

The TATTLE R.

By Isaac Bickerstaff Esq;

Quicquid agunt Homines nostri Farrago Libelli.

From Tuesday September 6. to Thursday September 8. 1709.

Will's Coffee-house, September 7.

I CAME hither this Evening, and expected nothing else but mutual Congratulations in the Company on the late Victory; but found our Room, which one should have hop'd to have seen full of good Humour and Alacrity upon so glorious an Occasion, full of sour Animals, enquiring into the Action, in Doubt of what had happen'd, and fearful of the Success of their Country. It is natural to believe easily what we wish heartily; and a certain Rule, That they are not Friends to a glad Occasion, who speak all they can against the Truth of it; who end their Argument against our Happiness, that they wish it otherwise. When I came into the Room, a Gentleman was declaiming; If (says he) we have so great and compleat a Victory, Why have we not the Names of the Prisoners? Why is not an exact Relation of the Conduct of our Generals laid before the World? Why do we know not where or whom to applaud? If we are victorious, Why do we not give an Account of our Captives and our Slain? But we are to be satisfy'd with general Notices we are Conquerors, and to believe it so. Sure this is approving the despotick Way of treating the World, which we pretend to fight against, if we sit down satisfy'd with such contradictory Accounts, which have the Words of Triumph, but do not bear the Spirit of it. I whisper'd Mr. *Greenhat*, Pray what can that dissatisfied Man be? He is, answer'd he, a Character you have not yet perhaps observ'd. You have heard of Battle-Painters, have mentioned a Battle-Poet; but this is a Battle-Critick. He is a Fellow that lives in a Government so gentle, that tho' it sees him an Enemy, suffers his Malice because they know his Impotence. He is to examine the Weight of an Advantage before the Company will allow it. *Greenhat* was going on in his Explanation, when Sir *George England* thought fit to take up the Discourse in the following Manner:

Gentlemen, The Action you are in so great doubt to approve of, is greater than ever has been perform'd in any Age; and the Value of it I observe from your Dissatisfaction: For Battle-Criticks are like all others; you are the more offended, the more you ought to be, and are convinc'd you ought to be pleas'd. Had this Engagement happen'd in the Time of the Old *Romans*, and such Things been acted in their Service, there would not be a Foot of the Wood which was pierc'd but had been consecrated to some Deity, or made memorable by the Death of him who expir'd in it for the Sake of his Country. It had on some Monument at the Entrance been said, Here the Duke of *Argyle* drew his Sword, and said, March. Here *Webb*, after having an accomplish'd Fame for Gallantry, expos'd himself like a common Soldier. Here *Rivett*, who was wounded at the Beginning of the Day, and carry'd off as

dead, return'd to the Field, and receiv'd his Death. Medals had been struck for our General's Behaviour when he first came into the Plain. Here was the Fury of the Action, and here the Hero stood as fearless as if invulnerable. Such certainly had been the Cares of that State for their own Honour, and in Gratitude to their Heroick Subjects. But the Wood entrench'd, the Plain made more impassible than the Wood, and all the Difficulties oppos'd to the most gallant Army, and most intrepid Leaders that ever the Sun shone upon, are treated by some in the Talk of this Room as Objections to the Merit of our Leader and our Army: But (contin'd he) I leave all the Examination of this Matter, and a proper Discourse on our Sense of Publick Actions, to my Friend Mr. *Bickerstaff*, who may let Beaus and Gamblers rest, till he has examin'd into the Reasons of Men's being Malecontents, in the only Nation that suffers profess'd Enemies to breath in open Air.

From my own Apartment, September 7.

The following Letters are sent to me from Relations; and tho' I do not know who and who are intended, I publish them. I have only writ Nonsense if there is nothing in 'em; and done a good Action if they alarm any heedless Men against the Fraternity of the Knights whom the *Greeks* call *Παρηγας*.

Mr. Bickerstaff,

IT is taken very ill by several Gentlemen here, that you are so little vigilant, as to let the Dogs run from their Kennel to this Place. Had you done your Duty, we should have had Notice of their Arrival; but the *Sharpers* are now become so formidable here, that they have divided themselves into Nobles and Commons. *Beau Bogg*, *Beau Pert*, *Rake*, and *Tallboy*, are of their Upper House; Broken Captains, Ignorant Attorneys, and such other Bankrupts, from industrious Professions, compose their Lower Order. Among these Two Sets of Men there happen'd here lately some unhappy Differences: Squire *Humphry* came down among us with Four Hundred Guinea's. His raw Appearance, and certain Signals in the good-natur'd Muscles of *Humphry's* Countenance, alarm'd the Societies: For *Sharppers* are as skilful as Beggars in Physiognomy, and know as well where to hope for Plunder, as the others to ask for Alms. *Pert* was the Man exactly fitted for taking with *Humphry* as a Fine Gentleman; for a raw Fool is ever enamour'd with his Contrary, a Coxcomb; and a Coxcomb is what the Booby, who wants Experience, and is unus'd to Company, regards as the First of Men. He ever looks at him with Envy, and would certainly be such, if he were not opprest'd by his Rusticity or Bathfulness. There arose an intire Friendship by this Sympathy between *Pert* and *Humphry*, which ended in tripping the latter. We now could

could see this forlorn Youth for some Days Moneyless, without Sword, and one Day without his Hat, and with secret Melancholy pining for his Snuff-box; the Jest of the whole Town, but most of those who robb'd him. At last fresh Bills came down, when immediately their Countenances clear'd up, ancient Kindness and Familiarity renew'd, and to Dinner he was invited by the Fraternity. You are to know, that while he was in his Days of Solitude, a Commoner, who was excluded from his Share of the Prey, had whisper'd the Squire, that he was bit, and caution'd him of venturing again. However, Hopes of recovering his Snuff-box, which was given him by his Aunt, made him fall to play after Dinner; yet mindful of what he was told; he saw something that provok'd him to tell 'em they were a Company of Sharpers. Presently Talbot fell on him, and being too hard at Fifty-cuffs, drove him out of Doors. The valiant Bert followed, and kick'd him in his Turn; which the Squire relent'd, as being nearer his Match, so challeng'd him: But differing about Time and Place, Friends interpos'd, (for he had still Money left) and perswaded him to ask Pardon for provoking 'em to beat him, and they ask'd his for doing it. The House consulting whence Humphry could have his Information, concluded it must be from some malicious Commoner; and to be reveng'd, Beau Bogg watch'd their Haunts; and in a Shop where some of them were at Play with Ladies, shew'd Dice which he found, or pretended to find; and declaring how false they were, warn'd the Company to take Care who they play'd with. By this seeming Candour, he clear'd his Reputation at least to Fools, and some silly Women, but it was still blasted by the Squire's Story with thinking Men: However he gain'd a great Point by it; for the next Day he got the Company shut up with himself and Fellow Members, and robb'd 'em at Discretion.

I cannot express to you with what Indignation I behold the noble Spirit of Gentlemen degenerated to that of private Cut-Purses. 'Tis in vain to hope a Remedy, while so many of the Fraternity get and enjoy Estates of Twenty, Thirty, and Fifty Thousand Pounds with Impunity, creep into the best Conversations, and spread the infectious Villany through the Nation, while the lesser Rogues, that rob for Hunger or Nakedness, are sacrific'd by the blind, and in this Respect, partial and defective, Law. Could you open Men's Eyes against the Occasion of all this, the great Corrupter of our Manners and Morality, the Author of more Bankrupts than the War, and sure Bane of all Industry, Frugality, and good Nature; in a Word, of all Virtues; I mean, publick or private Play at Cards or Dice; How willingly would I contribute in my utmost, and possibly send you some Memoirs of the Lives and Politicks of some of the Fraternity of great Figure, that might be of Use to you in setting this in a clear Light against next Session; that all who care for their Country or Posterity; and see the pernicious Effects of such a publick Vice, may endeavour its Destruction by some effectual Laws. In Concurrence to this good Design, I remain,

Bath, August 30.

Your Humble Servant, &c.

Mr. Bickerstaff,

Friday, Sept. 2.

Heartily join with you in your laudable Design against the *Murmurors*, as well as your late Insinuations against *Coxcombs of Fire*; and I

take this Opportunity to congratulate you on the Success of your Labours, which I observ'd Yesterday in one of the hottest *Firemen* in Town, who not only affects a soft Smile, but was seen to be thrice contradicted without shewing any Sign of Impatience. These, I say, so happy Beginnings promise fair, and on this Account I rejoice you have undertaken to unkenneled the Curs; a Work of such Use, that I admire it so long escap'd your Vigilance; and exhort you, by the Concern you have for the good People of England, to pursue your Design; and that these Vermin may not flatter themselves that they pass undiscov'rd, I desire you'd acquaint *Jack Haughy*, that the whole Secret of his bubbling his Friend with the *Swiss* at the *Thatch'd-house* is well known, as also his sweetning the Knight; and I shall acknowledge the Favour.

Your Humble Servant, &c.

Advertisements.

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