

N^o 155. Tuesday, August 28.

————— *He nugæ seria ducunt*
In mala —————

Hor.

I HAVE more than once taken notice of an indecent Licence taken in Discourse, wherein the Conversation on one Part is involuntary, and the Effect of some necessary Circumstance. This happens in travelling together in the same hired Coach, sitting near each other in any publick Assembly, or the like. I have, upon making Observations of this sort, received innumerable Messages from that Part of the fair Sex whose Lot in Life is to be of any Trade or publick Way of Life. They are all to a Woman urgent with me to lay before the World the unhappy Circumstances they are under, from the unreasonable Liberty which is taken in their Presence, to talk on what Subject it is thought fit by every Coxcomb who wants Understanding or Breeding. One or two of these Complaints I shall set down.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

I Keep a Coffee-house, and am one of those whom you have thought fit to mention as an Idol some time ago. I suffered a good deal of Rallery upon that Occasion; but shall heartily forgive you, who are the Cause of it, if you will do me Justice in another Point. What I ask of you, is, to acquaint my Customers (who are otherwise very good ones) that I am unavoidably hasped in my Bar, and cannot help hearing the improper Discourses they are pleased to entertain me with. They strive who shall say the most immodest Things in my Hearing. At the same time half a dozen of them loll at the Bar staring just in my Face, ready to interpret my Looks and Gestures according to their own Imaginations. In this passive Condition I know not where to cast my Eyes, place my Hands, or what to employ my self in. But this Confusion is to be a Jest, and I hear them say in
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' the End, with an insipid Air of Mirth and Subtlety, Let
 ' her alone, she knows as well as we, for all she looks for.
 ' Good Mr. SPECTATOR, persuade Gentlemen that it is
 ' out of all Decency: Say it is possible a Woman may be
 ' modest, and yet keep a Publick House. Be pleased to ar-
 ' gue, that in Truth the Affront is the more unpardon-
 ' able because I am oblig'd to suffer it, and cannot fly
 ' from it. I do assure you, Sir, the Chearfulness of Life
 ' which would arise from the honest Gain I have, is
 ' utterly lost to me, from the endless, flat, impertinent
 ' Pleasantries which I hear from Morning to Night. In
 ' a Word, it is too much for me to bear; and I desire
 ' you to acquaint them, that I will keep Pen and Ink
 ' at the Bar, and write down all they say to me, and send
 ' it to you for the Press. It is possible when they see how
 ' empty what they speak, without the Advantage of an
 ' impudent Countenance and Gesture, will appear, they
 ' may come to some Sense of themselves, and the Insults
 ' they are guilty of towards me. I am,

S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

The Idol.

THIS Representation is so just, that it is hard to speak
 of it without an Indignation which perhaps would appear
 too elevated to such as can be guilty of this inhuman Treat-
 ment, where they see they affront a modest, plain, and
 ingenuous Behaviour. This Correspondent is not the only
 Sufferer in this kind, for I have long Letters both from
 the *Royal* and *New-Exchange* on the same Subject. They
 tell me that a young Fop cannot buy a Pair of Gloves, but
 he is at the same time straining for some ingenious Ribal-
 dry to say to the young Woman who helps them on. It
 is no small Addition to the Calamity, that the Rogues buy
 as hard as the plainest and modestest Customers they have;
 besides which they loiter upon their Counters half an Hour
 longer than they need, to drive away other Customers,
 who are to share their Impertinencies with the Milliner,
 or go to another Shop. Letters from *'Change-Alley* are full
 of the same Evil, and the Girls tell me except I can chase
 some eminent Merchants from their Shops they shall in a
 short Time fail. It is very unaccountable, that Men can

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have

have so little Deference to all Mankind who pass by them, as to bear being seen toying by two's and three's at a time, with no other Purpose but to appear gay enough to keep up a light Conversation of common-place Jest, to the Injury of her whose Credit is certainly hurt by it, tho' their own may be strong enough to bear it. When we come to have exact Accounts of these Conversations, it is not to be doubted but that their Discourses will raise the usual Stile of buying and selling: Instead of the plain downright lying, and asking and bidding so unequally to what they will really give and take, we may hope to have from these fine Folks an Exchange of Compliments. There must certainly be a great deal of pleasant Difference between the Commerce of Lovers, and that of all other Dealers, who are, in a kind, Adversaries. A sealed Bond, or a Bank Note, would be a pretty Gallantry to convey unseen into the Hands of one whom a Director is charmed with; otherwise the City-Loiterers are still more unreasonable than those at the other End of the Town: At the *New Exchange* they are eloquent for want of Cash, but in the City they ought with Cash to supply their want of Eloquence.

IF one might be serious on this prevailing Folly, one might observe, that it is a melancholy thing, when the World is mercenary even to the buying and selling our very Persons, that young Women, tho' they have never so great Attractions from Nature, are never the nearer being happily disposed of in Marriage; I say, it is very hard under this Necessity, it shall not be possible for them to go into a way of Trade for their Maintenance, but their very Excellencies and personal Perfections shall be a Disadvantage to them, and subject them to be treated as if they stood there to sell their Persons to Prostitution. There cannot be a more melancholy Circumstance to one who has made any Observation in the World, than one of those erring Creatures exposed to Bankruptcy. When that happens, none of these toying Fools will do any more than any other Man they meet to preserve her from Infamy, Insult, and Distemper. A Woman is naturally more helpless than the other Sex; and a Man of Honour and Sense should have this in his View in all manner of Commerce with her. Were this well weighed, Inconsideration, Ribaldry, and Nonsense, would not be more natural to entertain
Women