

**TRAGIC DRAMAS, CHIEFLY  
INTENDED FOR REPRESENTATION  
IN PRIVATE FAMILIES: TO WHICH  
IS ADDED, ARISTODEMUS, A  
TRAGEDY**

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Tragic dramas, chiefly intended for representation in private families: to which is added,  
Aristodemus, a tragedy by Frances Burney & Vincenzo Monti

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**FRANCES BURNEY & VINCENZO MONTI**

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**TRAGIC DRAMAS.**

# TRAGIC DRAMAS ;

CHIEFLY INTENDED FOR

REPRESENTATION IN PRIVATE FAMILIES :

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

ARISTODEMUS,

A TRAGEDY,

FROM THE ITALIAN OF VINCENZO MONTI.

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BY FRANCES BURNEY.

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— " Virtue owns the Tragic Muse a friend ;  
" Fable her means, Morality her end."

CRABBE.

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## P R E F A C E.

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A LONG apology for a short work may be liable to just censure, as annexing to a trifle an undue importance. Various motives, nevertheless, having combined to induce the Writer of the following pages to bring them before the Public, she is desirous, by stating a few of them, to obviate as much as possible, the imputation of temerity, to which the publication of them may subject her: more especially since, wholly unknown herself in the world of literature, she can adduce the name, only, of her family, to attract attention, and stimulate curiosity, unaccompanied by any pretensions to the abilities requisite to fix the one, or gratify the other.

It has always appeared to her, that the objections which may be urged against private Theatres in

general, are not, in justice, applicable to those domestic Representations, in which the younger branches of a family perform select pieces; and to which only parents, relations, or friends particularly intimate, are admitted: and she has the sanction of judgments far superior to her own, and even clerical authority, for deeming the innocent and interesting recreation of speaking in character, to a little circle of chosen friends, an exercise not more obviously calculated to afford general entertainment, than to promote individual improvement.

Most people, at some period of their lives, are fond of what is usually termed *spouting*; while such as have, for themselves, outlived that inclination, often derive nearly equal amusement from witnessing the scenic efforts of their juniors. Recourse, therefore, is not unfrequently had to *Stage-plays*, for the purpose of private exhibition: but even where these are not objectionable in any other respect, which is by no means invariably the case, it is a task, demanding no inconsiderable skill and pains, to modify or curtail, so as to accommodate



them completely to the purpose; while to perform them in their pristine state, would frequently be attended with difficulties yet more insurmountable.

Something, therefore, distinct from these, yet of more continuity of interest, than can be maintained by the recitation of detached *Speeches*, *Dialogues*, or *Scenes*, though selected from dramatic works of even the highest excellence;—Something, also, which consistently with propriety, and perfect freedom from any evil tendency, may admit of more impassioned action and diversified effect, than is usually thought within the province of the *Sacred Drama*, appears desirable in our literature. The Writer is well aware that she is, herself, incapable of supplying the deficiency she indicates; having neither the time nor the talents needful for the purpose; but ventures to offer both her little sketches, in the hope that, not only, some hand more skilful than her own, will hereafter improve on the imperfect plan which she merely shadows out; but that, notwithstanding their acknowledged faults of structure and execution; their febleness, and per-

haps inaccuracy, of diction, since they have received no corrections but such as she has herself been able to give them; they will yet be found not inadequate to the purpose for which they were designed, and unexceptionable, at all events, in their moral tendency.

A plot and scenery, of a simple, or at least, not complicated description; and characters, few in number, or if otherwise, attired in a *costume* easily adopted by either sex; are among the lesser *desiderata* of the domestic drama. An attempt has been made to combine them, respectively, in the two first pieces: little being aimed at, beyond furnishing materials for occasional amusement, which, if not esteemed as profitable, may at least be admitted to be harmless.

It is, perhaps, a recommendation to these little Dramas, which would not advantageously be withheld, that they have both already been, more than once, represented by the junior members of a Family of distinction, and of the first respectability.

That the performance of amiable and intelligent young persons should elicit applause from an auditory composed of their parents and private friends, could tend neither to excite the surprise, nor flatter the vanity of the writer. But she derives her chief encouragement to make them public, from the sympathy, apparently felt, and unequivocally expressed, on the part of the audience, with which every representation has been honoured. Such demonstrations of interest, however, as are the result, in general, of something more than mere complaisance to either actors or author, she now adduces, gratifying as they must be, only as affording, perhaps, the best palliation she can offer for her apparent presumption.

The publication of this little work has also been, in some measure, accelerated, by the circumstance of several transcripts of the Dramas having been disseminated among friends who have requested copies. It seemed not impossible, that, by a casualty for which they might not be responsible, a more defective specimen might make its appearance, *in*