper's my Sire,
Great Bacchus the Fuel and Life of Love's Fire;
Who bestows on the Lover Assurance to try,
And drowns in the Lady all Force to deny.
From him I'm descended, and thus spoke my Father,
Go; call the chief Sons of True Humour together.
Let Harmony usher the Things they shall say,
Be laughter attendant, and Wit prompt the Play,
But banish low Quibble, and Sing-song impure,
Poor personal Satire, Entendres obscure,
Let not Ribaldry dare to offend the chaste Ear,
Nor Dullness, tho' even in Op'ra, appear;
Let Mirth by the Side of plain Sense take her Place,
And the Comic Muse smile undebauch'd by Grinace,
Do not stamp the Buffoon on the Sterling of Nature,
But the Sense of each Song be express'd in each Feature,
Come, Lads, let me see you know how to obey,
Ye social, harmonious Choice Spirits being,
A Moment be silent, ye Fair, while they sing.

The piece opens with a recitative about the break of day, the horn's sound, and the baying of the dogs. The hunters, all victims to the previous night's rouse, come to reluctant life with the rapping of the watchman. When the bucks demand that the watchman explain his audacity, he, in the guise of Father Time, warns them of the careless attitude they hold toward life and predicts that repentance will come too late with age. At the end of the first part the bucks reject his advice, gag him, and throw him in a pipe of claret.
The second part is in praise of drinking:

Come my Bucks, let to-night be devoted to drinking,
To-morrow's too soon to be troubled with thinking,
No more shall Time preach, nor no more shall we hear it,
For he's drown'd as he ought in a hogshead of Claret.

Now Time is no more, or no more can forbid us,
Of that troublesome Guest a Choice Spirit has rid us;
Yet if Time should be wanting for any Design,
Henceforth he is found in a Hogshead of Wine.

Since Time is confin'd to our Wine let us think
By this Rule we are sure of our time when we drink.
Come, my Bucks, let your Glasses with Bumpers be prim'd,
Now we're certain our Drinking is always well tim'd (p. 6).

In contrast to this praise of drinking and good fellowship, Stevens attacks the Italian opera by calling it "dullness in a foreign tongue." The scene concludes with a burlesque duet in ridicule of the Italian opera. There are a number of Italianate sounds put together nonsensically, the whole ridiculing the slight nature of the Italian opera's plot and its repetitiveness:

Thus with Jargon they juggle us out of our Money,
***
Each phrase must be fine, it's Nouvelle we are sure on't,
***
Be not Britons misled by a Song or a Dance,
Nor your Fathers forget, they're remember'd in France;
Shall Capers, Concertos, Coupees, Serenades,
Demolish the Men that demolish'd Armadas (p. 10).

The poem ends with an appeal to English patriotism and urges that foreign talent be expelled to preserve sense, wit, and reason. An
Epilogue points out that all is done in good fun and the purpose of the piece is merely to amuse. Laughter is the test; and if the piece has occasioned just one laugh, it has been proven successful.

This ode is supposed to have been in imitation of Dryden's celebrated St. Cecelia's Odes, but it bears very slight likenesses to Dryden. The piece, like Dryden's works, alternates song and recitative, but the content is entirely different. Stevens is merely concerned with celebrating a meeting of the Choice Spirits, his club, where the members enjoy good drink and pass a pleasant time. There is no more to the piece than this, except for a slight touch of nationalism in the plea for the expulsion of the foreign talent. The only resemblance to Dryden's work, then, is that the piece is an ode, it is regular in form, and it is occasional poetry.

Stevens' songs are very much like the "Choice Spirits Feast." They are occasional, and they are readily classed in two types. His songs are invariably either regular drinking songs that call for the enjoyment of every moment of life with the aid of a bumper of wine and a group of good fellows, or they are songs of English valor, bravery, and triumph celebrating the English Tar, the English way of life, or English victory over her foes. To these two types is added a varying amount of classical allusion as ornament. Most of these pieces are set to tunes of older popular songs, and were undoubtedly composed for the amusement and entertainment of Stevens' fellow club members. The songs are regular in rhyme, and are fairly slight pieces.

Stevens' poetry is his poorest work. He clearly illustrates here, though, his duality and his transitional status between the
neoclassicist and the romanticist. He employs regular verse patterns, regular rhyme, and the iambic pentameter couplet for the most part. His earlier work is didactic to the last degree and is obviously designed to instruct; it is concerned with human traits, follies, and fashions. Even in this earliest work, however, Stevens shows his sentimentality, for the tender scenes of rewarded virtue and the threatened doom of vice were popular and current devices. Stevens is best at the common drinking song that reflects his convivial nature and his pleasant philosophy of life. These songs were created for his fellow club men, and are light, pleasant, tuneful, and clever. When Stevens attempts serious verse, he is too heavy-handed to be successful.
NOTES

1. George Alexander Stevens, Religion: or the Libertine Repentant (London, 1751), p. vi. Throughout this dissertation all references to Stevens' works are to the text cited first. The first citation will be complete, and for subsequent entries, the page number will follow in parentheses.

2. ________, The Tombs (Dublin, 1752), p. 70.


4. ________, The Birthday of Folly (London, 1755), n. 3-4.

CHAPTER III

Tom Fool

Although Stevens' poetry shows his dual nature and reflects both sentimental and neoclassical traits, his novels are more illustrative of his work. The poems are fairly early efforts, and most of them are incomplete—with the exception of his popular song lyrics, and they are clearly occasional. His two long novels, however, show his dual nature in that they contain a strange combination of neoclassic and romantic materials as well as all of the current popular devices from the novels of masters like Fielding, Richardson, Defoe, and Sterne. The development of the novel in the eighteenth century by these men is one of the most noteworthy contributions of the age to the history of English literature. The rise of this genre is based upon a combination of genius and accident in an attempt to obtain realism and to portray the varieties of human experience. In the novel the individual seeks truth through experience; so the universal is rejected and the particular is stressed, specifically in character and setting. The two may both be suggestive and subtly appropriate, but, since most of the authors are consciously attempting to achieve realism, neither must impair believability.

The responsibility for these changes lies with the reading public. The many-sided break with literary tradition is caused by
the development of a new reading public, a public created with the rise of journalism. The first circulating library, opened in 1740, began an institution which was immensely popular, for books of the day were expensive and few could afford personal libraries. Circulating libraries stocked all types of literature, but the most popular was the novel, and this naturally led to an increase in this genre, even though relatively few were able to read. In addition to these obstacles, there was a strong mercantile and utilitarian objection throughout the country to educating the poor for fear of creating discontent. Thus the economic level restricted readers to two types, both people who had leisure time sufficient to afford opportunity to read—the women of the upper and middle class society who had little responsibility in the day, and the members of the poorer classes who had leisure time, the household servants and the apprentices. Thus the reading public came to be made up of female readers and tradesmen, shopkeepers, apprentices, and servants primarily connected with the middle class commercial and manufacturing interests. These people were concerned with everyday life, self-improvement, and entertainment: long scenes of distress and sentiment replace neoclassical tragedy, wit, and humor. The literary patronage of the court declined, and with it declined literary standards, for with the arrival of literature in the market place came necessity to please the buyers. These buyers demanded more explanation, clarity, and description, combined with the economic virtues of speed in production and copiousness. Naturally verse declined, and prose emerged; for verse demands more effort and more ability.
It was for this audience that Stevens wrote. He borrowed Defoe's concern for economic stability, and he similarly places serious emphasis on moral improvement, rising in the world, founding a family, bookkeeping, material success, and the sanctity of the contract. Like Defoe, Stevens worked rapidly and, consequently, lacks plot and continuity. Both authors are weak in construction and slight the value of fiction as entertainment. Likewise, both are strongest in the single brilliant episode.

From Richardson, the pillar of the sentimental novel, Stevens borrows the concept of man, innately benevolent and basically good. Virtue here must result in suitable reward, and vice must bring punishment, although Stevens is more like Defoe in that monetary success usually dispels moral obligations. However, like Richardson, Stevens is concerned with a wealth of detail concerning everyday life and behavior in an attempt to simulate realism.

Fielding, however, unlike Defoe and Richardson, was steeped in classical traditions and felt it was necessary to act in order to stem a growing anarchy of literary taste. For him, sound classical learning was necessary, and he stresses verisimilitude to show human nature, manners, and customs in his own society. Unlike Defoe and Richardson, Fielding has little personal contact with his characters, and he does not develop them with the individual in mind. Stevens follows Fielding in these views and is more concerned with assigning characters to their proper category in society, with as few diagnostic features as necessary without going deeply into the minds of the characters. He presents a static view of human nature, and there is an emotional artificiality. Plot is his major concern and has
priority.

From Sterne Stevens borrows the artistic possibilities of the unspoken, the half-spoken, the gesture, and the fleeting expression. Stevens attempts to copy Sterne's whimsical attitude, and he submerges plot in a world of domestic trivia with conscious lack of control. Like Sterne Stevens listens to humanity and sympathizes, but he adds a touch of the ludicrous.

To these borrowed traits Stevens joins romantic elements. The romantic delight in reactionary spirit, the picturesque, and the subjective is juxtaposed with the Augustan concern for respectability, conventionality, rationality, conformity, and objectivity. The Augustans exalted form over matter and hated enthusiasm. Between the two, the line of demarcation in narrative fiction is between those novels predominating in satire and wit and those which contain idealized characters possessing warmth, sympathy, benevolence, and moral excellence. With these is a glorification of nature, an interest in everyday affairs, an appreciation of natural beauty, and an exotic scene and a romantic past joined with the simple life. These works delight in confessions, emotional conflicts, passions, and morality. Sentimental fiction is first a story of love and second a record of trials and tribulations demonstrating the nature of the hero and heroine utilizing pity, benevolence, magnanimity, sympathy, tenderness, fidelity, and morality. The opportunity to teach is never neglected although the moral may not be obvious or the method may not be appropriate.

Stevens, like his age, shows a general tendency to be satisfied with typed characters in his novels, despite the new oppor-
tunity for variety, psychological development, and reality. The age continued, ineptly, the doctrine of the ruling passion, and the sentimental lovers are born for each other and for love fully equipped with fine nerves and a feeling heart.

Like the poorer authors, he pandered to the taste of the circulating libraries by providing stimulating material calculated to fill a craving for excitement: the pathetic, bizarre, pathological, melodramatic. All intellectual cargo is jettisoned, and stock themes and situations prevail: the prodigal's return, the tearful farewell, the fainting fit, the benevolent tableaux, the call of the blood, the seduction of the innocent. A large portion of this is today mediocre, but not all of it. All is interesting, and some of these authors had real ability. The notable development of sensitiveness is essential to progress in narrative fiction, and these novels portray life from the viewpoint of men whose estimate of man was generous—too generous but significant. The chief theme is love, and the story is merely frame for love and adventure. For two decades after Fielding and Smollett, the neoclassical novel flowers. This type is concerned with satire; it attempts to correct folly and affectation with ridicule. At the same time, the press is burdened with slipshod adventure. Richardson presents the feminine viewpoint and disapproves of satire because it stresses the evil side and hence may corrupt the reader's morals. Furthermore, Richardson lacks the wit and humor necessary to satire as well as the necessary taste, style, selectivity, and simplicity, but the other major figures of the day fit into the neoclassical tradition.
Stevens represents the transitional figure between the two camps, for his novels blend elements of each. The History of Tom Fool, Stevens' first novel, appeared in two volumes in 1760; his second, The Adventures of a Speculist, also in two volumes, appeared posthumously in 1788.

The preface to The History of Tom Fool reveals Stevens' expressed intent in publishing the novel:

There is a certain Period of Time, Metaphysicians predicate by this Term, Anxious Space.

This Vacuum is the half Hour immediately preceding Dinner; when Diamonds scratch Sash-windows, or decorate Drinking-glasses; when Plates are turn'd round upon Forks, and the Inside of French Roes moulded into Geometrical Trapeziums.

At that Time, all the English World is,—a—I don't know howish. Therefore this Book is recommended to be bought by all families, Unchristian, as well as Christian; and one Chapter of it is to be then served up, by Way of .het. 3

Equally flip in his dedication, Stevens addresses Tristram Shandy, expressing the anxiety of the world for his birth, since only the first two volumes of Tristram Shandy had appeared in 1760 and had aroused considerable popular interest. Stevens selects Tristram as dedicatee in accord with "the Examples of Quacks who, to vend their miserable Compositions, fix some famous Name to the Top of their Hills (I, xi)." Furthermore the name Tristram excites the curiosity of the town and tempts the people to read Stevens' "Collection of Curiosities." Finally, Stevens concludes by pointing out the dissimilarity between Tristram and himself: "Many People are in a Hurry to have you born; many People are in Haste to have me buried."
Advising Tristram of the reception the world offers, Stevens warns of the troublesome questions concerning characters, and the meaning of the asterisks and the black pages because "such is the customary Tribute Curiosity exacts from every living 'Triter, when fame has stamp'd the Sterling mark of Merit upon his Undertakings (I, i-iii)."

Stevens points out the disappointment of "Genius" whose works are not understood, but even worse is the fate of those who are misunderstood. Obviously Stevens means himself, for he belabors the point by relating a personal instance. His elderly aunt, "a little too-much given to Methodism" finds the works of Milton delightful until she misinterprets *Paradise Lost* and believes Satan is Milton's hero. Threatened with expulsion from the house and subsequently with famine, Stevens turns his reading to the safer *Journal and Journey* of Mr. Whitefield, evangelical leader of Methodist forces. Returning to address Tristram as author, one of the few who can both read and write well, Stevens humorously enjoins him to append notes to his work to prevent misunderstanding, for "Notes set a Book off, as Lace does a Coat; a rare Ornamental Edging: They are agatical Stiptics which stop an Author from running to Waste, after an Excruciation is critically amputated. They are the only Sheathings a Genius can use, to prevent Commentator's Maggots from impairing his Works, by eating it away with rotten Interpretations (I, iii-iv)."

Again illustrating his point with a supposedly personal experience, Stevens relates the reception Tristram is given by Sir Goutly Scutcheon and his family and in so doing imitates fashionable opinion. The baron himself is interested in the book only for its
exposé of ministerial miscarriages; his lady is interested only in identifying actual personages; and a friend, a gentleman critic who has never read the book, damn the work for its impieties. Through the lack of notes and critical apparatus, all three have misunderstood the author. It is true, however, that they are shallow and false, and admit they find almost as much pleasure in displaying the beautifully bound work in a glass bookcase.

In his own novel Stevens proposes to exhibit "as great an Oddity, as ever any of the Shandean Race exhibited; as much the Sport of Fortune, and the one who has made as much Sport too (I, x)." This is The History of Tom Fool, and the opening motto is, "More knows Tom Fool, than Tom Fool knows." Stevens tells the reader to take his work slowly, without too much haste. He urges the impatient reader to "Jog on a little longer--don't--pray don't throw the Book down--how will you know what is is about if you do. Much Mystery is concealed in it, I assure you; which by logical, and apologetic Inference and Implication, shall be made clear (I, xi)."

Like most neoclassical novels, Tom Fool opens with a careful study of the ancestry and origin of the Fool family. Stevens in a pseudo-serious and pseudo-classical tone traces the family from a bastard of the Phrygian Thormorma, or from the adopted child of the King of Thrace, the first to keep fools around him for sport. This derivation leads Stevens to a favorite topic, the status of the foreigner in English society. He sarcastically claims the Italians feel England is the country of fools because so many Italian performers have made fortunes in England and returned to Italy to raise fine mansions with monies earned from English follies. The French
share the same view, but the multitudes of French cooks, governesses, pimps, hair-cutters, priests, spies, dancing masters, and card players, dare not openly call the English fools for fear of endangering their livelihoods. Nevertheless, Stevens finds it impossible to fix definitely the origin of the family or of the country, for there are so many branches of the Fool family that it can only be considered a name common to all men.

The novel opens much like one of Fielding's, for the hero, Tom Fool, is the son of a wealthy country squire who, with the neighboring gentry and clergy, spends his time keeping open house and drinking prodigiously. Tom is sent to school but is made the butt of the school because of his simplicity and good humor, two qualities which are shown not to serve the possessor at all well in the current times. Furthermore, Tom will not fawn on the wife of the headmaster, or pursue the seduction of the maids like the other students. Too, although he is by far the best scholar in the school, he is treated as the greatest delinquent. Characteristically, Stevens criticizes society through its treatment of Tom, who represents the good-natured, generous, unselfish man. Tom complains to the old woman gingerbread seller who lives nearby the school when two wealthy gentlemen visit the school and show their ignorance by confusing Erasmus and Cicero and by other obviously incorrect scrambled erudition; however, despite their obvious ignorance, they are elaborately treated because of their wealth. Tom is censured and punished for his lack of respect. Resolving to stay no longer, Tom goes to his guardian, Mr. Frivil, keeper of the cockle shells for Lady Dowager Crotto, and is made fungus gatherer. When Mr. Frivil
goes to London to seek subscriptions for his tome on the mathematical investigation of billiards, Tom is made Keeper of the Chinese Curiosities for Miss Fash, Lady Grotto's daughter, with the promise of a promotion to Butterfly Catcher in the summer. Here Stevens is again ridiculing the follies of fashion in his day in accord with neo-classical motivation.

Milady's son, Sir Tasty, offers Stevens further opportunity to satirize the city emoluments—opera-going, hazard-playing, criticizing, cock fighting, challenging, turtle-eating, tavern visiting, keeping, and whoring. When Tasty returns home, Tom, with the assistance of Miss Fash, Lady Grotto's daughter, is made Cockchafer Feeder. At this point sentiment enters the story. One day while seeking his birds, Tom meets a destitute woman and her two children. This tender group soon meets a hypocritical vicar, Mr. Voss, who delivers a long speech against the inhumane profession Tom keeps, but refuses to aid the destitute family Tom has met. Tom collects a subscription in the village for the woman and her children, but everything is granted reluctantly because country people are so lacking in pity that they resemble the savage poths and vandals. Undoubtedly Stevens, long a strolling player, is remembering his own experiences on tour and is settling a few old scores. Soon after, Tom is examined by the vestry and charged with bringing a fresh charge to the parish. Even though the woman is a daughter of a former local family now fallen to decay, the vestrymen have no concern for more than their purses. When everyone refuses to take care of the poor family, Tom accepts responsibility and presents a letter from his master authorizing all necessaries for the new charges. The attitude of the vestry-
men change immediately, and they start outdoing one another in pro-
ferred kindnesses to curry favor with one who has such influential
connections. The whole episode is sugary sweet and sentimental.
Tom virtuously acts in accord with humane standards, but the majority
of mankind is too selfish and too self-centered to consider anyone
else.

A scene between the church warden's wife and the Lady Trotto's
woman, Mrs. Flimm, satirizes the smug superiority of common women.
Both gossip about the newly arrived family and exchange tidbits of
local gossip, unable to say anything pleasant about anyone. Mrs.
Flimm reveals that Miss Fash has fallen in love with Tom.

Mr. Voss, when entertained at the manor, finds Tom held in
high repute; so he again shows his hypocrisy when he praises Tom's
benevolence and charity and secures himself to the family with
flattery. When confronted with Tom, Mr. Voss endeavors to gain Tom's
favor; but Tom reveals what really happened the day before, and the
humiliated vicar departs after being exposed before the rector.
Stevens is consistent throughout his work in treating established
religion and its officials severely.

Stevens digresses to satirize the fashionable male pursuits of
talking politics and of drinking and female pursuits of gossiping
and card playing. Then the men leave their club and join the women
at Mrs. Thrums', a slap-stick brawl results, and everyone is mauled.

Returning to Miss Fash and her attachment to Tom, we find her
suffering the typical sentimental symptoms of love—loss of appetite,
want of sleep, and an uncommon fondness for solitude when Tom was
absent from the hall, coupled with an abhorrence of cards. Love at last conquers "Pride" and "Fear," and she resolves to inform Tom of her passion for him in a letter. Tom, meanwhile, is at a sporting match with Squire Tasty, where he is threatened with caning by Mr. Yeast, the proudest man in the county, for an imagined slight. When his attempt to cane Tom fails, Yeast demands that Sir Tasty discharge Tom immediately, but Squire Tasty, aware of the true situation, refuses Yeast and threatens a duel if Yeast remains unsatisfied; Yeast, though proud, is a coward and offers apologies to all involved.

Back at the manor, Miss Fash sentimentally awaits Tom: "Night is the Sabbath of human Kind; Midnight, therefore is high Holiday—Oft at this witching Time of Night, the Mind-tainted fair One expects her dear Undoer (I, 61)." Instead of Tom, she is discovered by her brother, evoking "Shame, Crief, Anger, Fear, Pride and Disappointment . . . . (I, 66)." Even more enraged when Squire Tasty playfully claims that Tom has told him of her passion for him, Miss Fash secures Tom's instant dismissal from her doting mother. Tom, unaware of the reason, is turned out of the house; Sir Tasty had by mere chance divined the situation in an effort to conceal his own assignation with his sister's maid. Slightly inebriated, Tasty had mistaken the rooms. Fittingly enough, Miss Fash in turn later discovers Sir Tasty with her maid, but now she assumes a moral air and warns her maid of the loss of virtue, "the best Portion a poor Person can have (I, 66)."

Tom takes refuge at the bottom of a haystack for the remainder of the night, with the elaborately artificial comfort of idyllic nature around him:
...the mild beaming Moon brightening every Object around him. The distant Steeples, Turrets, and Slate-topped Houses seemed silvered—beneath the Hedges Gloom, the Glow-worms glimmered thro' the leafy Trees; the whispering Wind rocked the little Birds to Rest, that were perched on the Velvet-budding branches; the Dew-moistened Grass glistened, as if thick sown with Pearl; the bleating Ewes, and baaing Lambs lay by him; and, on an up-hill Land, at Distance, with Legs bent underneath them, chewing the Cud, the lowing Herds were rested; while midst the Reeds a ripling Rivulet shining, slowly rolled over the Water-polished Pebbles; and the unclouded Arch of Heaven, studded with Stars, canopied the Landscape (I, 69).

With the morning Tom proceeds to the village to collect his debts, but all his former friends reject him now that his position at the manor is ended; only Miss Bonville, who has been re-established by the suit of the squire, remembers Tom's assistance when she arrived in town destitute. To her Tom reveals his life story. He acknowledges that Miss Fash had "a Sort of Friendship" for him but virtuously swears nothing untoward has ever occurred. Although Miss Fash has sent a note revealing her passion, Tom declined to take advantage of it because it would be unbecoming for a servant in the household to take liberties with a person of rank. Like Joseph Andrews, Tom is too innocent to recognize the planned seduction on the part of a lady of quality.

After Tom's story, Stevens, in typical fashion, digresses and relates Miss Bonville's story. A former toast of the country, she was brought up an only daughter with all the advantages, but threw them away to run off with an army officer. Her mother soon died from alcoholism, and her father dissipated his estate hunting and electioneering. After her first lover's death in Flanders, Miss Bonville takes several more, has two children, and returns to her
native town when necessity exhausts all her resources. The children conveniently disappear so that she may snare Sir Tasty.

Returning to the present, Tom is lionized in the village when it is revealed that he has spurned Miss Fash. He is sought out at the tavern by Lady Grotto's woman, herself desirous of Tom's favor. Stevens again copies Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*; Mrs. Flimm is obviously modeled on Lady Booby's woman, Mrs. Slipalop. Mrs. Flimm proposes to marry Tom, and go with him to London, offering to use her influence to obtain him employment in the city. As she pursues the offer with intimacies, Squire Blood, a neighboring gallant, intrudes to learn the facts of the story from Tom, for he himself has designs upon Miss Fash. Incredulous of Tom's claim of innocence, Blood turns himself on Mrs. Flimm, who sends Tom on an errand so that she might pursue the affair with Blood; but Tom soon returns to announce Flimm is wanted at home. Once home she turns to the cordial closet to soothe her disappointments of the evening.

On the way to London, Tom seeks out Mrs. Flimm's brother, butler to Mr. Ephriam Invoice, a rich merchant whose history follows. Marrying for love in youth, he lost his inheritance. After the bloom of love wore off, he allowed his wife to encourage some of her admirers, exacting damages from the trapped suitors. With his first wife's death he married a wealthy widow, who soon died leaving her spouse her considerable fortune. He married another heiress and again inherited her estate with her timely death. The fourth time he married the talented daughter of Lady Title for position. His house reflects his determination to rise in the fashionable world, for it is refinished in the highest gothic fashion, turreted, battlemented,
and landscaped to the last degree. Stevens here satirizes the extremes of contemporary taste; for the gardens contain: canals, Chinese bridges, grottos, cataracts, hermitages, serpentes, temples, pagodas, floating islands, a mandarin barge, and a Venetian gondola. Courteously received by Mrs. Fliim's brother, Tom is made footman in the Invoice household.

The other servants grill Tom but find him a dull fellow, for he is not proficient at gaining money from the guests of the house. When the servants learn that the master has invited English artists for dinner, they express contempt for such lowly, poorly dressed, and improvident fellows (I, 104). Here, obviously, Stevens is interjecting another favorite theme.

Soon Tom is placed in the best of graces with both family and servants by his assiduity, generosity, and readiness to do anyone a good turn; however, Tom is again cast into disgrace by the wrath of the ladies of the household when they find out his story, for they cannot forgive him for his shabby treatment of a lady of quality, and, as in society, his good qualities are sacrificed to fashionable folly. Meanwhile Mrs. Fliim has caught a new suitor and is now Mrs. Murphy Macgragh.

Again travelling to London, Tom finds a hundred pounds, abandoned by a fleeing highwayman the night before. In accord with sentimental standards, Tom resolves to keep the money until he can find its rightful owner but, with qualms, he borrows one guinea for necessities. He later borrows more for suitable clothing. Tom, seeking related members of the Fool family in London, meets two rogues, a gambler who has come up through the slums of London, and a discharged
valet. The pair plan to victimize Tom, but he is saved from them when a gentleman recognizes the gambler and has him arrested for robbery.

Disappointed, tired, chagrined, and dejected, Tom meets an agreeable young lady in the park; she, a woman of pleasure, leads him home for one idyllic week, but then the lady flies off to Bath, accidentally with Tom's cash after which Tom is carried off for debt. In prison, each inmate tells Tom of the events that caused his fall; Phil Poplin reveals that he has ruined himself with his muddling efforts to catch a fortune or to enter into an alliance with a lady of quality. Tom relates his story, and the next morning he reads the manuscript life of John Junior, the most noteworthy gentleman of the gaol. The life, entitled *Patchwork*, is a take-off on the popular novel of the circulating library and bears the impressive subtitle "*The Life of John Junior, Esq.* Interspersed with Dissertations, Quotations, Characters, Descriptions, Similies, Variations of Stile, Contents of Chapters, and Conclusions. Being an universal Copy-Book; or, Assistant for all Pen-men in the Pamphlet Way. Designed particularly as a Common-Place, or Compendium: To be made use of, by the Putters-together of Things; for the Circulating Libraries (I, 151)."

*Patchwork* begins with John Junior's ancestry and relates his picaresque journey through life. After a start as a travelling puppeteer, he becomes a London waiter, and turns to gambling. A bar maid advises him to become an author. But since there are already more books than buyers, he rejects that proposal as well as the alternative ones that he turn scientist, Methodist preacher, actor, or quack doctor.
John meets Squire Singleton, whose mistress has just left him, and with a lady of pleasure, Miss Mask, the three proceed to the squire's country house. At the races the squire and John display their knowledge, peep into pens, walk with the feeders, turn with the riders, shake hands with the knowing ones, visit the cockpits, propose bets to display arithmetical talents, and take none to show that they possess the secret. At dinner the men discuss the merits of the horses and outdo one another in proposing bets until the "air was really wounded (1, 186)."

Jack and the lady surprise the squire in bed with the dairy maid, and Miss Mask begins a melee until she is soothed with bank notes and the maid's dismissal. The three resume their travels, aiming for Bath, "the universal Receptacle of the Rich, the Wretched, the Gay, the Ridiculous, the Sick, the Dissatisfied (11, 189)." On the way they visit "the Thatched Theatre" more commonly called the Old Barn to see a puppet show featuring Punch and his wife Joan in Noah's Ark. The performance turns into a riot, of interest only for named puppets which indicate the extent of the repertoire. Characters include: the London apprentice, an alderman, the Emperor of Morocco, King Pepin, a pair of Lions, Susannah, the Devil, "Whittington's cat, St. George and the Dragon, Captain Mackheath, a "Welchman, Alexander the Great, and Johnson the Cobbler.

At Bath the trio meet the beautiful but fake heiresses Patilda and Matilda and learn their histories. One is the mistress of a Dutch merchant, and the other has been undone by a French journeyman haircutter. The sisters receive Miss Demirep, a lady of fashion, and learn of her new lover, an idiotic London gallant she has amused
herself with. This furnishes the other side of the story of Phil Poplin. Belinda finds herself in a tight place when she finds her new Jewish lover is acquainted with her regular patron; however, she is clever enough to outsmart them both. The adventures of Junior temporarily end when the manuscript is demanded as security by Junior's creditors, for Junior has been released from prison. These adventures all are in satire of the current popular novels.

Returning to Tom, he is discharged from prison by an act of insolvency and sets out for the country. He meets a blind man who is starving because his dog has been hung as sport by some young gallants, leaving the blind man helpless. Tom agrees to lead the old man, and the old man reveals his sentimental story. His early happiness ended when his son, filled with drink by a playful squire and his friends, dies of alcohol poisoning. Money is little consolation for the boy's death and for the subsequent grief of the distressed mother. The daughter becomes a lady's companion, is seduced and dies penitent after the birth of her child by the same villain squire. Both "fine blossoms" gone, the wife goes mad and is sent to Bedlam. The man himself is imprisoned for a minor violation of the same act, again by the same squire; and to increase his burdens he loses his sight.

Tom and the old man live for some time as guards for the village grain field, frightening the birds with whistles. Tom does such a good job that Lady Greensy, a neighbor, notices her doves are not as plump as before. Then she learns it is because Tom has scared them, she vows revenge and schemes to have Tom dismissed for neglect of duty, but her maids cannot lure him from his post.
Digressing into Lady Greensy's history, we find she is the wealthy widow of two husbands who professes to hate all men for the deceits they have played upon her. Intrigued when Tom refuses her bribe, Lady Greensy goes to see him herself and decides he is a fool worth marrying. Immediately she has a marriage ceremony performed.

The neighbors of the surrounding countryside flock around to see what "the Wretch Lady Greensy had thrown herself away upon" and reveal their hypocrisy by praising the new husband to his face. They find his refusal to partake of cards or sporting events proof of his oddity and his delight in books a sure sign of lunacy. One group, the Fullmott family, censure Lady Greensy for consorting with a servant, but at home each one is carrying on an affair with one of the family servants. Miss Fash, now Lady Pillow, arrives, but whimsically the author shifts the story back to Patchwork and the tale of Belinda, Matilda, and John Junior. One character, a landlady, presents a notable portrait:

Her countenance had not lost all its original Brightness; for her Forehead and Nose were abundantly enrich'd with purple-colour'd Pimples. The Lillies of her Neck were swallow'd, by the immoderate Use of Snuff-taking; and the Roses of her Cheeks, crack'd, crimson'd, and peel'd by the fiery Exhalations of Juniper. Her Teeth, like the remaining Pillars at Persepolis, stood irregularly, and seem'd decaying. The Alabaster Hue was sadly sullied, as if in mourning for their departed Neighbors. She wore, by way of Tete, a bob Wig, once Brown; but, by long Use, was tann'd into a dingy Red. From underneath which, some straggling grey Hairs hung down her Temples, like Icicles in dirty Thatch (II, 16).

Junior is reunited with his mother, occasioning an opportunity to digress into her story. She is a caricature of the popular female
authoress; she writes against the government, not because she is dis-
satisfied, but because "any Thing on t'other Side didn't sell so
well (II, 25)." Her story is embellished with a varied succession
of lovers, but none last long. From political writing she turns to
scientific and experimental prose and produces a treatise on materi-
alism, a dissertation on still-born infants, and a compendium of
natural philosophy proving mermaids do not exist. A history of a
fly and a dissertation on the antiquity of marrow bones and Cleaver
music follows, in six folio volumes. In the dramatic field she has
mastered all of Aristotle and the French writers and knows not to
offend the unities. She has turned Shakespeare's Merry Wives of
Windsor into a tragedy.

At Tunbridge Wells, Junior makes quite a show as a gentleman
while Tom Fool, newly married, is waiting in white gloves at a
Ladies' levee. Junior meets Mr. Saltern, a rich gentleman who is
interested only in his books. Saltern has studied extensively in
politics, astronomy, history, chemistry, physics, music, painting,
sculpture, and nature, but all have failed to bring him understanding
and nowhere has he found a man of sense, despite his search among
humorists, country people, entry, fashion-makers, government offi-
cials, and businessmen; he concludes his search in a night cellar at
a meeting of some Choice Spirits:

Their Spirits were choice indeed:—They live the Life
of those Insects, who are bred, brought to Maturity,
and die within 24 Hours. For all that these sin-
song, story-telling, mimic Existences pretend to, is
but to eat, drink, and divert for the Day. Necessity
their ruling Passion, a Tavern Treat their sumum
bonum. Yet among these, sometimes you meet with the
Glimmerings of Merit, tho' sodden'd by the Drags of
Debauch. But it often thus happens, that even real
Genius shall so far debase itself, as to prostitute the Bounties of Nature like supperless Street-walkers, to a Set of People, whose only Qualifications are, they can pay the Reckoning (II, 48-9).

Mr. Saltern invites Junior to visit a month with him at his estate in Wales where he will meet persons worth acquaintance for their virtues. On the way to Wales, Junior rescues a roused vagrant and her child, for the plight of the two appeals to his generosity and compassion, and this again occasions a long digression revealing her sad fall from happier days. The girl, a beautiful heiress, has been ruined by her pride and by the machinations of a rejected suitor. Her life reveals the vanity and ingratitude of mankind. She becomes a whore so as to avenge herself on mankind, but through the duplicity of her trusted servant, she is a second time trepanned by a pseudo West Indian merchant who steals her money and indentures her to the new world plantations. She wins the favor of the ship's captain, who promises to return her to England, but he too treats her badly and sells her as a bond slave to a mulatto woman. A sympathetic overseer aids her escape. After a shipwreck, the survivors are plundered by the country people, and our heroine's protector is murdered. All this occurs as the heroine is giving birth to her child. From that time on our heroine has wandered in a miserable condition, pride being sacrificed to want, for haughty minds suffer any affliction but poverty. Mr. Saltern is so impressed with the lady and her sentimental story that he immediately offers marriage and is accepted.

The arrival of the Grotto family presents Junior with a new set of interests, and before long he has the favor of Lady Grotto,
who is romantically interested in Junior, and Sir Tasty, who is thrilled by Junior's considerable aid in Sir Tasty's pursuit of the landlady. Junior soon is equally familiar with Miss Fash, who with the beneficial aid of cardplaying is recovering from her distress at the loss of Tom Fool. Soon Junior has won not only her cash and jewels but also her honor. But when the two are discovered in "unlawful traffic" by Lady Grotto, Miss Fash is married to Sir Pillow so that Lady Grotto herself will have no competition for the attentions of Junior. The whole group is soon in residence at Fool Hall with Tom and his new wife. Lady Pillow engages Junior's aid in arranging an assignation with Tom. She wants him to engage Lady Fool while she renews her pursuit of Tom. Fortuitously, Lady Fool is suddenly revealed as a drinker, so Junior's treachery soon succeeds.

When Junior seduces Lady Fool, Stevens employs a satiric yet sentimental scene in order to show the grave consequences. The violent reaction of nature echoes Milton's description of the fall of Eve when she eats of the forbidden apple. The application, however, to Lady Greensy, a woman of fashion, is unworthy. Stevens obviously is both satirical and yet moral in his intent. A black cloud crosses the surface of the shining, silvery moon, a bittern utters a hoarse cry, an owl whoops, the bees fly forth, the house dog howls, the toads croak, a noisome fog settles, thunder rattles, the wind rustles, and there is a sudden shower. Furthermore, Lady Grotto discovers Lady Fool and Junior and informs Tom; he challenges Junior to a duel, and the two race off to a secluded barn; Lady Fool resumes her drinking.
Her maid calls the rector to attend her ladyship, and he comes prepared to cure her by electric experiments, planning to publish his results and achieve fame. Lady Pool soon goes into violent hysterics, and Lady Pillow and Lady Crotto are summoned to comfort her. These worthies have been engaged in spreading the scandal of their hostess' behavior, but they rush to her side.

Tom, waiting in vain for Junior (who had lost his way) at the dueling spot, finally rides off and is lost on the heath. When his horse falls into a deep pit and dies, Tom is left helpless until the following morning when he is rescued by a shell collector and carried to an isolated house occupied by a retired but formerly celebrated lady of pleasure and her friends.

Junior, seized and thrown into jail on suspicion of having murdered Tom Fool, is abandoned by his former friends; but by bribing the jailor's wife, he is able to escape despite her plan to have him recaptured at the door. To her dismay the bag of money proves to be filled with odd pieces of junk. Junior and a trusted friend ride off in the night to resume a proper London existence.

Tom, hospitably received at the old mansion, soon hears the stories of three who have suffered in the clutches of calamity: Tom's discoverer, Mr. Borlace, tells of his ruination by foolishly trying to gain a reputation as a wit and humorist. He ruined his own estate and his wife's as well, and lost her, realizing his loss too late. His senses return with his ruin, and he works at country occupations and as overseer to the estate of the prostitute, the two of them having tired of vices and follies of the world.
The retired prostitute's companion, Miss Ninny, daughter of a baronet, turns out to be Tom's own sister, who through "heat of blood, prejudice of education, hurry of youth, deceit of mankind, and all the other lamentable topics" has experienced many hardships of life. She explains the lack of attention granted Tom once he was sent to school; for his parents, after a violent quarrel, destroy everything that the other holds dear. With the destruction of her china closet, Tom's mother is unable to contain her fury, and to avenge this destruction, she vows that Tom, his father's favorite, is a bastard. Crushed, Sir Philpot commits suicide, but he reveals his reasons in a long letter to a lawyer friend desiring to prevent his family from inheriting the estate. The lawyer, himself interested in Lady Fool, burned it; and Lady Philpot, to console herself after her loss, enters society and in the excitement forgets her son completely. Her daughter is exposed to all the follies of the day. Her first suitor proves that fleshly pursuits are not the secret of happiness; and a second, in league with the first, intensifies her opinion. Accidentally discovering his base deceit in a letter dropped by chance, she avenges herself with the aid of a new lover, an army man. Surprised with him by her mother, who herself had designs upon the officer, Miss Ninny is cut off and thrown out of her mother's house. The family lawyer gains control of the estate and of Lady Fool, the colonel is killed in Flanders, and Miss Ninny is received at her maid's mother's:

"Tho' gratitude is not to be found in fine Houses, it may sometimes be met with under a thatch'd Roof (II, 212)." Driven almost to despair, Miss Ninny accepts the suit of the son of the house and returns
with him to London where she finds that her new husband is merely a
er waiter at a noted tavern. Her husband expects her to entertain
gentlemen whom he recommends to her: "He married me only to make a
Property of me, and like the Wine he bottled, serve me up to some of
his Men of Quality (II, 213)." After she refuses to comply with his
schemes, he beats her and locks her in a garret feeding her only
bread and water for a week. Forced to act, Miss Ninny summons one
rejected gentleman and agrees to his suit if he will obtain a separa-
tion for her from her husband. All is arranged, and Miss Ninny
avenges herself on the man's wife (who refused assistance) by making
herself the talk of the town. She finally accepts an annuity from
the wife to terminate her alliance and retires to the country.

Finally, Mrs. Vielled, the owner of the house, tells her story.
She has seen many scenes of life and is sick of all she has seen. A
series of affairs have all failed to show her anything good about men
and life.

Tom resolves to leave England, but his companions urge him
first to consider seriously the consequences of this action. Tom
goes to church to give thanks for his recovery and then wanders in
the country, and soon is lost. He is discovered resting in a field
by a lady and her maid, the Miss Demirep who has appeared earlier in
the work as a woman devoted to making fools of men. Soon each reci-
procates the esteem felt by the other; love blossoms for both. Tom's
wife makes her will in his favor and, after two fits of apoplexy and
a letter pleading for forgiveness, dies. Tom shares his inheritance
with Mr. Bolace and his sister (who share esteem for each other and
plan to marry as soon as a divorce for Miss Ninny can be obtained)
and proposes to Miss Demirep, who feels she must decline because her person "has been the property of others (II, 250)." After the rest of the characters are married off, Belinda to her Dutch gallant and Sir Tasty to Miss Bonville, Tom and Miss Demirep go to London to attend to business, and Tom finds that Borlace has returned to his wild, profligate ways, and his sister has resumed her indiscretions. Borlace and Miss Ninny elope in their disgrace, and Tom, shocked and disgusted by folly and ingratitude, takes a ship to Jamaica to see about property he has inherited there. Miss Demirep secretly takes passage with him, and the two reach Jamaica after a series of amazing adventures including shipwreck on the coast of Florida, capture by cannibals, a voyage down the Amazon, discovery of the real kingdom of the Amazons, and reception in Jamaica where Miss Ninny, now the wife of Tom's agent, has reformed and leads a decent life.

Stevens reflects the transition between the traditional neo-classical values and the emerging sentimentalism. His work is directed to exposing follies and affectations and extravagances, especially in the fashionable world of London; and he, like Fielding, has no hesitation in entering the narrative to comment personally on situations. Stevens readily digresses on various subjects: malice, honesty, necessity, morality, modern youth, and hack writers. Like Fielding, Stevens addresses the reader and demands his attention concerning moral issues. The spirit of the age demanded that authors take responsibility for moral and artistic standards. Fielding was always ready to reprimand anyone who disordered the world of letters, from oratorical extravagance and journalistic ministerialism to reader ignorance. As is indicated in his burlesque Tragedy of
Tragedies, or the Life of Tom Thumb the Great, yielding had no patience for indiscriminating playwrights, poor actors, inept editors of Shakespeare, pedantic nonsense, false critics, and ornamental extravagance. He used comic etymology, meaningless critical apparatus, and caricatures of pseudo-learning to show up the faults of florid diction, impossible plots, violence, superhuman characters and lofty sentiment. The comic prose epic continues these goals in his hands. Stevens, though a lesser figure, has the same purposes. When Mr. Yeast proposes to administer a beating to Tom for an imagined insult, Stevens digresses on the bearing of malice, a very human trait:

Bearing malice is not one of the thirty-nine Articles, to be sure.—But, alas, who can help it? We are not all of us, as everybody ought to be. Sin and Folly are two very leading Fashions, and many People appear in each, not out of weak or bad minds, but merely out of Politeness; because they won't put their Friends and Acquaintances out of Countenance (I, 55).

Stevens points out the dual standard of the day in the meaning of honesty and the keeping of promises. Tom and Sir Tasty discuss the responsibility of promises; everything, says Sir Tasty, has two levels of meaning—one for a gentleman and one for a mechanic. Promises which advance a personal interest or advantage are to be kept, but others are to be forgotten without need for concern. People on the lower levels of society must adhere to any promise, but people of birth and breeding, superior beings all, neither speak nor think like other folks (I, 59-60).
When Tom discovers the sack of guineas and elects to borrow several to cover necessity, Stevens digresses upon this topic:

Necessity, like the Moon, has an Impulse over the whole World. It is like a Loadstone, full of occult Qualities, like a hot Summer, it occasions Corruption; 'tis like a new Shoe, it pinches secretly. Like the Pope's Bull, it absolves Sins. And like any other Bull, it winks when it does Mischief.

Does it not draw out Virtue's Tooth, with a Touch? Does it not—forgive the Transcriber, gentle Reader; he was obliged here to speak in Praise of Necessity; he cou'd not help thus paying his Compliments to that Being to whom, not only himself, but all other modern Authors—"Writers, he means, are indebted for their Learning, Inclination, Capacity, and Genius (I,115).

Similarly Stevens digresses concerning honor:

For Honor is the innate Principle of choice Spirits; it acts upon mankind, as Instinct instigates all other Animals: It is like a good Complexion; any body may wear it: It is like the Philosopher's Stone, it brings great Riches by Transmutation; it is like a Maidenhead, often sold over and over; it is a Waterman's Badge, that won't let the Wearer be press'd into the Service; it is like a Flint, it fires upon being struck; it is like.—What is it not like (I, 161-2)?

Referring to the hoards of foreign talent, servants, and refugees who descended upon London, Stevens comments:

Thus raging to be rich, French Dancers, Pimps, Cooks, and Hair-Cutters, venture to cross the Sea, slavish to earn, or beg, or pilfer England's ready Money. For that the unsexed Singer ships itself from Italy's effeminated Shore. —For that—Oh, London, London, London: Thou, like thy fair River Thames, receives the Rubbish of each soil (I, 165-6).
And when the retired prostitute, Mrs. Vielled, discusses modern youth in fashionable society, there is this digression:

...there are a Set of very gay-dress'd Figures of both Sexes about the Town now, who seem entirely divested of all Passions, and yet they have all the Marks of liveliness about them: They look without Expression, they talk without Meaning, and listen without Understanding; they move Mechanically, meer Machines, like Show-images, for Taylors and Milliners to display their Workmanship upon; he call'd them Expletives in Society, and compar'd them to Weeds in Blossom (II, 210-11).

Beside these Fieldingesque qualities, Stevens places features common to the most sentimental novel. Stevens' characters continually suffer some sad fate—harsh treatment at the hands of fellow man, the sufferings of prostitution and vice, the ruination of gambling, tearful farewells and forgiveness, but happy reunions result in a joyful end. Some of these tender scenes undoubtedly catered to the tastes of the readers in an attempt to achieve popularity; some are satirical, but the frequent repetition of the same type of material makes it clear that the purpose is not always satirical or merely to gain popularity. Stevens, though concerned with correcting folly and affectation, is also concerned with illustrating proper moral behavior. He is not convinced of the innate benevolence of man, for his situations involve the treachery, the unpredictability, the complex nature of mankind; still the author punishes vice and rewards virtues too freely to be realistic. A digression upon beautiful women in distress illustrates this point clearly:

It is needless, I believe, to observe, that when a beautiful Woman relates her Distresses, the Audience (especially if they be of the Male kind) seem to sympathize in all of her sufferings. Each Man pre-
tends to Pity, because he admires; and admiring, he hopes to do as others have done:—Tho' from the fair Relator he has already heard, that Man's unwarrantable Pursuits occasion'd every Misfortune she had endured. Oh ye high and mighty Inhabitants of many Acres, why will you class Beauty as a Specie of Game? Destroy them accordingly, and boast of it afterwards? Yearly are many beautiful Innocents betray'd, and beggar'd; yet (except in the Old Daily) seldom is Man brought to a bit of Shame for it.

N. B. No Apology is made for the above Piece of Morality.—It may not be altogether thought proper for the History; altho' it is very proper for the Historian (II, 108).

The tender scene of leavetaking between Tom and his beloved, Miss Demirep, occasioned by the summons of Tom's wife, Lady Pool, again is an outstanding example of sentimentality. Tom receives a letter from his unfaithful wife imploring him to forgive and return, and Miss Demirep is privileged to read the missal:

...she return'd them to Mr. Fool, but her hand she had not withdrawn from his. In that Position, for some Moments, they stood silent; tenderly looking at each other; at length Tom Pool, his Eyes glistening with compassion, thus addressed her.

Madam, had not the Hospitality Miss Demirep has shown to a poor wandering Outcast, bound him by the strictest Ties of Gratitude, not to depart without first, at least, acknowledging the Favors he has received, I should not hesitate a Moment obeying the Purpose of these Advises; but circumstance as I am, 'tis to you, and you only, I apply for Advice. What am I, Madam, to do?

(Miss Demirep) To go.—To go this Instant.—I may be irregular, but am not abandon'd—I love mightily, but not meanly.—Therefore go, this Instant go. 'Tis not my Advice alone, but my Intreaty, go. And may your Presence preserve your Lady's Health. At the same Time she spoke this, checking a swelling
Sigh, which Passion, in Spite of Reason's Teeth, was bursting out with. Then stepped forward to throw her Arms about his Neck, and take a parting Embrace—but recollecting, that her Caresses might detain him some Minutes, she check'd herself, and broke from him saying,—No, not a Kiss of mine shall stop you a Moment on an Event like this—Adieu—and immediately rush'd up Stairs into her Dressing-room (II, 245-6).

Such sacrifice can result in little but the resulting death of the first Lady Fool and the subsequent marriage of Tom and Miss Demirep.

With the utilization of Richardsonian sentimentality, there is satire of his profusion of detail. Describing the lovely Miss Demirep, Stevens says:

Yet if any particular Reader (as some Readers are very particular) wou'd be inform'd what colour Miss Demirep's Eyes were, whether her Locks were fastened, or fell loosely in flowing Curls upon her Shoulders; whether she was in full Dress, or in Dishabille; if it was Coffee or Chocolate she had breakfasted upon; how many shaking mandarins nodded upon her chimney-piece; what sort of Paper the room was lined with; and how broad the Turkey carpet was that covered the Flooring? They shall be inform'd immediately. Come Spirit of minute Description, Inspire me (II, 242).

With this is blended still a third element. Tom Fool is dedicated to Tristram Shandy, partly because of the latter's success, partly through admiration, and partly in an endeavor to capitalize on the popularity of Sterne's work and to gain a part of the same audience. It is not surprising then that Stevens employs Sternesque liberties with the story. Stevens at no time digresses as wildly or as freely as does Sterne, but there is a conscious imitation of Sterne's devices. Stevens frequently drops a character
to pursue the history of another; he often refers to the situation the character is left in, assuring the reader that he will soon return; and he has no hesitation in addressing the reader. The opening of the novel and the introduction of character is done in a Sterne-like way. Stevens concerns himself with the origin and ancestry of the Fool family; soon he feels it necessary to introduce and develop new characters, so he addresses the reader and informs him that he is going to run back to town and pick up fresh matter for the ensuing chapter (I, 36). As each figure appears, Stevens develops him partly, then leaves him to return to another figure; i.e., after a scene between Mrs. Flimm and her suitor Mr. Macgragh, "But hold—we shall not be abusive—we are Historians, not Satyrists.—Let us therefore look out for our principal Adventurer, Tom Fool.—Yonder he is, about fifty miles off, we'll overtake him in an instant. Apollo's post Charriot is at the Door; put Pegasus, and Facolett's Horse into the Harness; get a Will-o'the-Wisp for a Moon Lanthorn, and we're up with him, as soon as a Man may forewear himself (I, 113)."

A series of short chapters in one section of the novel remind one of Sterne; the titles indicate the random nature of the topics, all loosely associated, brief, and quixotic: "Chapter on Eloquence," "Honor," "Secrecy," "Schemes," "Descriptions," "Horse Race," "Party Riots," "Intrigue," "Dissimulation," "Ghosts," and "A Chapter Platonic (I, 152-82)." Like Sterne, too, is the elaborate, overly-rich description:

Aurora's Day Curtains, the Golden fringed Clouds, were undrawn; reflu gent to the View, up beamed the Sun, topping the misty Hills.—The—The—but we
shall not embellish any farther; the Reader may imagine, whatever Description he pleases, in plain English we let him know, Tom had a fine Morning to travel in (I, 114).

Repeatedly in this novel, Stevens addresses the reader and advises him that the next chapter will resume after the reader has recovered his breath, or he says that after the current adventure he will resume the story of someone else occupied elsewhere. At one point, Stevens addresses the literati after an episode in which a lady has lost her honor in order to redeem her gambling losses:

O ye reasoning Literati. Why will ye not do something more, than just tell us, like Guide-posts, the Way we have to go?—Why will ye not budge yourselves? Do but once, ye Dispassionates, hold in a dozen Hands at Hazard; take off your own Toast in a pint Bumper, or feel yourselves embraced in the dark Hour of Assignment; then ye would judge more like Men and Women of the World, and not expect we can become pure Philosophers on this Side Fifty (II, 122-3).

Later Stevens addresses the reader in a dialogue:

Once more, my good Reader, well met at the Squire's. You see the Company are drinking Tea in the Saloon; we won't disturb them, they'll have done presently. Here's a fine green painted Chinese Back-bench—excuse my Boldness, but pray be seated, and permit me to ask you two or three Questions.

Author—Pray, Sir, how do you like this History:
Reader—So—So—
Author—Why, so—so—be it then: a deal of Pains has been bestowed upon it. Very likely, But, pray, to what Purpose? Would not your Industry have answered much better, had you employed it to improve yourself in that Business (whatever it was) to which your Parents bred you. That is why I would have done, O most friendly Monitor, had I been brought up to any. We would no more scribble, than poor Strumpets would stroll the Streets, had we any Thing else to do. Have you not seen Children raise Dams
to stop a Kennel's filthy Current? Have you not also observed some grown Persons cut Tables, Dressers and Sticks to pieces?—Alas! Boys making mud Walls, Men whittling Wood, and our patching up Pamphlets, are all from the same Principle; a simple Inclination to do something. But as it is customary for Sculptors to chisel their Names, Architects to make their Marks, and Painters to portrait their own Faces; so it is proper Authors in some Parts of their Works, should give an Account of Themselves; least, like Homer, our Patron and Preceptor, after our Deaths, seven or eight Parishes may go to Law, or Loggerheads, about paying our burial Dues. To begin then with my own Account. My Father—alas! I had a Father—but Lady Fool's visitors are up, ready to promenade around the Garden. I'll postpone my own History, and go on with their's—This way, gentle Reader, along that ever-green Hedge-row, cross 'twixt those Tulip-beds, and we shall meet them in the Music-temple (II, 126-7).

Among the most interesting digressions in the work are those which Stevens makes on circulating library authors and hack writers:

Did not we Circulating Library Scribes, Imitators, and Plagiarists, now and then, thus inform the Reader we had some Morals, they cou'd not easily find it out by the rest of our Writings. Yet I hope to be allow'd observed one Thing in Behalf of us Letters—together—of things, for the Amusement of the very indolent Part of the Public. That altho' our Enemies say we have neither Morals, Learning, Money, nor Manners.—As to Morals, vide the first Part of this Chapter; and our Learning is elaborately shown, by our Quotations from the Greek Grammar; the apropos French Phrases we have selected from the Dictionaire Royal; and the many classical Lines, which with much Trouble we have helped ourselves to out of what is called Lilly's Sintaxis. Thirdly; as to our Manners, since Mr. Hart has taken upon him to teach grown Gentlemen, to be sure we are much more polish'd than before; we now and then receiving a genteel Lesson for writing a proper Advertisement. Indeed, as to Money, I have nothing to say to it, in this ungrateful, illiberal Age; We Geniusses are no more minded than worn-out Women of the Town; nay, not so much, for they can turn Bawds, and keep the best Company; but who the Devil can we pimp for?
The Muses are old Maids, and Prudes, and past Child-bearing; and we're too shabby, and shame-faced to say anything to Terrestrial Toasts. What an unrewarding Era this is? The World knows we have nothing to live by but our Wits, and they are resolving we shall have nothing more substantial to live upon.

I remember when a well-timed Pamphlet against either Party was Bread; and an Attack upon the Administration a Suit of Clothes certain. But there's nothing read nowadays, but such a General beats the French there, and such an Admiral takes the French here; and this and that Island surrenders to the English; just like the old Stories we heard at School, about the Grecians and Romans conquering everybody. These things are so common, and Englishmen are so uncharitable, that if we were to waste the last Drop of our Ink in the Cause of our Country should we be taken Care of for it? Or tho' we wore our Pens to the Stumps in praise of roast Beef, we shou'd never get a Belly-full by it. For my own Part, let Ignorance encrease, I resolve against publishing any more Things: I'll have my Bundle of Manuscripts buried with me, and say with Scipio my ungrateful Country shall have none of my Remains.

Yet Benign Reader, as I have a very capacious Family, and there are several outstanding chalk accounts in the Neighbourhood against me, let me beg you'll give this Work a good Word; if it's only for the sake of the old maxim, since you have been taken in to buy it: Lend your Help to hum others; or you may praise it upon the same humane Principle, as some Masters and Mistresses will give Servants they Discharge (for male Practices) a good Character. Not that the Wretches deserve to be well-mentioned, but what can the poor Creatures do, either Authors or Footmen, if no body speaks for them? That you may have something to praise me for, please Reader to observe the elegant Quaintness of Stile, which is interspersed up and down in several peculiar Phrases thro' this Compilation. Many more Hints, Sir, have I to offer you: but I believe, by the Help of this di-rectional Appendage, I have brought this Chapter to a tolerable Length: At least it will be, when I have added in order, that I have the Honour to be, Friendly, tho' unknown Reader, your most oblig'd, most obedient, and most Sincere humble Servant, the Transcriber (11, 109-12).

Later Stevens ends a chapter by begging the reader's forgiveness for interruptions. He defends himself by saying that "a
Hackney Writer, as well as a Hackney Horse, must bait now and then, or he never will get to the end of his Journey (II, 207)."

Throughout the novel Stevens is concerned with current events; the London scene and London events, fashions, and ways are always on or near the surface. Scattered throughout the narrative are allusions to topics of religious interest—Quaker freedom for women (I, 156), a derogatory reference to anabaptism as the final balm for severe cares (I, 138), presbyterian hypocrisy (I, 55), and methodist evangelicism and hypocrisy (I, 14-15, 136, 171; II, 26). The large numbers of foreign dependants of English fashion, the cooks, hair-dressers, dancing masters, maids, actresses, actors, and opera singers come in for mention as Stevens believed in keeping England first for the English (I, 2, 166; II, 34). Touches of nationalism, a force in the approaching romantic era, appear in praise of English beef, strength, and victory (II, 110). Men of the day are referred to at random—poets like Matthew Prior (II, 17), actors like Charles Macklin (I, 194) and David Garrick, famed for his naturalistic way of acting (II, 183, 219), Colley Cibber, Peg Woffington, and Mrs. Pritchard (II, 30), and theater managers like John Rich of Covent Garden (I, 138-9). The allusion to the ever-present choice spirits and their philosophy of the enjoyment of life is apparent (II, 48), and there is a reference to the celebrated case of Elizabeth Canning, the servant girl who disappeared and later reappeared with a tale of fantastic events (I, 34, 226).

In addition to contemporary references, Stevens' novel reflects his wide reading. In the novel there are specific references to his own contemporaries, Smollett (specifically to Ferdinand
Count Fathom as a history of a sharper) (II, 36), Sterne (dedication) (I, i-xii), and Prior (II, 12). Figures from the period preceding Stevens include Milton (I, 134), Dryden (I, 137), and Butler (II, 185). There is mention of Cervantes (I, 228) and even earlier references to Greek and Latin authors in general. But Shakespeare is the one author referred to most frequently. Stevens finds in Shakespeare's work constant inspiration for material—both in situation and wording. Tom Fool contains nearly a dozen specific references to the works of Shakespeare as well as many echoes. Stevens shows familiarity with Hamlet, Othello, the Merry Wives of Windsor, and Measure for Measure (I, 192, 213; II, 24, 31, 117, 164, 196, 204). Hamlet is Stevens' favorite, for he constantly quotes lines from it, parodies them, or alludes to them (I, 192; II, 117, 176, 204).

The influence of the stage on Stevens is strong, for this is the medium which provided him a living throughout his life. As a puppeteer, lecturer, actor, droll writer, and playwright—Stevens took a stab at all. In Tom Fool he reminds us of the deceptive values of appearances by analogy to the roles players assume on the stage:

There is a famous pantomimical Entertainment, called the Contention between Reason and Will: but tho' it is hourly performed by Mankind's Company of Comedians, yet the Players are not so perfect in their Parts as they ought to be, the Study being so very difficult. Now on what is called the Theatre, Actors and Actresses may keep up their Consequences, just as they please, since they appear not in inferior Casts, but only now and then like Eastern Monarchs, with all the Pride, Pomp, and Circumstance of pageant Finery. But we on Life's real and various Stages cannot preserve the consequential Part of our Character; because as we are
obliged every Day to make some Part of an Appearance, it necessarily follows, that we must sometimes act out of Character (II, 130-131).

Stage background is constantly evident, for Stevens writes his novel in dialogue and names each character with each speech (I, 86-7).

The device is a necessary one for the stage, and it does not intrude on the audience, but in a novel it is disconcerting and tedious. Further indication of Stevens' theatrical background is evident in the occasional designation of chapters or parts of a chapter as an act (II, 65).

Stevens' characters also reflect his dramatic interest, for they do not possess an inner life. Each one is involved in actions, often farcical in nature, and from these actions and from speech, the reader must evolve judgment; emotion comes only as exaggerated physical reactions—grief, despair, sorrow, joy. All are depicted physically, grotesquely even, and never realistically or convincingly. All that concerns the heart is stilted and artificial. Stevens is best at the farcical comedy and the clever ironic comment; true emotion cannot be so depicted. Stevens listens to human misery, but there is always a ludicrous touch.

His characters fall into two types, the organic ones necessary to the adventures related and the humorous portraiture incorporated for topical and farcical interest. The eighteenth century considered incongruity the basis of the comic; between affectation and reality is a middle ground or practicality. This practicality was to be achieved exposing the follies, and again this impulse to reform was strong to the age. The height of morals lay in good nature for Stevens, and the happiness or delight of life was all that one could
expect. Stevens strikes out against misery, hypocrisy, vanity, selfishness and man's lack of charity toward one another. Stevens attempted to utilise his stage training to break the monotony of a continuous narrative; and he shifts scene, depicts a multiplicity of character, and utilizes dialogue in an attempt to maintain interest. His subject matter is human relationships, and like the plot of comedy he takes his hero from low to high fortune. The picaresque writers adopted a straight-forward manner and related an autobiographical but episodic narrative that lacked continuity beyond the mere inclusion of the same central character. Stevens follows them in that he has no orderly structure in his endeavor to present a careful study of real life. The plot is clumsy, mechanical, and stiff. Stevens continues to balance his characters and ties the ends of the story together by marrying his characters to one another. However, the solution is not smooth. The whole too obviously is contrived. The succession of incidents follows the same pattern and becomes monotonous. One character tells his story, meets new characters, and then each tells his story. Each story even follows the same pattern. The hero always suffers adversity, but eventually triumphs and ends happily married to an heiress, reformed, or reunited with his family or close acquaintances. The incidents are obviously contrived to depict the follies of the fashionable; and the heroes themselves are too stilted, too typed, to evoke any real interest in them as human beings. They are obviously included to serve as dummies for Stevens' evaluation of society; and as a result no one can be really concerned—good is good, evil is evil, and in the end merit is rewarded.
Stevens is concerned with exploring contemporary manners more than he is in portraying a real individual experiencing universal truth in a life experience. Thus the characters are stereotyped and too stiff for real feelings. When their rhetorical comments are insincere, they are comic figures; and when they are sincere, they are playful but wooden. Stevens, then, has taken from the drama familiar qualities and has applied to the novel elements of satire, humor, burlesque, and farce. His novels are topical and concern his own view of town ways. His novels are important more for their revelation of contemporary society than for either story or literary merit.

The Adventures of a Speculist

Although The Adventures of a Speculist was posthumously published in 1782, most of the material was written for Stevens' magazine between 1762-1764. In an elaborate preface, purported to be by an anonymous editor but perhaps by Stevens himself, Stevens is praised highly for his genius. The novel is an attempt to preserve from obscurity Stevens' fugitive pieces from this earlier periodical. Since the magazine was unsuccessful, at best never having five hundred readers (I, iv), and since the merit of his wit is obscured by the contributions of others, the compiler proposes to present some of the "brightest moments" in a literary career, "animated by the prolific brain of the mirth-inspiring George Alexander Stevens (I, v)."

As a partisan for Stevens, the editor is determined to save the literary efforts of a period when Stevens seemed doomed to failure. The value of the work lies in Stevens' typical delight in harassing
current fashions, and in the fact that this very material is the basis for the memorable Lecture upon Heads.

Most of the pieces reflect the "scattered rays of that wonderful constellation of ludico-moral satire, in the midst of which—aided, it must be confessed by wigs and blocks—he afterwards shone forth in all his glory... (I, viii-ix)." "Certain it is," the editor claims, "that no man ever knew better than George Alexander Stevens—if ever man knew so well—how to 'shoot folly as it flies' (I, viii-ix)." It is in the "humble paths of prose" that Stevens, who never, it must be confessed, ventured far up the "arduous steps of Poetry," found his hobby, the shooting of folly, a hobby "which Nature had taught him to manage with a grace peculiar to himself (I, ix)." The editor extravagantly compares Stevens to Hogarth: "That Hogarth was with his pencil, George seems evidently to have been with his pen."

Between the two men that was a striking similarity—they each loved to laugh themselves, and they each loved to make the world laugh, one on canvas and one on paper, being when they chose "perfectly sentimental, and exhibit vice, at one time, in colors as odious, as, at another, they could represent folly in colours that were ridiculous (I, x-xi)." Both were original geniuses and presented a laughable, and faithful picture of the manners, fashions, amusements, and follies of London in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The Adventures of a Speculist proports to present a true picture of London in a series of loosely joined excursions through the city by a newly arrived college man. (Since Stevens consistently uses personal material in his work, he perhaps had some college back-
Having been confined to a life of seclusion in college, our narrator has a desire to see and be seen in the world in order to determine the validity of reports that London is everything. But before a concerted plan of action can be derived, our hero, Tom, receives a note from an old friend, Francis Flight, incarcerated by stoney-hearted creditors in the Fleet, a debtor's prison. Our journey begins there.

The opening iron-grated door of the prison is compared to the opening of the gates of hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, depressing and chilling the narrator, but the spirited greeting of Francis Flight in the coffee room expels any opportunity to meditate on the doleful state of the poor. From the window the friends survey the yard, where the employment of the inmates again recalls Milton, this time conjuring up visions of the fallen angels in Hell. The scene, however, offers Stevens opportunity for his favorite device, a series of character sketches including the fallen army officer, his very clothes lost at gambling, a famous and skillful jeweler, recently prosperous but ruined by a clever whore, an extravagant son who lost the aid of a sympathetic gentleman by seducing his patron's wife, and a clever man of fashion reduced to dung hauler and prematurely aged by the ostracism of a society enraged by his unfashionable attitude toward religion.

Progressing to visit the most noble inmates, Tom and Francis call on an elderly out-ridden gallant who has the distinction of having spent 20,000 pounds and who lives in a cluttered, filthy room with his mistress. The mistress, dressed to the nines in her bed-
ragged and frousy finery, presents a dirty face slightly the worse from exposure to snuff, fretting, and strong waters; but it is elaborately painted with rouge and India ink. Her hair is slickly smoothed with candle grease, and her forehead is embellished with painted paper flowers. Three-dropped glass earrings keep time to each action of her head, and a spangle-studded black ribbon encircles her neck. Dressed in a sardan satin robe-de-chambre, shortened into a bed-gown with a red porto-bello petticoat flounced with flowered linen, with an open front, the mistress presents a ridiculous and tarnished picture. Her slippers are embellished with yellow curtain fringe, her apron is salvaged from an old French silk waistcoat, and her ruffles are frayed but "showed that the person who wore them had been used to good things (I, 18)."

Her behavior, too, is in accord with her dress, for she wears a superior look and tosses her head with scorn; her face shows a "leer of approbation," the "crown of forbiddance," and the "majestic disdain" of a fine lady from St. James' Academy. Her constant trivial interruptions are similar to those married women of consequence use to check the conversation of husbands. Her best friend, an imposing woman of more than ordinary bulk, dressed in high fashion fit for a first lady of quality, keeps a bagno in Covent Garden.

The colonel himself is dressed in a wig with knots reaching half down his cheeks so that he seems in Indian fashion "where the inhabitants wear bird's ears for ear bobs." His complexion is tinged with blue, and crimson and mulberry pimples stud his nose, cheeks, and forehead. His beard is studded with gray hairs like icicles in dirty thatch. Equally well-dressed in tattered finery, the colonel
is devoted to merriment and drink. Such attention to appearances
begins Stevens' success. When these details are physically applied
to papier mâché puppets in the Lecture upon Heads, Stevens scores
popular success.

Entering into the action himself, Stevens sings a song of
humbug for the entertainment of the group; the song is typical of
Stevens, for it calls for the enjoyment of the moment. All of life's
problems, philosophy, passion, fashion, polite society, marriage, all
involve "loss and pain, pleasure and pain," but the worst blow of all
is discovering the bottle is out.

The colonel recounts his history as an army officer, and this
offers Stevens an opportunity to ponder why the possessors of estates
desert the wholesomeness of home for the foreign and primitive places
in the world.

The following day brings an opportunity to discourse upon the
dishonest stock jobber of Exchange Alley. Tom learns the history of
Jonathan Script, an old and worthy friend who has been reduced by
folly and deceit from plenty to penury. The initial meeting of the
two is sentimental—tears flow, and assurances of friendship and
material assistance follow. Horses and hazard, the sources of "the
miseries of gaming," have not trapped Script. He is guilty of avarice,
a far greater sin. Intending to make a killing on the stock market,
Script took a flier, failing to be as dishonest as his broker; and
by honoring his losses, unlike the majority of those who deal in stock,
he lost respect and fortune. Stevens describes the methods necessary
to success on the market, the trumping up of fictitious bad news, the
combined efforts of brokers to oversell and reduce market prices or
to buy extensively to stimulate a stock. Jonathan's prosperous busi-
ness, neglected by his intoxication with stock, suffers; for his
clerks grow careless, his servants cheat him, and necessary capitol
is diverted to the Exchange. These calamities are real ones to the
middle class readers, most of whom find leisure to enjoy reading
through asciduous devotion to the successful pursuit of commercial
success. Financially stripped in the market, Jonathan reveals his
folly to his wife, collapses in distracted agony in bed, and refuses
his amiable wife's consolation. ("Thank God, we were young enough
surely to repair any crosses and losses (I, 47)."") The following
morning Jonathan wanders through the fields in great anxiety and,
stopping to refresh himself in a tavern, accidentally overhears a
conversation between his broker and an honest friend, revealing the
hypocrisy of the pair who have engineered Script's collapse hoping
to gain an opportunity with Script's wife, a fine woman indeed.
Script lays both rogues sprawling, and returns home to find the
sheriff has called to seize the household possessions; his wife,
driven to distraction by the absence of her husband and by the shock
of the situation, is conveyed to Bedlam.

Script and Tom visit Exchange Alley and find it like a newly
discovered continent devoted to utter confusion and endless jabbering
in unknown tongues. Jonathan's Coffee House, the center of the
Exchange, is staffed by impertinent waiters who serve stock jobbers,
"as much strangers to modesty and good manners, as they are to
learning and integrity (I, 59)." From a table Tom and Script observe
the type who inhabit the exchange, the pickpocket, the novice brokers learning to be callous to all humane, generous, and social sentiments, and assorted jobbers of disreputable appearance, so insusceptible, self-sufficient, and full of effrontery that satire's sharpest barb cannot affect them.

Again Stevens interrupts to state his purpose in considering the jobbers. He does not expect to make them better by pointing out their faults; he merely intends to prevent the jobbers from making unaware people worse. He derives the etymology of the word job and concludes that it is used only to express action thoroughly base, the doing of a secret piece of mischief. The Ally is a haunt of hypocrites who use honor as a mock phrase to deceive. The Stock-jobber and the gambler are analogous and work to accumulate wealth in contradiction to known laws of the land, either by defiance of law, false combinations, false dice, or the use of another party, a friend, to lure the victim to the bait. It is Stevens' purpose to prevent this "contagion" from being universally felt and to prevent the nation from being illegally imposed upon, for he claims that he hopes to deter the inexperienced from the belief a fortune lies ready to grasp in the market.

Script and Tom observe a secret meeting of the stock jobbers through a peep hole, and the events are recorded in a comic sketch inserted in the text. In a tavern scene, Sam Double-Chin, Will Sansblush, Peter Killoryed, Bob Transport, Tom Transfer, Nick Hemp, Ordecai Stiver, and Jerry Scamp scheme to make fools of people by the use of false intelligence concerning French preparations for war.
in order to drive the stock market down, by rumor of Russian rebellion, or Prussian hostility to England. Each month is to bring some new piece of bad news. The characters are typed and are stilted, although there is some attempt to attribute nationality—an Irishman, Will Sansblush, and a German Jew, Mordecai Stiver. Further plans involve court scandal, and political intrigue; these rumors are to be spread by the three best agents, the mistress of a courtier, the waiter at a coffeehouse, and the valet de chambre to a gentleman.

Returning home, Tom and Jonathan Script see graphically enacted the ways of the jobber in a riot occasioned by the fighting of two pickpockets concerning the honoring of a contract to supply promised goods. Since the goods are worth more now than they were at the time of the contract, the lame duck pickpocket refused to fulfill his contract. In the Exchange, the same action occurs whenever stock deals do not benefit the broker. The only punishment is a brief period of banishment from the exchange. Stevens finds common gambling more honest; for if a man reneges on a bet at hazard, he is subject to a severe physical beating. Such a treatment applied to the stock jobbers should, Stevens feels, have an effect upon them like the one that the character George Barnwell had upon London apprentices.

Tom's sister offers Script's wife a refuge in the country upon her release from Bedlam, and Tom proposes to set Script up again in business with reputation and credit. Again Stevens distresses upon the satisfaction of rendering a fellow human happy and experiencing heartfelt appreciation. The entire section is the ultimate in sentimentality, stressing the agreeable sensation of doing right and
the horror of doing wrong. The rewards of virtue and villainy are clearly evident with reflection upon the hereafter, and the right-thinking mind is fortified to endure the whips and scorns of time in labor for family and by bearing the burdens of life.

To visit and restore Mrs. Script necessitates, of course, a visit to Bedlam. Melancholy and madness, the famous Cibber statues at the entrance, are admired, and their deplorable state is despised; for through exposure to the weather the "excellent figures" are decaying, and no casts or drawings exist to preserve them. Stevens finds that immensely polite personages can scarcely admire the sculptures, for the subjects are too shocking for polite taste, even though the same society allows pot-bellied Mandarins and Chinese monsters to adorn the drawing room. Those foreign figures are vastly entertaining, however; and English frights, like madness, though home-made, are considered shocking and low. In addition, the locale of the work, in a part of town never visited by connoisseurs, dilettanti, and gentleman critics, prevents proper consideration. Furthermore, no one has published a book about the sculptures to point out the several beauties so that the elocutionists and the dabbler in the arts can appreciate the work, "most modern professors of taste being only parroted into judgment...without understanding the words they utter (1, 105)."

In Bedlam Stevens finds the inhabitants better off than those who possess reason as a guide, for the "unhappy lunatics" can only be pronounced miserable in a state of rationality. Reason forces us to endure doubts, mortifications, and disappointments which the
"happy lunatics" miss while "singing and dancing in their straw."

In fact, the ballad makers to the opera and the theater are urged to furnish themselves with material at the hospital for drolls, distortions, and dances. Again satirizing fashion, fashionmakers are urged to seek new ideas in Lunacy, Folly's younger sister. Stevens protests he does not mean to make merry with the misfortunes of the mad; he practically points out that we often misplace our compassion and feel more for the mad than the mad feel for themselves. This attitude is not foreign to an age that found excursions to Bedlam an amusing entertainment.

A series of characters from Bedlam appear: the merry roisterer, the nude man who believed himself a pre-Adamite and hence went unclothed. (Several females have already been converted to the religion, which, Stevens observes, may prove as popular as Methodism.) There is also the mad philosopher-physician who makes cure-all elixirs, compounds, and lotions.

As might be expected, Script and his wife are reunited, inherit a valuable estate, and retire to the tranquility of the country. Our narrator, finding his affection for mankind declining by the hour, as knaves fatten on the spoils of the honest and ignorant, accepts the patronage of a nobleman friend who has a living of 600 pounds a year to bestow. The acceptance of the living ends the picture of the metropolis, but the parting gift of Francis Flight is the manuscript memoirs of an unfortunate "daughter of pleasure."

This diary presenting "genuine adventures" in "real scenes with just observations on the moral depravity of mankind" serves as a sequel
to what Tom himself has seen and, therefore, serves to conclude the novel.

Entitled *The Authentic Life of a Woman of the Town*, it is the story of the beautiful daughter of a wealthy tradesman, ruined by a man of fortune who professed friendship to gain the daughter on his own terms. The diary opens with a sentimental poem:

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Ah! what avail's how once appear'd the fair,
When from ray equipage she fell obscure;
In vain she moves her livid lips in pray'r,
What man so mean so recollect the poor?
From place to place, by unfee'd bailiffs drove,
As fainting fauns from thirsty blood-hounds fly;
See the sad remnants of unhallow'd love
In prisons perish, or on dunghills die.
Pimps and dependents once her beauties prais'd;
And on those beauties, vermin-like, they fed;
From wretchedness, the crew her bounty rais'd,
When by her spoils enrich'd, deny her bread.
Thro' street to street she wends, as want betides,
Like Shore's sad wife in winter's dismal hours;
The bleak winds piercing her unemploy'd sides,
Her houseless head dripping with drizzly showers.
Sickly she stalks amidst the miry land,
While streaming spouts dash on her unclad'd neck;
By famine pin'd, pinch'd by disease-bred pain,
Contrition's portrait, and rash Beauty's wreck.
She dies, sad outcast! heart-broke by remorse;
Pale stretch'd against inhospitable doors;
While gathering gossips taunt the fleshless corpse,
And thank their Gods, that they were never whores (I, 129-30).
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Unlike the common introductory penitential preface in novels concerning such unhappy women, the preface makes it clear that the heroine wants no pity:

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When I begged for mercy, 'twas denied me; when I merited compassion, I met with contempt; and when I deserved reproach, received adoration (I, 131).
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Writing without anger toward either sex, the heroine reveals that her own sex has treated her like an enemy and that mankind has treated her like a slave. The principal design of the narrative is to exhibit men and women as they are: women are sufficiently punished by vanity, and men are punished enough by time and circumstance at the hands of clever women. The diary is dedicated to the men:

To you, ye men, ye self-supposed Lords, and Prerogative-makers, to you this Narrative is addressed; not so much to make you know yourselves, as to make you remember yourselves, Conscious of what most of you are, most of you I must despise.—The Abject, the Idiot, the Ledman, the Villain, the Sharper, the Sycophant, the Bully, are characters which every Man personates in turn, who is mean enough to attempt at possession by deceit (I, 132).

Since her parents were prominent, the daughter was brought up first in every fashion. She was kept at a boarding school until the was twelve and there learned enough in two or three months through the conversation of her companions to astonish all readers. Maturing early, and of high health and spirit and a sanguine constitution, Miss proved uneasy at the least restraint. Her every wish was instantly gratified, but she was forced by society to smother her sexual urges. While visiting in the country, she learns of her father's failure. After being treated like a queen, she notices her hosts now hold her in contempt. Then her father's friend arrives to pay suit, she artfully allows herself to fall into his hands in order to gratify her craving for luxury.

A long scene of seduction follows. The gentleman is timid and backward, always ready to back down at the slightest sign of
displeasure from the lady; but she finally leads him to seduction. Established in London in genteel apartments, she visits her distressed father to offer all her savings, but she is rejected when her sin is confessed. Planning to break off her connection, she returns home, but decides that she is unable to forego the elegance she is accustomed to. Justifying her ways to herself by putting all she could save aside for her family should they change their minds, she continues a lucrative life. Shown off in society with fondling familiarity, childish toying, endless pats, and baby talk in the manner of the newly married, she found life first embarrassing, then indifferent, then fatiguing, and finally loathsome.

A discussion on kept mistresses and their friends points out the paradox of a woman who allows herself to be sold but who despises the buyer. When she is obliged to wait upon the one who pays the bills, the lady finds her desires lie with any other man.

We meet a procurer, Mrs. Balsy, a woman of genteel person, dress, and conversation, who warns our girl of the dangers of becoming too fond of any man, especially clever fellows; for they are amusing but have no money. Genius cannot pay for a diamond necklace or make a settlement upon beauty. Only the rich can provide security. At Mrs. Balsy's, Miss observes a gathering of clubmen, among whom are the young rake and the old roué. The life history of the roué follows. By toadyng and through the bedroom talents of his wife, he has risen to a position of wealth. This worthy becomes the new protector of our heroine, but his extreme jealousy soon becomes tedious, and she decides to elope to the continent with a gentleman she meets at the mercer's.
Three years of happiness pass, and the pair return to England nearly destitute after having spent all of Miss's savings. The lover expires almost immediately, and the stricken lady falls into a decline. Robbed by a dishonest nurse, our recovered heroine is forced to turn to common streetwalking. Her first appearance on the streets brings abuse from the rival whores and results in the attention of a reforming constable who keeps her for himself.

The reforming constable, a rogue, is currently "one of religion's officers" and is a hypocrite in the best sense. He accepts bribes from the whores of his neighborhood and turns in those who are unable to pay. His life story reveals that he was brought up by the parish. He is first an apprentice to a tinker; imprisoned for deer-stealing, he became tapster-boy for the gaoler. Released, he enjoyed careers as bookkeeper at an inn, waiter at a coffeehouse, and rambler. Imprisoned again on false charges of pickpocketing, he resorted to the Tabernacle and learned to say prayers and sing hymns sufficiently well to gain the attention of the saints, who clothed him and made him one of themselves...and introduce him to a love feast sexual orgy. Becoming a preacher is the next step. So effective is his threat of hell-fire and damnation that the congregation contributes money to bribe him from the subject of damnation. When a woman takes him before the mayor on charges of rape, he turns soldier and plunders freely, aided by his wenches, a pretty girl by whom he had a child while he was a Methodist preacher. He had learned the scriptures have two meanings, one real and the other whatever one chooses to place upon it in order for it to serve his own purpose. When the war enis, the
rogue returns to England, opens a tavern, and has his wife join the Tabernacle. She soon had the congregation convinced of her worthiness through her ability to sigh, groan, roll her eyes, and act piously. A special room in the tavern is placed at the service of the saints, and as reward the rogue is chosen constable. His notebook reveals his utter hypocrisy, for he preys on only those who do not bribe him.

Tiring of the constable, the heroine secures a position as chambermaid in the notorious bawdy house of Jennie Douglas. She presents the miseries of a bawdy house prostitute who is forced to do exactly what her purchaser wills, drink excessively, and keep irregular hours. Resisting the blandishments of Jennie Douglas, the heroine selects a respectable gentleman and establishes a private clientele to restore her fortune.

Volume one concludes with a description of Covent Garden, formerly celebrated for its fun and fine women, now dull and the residence of ugly and vulgar ladies of pleasure. Some of the houses of prostitution are described—Tom King's where the most celebrated women of the town appear with the dregs of the human species. Tom himself, a burley bouncer, is kept busy trying to keep order. In one side room gentlemen meet in clubs, and in another ladies await calls. The whole character of Covent Garden has changed from the glories of its earlier days, however; for it presently is the habitat of common street walkers, debauchery, infamous ignomy, and vulgarity.

Volume two continues the memoirs of our prostitute, and there are several private scenes concerning sexual irregularities for their
sensational and provocative value. Business is sufficient to necessitate the partnership with another lady. No gallants under forty are allowed to visit, for the parade of old impotent gentlemen causes no suspicion or attention.

To learn further about the ways of men, Miss obtains a suit, a surcoat, and boots, and dresses like a countryman. With a gentleman escort, Miss in disguise visits the London taverns, clubs and night cellars; but she finds the famed sparkle of such places overrated, for the taverns and clubs are dull in entertainment and conversation.

At a meeting of Comus's Court at Jack Speed's White Horse Tavern in Fetter-Lane, the spectators are more like mourners at Mirth's funeral. Even the Stars, clever fellows hired by tavern keepers to amuse the patrons, are dull; but Stevens preserves portraits of his contemporaries: "Bob Summers, the Singing Cobbler," who is a journeyman shoemaker turned singer, strolling player, and publican," Matt Skegs, the "Grunting Genius and Broomstick-Fiddler," who also sings, Dick Bowyer, a gentleman flute player who fancies himself a great traveller and intimate of the great, and Stevens himself, author of droll songs with too much sense to be a fool and too little to be prudent, like the grasshopper merry one half the year and miserable the other. Stevens begins a drinking song, but is interrupted by a brawl between two fellows over a silk handkerchief.

Interrupting the narrative again, Stevens comments on the modern-life writers who would here enter reflections on war and peace, for such men are too apt to meddle with that which they know
least about. The club meeting degenerates into drunken obscenity, and even the prostitute blushes in astonishment. Stevens provides a puppet show which starts with St. George and the Dragon, a monster which has confounded even the royal society. The technique is of the Punch and Judy type, with the puppeteer changing voices, and contrasting characters by insults. Two Babes in the Woods replace the scene of the creation of Adam and Eve who are not ready, and an obscene version of the great Deluge is proposed. (The puppeteer is to urinate around a stone wall.) The show abruptly ends because the proper characters are not available. The devil is still dressed as a stock jobber, from the last performance; the Pope is lent to the Woolcombers to represent Bishop Blaze, and the Pretender has been sold to a proprietor of a snuff shop for use as a Highlander on the sign.

Ned Shuter is called upon to present the droll by Stevens he recently presented at a Covent Garden benefit for Stevens; the droll is a comic paraphrase of Shakespeare's Seven Ages from As You Like It. Stevens has merely added to the framework character sketches of each of the seven ages of man, the infant, the school-boy, the lover, the soldier, the justice, the old man, and second childhood. Finally, Pinchbeck, a travelling showman of disreputable appearance, is called upon to recite his Dutch story; but irritated by a flying stick, he turns upon the audience, breaking up the group for the evening.

At Bob Derry's, a tavern famed for its oddities, the spectators find only confusion, drunkenness, stupidity, and miserable prostitutes waiting for customers. To wind up the evening, the couple visit a
night cellar and see a series of characters, an Irish chairman, a
superannuated strolling player, a disbanded marine, a whore's maid,
a bailiff's follower, a fleet parson, an advocate of Romanish re-
ligion, and a young gentleman forger, but all are on the moment
taken by the police. Left alone with genius, a ragged and dirty
ruffian, the disguised whore and her escort converse with him on
general topics; when Flyblown Genius staggers off home, he drops a
packet of papers of his own composition. These papers are rescued
and included.

Genius' first production is a detailed history of fashions in
1762. Stevens, "the very prince of wits," begins with objections to
the folly of printing a frontispiece to current work illustrating
female fashions:

The things are pretty, to be sure,...but yet those
are not sufficient directions for country-shop-
keepers to cut patterns by. But we shall oblige
our customers with a succinct, critical, impartial,
and authentic account of every alteration—Sacks,
Trollopees, Trains, Caps, Hoods, Hats, Flyes, Huffs,
Tippets, Slippers, Stomachers, Sauses, Coxcombs,
Flounces, Heads, and Garnets, undergo so plainly,
that a Lady at the Land's-end shall, in ten days
after a new Mode has made its appearance at St.
James's, be as well acquainted with its excellences
and intricacies, as if she had breakfasted at
Ranelaigh, dined with my Lord Mayor at Guildhall,
or danced at a Birth-night assembly (II, 80-81).

Stevens begins on hats, hoods, and headdresses; and with tongue in
cheek, he elaborates upon the ridiculous extremes of high fashion.
This material serves him in good stead in his lecture, for the same
caps adorn the comic heads which he manipulates so cleverly. He
considers the French night-cap, the Ranelaigh Bob (a low-life hood
popularized by the celebrated Mrs. Jane Douglas of procuring fame),
the Mary Queen of Scots Cap, the Fly Cap (resembling an overgrown
butterfly worn not to add to the outlines of the face but to add orna-
ment and elegance worthy of amorous intrigue), and the Turban roll.
The return of stays indicates the rising false modesty, and reflecting
further ridiculous extremes, shoe heels range in width from tea cup
size to the width of the china circle the cup stands upon. Stevens
ridicules men's hats, from the angle of cocking to the crease, and
the type, treating the military cap, the merchant's, the beaux' of
St. James, the sailor's, the quaker's (who wear hats spread over the
entire head to darken the outward and to sinity the possession of the
inner light), and the rawkies', who wear a hat so that the corner that
should cover the forehead points straight into the air.

Men's wigs are equally ridiculed. Since "wigs are as essential
to every person's head as lace is to clothes; and though understanding
may be deficient in the wearer, as well as money, yet people dressed-
out look pretty; and very fine Gentlemen, thus embellished, represent
those 'pots upon Apothecaries shelves, which are much ornamented, but
always empty (II, 91-2)." Stevens pictures the 'prentices's minor
bob or haircap, the Citizen's Sunday Buckle or sob-major bearing
several tiers of curls, the Apothecary's Bush (likened to a snow-heap),
the dignified Physical and Chirurgical Ties, the Scratch, or Blood's
skull-covering (combed to imitate a natural head of hair since such
gentlemen seek to have every thing about them natural), and the Jehu's
Jemmy, a fleecelike type affected by great gentlemen who love to look
like coachmen. Stevens uses caricatures by Hogarth to classify the wigs into three types: the episcopal (a protuberating wig eclipsing the majority of the face leaving only enough to look like a small piece of beef baked in a large pudding), the aldermanic (a two-ended wig resembling the two legs of an over-gorged glutton), and the lexonical (full length to symbolize the length of a Chancery suit). Each type is portrayed in an illustrative series of five varying caricature heads.

Further subjects for comment include the full gamut of fashionable materials: frocks, coats, surcoats, walking sticks, cosmetics, trains (not only becoming but proper to persons of fashion because they encourage the silk manufacturers), ladies' eating habits (degenerated from a thick slice of well-coiled beef in the days of Elizabeth to a few slices of bread and butter or a French roll).

A second short piece concerns the science of oratory, "An Introduction to the Preface of A Dissertation upon Oratory."

Repetitious, flowery, superlative, and emotional, the piece itself is a caricature of the rhetorical extravagances of the British Inquisitor (Charles Lacklin), Orator Henley, and the preachers of the psalm-singing saints, the Methodists of the day. Stevens utilizes Latinate vocabulary, tautology, and alliteration:

Flowers of Speech, and Specimens of Speaking

Imprimis, ORATOR FLORIDENSIS

Gentlemen,

Though tautology is allowable in practice, I don't approve on't theoretically; therefore, I shall plainly, fully, openly, and concisely, I hope, acquit myself, without being critical, or satirical, or
mystical, or rhetorical, or schismatical, or chimerical or shimsical.—I'll give no utterance to any arrogance, with dissonance of deliverance, nor countenance any exorbitance of intemperance, ignorance, nor extravagance: what I communicate I shall authenticate, and I beg you'll compassionate: I will not exaggerate, nor contaminate, nor depreciate, nor discriminate, an intemperate candidate, at any rate.—But I'll prognosticate he must be a profligate, repugnate, and illiterate, apt to prevaricate, hesitate, and degenerate.—I'll use no eloquence in this conference, in confidence the consequence of my innocence with reverence to your prudence.

.....

I shall now conclude without a multitude of solitude.... Oratory is composed of two parts, "Feeds and Flowers; the "Feeds of Metaphor are the roots of Rhetoric; and the flowers of Phrase are like a Nosegay of Eloquence. A set of Philosophers are like a bundle of brush-wood, when they are lighted up by the fires of dispute, and put into the oven of alteration; then out comes the crumb and crust of fair argument (II, 118-20).

An allegory follows, concerning Honesty and Knavery, characters in a tale of two apprentices who began life in the same school.

Honesty, a sure sign of lunacy, is always unpopular and destitute and is finally committed to Bedlam. Knavery, eminently successful and admired, eventually elopes with an heiress.

Of more interest is a fragment "Written by one of the Troop" concerning the "unparalleled sufferings" an English Company of Comedians endured on a tour of France. The troop went to France immediately upon the ratification of a treaty of Peace, equipped with such theatrical necessities as feathers, vilt truncheons, spotted flannels, copper emboss, transparent cloudings, laquered bowls, tin daggers, pantomime tricks, and clock stockins. At the customs examination, a piece of stage equipment, a painted cross, is taken as
evidence that the troop is catholic, so no trouble occurs there; but the first production, Romeo and Juliet, brings catastrophe when the leading man, wonderously large, fell through the stage, ruining the tone of the play, as well as injuring himself enough to prevent subsequent performances. Despite this mishap, the funeral procession proved popular as did The Beggar's Opera. On the following night features of both are combined in order to vary the fare. But once the spectacle of the performance wore off, the company found itself unable to make a living; for the French could not understand the players, and the English travellers turned their noses up in disgust at anything English. Retreating to Dunkirk and leaving baggage behind in Calais as security for debts, the company fell into factions and began a riot. Imprisoned for disturbing the peace, the members despair, but the author found a generous lady who paid his passage to London in return for caring for her monkey, squirrel, and two guinea pigs. Stevens concludes that there is no reason for going to France, for the French only make fools of the English or else teach the English to make fools of themselves.

A second allegory, longer, more drawn out, and less successful, concerns a contention between Poverty and Riches, with the Adventures of Flattery. The whole is elaborately worked out (Vale of Tempe, Prince Riches, his son Prodigality, his daughter Avarice, his grandchildren Misery and Infamy, etc.), but the movement is slow and the tone is eminently moral. A delight in nature, especially in idyllic descriptions, foreshadows the great interest in nature of the romantic writers. Stevens, however, is far more concerned with the life of
London, the nature of mankind, and the teaching value of such a story. The allegory fails to awaken an interest and remains stilted, didactic, and pedantic.

Another allegory, the "Amors of Wit and Oeconomy," is even less successful. Lovely Oeconomy is undone by Wit, for he is concerned only with enjoying life and good company. Marrying against the wishes of her brother Prudence, Oeconomy soon finds herself cast off by Wit, who is tired of her doting passion. Wit's companion, Hermes, records his adventures at the races and portrays the types of characters seen there: the credulous apprentice who steals from his master in an attempt to win a fortune at the races, the unfaithful husband, the gambler, and the ruined gallant.

The whole tale offers the author an opportunity to comment on love conceits and satirizes the elaborate, artificial and insincere:

There was eloquence in her looks, and she spoke in her silence; that she was more lovely than the fairest bloom of the spring; that the blush on her cheeks made the coral turn pale; that her teeth were finer polished than pearl, her breath more aromatic than breezes from the Spice Islands; that her neck sullied the undrifted snow; that the stars to her eyes were but glow-worms tails; and that the conversation of Celestials to her company was as dull as a winter's noon to a May-day's morn (II, 156).

Stevens intrudes to discuss the effect of passion and the consequences resultant, and he comments on headstrong women. The wedding of Oeconomy and Wit offers an opportunity to satirize the foolishness of the newly married; Stevens himself shows a cynical attitude toward marriage and finds it much less pleasant after four weeks than it was on the first day. To conclude, Stevens depicts the stuffiness of a
fashionable assembly, the cheap phoniness of the races, the hypocrisy of the gambler, and the discordant clamor and cruelty of the cockpit, finding bull-baiting "a more MANLEY and more INNOCENT exercise."

Having exhausted the works of Flyblown, Stevens returns to the history of the prostitute, but he immediately distresses again on the history of a condemned criminal. The prostitute finds "painful pleasure" in revealing the life story of the young criminal to "prove a means of saving one of those many who every year destine themselves by intemperance to destruction." Written by the criminal himself in his cell and while he momentarily expects the arrival of the death warrant, the story is thoroughly sentimental. The hero is only twenty-two and is the only son of a country vicar. He has fallen to crime through dissolute ways of the town. The hero joins an uncle in business. The scene in which the son departs for the city is similar to the one in which Laertes takes his departure of his family. Our hero's father furnishes him with moral advice:

My dear child, you are now going to the best and the worst city in Europe. Your future fortune will depend entirely on the acquaintance you contract. Shun much and mix'd company; be not flattered by common-place phrases of friendship, nor believe mankind when they promise to serve you. Let men of understanding only be your intimates. But the vicious, or the foolish, (which I am sorry to say compose above one-half of the inhabitants in that metropolis, and who like insects in the shambles are to be met with in every coffee-house, tavern, and place of public diversion) avoid like a pestilence. To keep company with fools, is a disgrace to your understanding; to herd with vicious people, a stain to your reputation. What the mad, the unthinking, the idle of this age call Pleasures, are merely the intoxications of riot; and every actor in such depraved scenes is sure of ending his part in beggary, in loathsome disease, or infamous punishment (II, 202-3).
At first the soul of perfection, the hero is introduced to the follies of the town and is captivated by a lady of pleasure and sinks deeper and deeper into the "affectation of riot, debauch, and extravagance..." never considering the consequences. Business is neglected for pleasure, the respect of the uncle and his family is lost, as well as his job. Turning to gambling, the hero sinks and finally is forced to take to the road in the capacity of highwayman. Betrayed for the reward by his mistress, he is brought to the sad end. He dashes himself against the walls of the cell in remorse for his misdeeds, which have caused the tears of a heart-broken father and the disgrace of the loss of honor, humanity, and Christianity. The hero nobly forgives his heartless mistress for her part in his capture, since she has only acted in character. A person who is despicable enough to let herself out for hire cannot be otherwise than base.

Concluding the story of the highwayman, Stevens returns to the prostitute and has her give up her trade in revulsion to London ways. Retiring to the country, our heroine boards at the house of a clergyman in the guise of widow of an army officer. Restored to bloom and spirits, she finds great delight in being her own mistress, no longer subject to call for "libidinous debauchees, feigned affection, or debilitated attempts of vitiated powerless tormenting inclination." The life of ease and innocence soon becomes tiresome, however, and the heroine decides to visit the Assizes in Exeter. Immediately, an understanding and good-natured gentleman of estate and fortune becomes her suitor and proposes marriage. Forgiving her her past, he marries her. She gratefully awards him her fortune; but by the following
winter, the husband is discovered to have a mistress in London. The reformed prostitute catches her husband and his paramour together; but understanding all too well the situation, she merely swoons. After a miscarriage and a fever, she recovers determined that such an ungrateful husband will not break her heart; he, after returning most of her money, conveniently sails for Jamaica with his new lady. Returning to her country estate, deeded to her by her husband upon his desertion, our heroine allows her former landlord, the clergyman, the knowledge of her troubles and is immediately forced to begin an affair with him. Astonished at his hypocrisy, the lady returns to London and finds her husband returned. His lady left him for a richer lover. Suffering torments for his treatment of his wife, he pines away but survives long enough to inherit the estate of a wealthy brother, return to England, reunite with his spouse, and be forgiven before death. The widow returns to the country and devotes herself to works of charity, having found at last in "spite of our dreams of joy, either from Wit, Splendor, Intrigue, Homage, or any other incidental Epicurean luxury, there is no permanent pleasure, no solid happiness that can be felt, except that which arises from the satisfaction of DOING GOOD (II, 296)."

Stevens is a transitional figure in the development of the novel. He is writing in a genre newly created by men more able than he for an audience of new tastes and values. The period itself reflects changing values and interests as the neoclassicists and their period pass and romanticism emerges. Stevens is concerned with the nature of mankind, and he attempts to correct folly and extravagance by satire, incorporating in his work the ludicrous, the topical, and the current. His delight in the city and in city life, his interest
in learning and his constant concern for the follies of fashion, religion, and medicine all fall into the neoclassic category; but Stevens shows as well the indications of the coming change. Respect for virtue, honor, morals, and trade indicate the values of the middle class. Tears, happy endings, and money reflect the typical interests of the new readers; and Stevens is content to abhor vice and falsehood and to value chastity and honor along with his readers.

Like Fielding, Stevens likes to interrupt and to add his views on the subject as well as to divest into moral lectures, but he does not do it as capably as does Fielding. Stevens interrupts at random and is always too self-conscious and stilted. The reader does not feel at ease with his digressions. The same kind of effect comes in the handling of incident. Stevens, with his dramatic background, is best in treating the short and single episode; long continuity breaks down. Tom Fool is much more unified than The Adventures of a Speculist, but even it is rambling, discursive, lumbering. The splicing of material in the Speculist is clumsy, and the incessant branching off into the history of the newly introduced character loses the thread of the situation. Perhaps Stevens is not entirely to blame; for if the editor is really an editor, the blame can be attributed to his shortcomings. Stevens had insufficient confidence in the work to attempt to publish it during his own lifetime, so he perhaps recognized the deficiencies. Stevens is more interested in the character, especially in developing the appearance of the character, to concern himself too much with the vital development of the internal, realistic person. He uses types. His puppeteering experience is reflected in
his treatment of character, for he is concerned with the shallow surface appearance, clothing, wigs, and eccentricities more than with realistic, human-like figures.

Like Defoe, Stevens uses sensational material, told from the first person, simulating diary form, personal record, or journal to achieve an air of reality; this material offers him a chance to utilize his own opinions on current topics, i.e., the dangers of female boarding schools, the dangers of vanity, the dangers of headstrong women. The table of contents indicates a conscious appeal to the reader of sensation—"The Arts of Seduction Exposed," "On Kept Mistresses and their Keepers," "Traits of a Procuress," "Miseries of a Bawdy House Prostitute," "Private Scenes of Prostitution," all lead the reader on, but the treatment is far from the sensational one indicated by the headings. As in the works of Defoe the emphasis is upon material welfare. The heroes and heroines may express repentance, but they never lack for goods, plate, jewels, monies, estates. It well behooves them to repent, for they have joined the respectable and no longer need to practice immorality.

Stevens is writing his novels at a period when he has yet failed to achieve any success. They are an attempt to capture recognition, but they fail. His livelihood in the ensuing years is obtained in writing drolls and short theatrical pieces, a livelihood necessitating talent of a highly specialized kind. When Stevens blends his interest in folly, his concern for appearances, and his dramatic flair in the Lecture upon Heads, he scores success. His novels are merely steps in the direction toward his true talent.
FOOTNOTES


2. Cross, p. 64.


4. It is interesting to note that the mulatto belongs to the type "West Indian character appearing in the dramas of the late 1700's. She is inolent (an effect produced by excessive heat), passionate, vain, haughty, and cruel as proved by her furious jealousy of her servant. For a discussion of this type see "Julie Sypher, "The West Indian as a "Character" in the Eighteenth Century," SP, XXXVI (1939), 503-20.


6. I have used the following edition of the novel: George Alexander Stevens, The Adventures of a Speculist (London, 1712).
CHAPTER IV

Distress upon Distress

Although the novels that Stevens wrote represent a large portion of his literary endeavors, his plays are even more representative. The theater was always closest to him, and throughout his life he made his living in theatrical circles. His plays, none of which are still remembered today, are primarily short, farcical, satirical, and topical afterpieces, although two of his earlier works are almost as long as his novels. These two, however, Distress upon Distress: or, Tragedy in True Taste, and The Dramatic History of Master Edward, Miss Ann, and others, the extraordinaries of these Times, were never acted. Like the novels they satirize fashionable excesses and are topical. The acted plays, on the other hand, are very short and comic.

Distress upon Distress: or a Tragedy in True Taste was Stevens' first play, but it was neither acted nor intended for the stage. The piece was written in 1752 and was first published in Dublin, for at the time Stevens was living there. The play was probably intended for the convivial members of Stevens' Nassau Court Club, for it is obviously a burlesque of the contemporary tragedies. The full title of the play alone makes the intent clear:

Similes, Rants, Groans, Sighs, &c. entirely New. 
Dedicated to the Right Comical L. C. J. Isaac Sparks. With Annotations, Dissertations, Explanations, Emendations, Quotations, Restorations, &c. by Sir Henry Hum and Notes Critical, Classical, and Historical. By Paulus Purgantius Pedasculus. Who has carefully Revised, Corrected and Amended it, Expurged the several Errors and Interpolations, Reconciled the various Readings, and Restored the Author to Himself.

All of the bad features of the contemporary tragedies are burlesqued: the blending of multiple plots (tragic, comic, and burlesque), bombastic acting and rhetoric (groans, rants, sighs), the elaborate annotations interpreting and in so doing destroying the life and speed of the play, and the revision and interpolation of material equally destructive in a supposedly serious effort to "restore the author." This latter comment refers to the contemporary efforts to restore Shakespeare, efforts which kept Shakespeare's plays before the public but in adaptations so altered in title and plot that the author would have had trouble recognizing several of his own works. The then recent edition of Shakespeare's works by Bishop Warburton, with its elaborate critical apparatus and ponderous notes to the text, seems to provide the chief motivation for part of the work. Thus, the extravagances of the stage, which had already brought down the wrath of Fielding in Tom Thumb the Great, a parody of the tragical plays, and the extravagances of the scholar-critic-editor in the editing of Shakespeare combine in Stevens to motivate Distress upon Distress.

The dedication is to the Lord Chief Justice Isaac Sparks, Stevens' friend, associate, fellow clubman, and humorist. The elaborate dedication shows playfully Stevens' sincere esteem for
Sparks; the whole is built upon a suggestion taken from Shakespeare's "the world's a stage" in As You Like It:

May it please Your Lordship, Life, as Shakespeare says, is like a poor Player, and a poor Player is like to be a poor Life; may, any Life, unless tolerably acted, is like to be a poor one.

The World's a Stage, Life an irregular Drama, our Passions are the Players, our Senses the Scenes, and Reason a drowsy Part of the Audience, that cannot, or will not mind what's performing around him.

Life is but a Joke—and our Art at the best, Is solely in making the most of the Jest.
To help the Joke on, you greatly contribute, and I sometimes am allowed to play an under Part to you.

Let me not rake up the Ashes of the Dead; disturb the Kanes of the Great Deceased, or disfurnish the Trophies of ancient Law-Givers, to make a Panegyric on your Lord Chief Justiceship. Come thou Sons of sterling Humour, Lucian, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Thou, the most witty, most worthy of all immortal Swift, inspire me. Teach me to paint THEE and thy Court—it will not be—not one Ray of all their mighty Power will they beam on me—unhappy Rustic.

Suffer me, then, as Your Attorney-General, to address You, and offer a Case to Your Lordship which comes immediately under Your Jurisdiction.

it is the whole Art and Mystery of HUM-BUGGING.¹

The history of hum is elaborately derived from ancient times, traced from Egyptian scholars through pseudo manuscripts and famous scholars. These scholars early began the search for the philosopher's stone and invented oracles, both fraudulent. Stevens traces the art of deceiving to Hermes Trismegistus, the Greek name for the Egyptian god Thoth, founder of alchemy; and Zoroaster, founder of the ancient Persian religion; through Herodotus, Greek historian; Pliny the Naturalist; and Sir John Mandeville, fictitious famous traveller.

Perhaps the most remarkable early hum was the Trojan horse (although
Stevens ventures to quibble that it may have been a mare, or a cow), the model for which, preserved in the Cretan Museum, was the source of Daedalus' intrigue for Madam Pasiphae using Europa's Galloway. Additional famous hummers include Ulysses, who survives innumerable tests by using his wits (Circe, Calypso, etc.); his wife Penelope, who held off undesirable suitors by unweaving her tapestry; and Alexander the Great, who made others believe he was a god, but who carried the joke too far when he began to believe it himself. The catalog includes many other classical figures and shows that Stevens had at least a surface familiarity with classical materials. It is true that Stevens could have obtained all this erudition from looking in a classical dictionary, which he himself suggests is the source of material for hack writers in his later novel, *Tom Fool*; but he seems to be genuinely familiar with the material.

Modern hummers include Cromwell and bargain hunters. Stevens derives the term "hum" from the nostrils of the Phoenician fanatic traders as they pretended to show contempt for offers made on their goods. Stevens then sees humming as the bold stroke of a younger brother of the house of Legend, and in his time as particularly the property of the gypsy, the mountebank doctor, the Methodist preacher, the Italian count, the decayed gentleman, the fortune hunter, the occultist, and the actor, who alone of all the group has some claim to respectability, for the very nature of the profession recognizes the element of deception. All these modern fakers, Stevens feels, should have a diploma from the Court of Good Humor; should they lack one, he demands that Sparks fine all pretenders severely, especially
poetry peddlers, classical critics, and plagiarizing humorists.

Stevens then presents an encomium upon Sparks, for he finds in Sparks the highest qualities of friendship, fatherhood, humor, and character. Then Stevens submits his work to the town for judgment:

...the Town is the Jury: To them therefore I submit, and if any Performance of mine, either as an Author, or Actor, can amuse them, my End is answered, my Labour paid: But if, on the contrary, I'm condemned, why, Silk-form like, I'll wrap my self up in my own Labours, and dose out the rest of my Days, in Dirt and Despair, a miserable Momento to all wou'd be Wits, my contemporaries.

It is very hard to be witty, and a melancholy Thing, a very melancholy indeed, when we want to arrive at wit. And Dullness (fast Friend to us Rhime-Makers), claps an Embargo on our Understandings. But though I can't come at Wit, I may at Sincerity, and possessed of that, dare say, if a single Page in the following Burlesque meets with Approbation from the Readers of Taste in this Metropolis, I shall from thenceforth begin to have a good Opinion of a certain Son of Indiscretion, called Geo. Alex. Stevens (p. x).

In typical fashion, Stevens, who readily digresses, includes several items of interest in his dedication. He humorously compares the good resolutions of the morning after a riotous evening to an enelope's tapestry; for, like the work, the resolves are undone in the evening:

In vain may we reason dispassionately, declare of Abstinence and Good Hours. It is all but a Web. At Night, Claret and good Company unravel all our Resolutions.

And faith, entre nous, I think we are in the Right of it. Time will not stay for us, why should we stay for Time? The future Moments are scarcely worth reflecting on, the past too painful to remember, and the present only fit for Laughter. Let us then socially
sacrifice to Mirth and true Humour. As in the ancient Days of Pleasantry our Forefathers tasted the Sweets of Joyful Society.

The Spirit of Hospitality presided at their Tables; Wit and good Humour were their Companions; and Fancy furnish'd out the Feast (p. v).

As usual, such is Stevens' philosophy of life. He always advocated the enjoyment of the moment, especially with good companionship and a bumper of wine.

An equally common topic is the basis of the second digression; foremost with Stevens is fashion and the follies of contemporary society. After he considers the catalog of heroes of the past, all men who have practiced notable hums, he concludes that such men would find themselves ill at ease in modern society, for the people of the day were far more advanced:

It is not by slaying of Monsters, founding of Empires, or being tempest-toss'd for half a score of years, we are now become great. The System of Life is entirely altered. If we would do any Thing for Posterity, we may endeavour to increase the infant Inhabitants of the Foundling-Hospital, and as to encountering Fatigues, the rude Jolts of a Hackney-Coach over the rough irregular Streets, broken Pavement, is enough to dis-compose the Oeconomy of both Limbs and Linnen of the prettiest Fellow existing (pp. vi-vii).

Such ironic contrast, comparing the feats of the ancient heroes to such modern accomplishments as killing time, riding in a hackney-coach, and leaving infants to the more tender care of the foundling hospital, shows Stevens' opinion of fashionable society. These heroes of old would not flourish in modern times, for they would not be able to hold their own in the pump room, at hazard, in the minuet, or at a masquerade. The only possible fashionable area left for men like Ulysses
is the new sport of boxing, at Broughton's, but even this is tame compared to the deeds which Ulysses performed (p. vi).

On the subject of humor, Stevens intensifies his opinion, and clearly shows his requirements. Throughout his life, Stevens' own convivial nature played a large role in his popularity. As an actor in his early years, he found this quality the one which kept him employed. Later as a droll writer and club man, this same quality stood him in good stead. It is interesting to note that it is this quality that Stevens finds most necessary for humor. Addressing Sparks, Stevens says:

For my own Part, I shall, as Your Attorney General, prefer a Bill against all Pretenders to Hum, who dare practice without being able to show a sensible Diploma; or, at least, a Deputation from the Court of good Humour.

That is the Court in which all Men ought to practice in, especially all those who with natural or acquired Qualifications are capable of taking upon them the Character of fine Companions.

With Submission to Your Lordship's Judgment, I cannot help giving it as my Opinion, that however fame-worthy Wit, Wisdom, and Learning are, Good-nature is much their superior.

I esteem Good-nature before wit, &c. may be thought in me to proceed from the common Vice of Railing at what I cannot enjoy.

I allow it; yet must beg leave to observe, that, although Wit is very pleasing, it is sometimes as hurtful, as it often raises up a Foe, seldom makes a Friend.

A Man of Wit and Humour may justly be compared to a beautiful Girl without a Fortune; they both attract many admirers, who pay strong Court for Possession, but it is momentary Self-Gratification only that they aim at. After, long Enjoyment blunts the Edge of Appetite, and familiarity renders every once wish'd for Perfection common. Satiety succeeds Desire, and the former Lovers
are no longer anxious after Enjoyment. What is then to become of those Victims to Frolic? The Girl languishes out her disease-shortened Days in an Hospital; and the Man of Wit, broken-hearted, perishes in Gaol, under the miserable Reflections of mispent Time and baseless Friendships (pp. viii-ix).

Here we see another side of Stevens, his sentimentality, combined with his good humor. The picture of the damsel languishing in the hospital in her last disease-shortened days, and the man of wit sadly reflecting on his days of glory, in debtor's prison, aware of his mispent youth and his fair-weather friends, is truly sentimental. Here, virtue is rewarded and folly, exemplified in the two figures, is punished.

With good nature Stevens blends elements of the practical joke—slapstick and slightly cruel play at the expense of some victim in a boisterous way. The Squire salutes his vassal Spunge with a faceful of wine. Stevens here divides humor into three types:

There are three Degrees of Comparison in Wit. The first Degree is the Hum, i.e. endeavouring to impose on the Credulous, e.g. He says, he will give him another Glass of Wine; but, how does he give it? The other stands ready to take it; but, how does he take it?

The second Degree of Wit consists in the Action of throwing a Glass of Wine. This may be properly called, Wit-pantomimical, just like throwing Tobacco-Pipes out of a Joke, burning Waiters' Wigs in fun, scorching the Shoes of their sleepy Companions, or blackening his Face or hiding his Pocket-book.

The third is, the Paranomasia, or Pun to dash and hit (p. 47).

One further curiosity in the dedication is the inclusion of an advertisement from Charles Macklin's last benefit. Macklin was an acquaintance of Stevens; a fellow actor and a man of considerable ego,
Macklin is here presented in a ludicrous light. The benefit is at Covent Garden, and it is a presentation of a new comedy, Covent-Garden Theatre: or, Pasquin turn'd Drawcansir. The play is in the manner of the Italian comedy, blended with the Greek traditions:

Written on the Model of the Comedies of Aristophanes, and the Pasquinades of the Italian Theatre in Paris: With Chorusses of the People after the Manner of the Greek Drama. The Parts of the Pit, the Boxes, the Galleries, the Stage, and the Town, to be performed by Themselves, for their Diversion; the Parts of several dull disorderly Characters, in and about St. James's to be performed by Certain Persons, for Example; And the Part of Pasquin-Drawcansir, to be performed by his Censorial Highness, For his Interest. The Satire to be introduced by an Oration, and to Conclude by a Peroration: Both to be spoken from the Rostrum, in the Manner of Certain Orators, by Signior PASQUIN (p. 11).

This piece was written about the time Macklin retired from the stage to open a tavern featuring himself as elucidator on matters of taste, history, and subjects of general cultural interest, all determined by Macklin himself. Naturally such an egotistical scheme evoked considerable abuse; Stevens' is not harsh, but it does point out the pomposity of the man.

The scholarly apparatus includes a "Genealogy of the Author," following the dedication. This piece is an elaborate tracing of the author's family tree from its roots in the union of Joan of Arc and M. Rondeau, chief court madrigal maker. Such an illustrious ancestry makes the author poetically begotten and secure in the role of poet, for his ancestors have been responsible for the invention of Leonine verses, acrostics, plays, tragedy epilogues, and dactylic and spondaic verse. His grandfather was a prologue writer for puppet shows, and
his grandmother composed poetry to be engraved in wedding rings.
The author's own parents were a signpainter and a ballad composer,
and he himself has a considerable talent for composing couplets for
almanacs and verses for valentines, as well as some success at
epitaph-making. The entire body of playful nonsense is attested to
by the impressive Welshman, Owen Llwhyddgmaeth Duollchyrdfdsfith,
genealogist.

Distress itself contains thirteen main characters, eight men
and five women. The men include Squire Fanfly; Beverage, a vinter;
Spunge, a captain; Gamble, a sharper; Phlebotome, a quack doctor;
Scarebabe, his man; Caustic, a corn-cutter; and Jack Handy, the
squire's handyman. The women include Capriola, a rope dancer;
Arietta, an opera singer; Miss Languish, an heiress; Sybilla, her
governess; and the Squire's Mama. Assorted attendants, a constable,
a watch, and a ghost comprise the rest of the cast.

The first act is composed in four scenes irregularly numbered
to indicate the lack of order in the tragedy of the day. The opening
scene presents Gamble in a passion. His aria reveals that he is
oppressed by the double burden of love and debt:

Woe heap'd on Woe, as Wave on Wave,
A Sea of Sorrows fills my Breast,
Can mortal Man more Trouble have?
By Love and Debt at once oppress'd (p. 15).

Spunge, equally furious, enters and trips Gamble. This action in-
roduces slap-stick action, and an argument results. But Beverage
reminds the two that the day is a special one and ill-suited to
quarreling, for it is the day on which Squire Fanfly, the landlord,
comes of age. To further quiet the two quarrelers, Beverage demands payment of the bill which the two owe:

Yes, in my Debt you have
So I have seen, in an unfurnish'd Room,
A needy Spider raise his air-spread Loom;
From one poor Speck at first his Web begins,
Thread after Thread, the Tax-free Tenant spins,
Day after Day, thus you've increase'd your Score,
You've spun your Threads out, and I'll trust no more (p. 18).

In an effort to change the subject, Spunee claims to hear the voice of dear Miss Molly Languish, and the group convivially set off to seek the Squire and his celebrating friends.

The second scene presents Miss Molly with her governess. Miss Molly is attempting to bribe her governess with a pot of marmalade, for she has sighed for delights but has never obtained them, and she no longer will wait for freedom and a husband:

Shall I still samplers stitch, or all the Day,
Like a mere Child, with jointed Babies play?
You'll break my Heart, dear Ma'am, what do you mean?
I'm now no Girl, this Month I've been fourteen,
Soon I'll be wed, I hope, and bedded too,
I'm old enough, tho' not so old as you (p. 20).

The uncorruptible governess remains firm, but reveals she has never had to face a more severe charge in her life:

Long have I hobbled, wrinkled thro' this Life,
A Virgin, Widow, and a widow'd Wife.
I've try'd all Troubles, I have felt the Jars
Of Cholics, Cramps, Histerics, and Catarrhas.
Yet never grumbled, never look'd awry,
Till now you force me——fye upon ye fye (pp. 20-1).

Arietta then enters, with two tragedy handkerchiefs, and laments the plight of a maiden who has placed her trust in faithless man. She
raves passionately, and Miss Molly attempts to calm her. But Arietta, ruined by Squire Fanfly, remains disconsolate:

On that fam'd Stage, where Perseus oft has flew,
Where Faustus conjur'd, and where Orpheus play'd,
With warbling Songs, I've charm'd attentive Crouds,
And Lords done Homage round me as at Court.
The Levee-throng'd Dependents watch their Prince,
To catch the secret Whisper, snatch his Smiles,
And then strut happy Home, big grown with Hope:
At length, one fatal Eve the Squire came,
Protested Love, presented, but O Gods!
His Words were weighty, for his Gifts were large.
He begg'd, I granted, but I can no more:
He's lost, I'm left, and all my Splendour's o'er (p. 23).

Miss Molly advises Arietta to smother her resentment and, since one love is gone, to obtain another love; and the Governess advises a strong drink. Arietta responds:

Wou'd I were drunk; nay, drunk I will be too,
And when I am I'll make the Devil to do.
Ye gilded Chariot, and ye rich Brocade,
And the dear Joys of midnight Masquerade,
A long Adieu, now thro' the filthy Town,
In dirty Hackney, and in plain silk Gown,
Must I be drove; perhaps 'tis worse decreed,
And thro' the Streets in Pattens I must tread.
Perhaps mend Stockings; O, ye cruel Gods!
Or scrub my Flesh off in the sharp Soap-Suds (p. 24).

Arietta makes a solemn vow never to see the Squire again:

Hear me ye Naiads, Fairies, Nymphs and Fawns,
Who wanton lave amidst the crystal Streams;
That o'er the smooth-worn Pebbles plays
Thro' flow'ry Vales, and daisy-sprinkled Meadows;
And ye who govern the high-waving Woods;
'Tho secret dwell in sun-sequestered Groves,
And nightly dance thro' arch-embower'd Walks.
Ye Hamodyrads hear! Ye sullen Gnomes
That flit on foggy Clouds from Earth unprais'd:
Ye purer Sylphs, that skim the midway Air:
And all ye Genii of the Deep attend,
If I request, Petition, send, or sue,
May Thunder split my Snuff-box all to pieces,
And lightnings burn my Brussels Mob to Ashes.

I'll now,
With weary, wandering, melancholy, tread;
Goaded by Griefs, disconsolately creep:
On the soft Pillow rest my aching Head,
Sob like a Child, and sigh myself to sleep,
Snore out my Wrongs and dream--the Lord knows what
What I, in Vision see, that I'll fulfill,
If 'tis my Blood, or pen-dipt Ink to spill:
To end my Woes at once by well-set Knife,
Or vindicate my Wrongs, and write my Life (pp. 25-6).

The sylph machinery, the incongruity of the promises to end her life
or set it down on paper, the disproportion between the witnesses of
her solemn vow, and the pledge of destruction of her snuff box and
lace echo the artificiality of Pope's "Rape of the Lock." A later
address to Folly and Dullness reflects Pope's Dunciad:

When Folly, like a chatter'ring Magpie, sat
Full on my Forehead, thro' the whole Debate,
On Wings of Rats between us Dullness bore,
And Common Sense stood trembling at the Door,
Words wav'd on Words, Nonsense, Nonsense roll'd
And I myself appear'd the greatest Scold (p. 38).

The next scene is between Phlebotome, a skeptical philosopher,
and Scarebabe, who has come from the Squire's mother to request the
aid of the doctor in having her son committed to Bedlam for his
rakish ways. Caustic enters with a black eye lamenting that he was
not born rich so that he could spend his time in fashionable leisure:

Had I been born but Rich I had been bless'd,
Sage then each Day in indolent Ease;
Supine, my Life insipidly had slid,
Thro' the throng'd Park, I'd lazy lounge along,
Arm linked in Arm with my laced Coat comperees,
And dawdling dangle with affected Limp.
Or big with pleasing Contemplation stand
'Gainst the Pier-Glass, and look whole Hours away:
Then nightly trifle round Theatric Scenes,
Retailing Remnants of stale Repartee,
Or o'er th' exhilarating Coffee join,
In Speculations for the Nation's Good;
Or with harmonious Taste, or clenched Fist,
Direct Jack Broughton's, or the Opera rule (p. 29).

Caustic reveals that the Squire blackened his eye with a wooden slipper as the corn-cutter treated Fanfly. Phlebotome finds in this episode sure proof of the Squire's insanity, and the three recall the fate of a friend who was tossed in a blanket the preceding winter by some overly playful young gallants:

In that wet Season, when descending Rains Stream thro' the Streets, and swell along the Lanes,
When Mud obnoxious, o'er the Pavement spread,
Soils the white Socking at each mirey Tread.
When the shrill Link-boy plies the Playhouse Door,
And Mack'rel pleasing Cry is heard no more,
When Strength-restoring Oysters are in prime;
Or, in plain English, it was Winter Time;
Then was Peel Garlick toss'd (p. 31).

Here Stevens is mocking the elaborate high-flown style of the tragedy writers in the overly elegant presentation of the season through descriptive detail and in the inverted order of events. Caustic laments that he was given a monarch's soul but that it was wrapped in the wretched case of his body. The three go off to attend the Squire, as his mother has directed; and the physician is elated at having a wealthy patron:

Cathartics and Narcotica I'll apply,
Nephretics and Emetics we must try,
And drain for Drugs the Dispensary dry.
The Attorney thus to lengthen out his Suit,
Forbids Peace-making, and foments Dispute;
Incessant Watches o'er his Client's Purse,
Makes good Things bad, and bad he makes much worse.
So Squire Fanfly, if I can allure him,
I'll make him mad, and afterwards I'll cure him (p. 33).

The final scene of the first act begins with the entrance of Capriola, Squire Fanfly's mistress, and her servant. Capriola is enraged, for she believes that Arietta has taken the Squire from her. When Arietta enters, the two women engage in a verbal altercation which is ended by the entrance of the Squire himself and his companions. Fanfly greets Arietta most affectionately:

O Arietta, O my warbling Dear,
Whose Voice is sweeter than the tuneful Sound
Of Well-match'd Beagles, op'ning in full Cry;
Thy Eyes are brighter than the Glow-worm's Light,
Thy Cheeks are redder than the ripen'd Peach,
Suffer thy Swain those fragrant Fruits to reach (p. 38).

Capriola intrudes, but is cast off with money—so thoroughly is the Squire infatuated with Arietta. The two women again lash out at one another. Capriola leaves, and the Squire and Arietta become reconciled to one another most affectionately. When Arietta leaves, Sybilla, Miss Molly's governess, complains of the attentions of the Squire's man Spunge toward her charge, the rich heiress, Miss Molly Languish. Spunge protests that he acted under the influence of liquor and is thus innocent, but the Squire punishes him for his presumptuousness, and Spunge draws the moral:

Be warn'd ye Youths, ye ever-thirsty Souls,
Who fond of Frolicks, doat on midnight Bowls;
By my Example learn to shun my Fate,
How wretched is the Man who loves to prate:
If you can Work; O! stick to what your Trade is,
Strong Liquors leave, and making love to Ladies (p. 48).
The Squire in turn advises the females in the audience:

Wou'd ye, fair Maids, our secret Failings scan,  
And as you pick your Laces choose the Man.  
The' Lace bespangled hides the strong close'd Seam,  
And the Paste-Buckles o'er the Instep beam:  
The' o'er the Hat the Milk white Feather's spread,  
The plummy Play-Thing shows a brainless Head,  
Did ye but know the gay embroidered Coat  
Oft cloathes a Comcomb, oft conceals a Sot,  
But 'tis in vain, fatally fond of Show,  
You see, and sigh in secret—Heavens! a Beau  
You with to wed—and often after find  
A rotten Carcase and a wretched Mind.  
Splendid thus monumental Marbles shine,  
The foul Corruption fills the gorgeous Shrine (pp. 48-9).

The scene concludes with the Squire's resolution to spend the evening with "smiling bowls" and to laugh the night away and leave love for the morrow.

The second act begins with a preface admitting that the author's intent is to droll upon Warburton's observations on Shakespeare; for although Stevens admits the extent of Warburton's learning, he finds him lacking in judgment and taste. Stevens feels that Warburton's edition of Shakespeare is overloaded with unnecessary, undeserved interpolations and that it is overly critical of the actors. Because of the ill treatment the actor gets at Warburton's hands, Stevens, "The meanest in renown, the poorest trifler of the town," endeavors to bring Warburton, the classic Goliath, down. Stevens feels that anyone who belongs to the theatrical profession has the right to attack Warburton with ridicule in return for the treatment Warburton has bestowed on it:

...he quits the Gentleman when he takes up the Critic, and thinks a Multitude of Learning will atone for an abundance of Rudeness; but, with Submission to his
Scholarship, Good Nature is as far before great Learning, as the Actions of the Heart to the Intentions of the Head. 'Good Nature and Good Sense for ever join; To err is Human, to forgive Divine (p. 52).'

The second act opens on a drinking scene as Squire Fanfly proposes a toast. Spunge is brought in unpunished; for before the men holding him could prevent it, he escaped and uprooted the pump by brute strength:

...with a Look, fierce as Hombrelliff's face,
He grasp'd, with raw-bone fists, the deep-fixed Pump,
Squeezing it close, then wriathed it too and fro,
From the Foundation loosening, by the Roots,
Uplifting tore it, with Herculean Hurl,
Upon the flinty Pavement flung it down;
Horrid to see, and shivered it to splinters (p. 55).

The Squire forgives Spunge, and further debates drinking in a parody of Hamlet's famous soliloquy:

To drink, or not to drink, that's the Question:
Whether 'tis nobler in a Man to suffer
From Gout, or Dropsy, by outrageous Drinking,
Or prudent arm our Reason 'gainst Debauch,
By Temperance to cure them. Let me think:
If by a social Glass or two, we cure
The Vapours, and elate the Woe-worn Mind;
'Tis a Prescription which ev'ry Wretch shou'd take.
To thirst—to drink—to drink perhaps too much.
Ah! there's the Rub—the Fear of getting Drunk
Adorns Sobriety with all its Charms;
Else, who'd Attendance and Dependance feel?
Who'd gloomy sit, on rainy Days at Home?
By Weather mop'd: Who'd be by Spleen oppress'd?
Or, sorrowing, sigh for an ungrateful Fair?
Bad Luck at Hazard, or worse Luck at Law?
When each, at once might lay Remembrance dead,
Did not the Dread of being sick next Day,
Or the worse Dread of not knowing how to pay,
Puzzle Desire, and make us rather choose
To stay at Home, in Poverty and Thirst,
Than run into Diseases, and in Debt (pp. 56-7).
The Squire's huntsman interrupts with the news that Capriola is leading a mob to stone Miss Arietta's windows, and the celebrants rise from their glasses to save the Squire's love.

Arietta, asleep in her bed chamber, is visited by a ghost; but before she wakes and the ghost can warn her, the bell rings and the spirit leaves. Arietta awakes with premonitions; and Capriola arrives brandishing a bottle. Capriola forces Arietta to choose between drinking a bottle of English brandy or having acid splashed on her eyes, nose, and face; when the Squire arrives, his love is drunk. The Squire observes:

At length she's dumb, her nimble Tongue stands still,  
Her talking faculties by Sleep are numbed,  
And every sound has left her silent lips.  
O thou sweet-pleasing Sleep, whose ebon wand,  
With drowsy poppies wreath'd, can slumberous charm,  
Ev'n ladies tongues, and at thy wond'rous touch,  
Silence is fix'd on tattle-loving Fair (p. 63).

Capriola attempts to woo away the Squire now that his love is out of commission, but she fails and exits with a curse:

...curse on your steady Muscle,  
Oh! I cou'd hate myself for being kind  
To savage Man, the only Beast untam'd.  
Each brute, from instinct, feels a separate Taste,  
But motley-minded Man mimics them all.  
First, like a spaniel, fawning, then puts on  
An ape's Grinace, and monkey-like he plays,  
Sly as the wily Fox, insidious plots,  
Or rudely rushes, like the mountain Bull,  
And all to win poor, weak, defenseless Woman.  
But when desire by full possession's cloy'd,  
Like secret skulking Moles, they coward hide,  
Or bray, like stupid Asses, of our favours.  
Woman to undeserving Man was given,  
The last best gift of ever-bounteous Heaven.
Fond, like a Child, at first the Play-Thing pleas'd,
But soon, too soon, the self-same Beauty teiz'd;
He cries to change, and sighs for other Toys,
Idiot-like dotes, or savage-like destroys:
While wretched Woman-kind betray'd, like me,
Can only curse the Sex, as I do thee (p. 64).

The next scene is a tender evening meeting between Miss Molly
and Spunge. Before Miss Molly can elope with her swain, the watch
seize him and bear him off to prison. The constable in charge is one
of Dogberry's sons, and he interrogates Spunge, judging him on the
grounds of physiognomy. Squire Fanfly has been carried off to Bed­
lam and cannot help Spunge. The constable concludes that Spunge is
guilty of robbery because he denies it, because he is not in bed at
a time when all honest people should be, and because he has a strange
bundle. (Miss Molly gave it to him.) Spunge is then carried off to
Bedlam after his master.

At Bedlam, the Squire's mama and Phlebotome observe several of
the inmates: a kept mistress who lost her keeper to his wife, a
dancing master who lost his sense studying politics, a shoemaker
whose skull was cracked at an election, a gamester who ran mad after
religion, a barber who turned mad with metaphysics, and a poet who
went mad when his play was damned. When Fanfly and his mother are
reunited, Fanfly promises to reform, to give up drink and mistresses,
and to return home to live a sober life of study as an obedient son.
A final dance of the madmen concludes the piece.

Distress upon Distress comes early in Stevens' writing career,
but in it is the same kind of material that appears throughout all
of Stevens' work. This material takes more definite shape in later
efforts, but the germ is evident quite early. Perhaps the strongest material is neoclassical, for the specific purpose is to ridicule the excesses of the contemporary tragedy and to repay Warburton's abuse of the stage by pointing out Warburton's follies in his edition of Shakespeare. Thus the ridicule is centered on two issues: the excesses of tragedy and the excesses of pedantic scholarship. Also evident in this work is Stevens' familiarity with classical and contemporary authors. Distress upon Distress clearly reveals the popularity of Shakespeare with Stevens by the profusion of references and allusions to him. Either in the text or in the notes, Stevens shows a knowledge of As You Like It (p. iii), Richard III (p. 29), The Tempest (p. 41), The Merchant of Venice (p. 54), Hamlet (p. 59), King Lear (p. 60), and The Comedy of Errors (p. 64). Stevens makes it clear that he himself has no doubt of the reality and ability of Shakespeare himself and awards Shakespeare full respect and admiration:

As by the famous Play-Writer, Shakespear, we have an Example; who several will not allow to have been a Man of any Learning; tho' we must be Men of Learning; ay, and good Learning too, to read him (pp. 55-6).

In addition Stevens seems familiar with a number of classical authors, including Lucian, Virgil, Cicero, Socrates, Horace, and Ovid; classical figures, Caesar, Cleopatra, Mark Anthony; and legendary figures, Ulysses, Penelope, Jupiter, etc. (pp. vi-vii). Stevens refers also to Cervantes and Rabelais (p. iv), to his near contemporaries Milton (p. 54), Elkanah Settle (p. 13), Swift (p. iv), Pope (pp. 34, 38) and to such actual contemporaries as Charles Macklin, actor (pp. vii-viii); Reverend Whitefield, Methodist leader
The elements of sentimentality that oppose these neoclassical qualities are less evident in this work, although certain indications are present. The piece has less really sentimental material than his later work, but contains the extravagant, clearly sentimental descriptions of winter (p. 31) and of night:

Now, grizely Night, thy pitch'd Tarpaulin spread,
Black as the sooty Chimney-Sweeper's Sack;
Snore, ye bed-wanting Bunters, on each Bulk;
Wake not, ye Watchmen, while I warm my Love...(p. 65).

and an address to a star:

By yon pale greasy Lamp that twinkling burns;
By the still Silence of this Tongue-ty'd Night;
By this sad Soul that snores, immers'd in Drink—(p. 66).

And the reformed Squire who abandons his rakish ways is, of course, a sentimental device.

In this piece there is satirical treatment of the follies of fashion. Foremost is the theatrical abuse of the tragic genre, but also included are references to fashionable social pursuits of card playing, dancing, gambling, and masquerading (p. vi). Also attacked are the legal and medical professions. Incidental references point out the length of profitable law suits and the extended medical treatment of wealthy patients (p. 33). Passing references indicate Stevens' contempt for such features of the age as the quack doctor, the evangelical preacher, the Italian count, the Italian opera singer, the rope dancer, and the fortune hunter (p. vii). And, finally, Stevens
caricatures the female school in the account the governess gives of her establishment:

I've kept a Boarding-School, 'Tis now three Years,  
To shew young Misses Plain-work and their Pray'rs,  
I form their female Minds, I mend their Tastes,  
Teach them to read and raise the various Fastes,  
To know the bordering Fringe, to whip the Seam,  
The Lawn to flourish, and to skim the Cream (p. 14).

Throughout the piece, Stevens uses over-alliteration and jingly rhyme to detract from the supposedly serious nature of the so-called tragedy. The piece is devoid of plot, and nothing happens to grieve anyone whatsoever. There is little action.

Perhaps the most pointed ridicule is directed through the elaborate notes appended to the work. Initially the notes reflect an attack on all pedantry, again in imitation of Fielding's Tom Thumb, while the second act devotes primary attention to the work of War­burton.

The notes are thoroughly pedantic and reiterate the obvious. The first few pages direct specific attention to the petty distresses of the play—the distresses of love and debt (p. 15), the distress of Miss Molly who longs for a mate (p. 19), the distress of the governess who has suffered many ailments in the course of years (p. 21), and the distress of Arietta, who has lost her reputation (p. 23).

One note presents an illogical argument in answer to a point; when Gamble enters in a passion, Paulus Purgantus notes that disputes concerning his ability to sing while in a passion are readily resolved by supposing Gamble is a witch doctor (p. 15).

The curse uttered by Gamble when he is insulted by Spunge is carefully explained as an Italian term meaning "give unto me Satis­faction":
The subsiding rage of Gamble is likened to steam condensing and evokes the following pedantic comment:

This is a fine physical, hydrostatical Metaphor. For any Fluid rarified by Heat, when it meets with a cold Medium immediately condensing, conglobes in pearly particles, adhering to the chilly metalline, or lignified Superfices.

A second note adds:

What body it was that the elemental Effluvias adhered to, I was long unable to determine; but fancy the Annotator must mean, by the Word Superfices, a Kettle’s Covering, commonly called, a Pot-lid; and the words, metalline and lignified, I take to relate to the essential quality of matter it was made out of (p. 17).

Further notes point out the incorrect use of a semicolon for a full colon (p. 17), unclassical word order (p. 18), antithetical uses of the language (p. 20), and the delicacy of using a common word like sweat (p. 21).

The fashionable habit of swallowing syllables or of dropping them to achieve affected speech is ridiculed in the dropping of the in- from intoxicated:

To mutilate, metamorphise, and transmigrate the English Language, is at present the polite Taste, while on the contrary, the Under-bred, instead of curtailing out of unwonted Generosity, add to their Dialect. e.g. Nam pro Nadam at St. James’s. Misturs pro Madam St. Giles....
Here I cannot help observing at a Particularity of Stile used by Tradesmen, Brokers, &c, of the Metropolis of Great Britain. They look on the Pronoun He or I to be no ways essential in their Advertisements, but think the word Said to be sufficient.

And I hear that there is a Complaint lodged in Nassau Court, by said pronouns, backed by Particle The, against Dublin News Printers, for same fault. Said Printers not given said words fair play in Advertisements (p. 22).

The notes point out word play and the seriousness of vowing. When Arietta decides to never see the Squire again:

This vow is made with premeditation, and as it ought to be; for tho' Swearing is at present in tip top Taste, and quite the Thing, I don't believe the Generality of Gentlemen Cursers take a sufficient Time to recollect what they are going to do when they swear; for it is proper to consider, that an Oath may sometimes be used periodically, sometimes expeditiously, at other Times by way of corroboration.

Further, I needs must say, that tho' there are some Persons called Clergymen, who will make a Bustle about Duty, Decency, and Religion and pretend, indeed, to have Swearing abolished, it would be as pernicious to Conversation, as the Prohibition of Spirits would be to Dram-Drinkers; for as Oaths not only interlard but make up two Parts in three of several Persons Conversation, what would those choice Spirits say if they were not to swear? Why, upon the nicest Calculation, according to de Moivre, Symson Lebute, &c, it therefore follows that they must be condemned to sit silent two Thirds of that Time they now fill up with such elegant Volubility.

There is something so daringly wicked in this calling upon God to confirm a momentous Relation, or upon the least Affront received, commanding a Deity to condemn them to eternal Perdition, that I cannot think common Swearers believe there is a god that hears them; or, perhaps, more modest, imagine the Deity thinks such Reptiles too much below his Notice to punish (pp. 24-5).

Other notes explain the stage action (p. 27), point out
anachronisms (p. 32), and quibble pedantically over word choices (p. 36). The most interesting of the notes are those that attack
Warburton; in them Stevens shows the ludicrous side by copying War­
burton's example. When Capriola refers to her Pinchbeck snuff box,
the note shows that the name means decked with a pinch of snuff; then
the meaning of decked is debated:

Whether it should be deck'd, or no, I cannot tell
certainly, since greater Men than me have been di­
ded about using that Word: For in the Tempest, Act
I. Scene the Second, there is the word deck'd,
according to Mr. Theobald.

The deck'd with Tears the Sea
Oxford Edit. Brack'd with Tears the Sea, i.e., Made
the Salt Water brackish.
Warburton. Moc'd with Tears the Sea.
Mr. Bentley. Stock'd with Tears the Sea.
I say, repugnantibus omnibus, it should be,
Flock'd, i.e., The Tears flock'd to the Sea. Paulus
Pergantius (p. 41).

Later, when Beverage informs us of the punishment to be awarded to
Spunge, the differences between ducked and drenched are pedantically
debated:

Been duck'd, it should be, for it implies their Heads
were stooped, or bent under the Pump. Think not
Reader this Emendation unnecessary, since our best
Critics seldom change words to better purpose, e.g.
Merchant of Venice. Act IV. Scene the Second.
Shakespeare. The Danger formerly by me rehearsed.
Spoke by Warburton, The Danger formally by me re­
hears'd. Portia. If you think fit, vide Bentley's
note on the Words sacred and secret in Milton.

Another alteration, here I beg leave to insert, of
Mr. Warburton's. Mercutio's Speech of Queen Mab,
he says he comes, In Shape no bigger than an Agate
Stone set in a Ring. Mr. Warburton, will have it,
in shade, i.e., like a comet. Again, in Coriolanus,
A Volscian tells Fennius, that Coriolanus, will
front his Revenges with the Groans of Old Women.
The virginal palms of their daughters, i.e. The held up Hands, The palsied intercessions of old votaries.
That is the others may beg, the Children supplicate,
The Fathers intercede in vain. Mr. Warburton will alter Palms to Fames, or Fames, from the French Passe or Sama, i.e. Swooning Kites.

Was the learned Critic to be ask'd, what Occasion for Notes on these Places? could he tell us he made the Text better?—No; more intelligible—no, Why then all these learned, laborious Annotations—"hy, for the same reason Butchers blow Veal, to make the Commodity swell, and sell better (pp. 54-5).

Again, there is discussion over As You Like it and the line "it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room":

The Oxford Edition alters it to a great Reeking in a little Room. Mr. W. denies that, keeps to the original Text, but says, the line means that the Bill was very extravagant, and every Thing the Guests had, very bad and mean.

So in Edgar's description of Dover Cliff, the Surge that over the idle pebbles plays. Idle there, Mr. W. says, means barren, uncultivated. Now would it not do, if we considered them, as Idle, to lie still, and let the water pass over them? What occasion for a note therein and such a forced interpretation?

Another, as forced an Interpretation of this modern Scholiast, we find on a line in Love-Labours Lost, Act I. Scene I. The Child of Fancy. Mr. W. says, Shakespeare calls them, Children of Fancy; not for being beholden to Fancy for their Birth, but because Fancy has its Infancy as well as Manhood (p. 57).

On the Winter's Tale Warburton has the following comment:

A Servant tells his Master, that Twelve Laborers have made themselves all Men of Hair to dance. Mr. W. observes, that Men of Hair signifies Men nimble, and that the Phrase is taken from Tennis-Balls, because they are stuffed with Hair; so that the Sense is, they are stuffed with Hair.
Now when they enter, it happens that they were all dressed like Satyrs, all in shaggy Dresses made of Hair, which was what the Servant meant; but his Interpretation is like the Foreigner's, who mistook the Words under a Sign, Money for live Hair, to signify, Money for living here (p. 58).

On *Hamlet* Stevens points out that Warburton wants to put "Advent" for "intent" in the line "Be thy Intent wicked or charitable," thereby changing the sense from a logical questioning of the ghost's intentions. And when the ghost says that it is "confined fast in fires," Warburton inserts too, "confined too fast in fires," thus taking unnecessary and unwarranted liberties (p. 59).

Stevens mocks Warburton's explanation in *King Lear* of Regan's "Which the most precious square of sense possesses":

By the Square of the Senses, we are here to understand, the four nobler Senses, viz. Seeing, Hearing, Tasting, and Smelling; for a young Lady could not, with any Decency, insinuate, she knew of any Pleasure which the fifth accorded. He is so very nice, in Respect of the Senses, that he will not allow them to be pierced. It is not right, he thinks, so he alters a Line in Lear's curse,

From A Father's Curse pierce every sense about thee.
To A Father's Curse pierce every Fence about thee (p. 60).

Elsewhere Stevens further points out ludicrous emendations which Warburton makes, the substitution of his own words for words Warburton feels absurd, the additions of others, and the free interpretations (p. 61).

*Distress upon Distress* is a slight work, a piece intended for clever commentary and humorous ridicule of topical and familiar material, but it shows Stevens in his earliest endeavors and reflects
the more neoclassical side of the author. There are present touches of the sentimental; but as stated earlier, the primary intent is to ridicule the excesses of tragedy and the excesses of pedantic scholarship.

The Dramatic History

Stevens' second long but unacted play has the involved title, The Dramatic History of Master Edward, Miss Ann, and Others, the extraordinaries of these times, collected from Zaphaniel's Original Papers. And as in Distress upon Distress, it is motivated by topical material, and specifically by Stevens' annoyance with his friend and sometime employer, Edward (Ned) Shuter. The "play" is unmanageable for stage use, for it lacks dramatic situation and coherent plot in addition to being one of the few things Stevens attempted that does not use act-scene divisions and dialogue to reveal the characters. The play was written about 1763 and seems to have been published after Stevens' death. The edition of 1785 contains a comprehensive life of the author which seems to be the source of the accounts contained in Baker's Biographia Dramatica, even to the quaint phrasings revealing the life of such an erratic and vivid figure. This life reveals that The Dramatic History was written while the author was at odds with Shuter and that it was intended to reproach Shuter for the lack of gratitude he had shown Stevens in speaking about Stevens in certain areas of town. Stevens had long provided Shuter with material for drolls and benefits; but Shuter, in bawdy houses and taverns, had rendered Stevens contemptible.
The cast of characters includes Mr. Llwhyddwhuydd, Master Edward (Shuter), Ap Thomas, Samuel Foote, Esq., the author himself, Corporal Knott, Harry Howard, Zaphaniel, Mr. Warner, a dancing master, a mountebank, a merry-andrew, a connoisseur, a gentleman haberdasher, Mrs. Llwhyddwhuydd, Miss Ann, Miss Shred, a governess, Winifred ap Shingle, and assorted constables, bumbailiffs, Choice Spirits, gossips, strolling players, and others.

In the first scene, the dancing master and his friend Zaphaniel summon the editor to obtain his assistance in relating stories concerning players; specifically these stories concern Ned (Edward Shuter) and Nancy Dawson, his mistress, and reveal Ned's airs. Stevens describes Zaphaniel and the dancing master with a special eye for visual detail:

(Zaphaniel is)...dressed in a laced coat, a fine flowered gold and silver waistcoat, figured Ruffles, a heart at his shirt bosom made of green and red stones; he had a sword and a bunch of ribbands at the handle, and he held a snuff-box in his hand...his companion was of the olive tint, his eyes vacant, his nostrils charged with rappee, and his eye-brows, forehead, and other parts of his face, indicating he much practised the look contemptuous, I took him for some foreign nobleman, just imported; but he was a figure dancer at the Opera-house; and thus he opened the business to me.*

The editor is to add style to the work of the pair; for they, being men of fashion, have no idea of books. In order to give him a better idea of the task, the dancing master proposes to entertain him at dinner with Ned and Nancy at Jemmy Warner's. He also lists the ways of attaining fashionable status:

...some choose to bribe a very great lady's hair-dresser; others get into fashion 'cause their fathers have a vote,
or their sister a pretty face, or they were born on this side, or that side Berwick-bridge; or, because—in short, Sir, there are many schemes, but I don't like any of them half so well, as printing your merits in the newspapers, or writing a book about it. I was let into the secret by my master, who got all his money by advertising. For, as he said, never mind what other people say, you will go on telling the town, so you will talk them into it, until they believe every syllable about you (p. 4).

After this introduction Stevens depicts Neddy's descent from the ancient Llwhyddwhuydd family. Ned's father, a Welsh chairman whose family inhabited Wales before the deluge and whose ancestors sailed with Captain Noah, reveals to his partner, Mr. Thomas Ap Morgan, that Mrs. Llwhyddwhuydd, about to give birth to her first child, the last hope of the family, craves to bite the Morgan nose. Morgan is reluctant to comply with the request; and his partner, using the ridiculous testimony of many legendary and classical cases drawn from popular magazines in which pregnant women have produced strange and varied offspring when they are influenced by strange longings, endeavors to convince him. Since these cases have all resulted from the impression the mother's imagination has upon the fiber of the child's brain, Llwhyddwhuydd fears that his child will be born without a nose.

The situation calls for the history of Neddy's mother, formerly Miss Justice, who is the daughter of a mulatto woman and an absconding judge; and she has the singular honor of having been born in America. As under cook to a West Indian family, she came to England, where she fell in love with an actor and ran off with him. He was unable to obtain employment, and her savings were soon exhausted. When his memoirs did not sell, the actor returned to his
native town to become a stocking weaver. Miss Justice, the deserted mistress, found the following flowery letter waiting her when she opened the "fringed coverings of her eye-lights":

My dear Adorable,

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat;...however, I'm resigned to fate, whatever world I am next thrown upon, cannot be worse than this—as I am now determined to renounce the follies, passions and delights of desires, I have been obliged to leave thee, my life, my soul, my all that heaven has given. This can I do, while there was one thing my charmer had left to raise money upon; did I desert her—no—did I not, my lovely creature, stay with thee till the last penny was spent; for we were rich in love; but now approaching want, with all its woeful train appearing, I retire from the storm, not being able to live, my dear, and see thee in distress; therefore have cut myself off from all the pleasure of loved London, and thee the chief, and condemned (curse on my stars) to the vile mechanical method of being obliged to get bread, by working at my business. I leave you in good hands, I know my landlord loves you; and if during my exile, as he is rich, you admit him into my throne, only for a time, why it will be political; I give you leave, as it may expedite my recall. As Congreve says, he takes only your body, I your mind. I must have the better bargain—remember this is my request, nay, my command to yield yourself up to one person, for the sake of another, and what is done by the finest woman in England, and what I would do for you, with the finest woman in England. Adieu (pp. 18-19).

Miss Justice, being unable to read, has her friend Miss Shred, an actress, read the epistle. Miss Justice's hysterics surmon the landlord, Mr. Llwhyddwhuydd; but she recovers with the aid of some brandy, a never-failing restorative. Mr. Llwhyddwhuydd, enslaved by her cooking, seems the best alternative; so Miss Justice marries him after she has heard Miss Shred's story concerning her own ruination at the hands of a wit. This theme is a favorite with Stevens;
and here again, beauty, on the town, falls afoot of wit, who cares only for company and clever repartee, and not for her, for money, or for cleanliness: "He was indeed, as all wits are, irresolute and forward as a baby, giddy as a drunken man, absent as a lunatic, as difficult to be pleased as a vexed idiot, and conceited as an Opera Singer (p. 26)." Then Miss Shred's second benefactor, a fop, lost his money and left her to marry the widow of a Methodist, Miss Shred became a fizer dancer at the Opera House.

The next scene, Scene Matrimony, concerns the subsequent success of the pair in the inn business, for the skill of Madame drew constant clientele and was the reason for the establishment of the Tripe and Trotter Club, the original gourmet club. With this success, David turned hypochondriac and was ordered to return to his original profession by his doctor, and Mrs. David began a liaison with an army corporal, an ideal gallant:

The Corporal was a gentleman remarkable for his gallantry; he had as many fine women as any general officer; he was form'd for intrigue, and graced with every accomplishment which could undo the fair.

He sung all the songs in the Beggars Opera, he could speak ten Tragedy love speeches, could dance a hornpipe, shew tricks with cards, balance a lady's fan upon his nose, no gentleman could fill a tea-pot more gracefully or swear more often, or more agreeably; then he wore his hat so smartly bluff, and his hair was powdered so smooth, could he have been but as constant as he was lovely. Yet as no man is perfect, he affected to imitate his betters, and boast of his amours....He, though admired by the fair, was dislik'd by his brother subalterns, especially the veterans, who, hagged by winter campaigns, their faces weather-worn, and scarified; did not like to see him look so plump, so pert, so smooth-faced, and wear his linen so well ironed (p. 34).
Knott has encountered many fine women, including Miss Neatsfoot, the trim man's daughter, a kept woman, and sometime actress; Bett Filbert, the fruit girl; and Waste Butt, the publican's widow. Corporal Knott engages George Alexander Stevens, the noted song writer, to create a song to Chloe, Madame Llwhyddwhuydd. The song is in the style of the public garden poets of amorous stanzas and has elaborate and pedantic notes:

Down the Parnassian heights I soar,
Upon Pegasus' back my fancy I bore.
Bright Phoebus, with Apollo here attend,
Be all ye Muses nine the poet's friend,
   A poet, as I'll show ye;
From France to Philadelphia's climes,
No haberdasher of rhymes,
   Can boast a Toast like Chloe.

She is not—yes, she is compleat, (purring on Knott's name)
Her alabaster, iv'ry teeth so neat;
Her eyes like starry suns all hearts illume,
And Zephyrus whistling sighs, her lips perfume;
   Where is her marrow know ye?
Her cheeks are cochineal'd; her breasts
Are Cupid's kettle-drums, and love's bird nests,
   That Venus builds for Chloe.

Tempests I'll tear up by the root,
Earthquakes I'll undermine to boot;
With the galaxy of the milky way,
Upon Jove's threshold I'll at marbles play,
   And stake my fair so showy;
I'll dare the synagogue of gods,
And play or pay, I'll lay the odds,
   That nothing ne'er beats Chloe.

When time's sharp scythe mows down my breath,
Shall I not in my quick expiring death,
In tinkling rills her murmuring whispers hear,
While she, like echo sobbing, sighs, my dear,
   Oh Corporal where go ye;
Revived; I'll rush into her arms,
And ravish all her curling charms,
   And charm my charming Chloe (pp. 47-52).
The poem exemplifies the extravagant use of classical allusions, of artificial inversions, and of showy but tired cliches. Nevertheless, the corporal is well pleased and presents the verses to his lady, not realizing that she cannot read. She thinks first that she is receiving a present, then a message concerning an appointment with her lover. When Knott hears of her consternation from the maid, he decides he has been hummed by the ballad maker and endeavors to attack the author, but he runs into David's sedan chair and upsets it and begins a general riot. The passenger of the chair, the renowned Samuel Foote, is carried into the Ilwhyddwhuydd house and is made comfortable with the aid of Miss Shred, while Corporal Knott pursues Stevens through the alleys of London.

That evening, the ardent corporal seeks out his mistress; but she, burning with passion, has reduced herself to insensibility with brandy, for a careless maid accidentally placed the brandy bottle where the water bottle stood. Since the corporal had that very day received orders assigning him to a new post, he endeavored to arouse the lady; and, influenced equally by the liquor and his arguments, the lady decided to run off with his, taking her clothes, her plate, and all the ready money. David, in the meantime, has returned home and has dreamed of portending serious events. David curses and swears himself dry in his rage when he discovers his wife's elopement, but his partner comforts him with the assurance that Chloe will return. This allows David to consider the subject of honor, and he journeys to the country to obtain the advice of his old friend, Mistress Winnifred ap Shingle, the overseer of the
weed pickers for a Welsh gardener at Lambeth. Winnifred, directly descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, is great in understanding, and she advises David to take back his wife. David is startled and knocks her backward into a wash tub and stamps on the cat, Grimalkin. When order is restored, David and Winnifred agree that he must, as a good Christian, forgive and forget. Winnifred begins a Methodist sermon, but David falls asleep before she can well begin.

In Portsmouth, Mrs. Chloe finds her gallant tiresome and elects to leave his company. All the money she had brought with her had been spent, and her lover was too busy gambling to pay her any attention. Chloe is in a sad plight, for she is obliged to put up with a furnished room instead of her own house, and nothing but her own company with not a shilling for necessities. The lady soon remembers her husband's many kindnesses and longs for him. When Knott discovers his lady in the embrace of a merry andrew, he breaks off with her; for he too has become weary of the attachment. The merry andrew, furious at the beating Knott administers him, discloses to his master, a doctor of physic, that he and Knott had cheated the doctor at cards; and the doctor immediately challenges Knott to a duel. Knott, encouraged by alcohol, accepts the challenge and brags of the victory he shall obtain, but he soon begins to back down. The doctor attempts to arm himself, and Knott plans to decline on the grounds of a previous appointment with a lady. The two appear, the doctor motivated by money and the corporal by honor, each terrified of the other. The doctor, supported
by brandy, attempts a charge; the corporal falls, pretending to be severely wounded; and both scamper off in opposite directions.

The doctor sneaks back to his room and climbs up the drainpipe, but a tapster believes that the furtive shadow is a ghost. The doctor, seeing the servant, who is dressed in white, is equally deceived, and thinks he sees the corporal's ghost. When the doctor attempts to escape over the roof, he falls through a rotten place; the clamor starts the terrified servant shrieking, and the whole inn is aroused. As the people flock together, they discuss the reality of ghosts and bravely declare that such do not exist; but when the landlord suddenly appears in a white cap and nightgown, all scramble for hiding places in terror. A slapstick scene follows with the drunken landlord calling for his tapster; and the tapster, convinced his last hour is upon him, pleads for mercy. The whole is terminated by the bravery of Lady Hadit, who begins to believe the spirit is a man, challenges it; for she feels a spirit of Satan would be too polite to harm a woman of quality.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Llwyddwhuydd longs to return to her husband and to her comfortable home. Conveniently she learns that her husband has advertised in the morning paper for her return and is prepared to forgive her all and ask no questions. The couple is extravagantly reunited:

"...my dear husband I esteem you as so worthy a man ought to be esteemed; yet if ever you was to reproach me, with what might or might not suppose to have happened during our separation; that moment should be my last, I would the next plunge myself to the bottom of the river, and prevent that way your ill usage."
Her spouse, though in raptures at the stateliness of his wife's gesture, yet the resolution of her look frightened him; fearful that she should make way with herself, especially as he had been at such an expense to fetch her home too; he had kneel'd down and begged her to be pacified, and forgive him, if he had said any thing amiss.

She forgave him, and raised him with a tender reconciling look, equal to what the most enraged (though detected) lady can soften into when her husband has made a proper humiliation, and giving up all his informers (p. 116).

The affair is soon forgotten, and all returns to normal, until Mrs. Chloe bumps into her husband's partner, Ap Morgan, who spills a bumper on her white satin garment. She is furious because the dress, her best, is ruined; and the two quarrel violently, with Thomas calling her attention to her recent indiscretion. Then Chloe consults Miss Shred about the incident, the two plan revenge. Then she finds herself with child, she claims to have an uncontrollable urge to bite the nose of Thomas; thus we come back to the present and have an explanation for Mrs. Chloe's desire to bite Thomas' nose. Before she can have her way, childbirth occurs. She had gone to the market to shop, not trusting her servants with the task; and a knave of clubs, tossed out of a window by an irate card player, struck her on the nose and induced labor. Such a sign can only indicate the nature of the knavish child, a boy. With the birth of the child were other omens—a five legged calf was born in Hoxton and Mr. Whitefield suffered some mysterious advent undisclosed by our author—omens further portending Shuter's character.

Her gossips soon congregate to see the new baby and to fill Mrs. Chloe in on the latest news. The women argue the merits of
priority concerning the status of the egg and the yolk, the innocence of a still-born babe, freedom of will, whether Adam was born and had a navel, and whether hell is located in the sun, in the center of the earth, or in comets. These gossips include Miss Shred and Jenny Douglas, the celebrated procuress. This religious dispute serves only to convince the mother that her child will have nothing to do with religion until he is of an age to decide for himself, and for this reason Master Neddy is never christened.

At this point the editor abruptly jumps ahead to the scene of the dinner at Mr. Warner's. The editor meets Master Edward and Miss Ann, his girl friend, who has come up in the world from humble beginnings as a dancer at Sadler's Wells to star billing at Covent Garden. Shuter's acting ability is attacked; for although his comic ability is sufficient to make him a capitol actor independent of buffoonery, prracy, or mimicry, and although he wins the esteem of the audience as well as entertains them, Ned attempts too hard to imitate the serious roles created by David Garrick. Ned is also careless with money and loves to gamble and bet, even to the point of laying a heartless wager that his elderly friend and landlord, Thomas Phillips, will not live to the following spring. Miss Ann, equally mercenary, allows his attentions to her for the money involved; for she is well aware that she must prepare for the days when she no longer can make her looks support her:

I shan't always look so well as I do now; for these cursed washes I use, for all they do give one's neck and face such a fine whiteness, yet they make one's
skin in a morning, look all crumpled, like a washerwoman's fingers, and turns one's flesh as yellow, as a pease pudding (p. 112).

Ann's aunt is shocked at her allowing the attentions of a player; for such a man is, in her eyes, beneath mention. Had Ann's suitor been a man of fashion, the aunt would have been much more pleased.

At the dinner the sweethearts engage in constant argument. Nan objects to Ned's pawing of her, messing her hair, and passionate attentions, and he chides her for her fondness for money. Ann points out Ned's lack of gratitude and specifically refers to the way he has treated Stevens. Ned boorishly tosses his wine at her and strikes her across the mouth. Nan slaps him back, and, scratching and biting, the two engage in a furious fight. At this point the observer-editor is called away by his patron and is given a job insuring regular wages and hours if he will forego his previous friends and employment. Naturally the man takes the new assignment.

The job of supplying style to these anecdotes of a player is assumed by Captain Cannon, who immediately takes airs upon himself in manner and dress, having had a previously unsuccessful existence as author, hack writer, and magazinist. Cannon informs us that he is not in sympathy with the theatrical profession, for he has suffered ill usage on behalf of his own early tragedy. An actress acquaintance passed unfavorable judgment upon it, and with the aid of a gentleman friend proposed to have fun at Cannon's expense. The boorishness of the gentleman, a haberdasher by trade, makes him a ludicrous figure; for in revealing his erudition, he shows clearly that he lacks the slightest vestige of a brain. His scholarship is
erroneous and his critical comments are pompous and meaningless.
The play itself was dedicated to the prime genius of the age, the quack, Chevalier Taylor, a friend to the ladies and a man of considerable consequence.

After this interruption, we return to the history of Neddy. Brought up in the best fashion, he is entrusted to a wet nurse and educated in the manner befitting a fashionable gentleman. Then the work ends abruptly. Stevens is throughout little concerned with plot and development; this piece, ostensibly intended to avenge slights suffered at the hands of Shuter, is very little concerned with the man himself. The bulk of the piece is directed to the fashionable subjects Stevens is continually interested in, follies, humor, and club life. As in his novels, Stevens follows a rough chronology based on the life of the central character, here starting with the birth of Shuter and the histories of Shuter's parents. Once this background material is supplied and Shuter is born, Stevens leaps to Shuter's majority for a brief scene, the dinner scene at Jenny Warner's, and then equally abruptly ends the play. The entire work is left without real motivation and, as in other works by Stevens, holds interest only for its treatment of contemporary materials. Such favorite topics as Methodism, hack-writing, fashionable follies, contemporary allusion, and sentimental scenes blended with digressions and addresses to the reader reminiscent of Sterne comprise the play.

Using his name-dropping device, as well as clever and witty commentary, Stevens alludes to most of the big names of the period—
including actual contemporaries like Samuel Foote, theatrical entrepreneur; John Wesley and Reverend Whitefield, Methodist leaders; Theophilus Cibber and Ned Shuter, comedians; Charles Macklin, actor; Nancy Dawson, actress; Fielding and Sterne, authors; Jenny Douglas, infamous procuress; and Elizabeth Canning, the widely publicized servant girl whose disappearance made the headlines of the day.

There are the usual references to Stevens himself and his jovial fellow clubmen, the Choice Spirits of Comus' Court. Reference is also found to such earlier figures of the day as Pope, Swift, and Congreve, as well as to Dryden, and to several Shakespeare allusions (Falstaff, p. 33; Othello, p. 21), and reference to older authority like Saxo Grammaticus (for the three orders of ghosts). In addition there are repeated references to the Beggar's Opera, John Gay's enormously successful creation. Most of these references are typical name-dropping, and very little is associated to them. Foote, of the lot, is most developed, for he is an actual character in the play. But his role presents him as the victim of an accident for the sole purpose of allowing clever Miss Shred to attend him and in so doing to reveal her charming but also treacherous femininity.

Even Shuter, seemingly the chief character according to the title, has a lesser role; for throughout most of the play, Stevens is concerned with the low-life of Shuter's parents.

Religion is one of Stevens' favorite topics; and it, and especially Methodism, comes in for considerable ridicule in the play. Like true scholarship, true religion is out of fashion and has been replaced by the emotional and sensational (p. 27). Con-
stant stress is given to the hypocrisy of the Methodist who merely
by virtue of membership in the sect immediately absolves himself
of all sin and all worldly vanities. These hypocrites then freely
advise others to seek the Lord to cover their own misdeeds (p. 28).
The sermon that Winnifred delivers to David when he seeks her ad-
vice concerning his marital situation illustrates such hypocrisy
and grandiose eloquence:

I say unto you, my beloved, that when the spirit agi-
tateth the flesh, it is a spiritual act; but when the
flesh motioneth the spirit, it is a carnal one. And
this is the difference, between Grace and Disgrace.

For worldly things, unless satisfaction seeths them,
are no more than kitchen stuff; which the scum of our
sins maket, in boiling over, and that is put in the
offal pot of repentance.

Therefore the saints of the Tabernacle, being clari-
fied by the justification of the new birth, are pure
Christian suet; which, when mixed with the plumbs of
the righteous, make up the pudding of glorification.

The pudding of glorification—thereto I say, that we
may mingle the spirit with the flesh, even as pota-
toes and butter-milk make stirabout; for that is the
type of the carnalities and spiritualities.

So I say...it is not sinful to consider the upright-
ness of the flesh, as directed by the spirit; be-
cause we may receive the spirit at home, or in the
fields, or in an alley, or in a centry-box; and I'll
stand centry among you; and if you have faith, you
shall raise the dead to life. I won't be a velvet-
mouthed preacher, like your church doctors, and
book learned blockhead.--no--no--oh--oh--can a boy
fly a kite without thinking of the clouds? can a
woman spread her fan without thinking of an angel's
sings? Therefore, I say, that the natural man is
not the spiritual man. Yet the spiritual man may
think of natural things. So those things are to be
put forward, which are to satisfy the longings of
the soul; and tho' at first it may be painful to
undergo them (pp. 78-9).
In an interlude concerning the life of the Jesuit who secretly entered England in an endeavor to restore the Catholic church, Stevens joins the Methodists and the Jesuits in a scheme to take over England—the Jesuits will have the church and the Methodists the money (p. 105). Stevens observes that the Methodist preachers are the first to run in times of calamity because they have not real faith in the eternally happy world they claim is so infinitely preferable (p. 106). Typical of the emotional preaching is the following, a recipe of regeneration presented to Miss Shred; for gamblers and ladies of pleasure, grown old with sufficient savings, make the best Methodists once they are weaned from wickedness and sanctified by the preacher:

Oh what a heavenly comfort it is to consider, that a sinner, after running thro' a life of wickedness, shall, only by attending on our tabernacle, be purified. Is it not a rich balsam for a sore soul? therefore come unto us all ye who are afflicted, with the remembrances of the methods, by which ye have got your wealth; and ye shall but give a tythe to us, by way of paying insurance to the saints, who will infallibly save you from being shipwrecked on the rocks of perdition, and will steer you into the harbour of grace. Yet we are not Baptists, no—we won't give you absolution—we are not Protestants—no—we will not save you by repentance—no, no we are Methodists; and it is regeneration shall save you; it shall be the cork waistcoat to keep you floating, and ye shall not sink into the bottomless pit of the sea, where the Devil of Hell lies in the shape of a shark to devour you (pp. 121-2).

In Stevens' eyes hypocrisy and money are the two foundations of the new popular religion.
Other favorite topics include the plight of genius and patriotism. Throughout his work Stevens constantly sympathises with genius, who is always a ragged and ill-used figure. Although Corporal Knott engages Stevens to write a song to Chloe for a measurer fee, he at least tips Stevens with six pence and occasions an address to great men:

Ye great men of many manors, who at this present writing can choose your taverns, and pay a ready money reckoning for every dainty you call for; while I, twirling my mutton before an ill-supplied fire, am stretching the elasticity of my invention, to its utmost pitch, how to obtain, upon credit, one single beer and near libation.—Oh, would ye but imitate this generous soldier's behavior, and bestow upon artists, you employ, a premium for their merit. But artists, perhaps, would think themselves happy could they, instead of being paid overplus, only receive the prices they agreed for.

But laments are vain, the labourers of genius, and the lollers in a coach and six, are no more analogous, than politics and plain-dealing....The reason why men of genius are so seldom rewarded by men of fortune is, because men of fortune don't understand genius; therefore rich people are more proper objects of pity than satire. It is the want of having their minds improved by arts and sciences, which makes them such strangers, to the happiness of knowing what to do with their time (pp. 44-5).

The detested genius, penniless and a stranger, is left upon the beach to make the best of his way, where he can..in London..he must prostitute his talents in vindication of villany, or condescend to be Folly's Auditor, Pride's Flatterer, Pimp, Informer, or Beggar, men in this metropolis having been condemned to perish on the streets, without benefit of clergy, had not Adulation persuaded Preferrment so here the whole distressed family ostentatiously, and now they are employed, by his Honour, as hay-makers, harvest folks, hedgers, stable-sweepers, errand-boys, and turnspits (p. 91).
In another scene, between the dandified Corporal Knott and an old soldier, Mr. Winterness, Stevens reflects strong patriotism and defends the old soldier, perhaps remembering his own army experiences. The old man is gruff, honest, and blunt in contrast to Knott's flowery and flattering small talk. As a veteran, the real soldier cannot stand the pretty ways and idle boasting of the young corporal; when the corporal has the temerity to interrupt the veteran's account of his war experiences to present his own conquests in love, old Winterness finds it the last straw. As one who has fought his country's battles instead of wearing fine pleated linen, who has endured "the inclemency of every hard season," and who, with half a dozen others, has scorned to turn his back on double the number of foes attacking, Winterness has only contempt for the fancy man. Winterness bears the marks of his constancy and bravery in the wounds he has received in battle and in the loss of eye and limb (pp. 34-35).

Four other favorite topics are present: the satiric treatment of doctors, of lawyers, of foreign talent, and of fashionable female follies. Doctors are among the few who manage to turn the human trait of giving advice into a profitable business; this advice, like that of "lapland witches" is characterized only by the mischief it makes (p. 69). Quack potions and cures are as bad as the doctor himself, and the gullible people that fall for the advertised wonders of medicine only victimize themselves. When the cat bites David's leg, he refuses to allow Winnifred to put anything on it other than medicine from the fashionable side of town;
for "low-life" medicine can do only harm. David would prefer to suffer infection of the bone than to be guilty of using a medicine unfit for a gentleman (p. 76). Such medicines, freely administered by physicians, have no real power, and the physician himself will never apply the dose to his own ailments (p. 106). Even the supposedly reputable physicians, who should guard against quack medicines, are guilty of deceit; for they inspect only a few of the apothecaries and leave quacks like Dr. Franks, Dr. Sarraht, Dr. Rock, Dr. Jesuit Drop, Dr. Greek Water, etc. alone. By winking at these advertisers and by allowing them to vend their potions, modern doctors increase their profits when they treat patients made worse by the quacks. Satirically Stevens comments:

When I mention the word quacks, it is not to be presumed, that any gentleman recipe-vender, acting under letters patents, can be hinted at; because we are all certain, patents are only granted to men of excellent science, of approved education, whose discoveries have been owing to indefatigable study, and are witness from repeated experiments, before the most skilful, to be entirely calculated for the health and preferment of the people of England (p. 115).

The lawyers are equally clever in gaining money for advice mischievously given to promote trouble (p. 69). Madame Llwhydd-whuydd's father was a lawyer who had to flee England to escape punishment for his deceptions (p. 13). And to further slight the members of the legal profession, the scene in the inn where the company tries the ghost in absentia satirizes the pedantic obscurity and jargon of the lawyer. Dr. Sincure, a learned man indeed, presents the deposition against ghosts in a very euphuistic fashion; but before he can get to the point, the entire company, led by the worthy
Dr. Sinecure, scatters before the seeming ghost of the landlord (p. 95).

Attacks on foreign talent are understandable, for the popularity of French and Italian artists offered severe competition to the English members of the theatrical profession. The Italian opera was immensely popular. In the play Kiss Shred attempts to find a position in an opera house in order to more readily find herself a protector, for she felt that the novelty of anything foreign gives one a distinct advantage. She, however, was not well received there, for the Italians were united against her (p. 28). The effeminacy of the profession is alluded to and Stevens casts aspersions on the manners of opera stars: "if there are any other persons, in this kingdom, that are not either gentlemen or ladies, except some of the Opera Singers (p. 83)." The foreigners gain grudging admiration, however, for they invariably find ways to succeed in England. Since they are more studious and more concerned with the nation than are the English themselves (p. 163), they always make money and gain success.

Sentimental paraphernalia abounds in the play, both in setting and situation. The background is always an artificial, pretty one—a card-board painted drop of sweet beauty, placid and quiet:

...the bright stars in the fiery fretted canopy of heaven sparkled...the silent glowworms twinkled...the leafy hedges rustling...and the whooping owls at distance toot tooting...made up nature's loving concert (p. 15).

Perhaps the most moralistic and sentimental part of the play is the scene in which Mrs. Llwhyddwhuydd realizes her folly in running off with an army gallant and lones to return to the comforts of her home.
I wish some ladies of my acquaintance, with whom it is at this moment a toss up, between inclination and interest, would read this part of my book carefully; and they would know, notwithstanding, modern memoirs mention whispering Zephyrs, eternal constancy, love-lane assignations, breath-stopped kisses, midnight moonshine, a charming fellow, and the post chaise door open,—that according to the undoubted testimonials of several maiden gentlewomen, who, by heart-felt experience, vow a lady is worse cooped up, who goes off with her gallant, than the most domestic wife, that undergoes the drudgery of the nursery, and kitchen.

Let us only example Mrs. Llwhyddwhuydd. She had no person to visit her, was visited by no person, obliged, from having a house of her own, to put up with a mean ready furnished lodging; in which, sitting all day solitary,—for believe me, dear ladies, the fine fellow of your fancy, soon grows sick of his sweetmeats, and every fond couple, who leave honour, family and all for love, having then nothing but love to live upon, soon eat up their allowance.

Think ladies, what Mr. David's wife suffered; who, like all other eloping ladies, had trusted the gallant with all, and dreaded to ask him for a single shilling, lest he should think her extravagant; denying herself necessaries, because he should not grumble at expense. How melancholy her case; no companions, but her own thoughts, reflecting and comparing past, with present times; her former respect, her present infamy,—her husband's tenderness, his repeated tenderness; her gallant's coldness, his continued indifference.

It is not, I hope, so bad with every lovely lady errantress. Yet many of them have experienced,—don't sigh, dear creatures;—I know its a melancholy scene, and in the catastrophe still more vexatious; because the reason which some ladies allege, for running away from their guardians or parents, is, the unbearable urge, which they receive at home, therefore apply to gallants, in hopes of mending their condition, as flying fish spring out of the sea to avoid the Dolphin, and tumble into the jaws of the shark.

Yet as the most time-serving-scribbler subscribes himself, at the bottom of a dedication, to his right honourable patron; as the tradesman bows, bill in hand, to his honour, with a parallel awe, I address the

Stevens points clearly to the moral:
ladies, and assure them, that my opinion of their magnanimity, will not suffer me to imagine, any thing here said, can alter what a fine woman has already resolved upon.—No—spite of all advice or example, her spirits will carry her through, whatever her will gives the word to, let the consequence be—no matter what (pp. 81-2).

Equally sentimental is the apology of the actress to the author. Her suitor has attempted to entertain himself at the expense of the author:

I admire your behaviour, Sir, and will endeavor to recompense you, for the pain of mind I am conscious you must have endured; too much I feel of that myself; what are all diamonds, equipage, fine furniture, and elegance of dress, when the mind, retracting into itself, shrinks back ashamed to reflect on the means by which those are purchased. Yet I must act the hypocrite, I must conform—conform to those I hate, nay worse—bear with rich stupidity, applaud with seeming attention, arrogant dulness; and flatter, even fondly flatter, indelicate folly. Sure of all slavery, mine is the worst! where the will is not left free; what is—(p. 180).

The artificial elegance of the apology and the extravagant attempt at sincerity fail to produce an effect which seems real to modern readers; the entire passage is comic.

As he does in the novels, Stevens indulges in frequent digressions on any subject that captures his attention. While talking about David's wife, the author digresses into the background of his own spouse and his courtship of her, and he finds her most attractive. Like Desdemona, she listened to the stories he told (p. 22). Later the subject of hypochondria stirs the author into considering the causes. Money and leisure time invariably produce serious imagined infirmities:
Reader, you must have known such persons, who, while they worked for their living, were useful members to society; but when, by chance or craft, they became masters of money, assumed a haughtiness of behaviour, abandoning themselves to a vitiated state of idleness, and gluttony. The event is, their being seized with a complication of infirmities, which, in their active and praise-worthy state, they felt not; they hurry to a doctor, give five guineas for advice, in hopes to have a worthless carcass sheathed from the worms; which, was it to continue on the earth for twenty years longer, would not be of five shillins use to any of its fellow creatures (p. 33).

On the powers of love Stevens is eloquent:

Love is equal in its power of action to money, but contrary in its effects; for as money will make persons blind to every thing, but their own interest; love will make persons see every thing, but their own interest (p. 40).

David's snoring starts the author off on a dissertation on the subject reminiscent of Sterne. A great deal of pseudo-erudition is displayed in a playful nonsensical way, for snoring arises from a superabundance of evening vapors, drink, and conversation stored in the head. When this liquid sublimates through the system and fills the body, the remaining "effluvia" can be discharged only through the "wind gates of the nostrils (pp. 54-66)."

From the digression on snoring Stevens goes directly to a consideration of dream interpretation and concludes that morning dreams are the most meaningful, for sleep and snoring have had an opportunity to remove the overflow of yesterday's celebrations. David dreams of a papier mache Tower of London and of the French undermining all English coal pits, and this dream is elaborately
explained according to the best schools of dream interpretation.

Obviously an omen of ill, the Tower, made of chewed paper, stands for the defection of his wife; for the affection which he thought to be as permanent as the tower was not substantial. The French plot is symbolic of the efforts of a wicked enemy to undermine his happy home (p. 66).

A digression on the human mind presents the three stages of man, high, middle, and low, all unified and equalized by passion so that in this state no difference can be observed between the groups. Such situations occur only in drunkenness, love, and anger.

Honor is a favorite subject, and digressions on it are frequent. The term is humorously treated, for every person in the claims the quality and places upon it all the ideals of life. But in practice the word is empty. The English have learned too well from the French, and nothing matters more than practicality, in marriage, in business, and in friendships (pp. 69-70). Honor is no more than a puff of wind, a vapor:

the term honour which urges, planet struck people, to take the unnecessary trouble of cutting one another's throats, when, as the madman observed, let but your enemies alone, and they'll dye of themselves (p. 86).

Further digressions concern the validity of ghosts and rudeness. All the idle words disputing the existence of ghosts are fine in theory, but in practice people believe in ghosts. Rudeness, however, is the prerogative of the best bred:

...it is the ultimate of taste, among the very best bred, to behave rudely, to those ingenuous, who have only
their own merit to recommend them: more especially, if the artist should, by the misconduct of parents, and cruel decree of providence, be born in ENGLAND....no man has the right to speak in company, unless he is qualified, by much money, or sanctified by court interest. Then he may express his contempt for his own countrymen, with proper consequence (p. 153).

As he did in the novels, Stevens indulges again in addresses to the reader which recall Sterne. He advises the reader to read on and not to dash the book down in disgust when he begins a digression on love (p. 21). We return to Miss Justice and her story after she recovers from the shock of her actor-lover's desertion, and we hear her welcome us serenely, thanks to the restorative aid of brandy (pp. 23-4). Stevens addresses the wealthy and pleads for further attention and support of men of genius (p. 43). And, again like Sterne, Stevens leaves and returns to his characters according to his whim, and instructs the reader of his intent as it occurs to him (p. 64). The whole play is a whimsical and playful piece; that it was never acted is not strange, for there is little that could be staged effectively.

The most significant part of the play is the attitude that Stevens shows toward his profession. Writing as a profession was primarily hack work in the period, for it was the age of the great expansion of the magazine, of the circulating library designed to appeal to the lower tastes of a new reading public, and of tremendous expansion of the novel, the new genre developed by Richardson and Fielding. Stevens is a typical figure in this background, the majority of his work being of a hack variety. The references incorporated show an awareness of the lack of quality necessarily characteristic
of such work. A letter in the style of the periodical illustrates the necessary qualities of morality, human nature, and pessimism coupled with brash abuse; this letter is the one which the actor sends to Miss Justice when he deserts her and the one in which he protests his love while he at the same time proclaims his desertion. When Corporal Knott requests a ballad honoring his love from Stevens, he offers comments on the art of poetry writing. The chief necessity is to manage to rhyme the name in such a way as to form a jingle; Stevens' task is to rhyme the difficult name Chloe, but he with effort manages a light love song. Stevens claims that he has written over 200 songs of such a nature (p. 45), and therefore is a master of occasional light verse (p. 46), especially of the perfumed public-garden love lyric. Nevertheless, Stevens maintains that it is the duty of the artist to educate and inform his audience. The rich do not understand genius, because they are lacking in knowledge and respect only the fashionable pursuits instead of encouraging works of art. Stevens comments that in England, a country that should be the leader of the world, the major part of the people only exhaust themselves and their fortunes in an eternal found of visits, parties, cards, auctions, and attendance on foreign singers and fiddlers (p. 45). He acidly comments that much of the fiction of his day depends upon the lurid and sensational for success and in his love scene between Chloe and her gallant, Chloe is conveniently senseless with brandy and completely at the mercy of her suitor. Our author, however, declines to pursue the scene, unlike
the ludicrous descriptions considered an essential embellishment for successful book sales (p. 62). Equally absurd is the amount of pseudo-learning featured in the magazine which treats unrelated scraps of knowledge (p. 70). David, the chairman, has educated himself thoroughly in his own eyes with solely this material (pp. 12-13). The extravagances of the theater are just as artificial, says Stevens, interestingly enough; for he himself uses the very things he labels as artificial—the contrived and mechanical situation, the slapstick scene, and the sweet but unconvincing backdrop (p. 89). In addition, the newspapers come in for ridicule with their advertisements, for it is this feature that restores Chloe to David and is widely utilized by the patent medicine vendors. With tongue in cheek, Stevens concludes that these are the blessings of the newspaper:

No patriot, in or out of place, ever considered their utility, with that grateful attention, these publications deserve.

Is there a want in this world, but what may be instantly relieved, if the patient will but consult the columns of those morning and evening intelligences? with as much gravity, as ever any one of the faculty pulled off his gloves; I do declare, that without the help of these dictionaries for the day, the great business of the nation could not be carried on.

How could Mrs. Phillips hope for the continuance of her customers: or the nobility and gentry know where to pay in their Opera subscriptions? where could they send for the best royal beautifying fluid? or could be sure of having French chicken gloves genuine? how should we know when Mr. Whitefield preaches in Edinburgh, or Georgia? or where we should be sure of Roman purl unadulterated? how should we be ascertained where the most noticed Dr. Taylor performs his occulistical, or oratorical operations? or where the best liquid blacking is to be got? where to send for the pure aetherial volatile quintessence of essence? or how
could we be informed, that the sea-water at Brijjith-Helmstone, is better than any other sea-water? were it not for being so instructed, by paragraphs and advertisements aforesaid. O credulity, credulity, thou universal power, how much are we indebted to thy influences?

New Discoveries, elixirs, lotions, injections, and nostrums, for the ladies, are (as we read) to be had at every toy-shop.

Sometimes, indeed, the applications and uses of these extraordinary succedaneums are not expressed, in so delicate a stile, as polite persons might wish. But when we consider, the humane intent of the makers-up, and venders of these medicines, the stile is excused (pp. 112-4).

Stevens admits that he is consciously attempting to imitate the styles of Fielding and Sterne because of the success of the two and because of the merit of their work. Stevens realizes, however, that he has had little success, for he feels that he is not as clever as such writers as Fielding and Sterne. Still, he feels that he is not worse than the majority of his contemporaries and that with some luck and a few connections he could soon forego attempting to struggle with his pen:

Then I would no more meddle with a pen and ink, than a lady in high keeping would mend her own linen: for my mind scorns the drudgery of writing, reading, and reflecting, as much as any rich man in the kingdom can do (p. 127).

Concerning the hack writers, Stevens cites the spirit of ribaldry as the chief requirement:

Come then, thou stimulator, and inspirer of all prosaic scribblers, who like me, jumble words together, unmusical, unmeaning, inaccurate, inelegant, and indifferent. Spirit of Ribaldry assist me, to sing, or to relate (p. 149).
Such writers can only hope for luck, and they must make ends meet by putting together magazines, memorandum books, songs, murder mysteries, and articles against the players in the newspapers. These men acknowledge that presenting the player unfavorably is wrong, but they need the employment, "rathering that the world starve than themselves (p. 164)." When their work fails to sell, the only thing left to do is to send abuse to market, for scurrility is always saleable:

...depraved appetites delight in things uncleanly; and some virtuosi make collections of snakes, toads, spiders, monsters, deformities, dark lanterns, and poisoned arrows (p. 165).

The final message in the play is an exhortation to fellow authors and sums up Stevens:

Those vain tale-bearing Books, entitled Memoirs, have so far subverted Readers, that the truth is to them but a threadbare garment.

Unsatisfied are they with each History, unless the Writer delivereth all the Particulars, concerning every Person whom he memorializes, from the Colour of an Eyebrow, even unto the Pattern of a Shoebuckle.

Since therefore it accordeth, that Narrators must use such Precision; enforced am I to extend my plan, the primitive Design of which was no more, than to repeat the Spirit-moving Discourses, that preceded this Play Actor, and comical Comedians Regeneration; which were utter'd unto him, by the great Mr. Whitefield, the good Mr. Wesley, the pious Mr. Bradbury, and the learned Mr. Romaine. But now it behoveth me, for expediting the sale of my Book, to give an account of his Birth, Parentage, Education, Character, and Behavior. Yet, for as much as it doth not, in any Sort, suit me to deliver those Historical-isms, according to the Vanity of the Times, I have agreed with a Scribe of this Town, vulgarly called a Wit; and he hath undertaken to Dress these Anecdotes, in all the fashionable Language of fine spanzled Phrases, for the Perusal of the Publick (pp. 193-4).
Stevens' acted plays are much more typical of the actual drama of the day. These pieces are primarily short afterpieces. They, like Stevens' songs, are much more concerned with situation comedy and with themes of drinking and enjoying life.

The French Flogged; or, the British Tars in America was the first play by Stevens that was produced. It was written for and acted at Edward Shuter's booth at Bartholomew Fair in 1759 and was used the following year by John Rich at Covent Garden. Rich applied for a license on February 22, 1760; and the play was produced on March 20 as an afterpiece to Shakespeare's Richard III. Shuter acted the role of a comic Irishman, and Stevens himself took a minor part as a sailor. The play, however, was not published until 1767, after Stevens had achieved fame as a lecturer. That same year it was again acted at Covent Garden but had no better results than before.

The afterpiece was an important part of eighteenth century drama and comprises some of the best theatrical entertainment of the period. This genre was introduced to the English stage with Thomas Otway's The Cheats of Scapin, in 1677. The playbills of the eighteenth century show that these short plays, the pantomime and the afterpiece, which conclude an evening's entertainment, exert a real, although not directly determinable influence on the regular drama; for it is through the emphasis which these plays place on dancing, music, and spectacle that these features became important parts of the regular drama of the stage. The type developed in the first decade of the century with the rise of the Italian opera, a medium which called for an afterpiece, usually a farce of shallow, absurd,
but lively action. Later with the success of the pantomime, developed by John Rich in the second decade of the century, the afterpiece became firmly established, and public demand necessitated light theater after the main attraction, a sentimental comedy or tragedy.

Although the comic and coarse epilogues of Restoration comedies are in a sense separate actions in themselves, soon plays were followed by a short one-act or two-act burlesque, pantomime, operetta, or farce. The farce was well suited to afterpiece development because it is by nature short and its sole purpose is entertainment. In such plays, situation and dialogue are the only important features. Motivation is unimportant and loose ends are frequent. Zestful, live, and satirical, the popularity and resulting financial reward of this form made it very attractive to authors; and this type of work was produced by almost every author of note in the period: Vanbrugh, Susanna Centlivre, Gay, Fielding, and Coleman the elder. With the success of the Beggar's Opera in 1728, farce went into a decline for a few years. Authors strove to copy Gay's form in hopes of enjoying the same extreme success. With the decay of the ballad opera in the late 30's, farce was revived.

The French Flogged, a one-act seven-scene farce built around a nautical situation, is among the earliest plays dealing with the sea. Tobias Smollett's The Reprisal: or, The Tars of Old England, produced at Drury Lane in 1757, was one of the first of this type, a type which was to become very popular at the turn of the nineteenth century. Patriotic enthusiasm was at a peak at the end of the eighteenth century, and audiences enjoyed spectacles which stressed directly, not allegorically or symbolically, national superiority. Situations
commanding patriotic fervor were welcome, and events of military and naval significance became popular stage material. By the turn of the century a considerable number of plays treat nautical incidents: The Naval Pillar; or, Britannia Triumphant, 1799, The English Fleet, 1803, and Nelson's Glory, 1805; The Spanish Dollars; or, The Priest of the Parish, 1805; The Naval Victory of Lord Nelson, 1805; The Battle of the Nile, 1815, and The Battle of Trafalgar; or The Death of Nelson, 1824. Thus Stevens was one of the first to anticipate the success of the nautical drama which was to deliver its greatest popularity nearly forty years later.

The action of The French Flogged is presented in two main plots. The primary plot involves the mission of an English captain sent to the new world to check the audacious insults of the French, the rival colonial power. At the time the play was written and produced, the French and the English were engaged in the long and bitter French and Indian War, 1754-63. Attached to this English-French controversy is the courtship of a white Indian princess by the English captain. The courtship is a very brief one, and interestingly enough the girl is the instigator of the affair which culminates in marriage when the French suffer defeat at the hands of the English.

The other plot is more comic. In it, a bulstering Irish braggart, Macfinian, has adventures with a black princess in a low-level plot directly contrasting to the English Captain-White Princess plot. The whole is weakly joined by a final feast and nationalistic bragging after the success of the British force against the enemy.
The plot construction is ragged; it lacks continuity and motivation. The whole mission to check "audacious insults" is a vague one, and the entire movement of the piece depends upon the chiding of the French, topically of interest at the time. Throughout the play, the French nation is depicted in unflattering light; one Englishman can easily ward off at least three of the French. The second plot depends upon slapstick humor and upon situation and dialect. Macfinian, a role created for the comic talents of Shuter, speaks in a thick brogue and seems completely out of place in the piece. He speaks as if he has been lured to settle the country with false promises; yet he also seems to be one of the English sailors on the mission.

Although the double plot was common in contemporary comedy, it is detrimental to The French Flogged, for the piece is far too short to sustain two plots adequately. The interest of the reader rapidly wanes in a futile attempt to find continuity. The patriotic valor of the English could make a nicely motivated play, but the Irish nonsense is more suited to the nature of the farce. Macfinian suggests strongly the bragart soldier, the miles gladiator, who has a long theatrical history. He combines these qualities with regional ones, for he speaks in a thick Irish brogue.

Such a stock character is important in a play: for, by using a typed character, the dramatist provides humorous material and, at the same time, saves himself work. The stock character does not require original effort, and it depends upon a fixed combination of previously established attitudes and responses. No further effort
is needed to portray such a figure. In order to be a stock character, the figure passes through three stages: an initial realistic one, an indifferent or developing one, and a final one of false exaggeration. Interestingly enough, elevated figures of a stock type are never as effective as low-life ones which, by the use of dialect, coarse manners, and ridiculous situations, add realistic humor.

Comic Irishmen, at the time when Stevens wrote, are the largest and the most important group of regional characters in English drama. The first stage of establishing the character began in the Elizabethan period. Introduced in a dumb show in Thomas Hughes' *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, in 1587, the character caught public favor, and the Irishman appears in five types in the plays of some of the foremost dramatists of the day: tradesman, beggar, footman, swaggering captain, and the wild Irishman. The character is developed until 1660, when the second indifferent stage begins; and then the type expands to include other servants and military officers. These figures all speak in a thick brogue, swear, blunder, drink, and hunt fortunes. The third type begins in 1760 and continues throughout the plays to the end of the century. Thus the stage Irish were predominantly servants and military or naval officers, although they appear in other lower-class roles.

Stevens was one of the first playwrights to use the comic Irishman in the true stock sense of the third stage. Macfinian is an amorous, quarrelsome, clumsy sailor. He speaks in a brogue undoubtedly enriched by the actor who took the part. Since the degree of conventionality is directly related to the popularity of the
character, the most popular role is the one with the least dramatic worth. Macfinian is definitely a popular device calculated to appeal to audience taste.

The setting of the play presents several peculiar problems, for it blends incongruous materials. The action definitely occurs in the new world, but it ranges all over the continent and part of the Caribbean. The Indians are divided into two types, black and white; and despite the possibility that the exact nature of difference between Indian and the Negro was confused in the day, it is certain that the two were clearly distinguishable. The scene itself ranges from a lush tropical island setting to wilderness scenes of the French and Indian wars somewhere in the Virginia-Ohio area.

Perhaps the strongest unity is supplied through the conscious appeal to patriotism throughout the play, in the slighting references to the French and in the songs praising English valor and courage and ability. There are three such sons and two processions in the play which clearly commemorate the brave and self-sacrificing sailor, guardian of the English nation.

The French Flogged was Stevens' first attempt at writing plays for the stage, but the plot is too ambitious for a farce. With this fact in mind, Stevens should have ignored the love-honor plot, the story of the English Captain, his men, and the Indian Princess. The story is too complex to develop in a one-act farce, and it is composed of material completely unsuited to farcical treatment. The entire effect of this plot is incongruous, and the sincere attempts at elevated and elegant diction become comic and artificial because
of the farcical and comical nature of the play. If this material were caricatured, it would be comic, but it seems to be of serious intent.

The love story is so condensed that it serves no function. The lady is the aggressor, and the captain is in no position to express a choice. Like the English and French material, this would be better in another type of play in which it could have fuller and more dramatic treatment.

When one considers the tradition of farce, it is evident that Stevens neglected its primary purpose. Presented after a serious play, it is designed to entertain and amuse the audience. A brief comedy is easiest and most practical for this purpose. The only part of The French Flogged that fulfills this purpose is the comic Irish material which contrasts the Irishman and the practical black woman. Even this, however, is weakly treated; for although Macfinian is obviously a bragart coward, there is no real development of this material. The French Flogged contains some interesting material with considerable dramatic possibility and substance, but the author attempts too much. He did not know where to stop in planning his plot, and the resultant double plot lacks unity, continuity, and coherence. It is unwieldy and it ignores the purpose of the entertainment. Thus, the reasons are obvious why this play made little impression on the stage.

The Court of Alexander

The Court of Alexander presents another type. This play, an operetta, was presented in 1770, at Covent Garden. Contemporary
reviews state that the music was "...admirably composed by Mr. Fisher, a young gentleman of great musical excellence, lately engaged in the service of the public...." but London "can by no means relish the inconsistencies of the present piece....In plain English, The Court of Alexander is very unfavorably received, though the music is excellent, and the merit of the performers unquestionable." The review of the printed version of the play, which appeared soon after, was no more flattering: "That, however, has displeased on the stage is seldom known to succeed in the closet, and we therefore fear that the facetious author of this piece will have but a very limited sale for his production." Stevens' treatment of the old and popular story of Alexander the Great was apparently too coarse for London audiences; the moral atmosphere favored by the bourgeois audience evoked the following comment: "...the Humour of this Burlesque was, in general thought too vulgar and low to be exhibited at a Theatre-Royal in London." Another account states that the play failed because "the humour of this piece is very low;" and another says that "there was as much applause as author or composer deserved." The license was applied for by George Coleman on December 15, 1769; and the play was produced on January 5, 1770. Stevens' play is apparently a burlesque of The Rival Queens, the extremely popular stage perennial by Nathaniel Lee, produced first in 1677. Stevens, however, abandons all serious material and creates a comic and coarse operetta.

Lee's work, The Rival Queens, was based on historical material blended with a conflict of love and honor. Lee anticipated that rhymed
heroic tragedy was on the wane, and he anticipated Dryden's own change to blank verse; in addition, Lee attempted historical accuracy. The plot combines a conspiracy of malcontents jealous of Alexander's power and a love struggle between the two queens, Roxana and Statira, for the emperor. The play was further made popular with the addition of such spectacular and stage-worthy devices as supernatural omens, ghosts, duels, murders, conspiracies, spectacles, and passionate love scenes. It is certain that Stevens was familiar with the play, for it was revived and acted frequently during the eighteenth century. Staged yearly at Drury Lane from 1763 to 1769, and from 1772 to 1776, the piece was certainly equally well-known to the audiences who could immediately see the similarities between the two plays. Stevens abandons the conspiracy feature of Lee's play, but he uses the love struggle as the basis for a light, shallow, and frothy satire intended to amuse at the expense of the earlier play.

Although Stevens reduces the total cast of his parody by eliminating all the minor parts, the main characters of Lee's heroic tragedy are duplicated in Stevens' lighter vehicle. In both plays the great emperor Alexander is the central figure; and his court is basically the same and includes Clytus, Master of Horse and an old companion of Alexander; Hephestion, Alexander's favorite, who is in Stevens' play reduced from the more important role of rival suitor in Lee's play; and the Princess Parisatis. Suitor and personal choice of the Princess is Lysimachus, a prince of the royal blood. Stevens adds one new character, King Forus, who assumes the role of rival to Lysimachus in place of Hephestion. One further change was the
replacement of the rival queen, Statira, by Alexander's well-known mistress Thais, who in this play is made a gypsy, a race considered extremely wild and immoral in that day.

The play opens with a drinking scene and features drinking songs by several members of the court. The two rival females, Roxana and Thais, engage in a verbal battle and physically attempt to tear Alexander from the other, after a procession of drinking trophies (replacing Lee's procession of battle trophies). The second act introduces the love rivalry for the Princess Parisatis between the suitor backed by Alexander, King Porus, and the clumsy lout who is Parisatis' own choice, Lysimachus. Again, the two rivals engage in a battle, this time physically; and Alexander is called upon to intervene. To intensify the spectacle, Jupiter arrives from the heavens and the play ends on a note of fashionable reason; the two suitors agree to drink together and to settle their suits by a game of cards.

As is true in all of Stevens' work, The Court of Alexander presents several topics popular in the period. Thais is concerned with Alexander's alcoholism and endeavors to win him to tea drinking instead, for it is much more genteel. Fashionable interest in China and in things Chinese is further satirized. Thais spends much of her time in her fashionable Chinese pavilion. Parisatis is equally fashionable; but in the battle between her suitors, her best china tea set is broken. In addition both the decision to settle the dispute for Parisatis by a card game and the drinking songs throughout the operetta again satirize fashionable topics.

The treatment of material, the musical accompaniment, and the comical songs make the play a burlesque opera, a degenerate form of
the regular opera which did not become popular until the eighteenth century. At this time opera on the continent was blended with the tradition of the English court masque. In the masque, the spoken word is joined with music, but music still serves a subservient role. The scenery, the poetry, and the drama all receive more attention. The masques of James I and his son Charles I were more like opera; poetry, music, dancing, stage machinery, costumes, and scenery were equally blended. With the closing of the theaters in 1642, true drama came to an abrupt end, and during the interregnum, entertainments assumed various guises. Some of these were musical and were increasingly operatic in nature. With William Davenant’s The First Day’s Entertainment at Rutland House (1656), better known as The Siege of Rhodes, English opera was definitely introduced to the stage.

The masque continued as a separate form for nearly a century after the introduction of the opera in 1656. Musical masques and musical interludes were often used as afterpieces to fill the popular demand; however, these entertainments were unsuccessful rivals to the opera. The masque itself was staged through the century, although it, too, was not remarkable: James Thompson’s The Masque of Alfred, 1745, Covent Garden, and 1752, Drury Lane; Susannah Cibber’s The Oracle, 1752, Covent Garden; George Coleman’s adaptation of Jonson’s Oberon, The Fairy Prince, Covent Garden, 1771.

Opera development was sporadic after The Siege of Rhodes. Henry Purcell was one of the first to write true operas before the first decade of the eighteenth century; his Dido and Aeneas appeared
in 1680. During the first years of the new century, Italian opera became popular and succeeded in establishing opera as a dramatic medium on the English stage. With the popularity of Italian opera came several attempts to establish a native English opera. Joseph Addison's *Rosamund* (1707) was the most notable of these attempts at a native type before Handel began writing operas with *Rinaldo* which appeared in 1711.

In the second decade of the century pantomime became popular and replaced opera, which declined until 1728, when John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* was a tremendous popular success. Gay's ballad opera combined political and social satire with satire of such contemporary genres as Italian opera and sentimental drama. The ballad opera was thus both a rival and a burlesque of Italian opera; however, as a form for theatrical endeavor, the ballad opera died in the 1730's. Comic opera, developed after 1750, was the heir and successor.

The ballad opera is an operatic comedy often accompanied by new lyrics set to old and favorite tunes. The comic opera is primarily a musical comedy with strong elements of farce. Both the lyrics and the tunes may be original. Another close relative is the burlesque comic opera, a popular medium after 1750 and a medium with very few restrictions. A burlesque comic opera is a drama in rhyme with music, short comic recitatives, and singing. The requirements of comic opera are fulfilled in *The Court of Alexander* which contains two comic recitatives. The first is delivered by Alexander as his women battle over him at the close of the first act; he likens the struggle to a game of whist. The second recitative is again
delivered by Alexander, and it is designed to reveal Alexander's regret over his hasty, impetuous actions. These recitatives are the declamatory part of opera; they are dependent upon verbal accentuation, but a music accompaniment supports them. The chief interest is definitely the vocal parts, and the music is a mere frame.

The laws governing eighteenth century opera were strict. Each scene had to end with a song. Every important character had to sing at least one song per scene; no one could sing two songs in succession. The chief character delivered at least one recitative to display the power of his voice. 21

The Court of Alexander blends elements of the masque, the farce, and the opera. The elaborate machinery necessitated by the descent and subsequent ascent of Jupiter to quell the earthly disturbances, and the god’s intervention are both features of the masque. The comical situation and humorous treatment is like the farce, and the songs and recitatives belong to the opera. Emphasis is not placed on dramatic construction, but the construction of The Court of Alexander is much tighter than construction in the preceding work, The French Rlogged. The two plots are more compatible, and there is better plot connection. Alexander, the central and most vital character, joins the two threads of action—the rivalry of the two women for the favors of Alexander himself and the rivalry of the two men for the hand of Parisatis. Elements of parody continue throughout the play, and there is no lapse into a serious vein. Thus Stevens sustains humor and unity of tone in the play. The first act is devoted to Alexander himself and the Roxana-Thais rivalry. The noble
and brave warrior of history is comically reduced to a drunken, good-natured, jovial, and amiable buffoon. This reduction in stature, however, is in keeping with the humorous intent of the piece, and it is effective in sustaining comedy. The second act concerns the rivalry for the hand of Parisatis. Alexander links the plots when he appears, tries to settle the dispute, and is struck for his trouble. Enraged, he strikes his old friend Clytus down and is carried off singing a mad song. A weak point in construction is that his final plight is unresolved. Unless Alexander re-emerges to join the grand chorus at the end of the play, he is left ignorant of the wonders accomplished by Jupiter—reviving Clytus, settling the dispute of the suitors, and tidying the mess the mortals have made in the world. Alexander's madness indicates the loss of his senses as punishment for his rash action, but such a punishment cannot be permanent, for it is too severe for the comic action of the play. The logical end would be to have Alexander rejoin the cast in the finale.

This second play is better than The French Flogged. Despite the fact that the stage reception was not encouraging, the piece contains both humor and unity. It is much more stageworthy than The French Flogged, and although as in all burlesques, time and changing conditions have dulled the satire, enough humor remains to make the play still amusing.

**The Trip to Portsmouth**

Stevens' last play, The Trip to Portsmouth, was licensed August 3, 1773. The application was made by Samuel Foote, and the sketch
appeared the next week in Foote's Haymarket Theater on August 11.  
Genest says that the play, a poor piece of one act, composed of detached scenes with songs, was not acted until September 5, 1775.  
The play is a comic opera sketch in one act of four scenes inspired by a recent naval review. The music was composed by Charles Dibdin, 1745-1815. Some accounts confuse Stevens' work with an opera of the same title which appeared in 1772, at Covent Garden with music by Dr. Thomas Augustine Arne. Dr. Arne did the score for this 1772 opera, for he was at the time employed with hack work for Covent Garden. Dibdin, however, was associated with the Haymarket, and was known for his sea songs, the type which predominates in Stevens' sketch. John Woodfall Ebsworth calls Dibdin's sea songs meritorious for the spirit, sentiment, and honesty they express. Beyond this collaboration between Dibdin and Stevens there is no further evidence of relationship between the two men. Despite the fact that The Trip to Portsmouth was hastily composed and poorly written, the play was received with great applause by several crowded houses.

Stevens himself is thought to have made his final stage appearance as an actor in this, his own play. Since the list of the cast does not include the name of the author, it is likely that Stevens took the part of one of the minor characters, perhaps of an extra sailor.

The action of the entire play centers around a naval review attended by the king, George III, in Portsmouth, a seaport in Southampton, England. The various characters of the play converge on the review from all parts of England, and part of the action presents some of them on the road. Sir Flimsey Nervous, a foppish gentleman,
and his mistress, Miss Flirt, journeying to Portsmouth, offer sharp contrast to the unfashionable but honest and plain countryfolk who also are attending the review. A second scene portrays two drunken rakes in an inn who meet a fashionable friend who hopes to marry a fortune under false pretenses. To increase the opportunity for comedy, a Scotch gentlewoman and her brother arrive and demand rooms at the inn just when a French gentleman arrives. Stevens then involves the Scotch and Frenchman in an argument about the respective merits of the French and the English. The scene ends with the arrival of a group of sailors who sing a patriotic song, call for grog, and dance a sailor's hornpipe.

The third scene depicts the low-life landlord and his shrewd wife in a quarrel over her attentions to her intimate friend, a Methodist doctor; here Stevens works in the usual satiric references to the hypocrisy of the Methodist, the quack nature of medicine, and the headstrong nature of the female.

The final scene occurs with the arrival of Miss Flirt and her gallant. Several other characters arrive—a stern London business man who recovers his rake son to reform him; Sneer, a hypocritic pessimist; and additional sailors. The whole scene involving patriotic songs, drink, and low comedy is concluded with a final procession of ships to simulate the review itself.

The action suffers from the same weaknesses common to all of Stevens' work. His inability to limit the range of the material limits the dramatic effect. The only unifying feature of the play is that the characters, who are rather numerous for a one act sketch, all are journeying to, or are already at, Portsmouth for the review. Since
the incidents are not connected or subordinated to one another, all the characters are of equal importance. The large number of these characters and the short nature of the episodes make the action confusing, jerky, and rough. Continuity does not exist, and the entire success of the play depends on the patriotism of the piece and on the brief humor of the situations themselves.

Had Stevens unified the play with a single hero, the plot would have been more effective; for it would have followed a chronological order. The dependence upon situation relates the play to farce, but several of the episodes do not have a humorous purpose. The portion concerning the merit and bravery of the English tar is certainly designed with serious intent, and the review itself is a serious occasion of national import. The satire is directed toward the character types who have come to attend the event.

The introductory material reminds one of Jonson. Stevens employs the opening stage framework, an initial device that is frequently found in the plays of the Elizabethan dramatist. The prompter, the first character to appear on the stage, is frantically trying to find someone to deliver the prologue because the one slated to perform it, Samuel Foote, has refused his summons. A second refusal comes from the chief character, and the prompter leaves in despair. Then Weston, the chief character, delivers an impromptu prologue introducing the first scene of the play. This prologue is in the tradition of the theater and concludes with the traditional plea for approbation. The tone, however, is not serious. Stevens is parodying the elaborate introductions and apologies of some of
the contemporary playwrights; he caustically alludes to the absence
of rules in the time of Shakespeare and the resulting comedy as
opposed to contemporary comedy so rule-bound that it lacks all sparkle.

The advertisement which precedes the play is also reminiscent
of Jonson. It reveals, much like the argument of Jonson's *Volpone*,
that the play was written in a very short period of time. With the
exception of the songs, Stevens claims to have written the piece in
five days, and he admits that the work is deficient:

> The editor of these Detached Scenes, (the whole of which
> except for three or four of the Songs, were begun and
> finished in five days) humbly presents them to an indu­
> lent public, in hopes of their excusing the many Errors
> with which so hasty a Performance must inevitably a­
> bound. —Conscious of a Deficiency in point of that cri­
> tical Merit required in Dramatic Performances, his ut­
> most wish will be accomplished, should the late Naval
> Review at Portsmouth have enabled him to furnish even
> the temporary Amusement of a leisure Hour.

The character names also remind one of Jonson, for they in­
dicate the predominant traits of the figures. The play includes
Sir Flimsey Nervous, the fashionable fop; Hearty, a patriotic gen­
tleman; Smeer, a disparager; Groanly, a Methodist doctor; and Miss
Flirt, an adventuress.

The conversation between the prompter and Weston at the open­
ing of the play is interesting commentary on the acting of the day.
Stevens favors the naturalistic school established by David Garrick
about the middle of the century. Before Garrick, actors were known
for one type of role, and they performed it with considerable bombast
and emotion. Weston refuses to deliver the prologue for this very
reason. He is a comedian, and the prologue is of so serious a nature that it will be out of the realm he is familiar with:

I will venture to say,
'Tis a serious affair, and quite out of my way:
Sentimental, pathetical, tender, affecting,
Just like his last piece, and his new way of acting.

Man: Your speaking, I'm sure, would give it such grace.—

'Yes: It would;—but who'll give me a tragedy face?—
I tell you, I neither like whining nor ranting,
The groanings and tonings of tragedy canting;
To sigh, and to strut, and to start, and to stare,
My arms throw about, up and down, here and there;
Kick my train in a pet, and with passionate rumble,
Take sun, moon, and stars, a bombastical tumble;
'Till quite out of breath with heroi cal swagger,
The poison bowl enters, or polish'd tin dagger:
Then quivering, I fall, or in simile die,
So, so as if, or as when, or as why,
Ti, ti, tum, Ti, ti, tum, Tum, tum, tum, Ti, ti.

In addition Stevens chides those fashionable travellers who begin a journey out of humor and thenceforth find nothing but bad no matter what they encounter on the trip. Such people allow their own ill temper to distort enjoyment of all they meet. In Portsmouth, Stevens chides the greedy who pray for war so that they can make the best of a wartime economy with no regard for the sufferings of others. Concerning contemporary marriage customs, Stevens satirizes the materialistic arrangement of marriages that are marriages in name only once an heir is born, for then the wife and the husband live separate lives and enjoy private pleasures. Divorce at the time took an act of Parliament, and the resulting scandal was devastating.
The fashionable attire of the young rakes opens the door for ridicule of extravagances in dress. The coats are stiffly lined so as to make the wearer appear erect, and the tails resemble weeds with the roots uppermost. Clothes are so universally elaborate that no one can distinguish the classes of society any longer, for the scoundrels of the day dress more carefully than the gentry. One cannot distinguish a tooth-drawer or a hairdresser from a lord.

The prose dialogue is varied by satiric Scotch and French dialect. Stevens carefully works out phonetic spellings so as to give the speeches a realistic flavor, and he scatters occasional native words or idioms to lend authenticity. The Frenchman offers the author a chance to point up French conceit, bravado, and base practicality. The Scotch figures are parsimonious and haughty; the woman possesses a burr that at times makes her almost unintelligible.

Patriotism is an important part of the play, and again Stevens has high praise for the valiant seaman much like that he previously used in The French Flogged. Since Stevens himself seems to have had naval service, he is perhaps understandably biased in favor of the English tar. The tone of this material is always serious; and the praise, although extravagant, is intended. The sea songs reflect the convivial nature of the author; for combined with glorifying the sailor and praising the valors of England, they reflect a philosophy that requires the enjoyment of life, especially with the aid of a friendly bumper, and a group of stout friends.

The songs of the piece are chiefly patriotic. The first one praises the King, and a later one again reflects the love for country,
honor, home, and the King, as a symbol of all that is English. There is one Scotch song that has traces of a burr and depicts honor, self-pride, and love of the simple life. The majority of the songs, however, are nautical and praise the life of the sailor and the life of cheer. The lyrics vary individually according to the treatment of the subject. The first song likens a sea battle to an exciting hunt; the next brags on English freedom, tradition, and history. The third is a drinking song and calls for the enjoyment of every moment to the fullest. Another expresses the inevitability of death, and still another depicts the excitement of sea life—through battle, storm, and calm. Incorporated in these songs are typically derogatory remarks about the French, current fashions, and social activities.

The Trip to Portsmouth was Stevens' most successful work, although the construction is faulty. The scenes are loosely joined, and the character development is sketchy. A great variety of equally important characters confuses the plot and prevents tight development. The action itself, consisting of a variety of loosely related sketches, is not smooth. The chief attractions of the play are the amusing comic incidents and the appeal to nationalistic pride; these features are undoubtedly responsible for the success of the piece.

Stevens' final piece, The Cabinet of Fancy: An Evenings' Exhibition was performed in 1780, perhaps after Stevens himself retired to the country with failing senses. Stevens may have had little or no connection with this piece, which is specifically intended for amusement and cleverness. Like much of Stevens' work, it is concerned with current fashions. Fancy is the chief figure, and
pantomime is the method of presentation. The qualities of Temperance,
Cheerfulness, and Contentment are praised, and such former favorite
topics as the Lady of Fashion, The Dancing Master, Punch and his wife
Joan, a termagant headstrong woman, appear.

George Alexander Stevens was a dramatist who was neither better
nor worse than the majority of the eighteenth century playwrights.
Seven of his plays still exist although they, like their author, have
long since been forgotten. Stevens wrote farcical afterpieces for
the stage, most of which appeared between 1760 and 1773. These short
pieces were designed to entertain an audience for a brief time; they
were not of great literary value. Most of the drama of this period,
before the great plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan, was similarly de­
signed. Stevens was typical of the age. To the theater he was like
the bourgeois in society or like the noncommissioned officers in the
army. Without such figures of the border-line, there would be nothing
to border. There would be no Goldsmith, or Garrick, or Sheridan, or
Mrs. Siddons.

The drama of the eighteenth century was not the most brilliant
in English literature, but it is interesting. The first half of the
century saw two developments of historical importance: the quality
of the theater managers changed and comedy became increasingly moral
and sentimental. The theaters of the Restoration were managed by
courtiers who were awarded positions by royal favor; but by the be­
ginning of the eighteenth century, theater managers were professionals,
and many were actors. With the change in the nature of the mana­erial
ranks came a change in the quality of the playwrights, who were com-
posing for money and were willing to allow the manager the right to alter dramatic work to fit the capabilities of the theatrical company. Because the earlier dramatists of the Restoration were primarily gentlemen, their plays concerned people who were allegedly gentlefolk, but the new class of playwrights were of the middle class and reflected the character of their bourgeois society.

The middle class, fast becoming powerful in England, affected the entire age. The theatrical works of the early part of the century increasingly avoided the bawdiness and lacked the wit of the Restoration plays; political questions became an important aspect of the stage. So hot did these questions become that it was felt necessary to pass in 1737 a licensing act which was more strict in censorship than any previous step, exclusive of the Puritan domination from 1642 till 1660. Fielding's unmerciful and severe attacks on the administration resulted in rigid governmental control. In this setting were these early prominent stage figures: Colley Cibber, who wrote sprightly comedies and was famous for portraying court fops; Richard Steele, a friend and associate of Cibber, who strove for the respectable and the genteel in the sentimental comedy; Joseph Addison, who in his tragedy Cato, achieved a popular and elegant example of strict adherence to unity and an ordered existence; and Henry Fielding, who wrote farces of biting irony and satire on political and fashionable subjects.

The middle part of the century brought an important change. In 1741 David Garrick introduced a naturalistic school of acting, a school which probably encouraged the bourgeois play. The new his-

trionic skill did not promote literary quality, for, although the
age was one of great actors, it was burdened with second-rate literature. Three theaters were prominent: David Garrick's Drury Lane, John Rich's Covent Garden, and Samuel Foote's Haymarket. The best theater was Drury Lane and the next best was Covent Garden: both houses observed conventional theatrical procedure. The Haymarket was more radical and scurrilously attacked many of the prominent figures of the age.

Theatrical entertainment consisted of a major piece, either tragedy or comedy, and an after-piece, usually a work of contrasting character which came between acts or at the end of the main play. Troupes of singers, dancers, strong men, and acrobats appeared at the intermissions to keep the audiences quiet. The tragedies, often domestic in type, lacked freshness and novelty, and the comedies were sentimental and often degenerated into pantomime burlettas, and musical comedies, forms which are rarely considered real drama. The loose form of the topical and personal farces led directly to the pantomime in which outward realism replaced sound psychology and good plotting. Plots were usually obvious in derivation. Shakespeare and other Elizabethans were revived and often reworked. Restoration comedies were expurgated and supplied with moral deductions, and translations from the French were frequent.

Dramatists in the latter part of the eighteenth century, with the exception of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, were primarily minor figures. Arthur Murphy, 1727-1805, was a successful author of comedies in the manners tradition and of tragedies which were popular. George Coleman the elder, 1732-1794, began writing
comedies of vivid reality and vivid reality; but something, perhaps managerial duties, defected the promise of his early work. Hugh Kelly, 1739-1777, and Richard Cumberland, 1732-1791, were the two foremost popular writers of the sentimental comedy and the tragedy.

More prominent were Oliver Goldsmith, 1728-1774, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 1751-1816, two men who led a rebellion against the sentimental comedy to restore laughter and honest humor. Their plays are among the most famous plays of all time: She Stoops to Conquer, 1773, The Rivals, 1775, and The School for Scandal, 1777. These plays returned mirth to the stage and restored the witty and elegant comedy of the Restoration.

In this background appears Stevens. He wrote before the plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan were produced; and like most of the other dramatists of the day, he turned out short one and two act plays of a farcical nature. His work reflects the spirit of the times and the are itself. Not until the last decades of his life did Stevens enjoy a measure of success. A literary jack-of-all trades, he turned his hand successively to the roles of actor, poet, dramatic author, sence writer, club man, vocalist, novelist, parodist, and lecturer. Only as a lecturer did Stevens function as a successful public entertainer.

This extraordinary life and hither-to untouched literary output throws light on unexplored areas of stage history. As a dramatist Stevens did not write great literature. The fact that his work is inferior is reflected in the stage history of the plays. Much of his work is dependent upon contemporary satire and parody; therefore, the
passage of time affects the work considerably. Stevens was unable
to limit himself to development of a single action, and in attempt-
ing to embellish his work he undermines the better features—the
satire and the humor. The great numbers of characters with which
he works overbalance his sketches themselves, but they show his in-
terest in and concern for humanity. Stevens' diction is ordinary, and
there is no special merit in either eloquence or poetic imagination.
Also his construction of plot is defective, and his stagecraft is
weak, for he too often blends serious and comic materials and in-
cludes inconsiderate elements. Stevens is always good at producing
ludicrous and slap-stick situations and at producing ironic con-
trasts. For his clever approach and for the blend of the issues of
the day. Stevens is full of interest; he represents the typical fig-
ure of his day, a figure of transition between the neoclassic and
the sentimental periods. His interest lies in man and man's life—
his follies, his problems, and his nobility. Although Stevens was
not a great artist, he was clever and has a bent for satire. His
comic portraits of life are still pointed and amusing. The great
variety of his work is clearly influenced by his strange and un-
usual life, and it clearly reflects an authentic picture of the age—
its fashions, its developing patriotism, its rising middle class.
Stevens' work reflects the joy and the variety of the period. The
drama of the eighteenth century is not golden literature; for at the
start of the century, the sentimental comedy, a degeneration of the
great comedy of manners, dominated the theater. Although most of the
plays of the period were deficient in dramatic quality, it is necessary
to study them in order to get a true picture of the period. Even borderline figures are useful for evaluating the merit of the others. Without this comparison, no single author can display the true extent of his genius. In mid-century, drama produced no great champions until Goldsmith and Sheridan began their attacks on sentimental comedy which resulted in the plays which are today considered the best work of the period. Stevens wrote before this attack liberated the stage from the bonds of moral stricture imposed by the bourgeoisie. Although he seems to be chaffing at these bonds, his talents were not great enough to free the theater from tradition. Stevens' great personal charm was his misfortune; for it long kept him popular despite his lack of great talent but was not strong enough to carry over into his plays.
NOTES


2. ________, The Dramatic History of Master Edward, Miss Ann, and others, the extraordinaries of these Times (London, 1745), pp. i-2.


5. John Ernest, Some Account of the English Stage From the Restoration in 1660 to 1730 (Bath, 1832), IV, 497.


13. Kent in Victor, The History of the Theatres of London, from the year 1660 to the Present Time Being a Continuation of the Annual Register of All the New Travels, Comedies, Farces, Pastimes, & that have been performed within this short period with occasional notes and anecdotes by Mr. Victor, author of the two former volumes (London, 1771), III, 108.


16 Catalogue of the Lament Plays, I. 7.


18 Theatet, p. 13.

19 Even more in the same tradition is the slight piece entitled "Hearts of '90," attributed to Stevens, as performed at Surrey Lane in 1739. The play takes place in a village of sailors and their sweethearts. It is patriotic, and set in a country village. A painted ship forms the backdrop, and the sailors form a procession and proclaim English valor. In 1740 the French were expelled from the French and Indian War by an attempt to force the English from America. The play appears in the biennial series, Three Centuries of Drama, Henry J. Hollis, ed., English 1751-1774, Larpent Collection 10-2 (New York, 1933).

20 Pellington, p. 102.


22 Catalogue of the Lament Plays, 1. 7.

23 Forest, IV, 3, where Eneas is probably mistaken. In this date, however, for 1740, it is the only one who cites it.


25 John Cookfield Swarte, 2d D., s. v. "Vivien, Charles."

26 The History of the Theatres of London; Containing An Annual Register of all the New and Revised Tragedies, Comedies, Operas, Farces, Fantomines, &c., that have been performed at the Theatres-Royal, in London, From the Year 1663-1708 with Occasional Notes and Anecdotes in two volumes, by Charles Burnell, ed. (London, 1764), 22.


29 Ibid., 32.


19. Even more in the same tradition is the slight piece entitled "Hearts of Oak," attributed to Stevens, and performed at Drury Lane in 1779. The piece is a sort of ditty of sailors and their sweethearts. It is patriotic, and is set in a country village. A painted ship forms the backdrop, and the sailors form a procession and proclaim English valor in defiance of the French currently engaged in the French and Indian War in an attempt to force the English from America. The play appears in the microprint series, Three Centuries of Drama, Henry T. Wells, ed., English 1751-1800, Larpent Collection K-2 (New York, 1973).


23. Serpent, V, 397. Serpent is probably mistaken in this date, however, for it is the only one who cites it.


26. The History of the Theatres of London; Containing An Annual Register of all the New and Revised Tragedies, Comedies, Operas, Farces, Pantomimes, &c, that have been performed at the Theatres-Royal, in London, from the Year 1771-1795 with Occasional Notes and Anecdotes in two volumes, Walter Chamberlain Oulton, ed. (London, 1795), 23.


29. Ibid., 42.

CHAPTER V

Lecture upon Heads

Stevens' Lecture upon Heads, his most popular work, is clearly in the tradition of the character sketch. This literary genre was tremendously popular in the seventeenth century, when, with the decline of the Renaissance, there was great interest in ethical, political, and social types. Writers like Joseph Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury, and John Earle achieved success with their portraits of contemporary figures. These sketches were presented with rhetorical elaboration and moral intent. Typical of the genre is euphuism and didacticism; the sketches have little cumulative strength. The character sketch is tightly packed with contrasts, comparisons, puns, strange conceits, unexpected antitheses, and alliteration. Through the century, however, there is a tendency to lose the generic universality of character and to focus attention on biography of a specific individual. With the eighteenth century, the character becomes part of the periodical essay and is subsequently incorporated into the novel.

Stevens, however, uses the character concept of the earlier period. His characters are witty, facetious descriptions of the nature and qualifications of a universal type. Stevens follows a pattern similar to one suggested by Ralph Johnson in his The Scholar's
Guide (published in London in 1765):

Choose a Subject, viz. such sort of men as will admit of variety of observation, such be, drunkards, usurers, liars, tailors, excise-men, travellers, pedlars, merchants, tapsters, lawyers, an upstart gentleman, a young Justice, a Constable, an Alderman, and the like.

Express their natures, qualities, conditions, practices, tools, desires, aims, or ends, by witty allegories, or allusions, to things or terms in nature, or art, of like nature and resemblance, still striving for wit and pleasantness together with tart nipping jerks about the vices or miscarriages.

Conclude with some witty and neat passage, leaving them to the effect of their follies and studies.

Stevens writes to expose follies and affectations in contemporary society. His characters in the Lecture upon Heads are delivered in terse, compact sections. There is no continuity, for each character is independent of the others and introduces a new situation. Stevens' conscious intent is to reveal human nature in its unchangeable aspects.

The Lecture upon Heads was extremely popular and well received and was performed on more than one hundred successive nights. The earliest form is nominally divided into three sections: the first devoted to men's heads, the second to women's heads and fashions, and the third to wigs. Important to the performance were the props employed by Stevens; he utilized heads of wood and of pasteboard "to denote, that there are not only Blockheads, but Paper sculls (p. 7)."

The Lecture opens with the "head of Alexander the Great, 'one of those extraordinary personages called Conquerors." The history of Alexander was popular in the literature of the century; and Stevens himself later employs this material in his comic opera, The Court of Alexander (1775). Manipulating the head as he comments on the fame
of the man involved, Stevens employs his puppeteering experience and discourses on the head of Alexander, called the Great because of the great number of people his ambition had cut to pieces. Equally dexterous at slaughtering man is the Cherokee Chief, Sachem-Swampum-Tomahawk. But the foremost man-killer is the quack doctor, whose head is "exhibited to show the weakness of Wisdom, and the strength of folly; for if wisdom was not so weak, would such fellows as Carmen, Coblars, and others be permitted to vend their unwholesome mixtures, under letters patent;—and if folly was not too strong, would any body swallow their compositions (p. 31)?" Stevens shows the difference between the madness of the head which made Alexander a conqueror and the folly of the town which dubbed the quack a doctor. The savage wants the "rust of antiquity to varnish over his crimes, and the pens of writers to illustrate his actions." The quack, on the other hand, is his own historian; for he records cures never performed and produces testimonials never granted. His coat of arms is cleverly composed of three ducks proper and "Quack, Quack" for the motto, surrounded by a death's head with a few puffs and bills of mortality for a crest. The whole was created by the admirers of the quack, the undertakers, sextons, and gravediggers; for these are the people whom he benefits.

The cuckoo wears ornaments "not for what the wearer has done; on the contrary, he tears about with him the constant memorial of the faults of others... (p. 6)." Ill-used by the world, he suffers for the commission of faults he could not commit. The horns denote the abundance of brethren in affliction and are diluted to show that there are wretches base enough to accept the waves of dishonor. Furthermore,
of the man involved, Stevens employs his puppeteering experience and discourses on the head of Alexander, called the Great because of the great number of people his ambition had cut to pieces. Equally dexterous at slaughtering man is the Cherokee Chief, Sachem-Swampum-Tomahawk. But the foremost man-killer is the quack doctor, whose head is "exhibited to show the weakness of Wisdom, and the strength of folly; for if wisdom was not so weak, would such fellows as Carmen, Cohlers, and torters be permitted to vend their unwholesome mixtures, under letters patent;—and if folly was not too strong, would any body swallow their compositions (p. 37)?" Stevens shows the difference between the weakness of the head which made Alexander a conqueror and the folly of the town which dubbed the quack a doctor. The savage wants the "rust of antiquity to varnish over his crimes, and the pens of writers to illustrate his actions." The quack, on the other hand, is his own historian; for he records cures never performed and produces testimonials never granted. His coat of arms is cleverly composed of three ducks proper and "quack, quack" for the motto, surrounded by a death's head with a few puffs and bills of mortality for a crest. The whole was created by the admirers of the quack, the undertakers, sextons, and gravediggers; for these are the people whom he benefits.

The cuckold wears ornaments "not for what the wearer has done; on the contrary, he bears about with him the constant memorial of the faults of others...(p. 6)." Ill-used by the world, he suffers for the commission of faults he could not commit. The horns denote the abundance of brethren in affliction and are united to show that there are wretches base enough to accept the wares of dishonor. Furthermore,
the brass buck's head seen in public and private houses functions not only to accustom man to the sight of horns but also to hold hats. Stevens is adopting a moral tone; and by comparing two unequal functions, he intensifies his scorn for moral indiscretions.

Stevens next considers the wigs and puns that it is the result of the ancient custom of adorning the temples. The bare shaven head is too like that of a professional beater, naked, raw, simple; but with Art the head becomes luxuriant, an object of wonder, reverence, and importance. Like a law text, a good wig is a compendium:

Special pleadings in the fore-top, pleas, rejoinders, replications, and demurs in each turn of the head—the knotty points of practice in the twist of the tail—the depth of the full bottom, denotes the length of a chancery suit, while the black coif at top, like a blister plaster, seems to tell us, that the Law is a great irritator, and never to be used but in very desperate cases (p. 11).

The diatribe against the legal profession continues with an oration ostensibly in praise of the law; it is likened to a fine woman's temper, a book of surgery, and fire and water—all very fine servants until they get the upper hand. Like a gentle woman the law is fine to follow, but it is like a scolding woman when it follows us. Employing legal double talk and Latinate endings, Stevens presents a study of the four parts of the law: the plaintiff, the defendant or damages, the quid pro quo or council, and the sine-quantum or without something (money). Stevens relates an elaborate example concerning a quarrel between a cook and an intoxicated pantry-raiding room, who is felled by a dripping pan wielded by the irate cook. To conclude, Stevens observes that the law is loquacious,
"forasmuch, nevertheless, moreover, likewise, and also——The liberty of the law is the happiness of the English: and it is very happy for us Englishmen, that we have the liberty to go to law (p. 15)."

Once he begins on wigs, Stevens treats various types: the fashionable stiff and unnatural journeyman's jemmy, plastered like the top of a cabbage plant after a shower of snow, and the adorning glory of Sir Languish Lispine, the ladies' man. An extremely delicate creature, Sir Languish carries tea cups, fans, and snuff boxes but uses his head only to have his wig dressed upon. With his smiles, simperings, and oglings, it is hard to distinguish him from the fashionable lady he copies so closely. The quantity of powder put on these wigs, like sugar on a cake, denotes that the wearer is a "sweet fellow."

Finally Stevens considers the full frizzle bob which resembles an ostrich who has taken refuge in a bush.

Nobody's Head, currently unclaimed by society, is adorned with a fool's cap, the first of which was worn by Judas Midae who was able to make all he touched turn to gold. Henceforth money is the power that turns men to fools. Wittily Stevens observes: "Life is said to be a lottery; and folly is concerned in the chances (p. 17)." In a card game, these court cards when turned up trumps become honors and prove that those who deal fairly may rain honors. Put too often these honors, or the lack of them, depend upon the shuffle. Mortals are divided into three categories, generous fellows, honest fellows, and devilishly clever fellows; but all are married into Folly's family and have the fool's cap for a crest. Stevens cynically claims that life is empty, nothing—"from ten to twenty, we go to school to learn, what,
from twenty to thirty, we are strangely apt to forget; from thirty to forty, we think things must needs be as we would have them; from forty to fifty, we find ourselves a little out in our reckoning; and from fifty to sixty, upon casting up life's debtor and creditor, find nothing this the certain balance (p. 20)." A number of nothings added to the numeral one take rank and precedence immediately, but have no consequence alone, so as in arithmetic, life may turn nothing into something and take all away to leave nothing again: "to nothing we must all come; happy they, who, amidst the variations of nothing, have done nothing, to be ashamed of (p. 21)."

From the "Dissertation upon Nothing" Stevens likens Nobody's genealogical tables to the form of a man. The mayor is the head, the sheriffs the arms as they execute the law, and the aldermen the legs, as they support the law; the shield is blank, ready to be filled in at the whim of any purchaser, and a bag of money, everybody's coat of arms, represents man's universal handiwork. Esteem, generosity, friendship, gratitude, public spirit and common sense all belong to nobody; all are so ill-used that no one will claim them, not even the poor house, represented by Mr. Overseer, Mr. Headborough, and the vestry who all find such qualities too common and too vulgar to be concerned about.

Stevens then develops an allegory of the family of Ostentation and his lady, Vanity, Vanity's sister Wit, her suitor Judgment and their child, Genius. Since it is common for genius to suffer, she endures hardship and lodges with Oblivion and his mother Necessity until she marries Science and produces her children Architecture,
Painting, Poetry, Astronomy, and Music. These personages are poorly received in England and are forced to hope that the merit of their works will recommend them. In the country they starve; but in London, they are employed in minor roles. Eventually they are found and appreciated by Lady Fashion.

The first section concludes with the heads of Honesty, battered and mutilated, and her contrasting opposite, Flattery, who is white and shining to the fortunate and ever in eclipse of the unfortunate. With ill fortune, Flattery turns into reproach, but we still seek her despite her tendency to injure. Flattery's family tree is given and her adventures are related. Report on Poverty by Tit, Flattery was employed by princes to carry congratulations to one another, but when captured by Dutch pirates, she fauned on the captain. Then she turned bar-keep. Later she is employed by a gentleman to help rain the hand of an heiress, but with success of the suit she is kicked out of doors before a fortnight passes. To this day she is found at the beginning of a courtship and at the end of a petition.

Part two is devoted to the fashions of fine ladies, for these things have caused more alteration in the affairs of men than all lunar or sub-lunar revolutions. Again, Stevens ridicules women's head dressings, and he repeats much of the material he used in the section on fashions in the Adventures of a Speculist. Stevens comments also on the riding hood, with lappets that fall down the side of the face like the folds on the face of an Egyptian mummy, and the fashionable Banelach hood, copied from low-life. The wearers of these creations torture their mother tongue by clipping polysyllables into
monosyllables, by stressing the long a--"shaant," "caant," and "naant," and by adding additional syllables for elegance, like "breakfastes," "postesses," and "sisteres."

Stevens returns to his subject, however, with the morning head-dress of Cleopatra, in which the head is swathed completely. This cap is too cumbersome for the modern lady of fashion; she favors the French night cap which makes her look like a hooded horse. Equipped with eye flags, this cap helps form the habit of looking forward only. In addition, Stevensocks cosmetics, finding "the pernicious practice of face painting, or rubbing of rouge and white wash on the complexion (p. 33)" like the practice of a pirate, for both women and privateer employ false colors. Stevens puritanically calls exercise the best face painter, and innocence the best painter of complexion. Ladies of "antiquated virginity" both elderly and unmarried who act comme il leur plaît roles are the only things that harm the female race more than cosmetics.

Equally unattractive is an old bachelor, an "old bully in love," for he constantly abuses conjugal rights and daren't accept its challenge. Always ready to advise others on the rearing of children, the treatment of wives, or the rearing of the home, the old bachelor is merely a talker and a fool ready to be deceived by some clever mistress.

The second section concludes with the head of a blinker, covered by a large hat to keep off the outward light and intensify the light within, the head of a statesman or never enough, who wears a large hat copied from the French mode, and the head of a Frenchman, who simpers and mims and brags about his race. Stevens expresses his philosophy of enjoying life instead of fearing the future. He laughs both at
the old people who praise the past which they neglected to use and at
the young who neglect the present and look forward to the future.
Fashion is too trivial to justify the effort spent upon it.

The third section of the lecture continues the material found
in the earlier parts. Stevens begins with the satire of an apothecary
and presents a dissertation upon sneezing and snuff-taking. The
language, superlative, complex, and repetitions, is made hopelessly
unintelligible in order to parody medical Darwin:

Sneezing, otherwise learnedly called sternutation, is
occasioned by a violent, involuntary, impression, re-
pression, compression, suppression, and oppression of
the animal spirits and nervous fluids: which acting
upon the nerves, which are subservient to the muscles
and the diaphragma, communicate the same vibration,
otherwise oscillations, of the medullary substance of
the nerves, and excite those impulses and concussion
of the thorax which accompany sternutation, by which
means, the patient is in such sort of a situation, that—if he has a pocket handkerchief, he
may wipe his nose with it (p. 47).

Snuff is divided into the physical type (which Stevens ironically says
has sufficiently pestered the town) and the metaphysical variety,
Self-consequence, which with good fortune works to prevent the re-
cognition of old friends. Such is the snuff of Contempt, popular with
the well-dressed when they are in poorer company and with the con-
oisseurs who find all that is English full of inferior qualities.

Next comes the head of a blood, who wears a wig with a fore-
top in imitation of Jupiter, who turned himself into a bull to romp
with Europa. Thus bloods are still fond of making beasts of themselves;
they kick up dust, play pranks in taverns, and take up fads. The
blood is "a wit, at Wetherby's; a toastmaster, at Bob Drury's; a
he feels it would be better to omit it unless it were presented by someone else with a better speaking voice.

The expanded lecture is in five acts. The first act opens with Stevens' introductory apology:

Before I presume to meddle with the heads of other people, it may seem necessary to say something by way of apology on my own: if...anything can be said to the purpose. But after many various attempts, finding that I could not profit by my own, I have taken the liberty of collecting a set of those belonging to other people (pp. 17-18).

The first part of the lecture is again directed toward extreme wigs. They are the furniture for the head and like books are voluminous and of all sizes. This quality suggests another popular fad, false books. A block of wood is carved to resemble a book but is used to hide tea things or some other equipm ent. Playfully, Stevens likens the various woods so employed to the various authors--Shakespeare to cedar, 'physical' dictionaries to Jesuits' bark, the review to birch, and English history to the solid heart of oak. Then Stevens adds some satirical comments on the elaborate stock which some coil upon their necks to the point that it resembles a large dinner napkin. This false delicacy brings to mind the womanish man, Master Jackey who, as an example of a woman's boy, personifies the effeminacy. The opposite extreme is the masculine woman, especially exemplified in the currently fashionable riding costume. With this material is the character of Sir Dimple Dimsey, the falsely 'hearty' type. Sir Dimple is always ready to slap someone on the back, tell someone a joke, and supply examples from his wide range of experiences. The editor comments that this is one of the most effective
Of this group, however, Foote, "a modern Aristophanes," is the most severe and the most impatient. It is then fitting that Stevens is presenting his lecture for Foote's theater. Stevens' purpose is to make the absurdities of man subservient to individual extravagances of disposition, beginning with the extravaant decorations that man is fond of—wigs, hats, etc.

The opening of the lecture itself provides many details of the presentation. Abruptly and awkwardly, Stevens enters from a door to the right of the stage and delivers a prologue not destitute of wit and humor but deficient through the lack of personal qualities of voice and action. His expressive countenance, however, somewhat atones for his deficiencies, and he introduces his puppets directly into the show. These have been kept hidden behind a curtain until the proper moment arrives when Stevens discloses them, sets all to nodding, and asks the audience to recognize those it is familiar with:

Like heads of corn, in autumn's plenteous field;  
Yon crop of heads dame Fashion's harvest yields.  
From hints like these, I form'd my lecturing plan,  
And strove to mark the ministr'ies of man.  
If you find o'er-bold in the deed, or design,  
Of all heads to be seen here, the wrong-head is mine.  
In behalf of that head, I put in my petition;  
That you'll please to accept this droll exhibition.  
I hope your attention will honor my story,  
And the whim of this night may find favor before ye (p. 16).

Stevens stands behind a long counter-like table covered in green cloth with the motto "As You Like It" enblazoned on the front. He has two screens directly behind on the oblique, behind which he stores his forces, the puppet heads. The editor comments that the prologue as a composition is neither great nor devoid of merit, but
the bulk of mankind were compelled for their own sakes to treat her at least with respect. Men as yet had not learnt to consider their imperfections as recommendatory qualifications; or if any did blindly think them such they found it necessary occasionally to conceal those accomplishments under the mask of innocence (pp. 2-3).

The editor points out that modern man derides subjects of importance like religion and manners. Such disrespect necessitates immediate attention. To justify Stevens' choice of lesser topics for satirical treatment, instead of direct attention to human and divine institutions, the editor points out that these points are so serious: in need of attention that they cannot be treated directly. Modern men openly plot immorality, plan to destroy innocence, and scheme to ruin virtue. These vices are so strong that they are proof against the forces of reason and argument: lesser issues like follies, fashionable life, and matters of taste and dress are better suited to satire; by destroyin these issues, fuel for the larger points is destroyed. In the long run, the larger issues will be corrected.

This, the editor states, is exactly what Stevens is attempting to do with his lecture. The problem one must face in such satire, however, is vanity; for all who are admitted to the audience for the price of a ticket immediately assume that they are superior to the ones Stevens is attacking. These people must divest themselves of their own pride to contribute to the ultimate purpose. Such modern stage figures as Carrick, Foote, Woodward and Weston do the same in the managerial choices of material for the stage by Carrick and Foote, and in the presentation of the material by such actors as Weston and Woodward.
Altho' the author is unacquainted with the useful method of short hand writing, yet he flatters himself, he has done strict literal justice to Mr. Stevens, and the public, in the Lecture here subjoined; conscious of no deviation from the original, but such, as a friendly commentator in justice to merit "inis a secret satisfaction in making.

The Critical Observations were made on the first night's lecture, delivered this season at the Haymarket; and were confirmed to the observer, by several other evenings punctual attendance.

He is happy to confess the highest opinion of the abilities of Mr. STEVENS. Should anything therefore contained in these few pages, contradict his notions, that gentleman will not be displeased, when he is assured, they were made public from no other motives, than such as are consistent with FEVERISH, and SAGA (p. v-vi).

The introductory essay considers the purpose of satire; not only is perfect, and man must try to correct his faults by one of two methods. His physical crimes are to be punished directly through the actions of the law courts, and his social follies are to be pointed out through satire. This indirect attempt to correct is as strong as physical punishment, and it provides the chief motivation of the stage:

It was not uncommon for great and noble deeds, to owe their origin to the sublime sentiment of the poet, and the address of the player. Nor was it unusual for infancy to start at its own shadow, and stand indebted to ridicule for a reformiation, which principle could not accomplish.

Thus in the days of more, deformity of every species was kept within some certain boundaries. Virtue was not entirely forsaken. She had some admirers who loved her for her own decency—she had others who pretended the appearance of a friendship for her—and
missions, especially since an entertainment of such length must give
the audience an opportunity to stretch.

A strange 1772 edition of Stevens' lecture supplies further
details concerning the presentation of the material and also gives
an indication of the way in which Stevens expanded the material.4

The piece, published in London, is prefaced with an introductory essay
on the nature of satire. Stevens was then giving the lecture, in its
expanded version, nightly at the Hay-market, and was receiving enough
popular acclaim so that the anonymous author felt the occasion warranted
a pirated edition to which critical observations were added. Most of
the material in the lecture itself remains the same; but more has been
added, some from the materials Stevens used in the enacted play and
some from The Adventures of a Speculist, his posthumous novel. The
emphasis is topical and the popularity of the presentation depends
strongly upon the allied interest and variety that the puppets give
the piece. Since Stevens was never successful as an actor, he prob-
ably employed the books as an added attraction to help insure popular
success.

The editor of the piece writes in his prefatory dissertation ent
that he has pirated the piece and gives his reasons:

The remarks in the following performance, are the last;
production of a few hours. The facility with which all
ranks of people hunt after public places of amusement,
rose to the thoughts in this short "334"; and the
present "184" at the Hay-market, occasioned their
speed to the press. To the latter account, the intel-
ligent public will justly attribute a number of those
errors, they must naturally meet with, in this triling
publication.--
stretch themselves out upon the tender-hooks of temptation.---Tragedy
is the blank verse of Beelzebub;---Comedy is the hasty pudding; and---
Pantomime is the Devil's country dance (p. 59)." The "sermon" con-
cludes with a demand for money and a facetious epilogue, for money
will scald away all iniquities:

Do put some money in the plate,
Or, I, your preacher, cannot eat;
And 'tis with grief of heart I tell ye
How much this preaching acow'rs the belly;
How pinching to the human tripe
Is city's belly-coke, and wine;
But that religion (lovely maid)
Keeps a cook's shop to feed the trade.

The motives of our deeds the same
With Whitefield, I put my claim;
The pious thieves attack your nurses,
With cries, and tears, and prayers and curses;
But, I, more modest in the trade,
Are never damn the fools I've made.
But will, if so your worship's please,
In future times, on bended knees,
Say, sing, swear, that those alone are right,
Who crowd that tawdry column every night (59-60).

Since the lecture was supposed to last for the length of period of four
hours, Stevens must have allowed himself considerable improvisation.
Of course he has complete freedom of subject because of the loose,
random nature of the material. He is always free to introduce the
latest topical material. Should a certain portrait prove popular, he
could improvise until the audience itself was satisfied; in addition,
his use of the puppets, wittily accompanied by lectures and pantomime action, would extend the time necessary to the performance.
Furthermore, the three divisions of the piece undoubtedly were inter-
things he knows nothing about. And finally Stevens presents the head of a sharper, a heavy, vulgar, sour type. Born aboard a transport in which his mother, a felon, was being sent to America, he, with the absence of Conscience and Memory, finds nothing too base to commit for profit. After a life of infamy, such men are buried with purchased pomp, and their fortunes are left to hospitals for incurables, thus returning monies to rightful owners.

The funeral of the rambler is equally elaborate. Stevens caustically comments that this rogue of infamy obtains more social and financial success than men of real merit, the soldier and sailor, who fight for the country, suffer the loss of limbs, and are appreciated only in times of actual war. After hostilities cease, true merit is neglected and unworthiness is rewarded. Sentimentality enters the picture, for Stevens depicts a tender scene of the successful rambler, honored but deserving censure, for the poor tender innocent children of parents he has ruined run naked and crying in the open.

The concluding head is one of the Tabernacle saint, a man who gives nothing in charity and riots with hypocrisy. Stevens writes: "With one eye he looks up to Heaven, to make his congregation think he is devout, that's his spiritual eye; and with the other eye he looks down to see what he can get; and that's his carnal eye (p. 35)."

Stevens presents a sermon which parodies the Methodist preacher; it rambles from thought to thought, it is emotional, and it is rhetorical. The sermon rambles from a consideration of conscience to the meaning of reformation and the actions of the devil among lawyers, tailors, and players: "The play-house is Satan's ground, where women
constant customer, at the Round-house; a terror to molest women, and
a dupe to women of the town...(p. 43)."

The woman of the town is summarily treated, her head having
mouldered away at first touch. Stevens shows his sentimental and
moral side here; he, however, does not stress the issue to the point
of didacticism. He turns to the Tea-Table critic or master among the
maids, mama's darling. This individual's scholarship is limited to
the book of Hoyle and to calculating how much cream fits into a tart.
A fit of despair at the death of a favored lap dog occasions his death,
and an autopsy reveals that his brain is a mere pincushion. In con­
trast Stevens depicts the Learned Critic, or "word crubber," a hunter
after commas, semi-colons, and classical conjugations. He is devoted
to the dictionary and to argument and finds minor faults objects of
great issue; awake to half-syllables only, he closes his eyes to all
the real things in the world. For a brain he has only parts of lar­e
obtuse indexes to tomes of no value.

Next Stevens caricatures a series of city figures: the stock
jobber has the voice of an ass; he cries distress, demands gratitude,
and reacts only to the stimulus of money. Lacking all the vessels and
nerves of humanity, he is devoted to scurvy and heartlessness. The
bullion, Sir Full Fed Dome Divine Double Chin, is fond of turtle, venison,
and politics. To him, the cook is the greatest genius in the world,
next to a writer of political news. Fond of good living, Sir Full
Fed furthers his own ends at the expense of his neighbors and spends
his spare time concocting empty and foolish plans. His talk is idle
and his facts are incorrect, but he can brag with the best and censure
scenes of the lecture, for it alone brings down the house.

The editor notes that Stevens has an "unhappy propensity" for punning; but he manages, despite this defect, to incorporate great wit and pleasantness in his material. The first act ends with a portrait of the London blood, a figure much like the villainous squire in Tom Fool, a man who kicks an old woman, teases a blind man, and applies a hot poker to the soles of the feet of his sleeping friends. Such a figure finds it humorous to toss a bear in a blanket, to throw a waiter from a window in a fit of pique, and put a blind horse in a china shop. The act closes with one of blood's drunken revels.

Act two opens with an allegorical treatment of the arts—painting, poetry, architecture, music, and astronomy. This material is from the earlier lecture and again is appreciated only through the favor of Fashion, subject to the whim of Fancy, Novelty, or Invention. Again it is banished. Subsequently Stevens censures parents who employ a fashionable French covering, for these parents evade responsibility and trust the child to a nurse whose ignorance and vanity is typical of the French race. Again Stevens indulges in caustic comments upon the allegorical families of Somebody, Nobody, Everybody, Anybody, and Busybody. Somebody possesses self-importance, self-confidence and contempt for the rest of mankind and especially for the familiar. Nobody has the rare and currently unpopular qualities of honesty, friendship, generosity, esteem, common sense, gratitude, and public spirit; and Busybody associates with all of the others. The whole is rather tedious, long, artificial, and moral;
Stevens is too didactic even for the editor who finds the whole lacking in humor and devoid of vivacity. The editor regrets that Stevens uses such unnatural, tedious, chimerical, somnolent, and absurd material and that all is delivered in a whining voice so that the merit of the subject is destroyed by the unreality. Such plain common sense is burned by the irrational buffoonery of the pantomime delivery (pp. 41-42).

A scene featuring a Jewish conjurer who is best at legal tricks reflects Stevens' usual contempt for the legal profession, and the comic scene of the wrangle of lawyers over a trivial matter further illustrates the shabby side of the profession. With this material is the commendation of the military forces, neglected by an ungrateful public that unjustly adores worthless foreign talent and cheats who practice medicine or astrology. On this note the second act ends with a comic puppet presentation of a recitative from a pseudo-Italian opera. In a very high voice Stevens sings:

Suppose me for once a burletta projector, the attempts a mock, musical scrap of a lecture. Suppose this for once a harps'chord or sinnet. Ye must suppose so, or there's nothing in it. And thus I begin, tho' a stranger to graces; Those deficiencies must be supplied by graces, and want of wit made up by the making of faces.

RECITATIVE

Com cara, com,—attend aff etiogol,
En'lish be dumb—your language is—but so so.

Air

Com laughter dear, carissim' anima me—a
So boil the kettle, make me some green tea—a
'Obolo' dal'chefonio
With the tea, cream and sugars, bento
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"With a little slice,
Of bread and butter nice,
Of brave bread, and butter—Bra-vi-si-si-mo!

With jargon like this, at our judgment’s expense,
At the idol of sound, we sacrifice sense.
Avoid for the future these imported elves,
But do justice to ENGLAND, GOOD SENSE, AND YOURSELVES (pp. 49-50).

Our editor agrees that Stevens’ caustic comments on the neuter nature of the opera performers are justified and the extravagant absurdities of the opera are deserving of ridicule. But Stevens, by wearing an elaborate headdress while playing the harpsichord and by making uncommon faces, is able to out-Herod Herod.

The third act concerns the extravagances of women and again treats such favorite subjects as headdress, makeup, speech habits, matrimony, and disposition. Most of this material is taken from the earlier lectures, and some is taken from the materials included in the Adventures of a Speculist. The modern headdress and its extravagances offer Stevens a chance to compare it to the thatching of a farm roof—the farmer cuts small thatch on the roof he doesn’t intend to use.

Even the French have curtailed the extravagance of hat-making, partly because the French and Indian war has disrupted the fur trade and made materials hard to come by; but the English still follow and even improve on the absurdities of earlier times. In condemning modern cosmetics Stevens assumes a bourgeois attitude. Since his puppet is extremely heavily made up, the visual satire is more devastating than the verbal. Cosmetics are fitting only for prostitutes who, like pirate ships, sail under false colors. Such women by the very use of
cosmetics advertise the lack of true beauty, which necessitates only a good disposition. The popular and supposedly elegant clipping of speech and the adding of extra syllables offers opportunity for satire, and the puppets who are allowed to speak represent a lady of the upper class and an oyster woman of the lower class complete with a black eye and a filthy hair ribbon.

Another topic Stevens treats is matrimony. Here he sentimentally advises his audience that the only quality necessary to both man and wife is a good disposition. Stevens observes that courtship is built on deceit and that once the trap is closed, both the man and woman revert to their natural sloppiness and carelessness. The female is too fickle and frequently changes her mind, and the male is bored once the saucy of the courtship turns into matrimony. Interspersed with these comments are two digressions, one on modern poetry and its appreciation of a sweet idyllic nature in a pleasure garden of beauty, and one containing an allegorical presentation of the qualities of Delicacy, Indifference, Gratitude, and Sullenness.

The fourth act is devoted to further satirizing of the law and the legal profession. Again Stevens divides the law into three groups, and he presents a ponderous, verbose, prolix, and pompous case between the footman and the cook to illustrate his satire. The two lawyers employ Latinate, rhymed, alliterative, and artificial diction, and illustrate the chicanery of the law court. The editor considers this piece entertaining and witty, but it is dull and tedious to most modern readers. The issues are worn-out, and the purpose is unimportant. Here too Stevens includes his satirical comments on the
champion bankiller, the quack doctor, as well as caustic allegorical comments on politics and flattery. The best part of this section is the new addition of a legal case between a farmer and a ferry boat owner. The farmer's hull has eaten the hastily improvised rope that the ferry man tied his boat up with so that the boat and the hull both float off down stream. Each man sues the other for the loss of his property, but through the local impetugous, the case is unsettled and the final settlement is unsatisfactory to both, for the judge advises them to sue the water bulliff. Here, again, the editor sees the case as valid satire of the pomposity of the court and a pleasing entertainment full of wit and humor. This time he is more nearly correct; for the piece, although not hilarious, is considerably more clever than the case of the footman and the cook.

The final act concerns various city subjects, including the politician, the city epicure, the quack doctor, and the Methodist saint. Again, the majority of the material is from the first lecture, and the act as a whole is less effective than the earlier ones. The former reader agrees with the editor who sees this material as unenteraining and insipid to its extravagances are too much for the patience of the audience. There are the usual references to the characteristic humor and love of money among Methodists. The lecture closes with the address of the Methodist priest, with a half-satisfied face, who shrills:

"Brother sez--Brother sez--The word 'thistle' comes from the word 'thistle', because we all breathe-therein. If you are low, I'll pour you out of the devil about you"
like a whirligig—now unto a bowl of punch will I compare "ha-tri-mo-ny." There is the sweet, or the sugar, that is the honey-moon. There is the largest part and most insipid, the water; that's what follows after. —Then there's the spirit, that's the husband—and there's the sour, that's the wife.—Let me ask you a question now seriously.—Did you ever see any body eat hot hasty pudding? what faces they make—al puhh!—al puhh!—al puhh!—such faces will you make when Old Nick nick's you.

As the cat on the house-top is cater-mauling,
So on the top of my voice will I be howling!

But some money in the plate!—But some rum I say in the bowl! —Your oaths, if they be scalped off, like 'gittins from a hoo's back, —and you shall be scalped of all your iniquities, as easily as I shall pull off this keruke (p. d(-c).
FOOTNOTES


3 George Alexander Stevens, The Celebrated Lecture on Heads (Dublin, 1765), title page.

4 An Essay on Satirical Entertainments. To which is added Stevens' new Lecture upon Heads, Now Delivering at the Theatre Royal, Hay-Market, with Critical Observations (London, 1772).

5 Stevens himself is supposed to be guilty of such a prank. DNB, s. v. "Stevens, George Alexander."
CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

In all of his works Stevens reflects the transitional nature of the period in which he wrote. He has some of the qualities of the neoclassical age: he desires to point out and to correct the follies of the era in matters of customs, manners, and dress; and he is acutely concerned with the urban world about him. City life offers all there is to want, and Stevens endeavors to obtain as much from it as he can. He has an appreciation for the works of great men of the past and seems well read, but opposing these characteristics are some of those which become increasingly important as the era changes. Stevens awakes to the new tastes of the age; and even though he is much interested in enjoying life, he is not interested in purely sensual gratification.

He holds to a high moral level; he can treat prostitutes, drunkenness, and similar situations, but he always has a superior air. Such subjects are never raised, and invariably they lead to disgrace, disaster, or reformation. Stevens is always careful to consider the wrongs done by these people not only to their own reputations but also to the reputations and feelings of relatives. The value of money and the duty or responsibility of using it well is always apparent: sheer extravagance and folly entail the abuse or waste of money and reflect a failure to act in a responsible manner. There is some evidence of
interest in the rural scene, not yet developed. Stevens uses only idyllic, tranquil, picturesque settings. These features soon become tedious.

The very form Stevens chooses to work with is indicative of these things. The character sketch is an old form which developed from ancient roots. It is a form that calls for limitation, keen observation, polish, and a certain judgment of social values. Stevens is interested in social materials and in keen observation. He directs his efforts at the mind, and tries to "shoot folly as it flies." With this, however, he is interested in enjoying life and in being free to consider whatever he wishes to treat. His characters are caricatures, flat, stilted, and over-balanced in one direction. They illustrate human faults, but they are not as rigidly held to this purpose. Stevens digresses, he interjects personal comments, and he supplies little anecdotes to help entertain his reader. His work reflects the sentimental tastes of the period in the happy endings, in the righting of wrongs, and in the respect for money and business practices with the condemning of debauchery, riot, and extravagance. With his satiric intent is an equally strong purpose of entertainment. The puppets of the lecture offer visual entertainment to sweeten the mental or satiric purpose.

Like the ancient character sketches, Stevens is illustrating follies. Like them he is terse, polished, witty, satirical, and aphoristic. Furthermore, he lacks continuity. But Stevens is not really as careful to unify each section, and he is always ready to venture forth on any path that seems suggestive. He is not as
euphuistic as the early writers of character in the seventeenth century, and he does not support his figures with a long accumulation of traits and deeds. Stevens depends on quick association, personal interpretation and evaluation. Once he suggests a subject, the reader must elaborate with his own personal reactions. Stevens does not treat characters of places. He is interested in people and not in places. His Lecture upon Heads was successful because it reveals the author's experience in life, his attention to the values and tastes of his audience, and even more his warmth and clever personality. His convivial nature kept him associated with a theatrical company despite his lack of acting ability; his cleverness kept him employed as droll writer for one of the successful comedians of the day, and his own personality made him popular in London club life. This personal quality was a strong factor in his success. He has been obscured by time because of this loss and because of the topical nature of his work. As the time changes and as one way of life passes, few but the foremost figures suffer decline and oblivion.

George Alexander Stevens attempted many things in his lifetime; and, although great success always eluded him, he is definitely representative of the minor artist of his own day. He was neither better nor worse than those of his contemporaries who were working in the same areas of literature; and although he has been long forgotten, he deserves attention for the light he and his work throw on the background materials of the eighteenth century. Stevens' extraordinary life itself is worthy of some attention, "for he experiences the extremes of existence in the literary fields of the period, having alone
with his varied career varied experiences as hack writer, editor, dramatist, poet, novelist, lecturer, and club man.

Stevens' poetry is of interest primarily for its relation to the ordered, regular verse of the neoclassicists. His work lacks great depth, and his poems, primarily occasional in type, are weak. Most of his poems are drinking songs that would have been popular with his club associates and were intended for convivial company. These poems are regular in form and rhyme. It is of special interest that these poems are often about patriotic subjects, for nationalism as such became strongest at the end of the century. An equally prevalent theme is Stevens' own variety of the philosophy of eat, drink, and be merry; for throughout his work Stevens makes it clear that a cool disposition is his own measure of success. Second to it are wit and keenness, qualities regularly associated with the humorist. Thus the songs stress the pleasures of good company, the pleasures of sociable drinking, and the comfortable nature of tavern society where exaggeration and cordiality triumph over fact and reality. These poems frequently employ rolls and rhymes and contain frequent classical allusions to enrich and ornament the work. Stevens employs much alliteration and tends strongly on regular rhyme to carry his verse. Many of these lyrics were intended to be sung, and like many popular songs of today, the sense was subordinated to the sound. Thus the work of this type cannot be expected to survive; it is too slight to last for more than a short period, and the fact that the tunes of the songs are often ones adopted from other and older pieces makes them even more short lived.
Stevens attempted several more serious poems which again are interesting for their reflection of materials then popular. His earliest piece, "Religion," partly autobiographical, is regular and treats a serious subject. Stevens, however, is too heavy handed and too sentimental for the piece to be effective. His "Birth-Day of Folly" is in imitation of Pope's Dunciad, and here again Stevens is interested in a neoclassical subject, the problems of pedantry, dullness and folly. His "Choice Spirits Feast" is occasional and intended for the club members' entertainment. All these poems reflect the neoclassical side of the author; he is consciously concerned with teaching and with preserving the functions of the neoclassical poet. His "Tuska," however, reflects the other side of Stevens, the side that is indicative of the transitional theme and indicates the growing influence of romanticism. Here is a poem in the worst tradition of the graveyard school, but it is still treated in a regular poetic form. "The Drinker," too, is sentimental and didactic. Stevens' poetry is indicative of the man, even though it is the slightest of his work.

His efforts in periodical existence are difficult to assay. The periodical he edited is one of the lesser ones, and the nature of the work makes his contributions impossible to identify specifically. The only evidence of Stevens' own work is through its reappearance as impressions in Stevens' own novels. Here is indicated the diversity of the material, and also its part neoclassical and part romantic values. The author is definitely writing to appeal to the middle class audience,
an audience that values material things and is interested in morality and superiority. Virtue is rewarded and vice is punished or converted to righteousness.

The plays show us Stevens in the world that he knew best. Throughout his life he was associated with the stage, and throughout his life he was supported by some degree by his stage endeavors. The nature of the eighteenth century drama itself is important to remember, for Stevens was working in an age of great actors in a period when the literature was for the most part second-rate. Like most of his contemporaries, Stevens was less than first-rate, and his services pandered to the tastes of the popular audience. In his plays the emphasis is on amusing entertainment and on slight, somewhat slapstick topical humor, stated cleverly and humorously. The pieces are designed for the actor and lack motivation and plot, for these elements are secondary to the purpose. Thus the plays have not survived on the modern stage. Time has taken a heavy toll, and no longer could these plays hold the attention of an audience.

Stevens' novels are the most typical and the most revealing of his work. These, like his plays, are discursive, digressive, rash, and weak in structure, and again the emphasis is on the clever, the topical, and the successful. Again Stevens shows his transitional status, for his work reflects his dual nature: he utilizes all of the tricks and devices of the second-rate novels, he is imitative of the great masters, Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne, and he is moral and sentimental. Furthermore he is didactic, and his stories are picaresque. The characters are shallow and poorly developed, and the
virtuous and good always get a reward. Topical references play an important part, and there is much satire of the Methodists, the fashionable, the stock jobbers, the ramblers, the humorists, and the wits. His backgrounds are still laid in the city, although his characters are beginning to notice the country and its tranquility. The country scenes, however, are still merely flat, pretty rural backdrops but seldom realistic.

Stevens' Lecture, his one great success, reflects the same facets of his work. Here the topical and the clever are allied with the visual appeal of puppets; and thus, partly through novelty, Stevens scored a popular triumph. His work, then, although second-rate, is voluminous and reveals the nature of the literary life of his period. Stevens, whose work has been 'forgotten, deserves attention if only for the light he sheds on the background material of the age.
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Candidate: Robert Blaine Thomas

Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: The Life and Work of George Alexander Stevens

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Date of Examination: May 10, 1961