

**REJECTED ADDRESSES:
OR, THE NEW THEATRUM
POETARUM. PP. 1-252**

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Rejected Addresses: Or, The New Theatrum Poetarum. pp. 1-252 by James Smith & Horace Smith

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JAMES SMITH & HORACE SMITH

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OR

THE NEW THEATRUM POETARUM

"Fired that the HOUSE reject him!—'Death, I'll *print* it,
And shame the Fools!" POPPE,



LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
GLASGOW AND NEW YORK
1888

PREFACE.*



ON the 14th of August 1812, the following advertisement appeared in most of the daily papers :—

“Rebuilding of Drury Lane Theatre.”

“The Committee are desirous of promoting a free and fair competition for an Address to be spoken upon the opening of the Theatre, which will take place on the 10th of October next. They have, therefore, thought fit to announce to the public, that they will be glad to receive any such compositions, addressed to their Secretary, at the Treasury-office in Drury Lane, on or before the 10th of Sep-

* To the first Edition, published in October 1812.

tember, sealed up, with a distinguishing word, number, or motto, on the cover, corresponding with the inscription on a separate sealed paper, containing the name of the author, which will not be opened unless containing the name of the successful candidate."

Upon the propriety of this plan, men's minds were, as they usually are upon matters of moment, much divided. Some thought it a fair promise of the future intention of the Committee to abolish that phalanx of authors who usurp the stage, to the exclusion of a large assortment of dramatic talent blushing unseen in the background; while others contended that the scheme would prevent men of real eminence from descending into an amphitheatre in which all Grub Street (that is to say, all London and Westminster) would be arrayed against them. The event has proved both parties to be in a degree right, and in a degree wrong. One hundred and twelve addresses have been sent in, each sealed and signed and

mottoed, "as per order," some written by men of great, some by men of little, and some by men of no talent.

Many of the public prints have censured the taste of the Committee, in thus contracting for addresses as they would for nails—by the gross; but it is surprising that none should have censured their *temerity*. One hundred and eleven of the addresses must, of course, be unsuccessful: to each of the authors, thus infallibly classed with the *genus irritabile*, it would be very hard to deny six staunch friends, who consider his the best of all possible addresses, and whose tongues will be as ready to laud him as to hiss his adversary. These, with the potent aid of the Bard himself, make seven foes per address; and thus will be created seven hundred and seventy-seven implacable auditors, prepared to condemn the strains of Apollo himself—a band of adversaries which no prudent manager would think of exasperating.

But, leaving the Committee to encounter the responsibility they have incurred, the public have at least to thank them for ascertaining and establishing one point, which might otherwise have admitted of controversy. When it is considered that many amateur writers have been discouraged from becoming competitors, and that few, if any, of the professional authors can afford to write for nothing, and, of course, have not been candidates for the honorary prize at Drury Lane, we may confidently pronounce that, as far as regards *number*, the present is undoubtedly the Augustan age of English poetry. Whether or not this distinction will be extended to the *quality* of its productions, must be decided at the tribunal of posterity; though the natural anxiety of our authors on this score ought to be considerably diminished when they reflect how few will, in all probability, be had up for judgment.

It is not necessary for the Editor to mention the manner in which he became possessed of

this "fair sample of the present state of poetry in Great Britain." It was his first intention to publish the whole ; but a little reflection convinced him that, by so doing, he might depress the good, without elevating the bad. He has therefore culled what had the appearance of flowers, from what possessed the reality of weeds, and is extremely sorry that, in so doing, he has diminished his collection to twenty-one. Those which he has rejected may possibly make their appearance in a separate volume, or they may be admitted as volunteers in the files of some of the newspapers : or, at all events, they are sure of being received among the awkward squad of the Magazines. In general, they bear a close resemblance to each other—thirty of them contain extravagant compliments to the immortal Wellington and the indefatigable Whitbread ; and, as the last-mentioned gentleman is said to dislike praise in the exact proportion in which he deserves it, these laudatory writers have probably been only