

ART. XII. *Public Characters of 1809-10*, 8vo. pp. 684. London. Sherwood and Co. 1809.

FROM an ill-written 'Preface' to this strange production, it appears that the Editor has been, for some years, in the practice of sallying forth on the king's highway, seizing upon numbers of unsuspecting people, under the extraordinary pretence of their being "PUBLIC CHARACTERS," and dressing them up with caps and bells, and other derogatory appendages of folly, for the entertainment of such as chose to lay out a few shillings on so indecorous a spectacle.

The only plea advanced by him for this annual outrage on the peace of society, is, that the victims of it are dizened out in such beautiful colours, that they cannot choose but be delighted with their own appearance. This is adding mockery to injury. The wardrobe of a puppet-show is more magnificent than the frippery thus forced upon them; and the bungling wretches employed to string the tawdry tatters together, must have served their apprenticeship to the furnishers of garden scare-crows.

The first, or, as we rather think, the second person who figures in the groupe of this year, is 'the Reverend William Coxe, M.A. F.R.S. and F.S.A. Archdeacon of Wilts and Rector of Bemarton.' His appearance is not a little comical; and we should endeavour to give our readers some idea of it, did we not consider him as 'a man more sinned against than sinning,' and no less grieved than ashamed at his involuntary degradation.

But though we feel unmixed pity for sufferers of this description, we cannot be so indulgent to those who rush into the circle, *uncaught*, and exhibit their foppery for the gratification of individual vanity. Towards the conclusion of the show, 'Mr. M. P. Andrews, M. P. for Bewdley in Worcestershire,' steps gaily forward, and, with the air and gait of a morris-dancer, enters upon a ridiculous display of his accomplishments.

He begins with a scrap of bad Italian; after which he informs the audience that he was destined for the counting-house: but that, 'instead of thumbing over the ledger, he became enraptured with the poets of antient days, and wooed the Muses with considerable success.' p. 523.

Of these raptures, and this success, he gives a specimen, in a prologue

prologue of several pages, in which, he adds, 'he is allowed to have displayed peculiar excellence.' p. 525.

'Lady Drawcansir came to me last night,
 "O! my dear ma'am, I am in such a fright;
 They've drawn me for a man, and what is worse,
 I am to soldier it, and mount a horse:
 Must wear the breeches!"—Says I, "don't deplore
 What in your husband's life you always wore." &c.

Notwithstanding the radiance shed around him by these, and a hundred other verses, nearly equal to them in glory, Mr. M. P. A. absolutely startles our credulity by affirming, with apparent seriousness, that 'he was not *dazzled* with his good fortune.' p. 529.

He next produces a list of his numerous farces,—farces, of which the very names have perished from all memory but his own,—and, that no possible wish may remain ungratified, in a matter of such moment, he considerately subjoins 'the cast of the characters at Covent Garden.'

A rapid transition is then made from poetry to politics, and we learn that Mr. M. P. A. has 'sat during five successive parliaments, made one speech, and given two votes for the Prince of Wales.' p. 530.

Lastly—but the reader shall have it in his own words: and we must do the speaker the justice to say, that, in every requisite of fine language, what follows is, at least, equal to the very best parts of this curious exhibition of 'Public Characters.'

'But it is chiefly as a member of the *Bon Ton* that Colonel Andrews'—mark that, the Colonel! 'has rendered himself conspicuous. His house is occasionally thrown open to the first company, and no private gentleman perhaps has ever possessed a more elegant assemblage of Lords and Ladies than have made their appearance at his routes. His noble withdrawing rooms, uniting with the brilliancy of an audience-chamber all the effects of a conservatory, exhibit, amidst the severest rigours of winter, a parterre of blooming dutchesses, marchionesses, countesses, baronesses, &c.: and had he realized his early inclinations, and repaired to the East, his harem, even if he had become a Turkish Bashaw, would have turned pale at the sight of so many fine specimens of British beauty.' p. 532.