

‘ he is not yet above twenty Years old) if his Mother,  
 ‘ whose Darling he is, will venture him.

*To the SPECTATOR.*

*The humble Petition of Benjamin Easie, Gent.*

*Sheweth,*

‘ **T**HAT it was your Petitioner’s Misfortune to walk  
 ‘ to *Hackney Church* last *Sunday*, where to his great  
 ‘ Amazement he met with a Soldier of your own training:  
 ‘ she furls a Fan, recovers a Fan, and goes through the  
 ‘ whole Exercise of it to Admiration. This well-managed  
 ‘ Officer of yours has, to my knowledge, been the Ruin  
 ‘ of above five young Gentlemen besides my self, and still  
 ‘ goes on laying waite wheresoever she comes, whereby  
 ‘ the whole Village is in great Danger. Our humble Re-  
 ‘ quest is therefore, that this bold Amazon be ordered  
 ‘ immediately to lay down her Arms, or that you would  
 ‘ issue forth an Order, that we who have been thus in-  
 ‘ jured may meet at the Place of General Rendezvous,  
 ‘ and there be taught to manage our Snuff-Boxes in such  
 ‘ manner as we may be an equal Match for her:

R *And your Petitioner shall ever Pray, &c.*



N<sup>o</sup> 135. *Saturday, August 4.*

*Est brevitatem opus, ut currat Sententia*——— *Hor.*

**I** Have somewhere read of an eminent Person, who  
 used in his private Offices of Devotion to give Thanks  
 to Heaven that he was born a *Frenchman*: For my  
 own part, I look upon it as a peculiar Blessing that I was  
 born an *Englishman*. Among many other Reasons, I think  
 my self very happy in my Country, as the *Language* of it  
 is wonderfully adapted to a Man who is sparing of his  
 Words, and an Enemy to Loquacity.

A S

AS I have frequently reflected on my good Fortune in this Particular, I shall communicate to the Publick my Speculations upon the *English* Tongue, not doubting but they will be acceptable to all my curious Readers.

THE *English* delight in Silence more than any other *European* Nation, if the Remarks which are made on us by Foreigners are true. Our Discourse is not kept up in Conversation, but falls into more Pauses and Intervals than in our Neighbouring Countries; as it is observed, that the matter of our Writings is thrown much closer together, and lies in a narrower Compass than is usual in the Works of Foreign Authors: For, to favour our Natural Taciturnity, when we are obliged to utter our Thoughts, we do it in the shortest way we are able, and give as quick a Birth to our Conceptions as possible.

THIS Humour shews it self in several Remarks that we may make upon the *English* Language. As first of all by its abounding in Monosyllables, which gives us an Opportunity of delivering our Thoughts in few Sounds. This indeed takes off from the Elegance of our Tongue, but at the same time expresses our Ideas in the readiest manner, and consequently answers the first Design of Speech better than the Multitude of Syllables, which make the Words of other Languages more Tunable and Sonorous. The Sounds of our *English* Words are commonly like those of String Musick, short and transient, which rise and perish upon a single Touch; those of other Languages are like the Notes of Wind Instruments, sweet and swelling, and lengthen'd out into variety of Modulation.

IN the next place we may observe, that where the Words are not Monosyllables, we often make them so, as much as lies in our Power, by our Rapidity of Pronunciation; as it generally happens in most of our long Words which are derived from the *Latin*, where we contract the length of the Syllables that gives them a grave and solemn Air in their own Language, to make them more proper for Dispatch, and more conformable to the Genius of our Tongue. This we may find in a Multitude of Words, as *Liberty, Conspiracy, Theatre, Orator, &c.*

THE same natural Aversion to Loquacity has of late Years made a very considerable Alteration in our Language, by closing in one Syllable the Termination of our



Præterperfect Tenſe, as in theſe Words *drown'd*, *walk'd*, *arriw'd*, for *drowned*, *walked*, *arrived*, which has very much diſfigured the Tongue, and turned a tenth part of our ſmoothest Words into ſo many Cluſters of Conſonants. This is the more remarkable, becauſe the want of Vowels in our Language has been the general Complaint of our politeſt Authors, who nevertheleſs are the Men that have made theſe Retrenchments, and conſequently very much increaſed our former Scarcity.

THIS Reflexion on the Words that end in *ed*, I have heard in Converſation from one of the greateſt Genius's this Age has produced. I think we may add to the foregoing Obſervation, the Change which has happened in our Language, by the Abbreviation of ſeveral Words that are terminated in *eth*, by ſubſtituting an *s* in the room of the laſt Syllable, as in *drowns*, *walks*, *arrives*, and innumerable other Words, which in the Pronunciation of our Fore-fathers were *drowneth*, *walketh*, *arriveth*. This has wonderfully multiplied a Letter which was before too frequent in the *Engliſh* Tongue, and added to that *hiſſing* in our Language, which is taken ſo much Notice of by Foreigners; but at the ſame time humours our Taciturnity, and eaſes us of many ſuperfluous Syllables.

I might here obſerve, that the ſame ſingle Letter on many Occaſions does the Office of a whole Word, and repreſents the *His* and *Her* of our Fore-fathers. There is no doubt but the Ear of a Foreigner, which is the beſt Judge in this Caſe, would very much diſapprove of ſuch Innovations, which indeed we do our ſelves in ſome meaſure, by retaining the old Termination in Writing, and in all the ſolemn Offices of our Religion.

A S in the Inſtances I have given we have epitomized many of our particular Words to the Detriment of our Tongue, ſo on other Occaſions we have drawn two Words into one, which has likewiſe very much untuned our Language, and clogged it with Conſonants, as *mayn't*, *can't*, *ſhan't*, *won't*, and the like, for *may not*, *can not*, *ſhall not*, *will not*, &c.

I T is perhaps this Humour of ſpeaking no more than we needs muſt, which has ſo miſerably curtailed ſome of our Words, that in familiar Writings and Converſations they often loſe all but their firſt Syllables, as in *mob. rep.*  
*pos.*

*pos. incog.* and the like; and as all ridiculous Words make their first Entry into a Language by familiar Phrases, I dare not answer for these that they will not in time be looked upon as a part of our Tongue. We see some of our Poets have been so indiscreet as to imitate *Hudibras's* Doggrel Expressions in their serious Compositions, by throwing out the Signs of our Substantives, which are essential to the *English* Language. Nay, this Humour of shortning our Language had once run so far, that some of our celebrated Authors, among whom we may reckon Sir *Roger L'Estrange* in particular, began to prune their Words of all superfluous Letters, as they termed them, in order to adjust the Spelling to the Pronunciation; which would have confounded all our Etymologies, and have quite destroyed our Tongue.

WE may here likewise observe that our proper Names, when familiarized in *English*, generally dwindle to Monosyllables, whereas in other modern Languages they receive a softer Turn on this Occasion, by the Addition of a new Syllable. *Nick* in *Italian* is *Nicolini*, *Jack* in *French* *Fanot*; and so of the rest.

THERE is another Particular in our Language which is a great Instance of our Frugality of Words, and that is the suppressing of several Particles which must be produced in other Tongues to make a Sentence intelligible: This often perplexes the best Writers, when they find the Relatives *whom*, *which*, or *they*, at their Mercy whether they may have Admission or not; and will never be decided till we have something like an Academy, that by the best Authorities and Rules drawn from the Analogy of Languages shall settle all Controversies between Grammar and Idiom.

I have only considered our Language as it shews the Genius and natural Temper of the *English*, which is modest, thoughtful and sincere, and which perhaps may recommend the People, though it has spoiled the Tongue. We might perhaps carry the same Thought into other Languages, and deduce a great Part of what is peculiar to them from the Genius of the People who speak them. It is certain, the light talkative Humour of the *French* has not a little infected their Tongue, which might be shewn by many Instances; as the Genius of the *Indians*, which is so