

IT gives me a serious Concern to see such a Spirit of Diffension in the Country ; not only as it destroys Virtue and common Sense, and renders us in a manner Barbarians towards one another, but as it perpetuates our Animosities, widens our Breaches, and transmits our present Passions and Prejudices to our Posterity. For my own part, I am sometimes afraid that I discover the Seeds of a Civil War in these our Divisions ; and therefore cannot but bewail, as in their first Principles, the Miseries and Calamities of our Children. C



N^o 127. Thursday, July 26.

— *Quantum est in rebus Inane ?* Perf.

IT is our Custom at Sir ROGER's; upon the coming in of the Post to sit about a Pot of Coffee, and hear the old Knight read *Dyer's* Letter ; which he does with his Spectacles upon his Nose, and in an audible Voice, smiling very often at those little Strokes of Satyr, which are so frequent in the Writings of that Author. I afterwards communicate to the Knight such Packets as I receive under the Quality of SPECTATOR. The following Letter chancing to please him more than ordinary, I shall publish it at his Request.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

YOU have diverted the Town almost a whole Month at the Expence of the Country, it is now high time that you should give the Country their Revenge. Since your withdrawing from this Place, the fair Sex are run into great Extravagancies. Their Petticoats, which began to heave and swell before you left us, are now blown up into a most enormous Concave, and rise every Day more and more : In short, Sir, since our Women know themselves to be out of the Eye of the SPECTATOR, they will be kept within no Compass. You praised them a little too soon, for the Modesty of their Head-dresses ; for as the Humour of a sick Person is often driven

‘ driven out of one Limb into another, their Superfluity of
 ‘ Ornaments, instead of being intirely Banished, seems
 ‘ only fallen from their Heads upon their lower Parts.
 ‘ What they have lost in Height they make up in
 ‘ Breadth, and contrary to all Rules of Architecture widen
 ‘ the Foundations at the same time that they shorten the
 ‘ Superstructure. Were they, like *Spanish* Jennets, to
 ‘ impregnate by the Wind, they could not have thought
 ‘ on a more proper Invention. But as we do not yet hear
 ‘ any particular Use in this Petticoat, or that it contains
 ‘ any thing more than what was supposed to be in
 ‘ those of Scantier Make, we are wonderfully at a loss
 ‘ about it.

‘ THE Women give out, in Defence of these wide
 ‘ Bottoms, that they are Airy, and very proper for the
 ‘ Season; but this I look upon to be only a Pretence, and
 ‘ a piece of Art, for it is well known we have not had a
 ‘ more moderate Summer these many Years, so that it is
 ‘ certain the Heat they complain of cannot be in the
 ‘ Weather: Besides, I would fain ask these tender con-
 ‘ stituted Ladies, why they should require more
 ‘ Cooling than their Mothers before them.

‘ I find several Speculative Persons are of Opinion that
 ‘ our Sex has of late Years been very saucy, and that the
 ‘ Hoop Petticoat is made use of to keep us at a Distance.
 ‘ It is most certain that a Woman’s Honour cannot be
 ‘ better intrenched than after this manner, in Circle within
 ‘ Circle, amidst such a Variety of Out-works and Lines
 ‘ of Circumvallation. A Female who is thus invested in
 ‘ Whale-bone is sufficiently secured against the Approaches
 ‘ of an ill-bred Fellow, who might as well think of
 ‘ Sir *George Etheridge*’s way of making Love in a Tub,
 ‘ as in the midst of so many Hoops.

‘ AMONG these various Conjectures, there are Men
 ‘ of Superstitious Tempers, who look upon the Hoop
 ‘ Petticoat as a kind of Prodigy. Some will have it that
 ‘ it portends the Downfall of the *French* King, and ob-
 ‘ serve that the Farthingale appeared in *England* a little
 ‘ before the Ruin of the *Spanish* Monarchy. Others are
 ‘ of Opinion that it foretells Battle and Bloodshed, and
 ‘ believe it of the same Prognostication as the Tail of a
 ‘ Blazing Star. For my part, I am apt to think it is a Sign

‘ that Multitudes are coming into the World rather than going out of it.

‘ THE first time I saw a Lady dressed in one of these Petticoats, I could not forbear blaming her in my own Thoughts for walking abroad when she was *so near her Time*, but soon recovered my self out of my Error, when I found all the Modish Part of the Sex as *far gone* as her self. It is generally thought some crafty Women have thus betrayed their Companions into Hoops, that they might make them necessary to their own Concealments, and by that means escape the Censure of the World; as wary Generals have sometimes dressed two or three Dozen of their Friends in their own Habit, that they might not draw upon themselves any particular Attacks from the Enemy. The strutting Petticoat smooths all Distinctions, levels the Mother with the Daughter, and sets Maids and Matrons, Wives and Widows, upon the same Bottom. In the mean while, I cannot but be troubled to see so many well-shaped innocent Virgins bloated up, and waddling up and down like big-bellied Women.

‘ SHOULD this Fashion get among the ordinary People, our publick Ways would be so crouded that we should want Street-room. Several Congregations of the best Fashion find themselves already very much straitned, and if the Mode increase I wish it may not drive many ordinary Women into Meetings and Conventicles. Should our Sex at the same time take it into their Heads to wear Trunk Breeches (as who knows what their Indignation at this Female Treatment may drive them to) a Man and his Wife would fill a whole Pew.

‘ YOU know, Sir, it is recorded of *Alexander* the Great, that in his *Indian Expedition* he buried several Suits of Armour, which by his Direction were made much too big for any of his Soldiers, in order to give Posterity an extraordinary Idea of him, and make them believe he had commanded an Army of Giants. I am persuaded that if one of the present Petticoats happens to be hung up in any Repository of Curiosities, it will lead into the same Error the Generations that lie some Removes from us; unless we can believe our Posterity, will