

The TATTLER.

By Isaac Bickerstaff Esq;

Quicquid agunt Homines nostri Farrago Libelli.

From Saturday May 7. to Tuesday May 10. 1709.

From my own Apartment, May 8.

Much Hurry and Business had to Day perplex'd me into a Mood too thoughtful for going into Company; for which Reason, instead of the Tavern, I went into *Lincoln's-Inn-Walks*; and after having taken a Round or Two, I sat down, according to the allow'd Familiarity of these Places, on a Bench; at the other End of which sat a venerable Gentleman, who speaking with a very affable Air, *Mr. Bickerstaff*, said he, *I take it for a very great Piece of good Fortune, that you have found me out. Sir, said I, I have not, that I know of, ever had the Honour of seeing you before. That, reply'd he, is what I have often lamented; but I assure you, I have for many Years done you good Offices, without being observ'd by you; or else, when you had any little Glimpse of my being concern'd in an Affair, you have fled from me, and shou'd me like an Enemy; but however, the Part I am to act in the World is such, that I am to go on in doing Good, tho' I meet with never so many Repulses, ev'n from those I oblige.* This, thought I, shows a great good Nature, but little Judgment in the Persons upon whom he confers his Favours. He immediately took Notice to me, That he observ'd by my Countenance I thought him indirect in his Beneficence, and proceeded to tell me his Quality in the following Manner: *I know thee, Isaac, to be so well vers'd in the Occult Sciences, that I need not much Preface, or make long Preparations to gain your Faith that there are Airy Beings, who are employ'd in the Care and Attendance of Men, as Nurses are to Infants, till they come to an Age in which they can act of themselves. These Beings are usually call'd amongst Men, Guardian Angels; and, Mr. Bickerstaff, I am to acquaint you, that I am to be yours for some Time to come; it being our Orders to vary our Stations, and sometimes, to have one Patient under our Protection, and sometimes another, with a Power about us of assuming what Shape we please, to ensnare our Wards into their own Good. I have of late been upon such hard Duty, and know you have so much Work for me, that I think fit to appear to you Face to Face, to desire you would give me as little Occasion for Vigilance as you can. Sir, said I, it will be a great Instruction to me in my Behaviour, if you please to give me some Account of your late Employments, and what Hardships or Satisfaction you have had in 'em, that I may govern my self accordingly.* He answer'd: To give you an Example of the Drudgery we go through, I will entertain you only with my Three last Stations: I was on the First of *April* last past, put to mortify a great Beauty, with whom I was a Week; from her I went to a common Swearer, and have been last with a Gamester. When I first came to my Lady, I found my great Work was to guard well her Eyes and Ears; but her Flatterers were so numerous, and the Houle, after the modern Way, so full of Looking-glasses, that I seldom had her safe but in her Sleep. Whenever

we went abroad, we were furtounded by an Army of Enemies: When a well made Man appear'd, he was sure to have a Side-glance of Observation: If a disagreeable Fellow, he had a full Face, out of meer Inclination to Conquests. But at the close of the Evening, on the Third of the last Month, my Ward was sitting on a Couch, reading *Ovid's Epistles*; and as she came to this Line of *Helen to Paris*,

She half consents who silently denies.

Enter'd *Philander*, who is the most skilful of all Men in an Address to Women. He is arriv'd at the Perfection of the Art which gains 'em, which is, *To talk like a very miserable Man, but look like a very happy one.* I saw *Distinna* blush at his Entrance, which gave me the Alarm; but he immediately said something so agreeable on her being at Study, and the Novelty of finding a Lady employ'd in so grave a Manner, that he on a sudden became very familiarly a Man of no Consequence; and in an Instant laid all her Suspicions of his Skill asleep, as he almost had done mine, till I observ'd him very dangerously turn his Discourse upon the Elegance of her Dress, and her Judgment in the Choice of that very pretty Mourning. Having had Women before in my Care, I trembled at the *Apprehensions of a Man of Sense*, who could talk upon Trifles, and resolv'd to stick to my Post with all the Circumspection imaginable. In short, I prepossess'd her against all he could say to the Advantage of her Dress and Person; but he turn'd again the Discourse, where I found I had no Power over her, the abusing her Friends and Acquaintance. He allow'd indeed, That *Flora* had a little Beauty, and a great deal of Wit; but then she was so ungainly in her Behaviour, and such a laughing *Hoyden* — *Pastorella* had with him the Allowance of being blameless; But what was that towards being Praise-worthy? To be only Innocent, is not to be Virtuous. He afterwards spoke so much against *Mrs. Dipple's Forehead*, *Mrs. Prim's Mouth*, *Mrs. Dentifrice's Teeth*, and *Mrs. Fidge's Cheeks*, that she grew downright in Love with him: For it is always to be understood, That a Lady takes all you detract from the rest of her Sex to be a Gift to her. In a Word, Things went so far, that I was dismiss'd, and she will remember that Evening 9 Months, from the 3d of *April*, by a very remarkable Token. The next, as I said, I went to was a Common Swearer: Never was Creature so puzzled as my self when I came first to view his Brain; Half of it was worn out, and fill'd up with meer Expletives, that had nothing to do with any other Parts of the Texture; therefore, when he call'd for his Clothes in a Morning, he would cry, *John!* — *John* does not answer. *What a Plague! No Body there? What the Devil, and rot me! John, for a lazy Dog as you are.* I knew no Way to cure him, but

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writing down all he said one Morning as he was dressing, and laying it before him on the Toilet when he came to pick his Teeth. The last Recital I gave him of what he said for half an Hour before, was, *What, a Pox rot me! Where is the Washball? Call the Chairmen: Damn 'em, I warrant they are at the Ale-house already! Zounds, and Confound 'em.* When he came to the Glass, he takes up my Note--*Ha! This Fellow is worse than me: What, Does he swear with Pen and Ink?* But reading on, he found 'em to be his own Words. The Stratagem had so good an Effect upon him, that he grew immediately a new Man, and is learning to speak without an Oath, which makes him extremely short in his Phrases; for, as I observ'd before, a Common Sweater has a Brain without any Idea on the Swearing Side; therefore my Ward has yet mighty little to say, and is forced to substitute some other Vehicle of Nonsense to supply the Defect of his usual Expletives. When I left him, he made use of, *Odibodikins! Oh me! and Never stir alive!* and so forth; which gave me Hopes of his Recovery. So I went to the next I told you of, the Gamester. When we first take our Place about a Man, the Receptacles of the *Petricranium* are immediately search'd. In his, I found no one ordinary Trace of Thinking; but strong Passion, violent Desires, and a continued Series of different Changes, had torn it to Pieces. There appear'd no middle Condition; the Triumph of a Prince, or the Misery of a Beggar, were his alternate States. I was with him no longer than one Day, which was yesterday. In the Morning at Twelve, we were worth Four Thousand Pounds; at Three, we were arriv'd at Six Thousand; half an Hour after, we were reduc'd to One Thousand; at Four of Clock, we were down to Two Hundred; at Five, to Fifty; at Six, to Five; at Seven, to One Guinea; the next Bet, to Nothing: This Morning, he borrow'd Half a Crown of the Maid who cleans his Shoes; and is now gaming in *Lincoln's Inn-Fields* among the Boys for Farthings and Oranges, 'till he has made up three Pieces, and then he returns to *White's* into the best Company in Town again. This ended our first Discourse; and it is hoped, you will forgive me that I have pick'd so little out of my Companion at our first Interview. In the next, 'tis possible he may tell me more pleasing Incidents; for tho' he is a Familiar, he is not an Evil Spirit.

St. James's Coffee-house, May 9.

We hear from the *Hague*, of the 14th Instant, *N. S.* That Monsieur de *Torfs* hath had frequent Conferences with the Grand Pensioner, and the other Ministers who were heretofore commission'd to treat with Monsieur *Rouille*. The Preliminaries of a Peace are almost settled, and wait only for the Arrival of the Duke of *Marlborough*; after whose Approbation of the Articles propos'd, it is not doubted but the Methods of the Treaty will be publickly known. In the mean Time, the States have declar'd an Abhorrence from making any Step in this great Affair, but in Concert with the Court of *Great Britain*, and other Princes of the Alliance. The Posture of Affairs in *France* does necessarily oblige that Nation to be very much in earnest in their Offers; and Monsieur de *Torfs* hath profess'd to the Grand Pensioner, That he will avoid all Occasions of giving him the least Jealousy of his using any Address in private Conversations for accomplishing the Ends of his Embassy. It is said, That as soon as the Preliminaries are adjust'd, that Minister is to return to the *French* Court. The States of *Holland* have resolv'd to make it an Instruction to all their Men of War and Privateers, to bring into their Ports

whatever Neutral Ships they shall meet with laden with Corn, and bound for *France*; and to avoid all Cause of Complaint from the Potentates to whom these Ships shall belong, their full Demand for their Freight shall be paid them there. The *French* Protestants residing in that Country have apply'd themselves to their respective Magistrates, desiring that there may be an Article in the Treaty of Peace, which may give Liberty of Conscience to the Protestants in *France*. Monsieur *Bojnag*, Minister of the *Walloon* Church at *Rotterdam*, has been at the *Hague*, and hath had some Conferences with the Deputies of the States on that Subject. It is reported there, That all the *French* Refugees in those Dominions are to be naturaliz'd, that they may enjoy the same good Effects of the Treaty with the *Hollanders* themselves, in respect of *France*.

Letters from *Paris* say, the People conceive great Hopes of a sudden Peace, from Monsieur *Torfs* being employ'd in the Negotiation, he being a Minister of too great Weight in that Court, to be sent on any Employment in which his Master would not act in a Manner wherein he might justly promise himself Success. The *French* Advices add, That there is an Insurrection in *Poitou*; 3000 Men having taken up Arms, and beaten the Troops which were appointed to disperse them: Three of the Mutineers being taken, were immediately executed; and as many of the King's Party were us'd after the same Manner.

Our late Act of Naturalization hath had so great an Effect in Foreign Parts, that some Princes have prohibited the *French* Refugees in their Dominions to sell or transfer their Estates to any other of their Subjects; and at the same Time have granted them greater Immunities than they hitherto enjoyed, they having always had Magistrates set over them of their own Nation. It has been also thought necessary to restrain their own Subjects from leaving their Native Country, on Pain of Death.

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