



N<sup>o</sup> 228. *Wednesday, November 21.*

*Percunctatorem fugito, nam Garrulus idem est. Hor.*

**T**HERE is a Creature who has all the Organs of Speech, a tolerable good Capacity for conceiving what is said to it, together with a pretty proper Behaviour in all the Occurrences of common Life; but naturally very vacant of Thought in its self, and therefore forced to apply itself to foreign Assurances. Of this Make is that Man who is very inquisitive. You may often observe, that tho' he speaks as good Sense as any Man upon any thing with which he is well acquainted, he cannot trust to the Range of his own Fancy to entertain himself upon that Foundation, but goes on still to new Inquiries. Thus, tho' you know he is fit for the most polite Conversation, you shall see him very well contented to sit by a Jockey, giving an Account of the many Revolutions in his Horse's Health, what Potion he made him take, how that agreed with him, how afterwards he came to his Stomach and his Exercise, or any the like Impertinence: and be as well pleased as if you talked to him on the most important Truths. This Humour is far from making a Man unhappy, tho' it may subject him to Rallery; for he generally falls in with a Person who seems to be born for him, which is your talkative Fellow. It is so ordered, that there is a secret Bent, as natural as the Meeting of different Sexes, in these two Characters, to supply each other's Wants. I had the Honour the other Day to sit in a publick Room, and saw an inquisitive Man look with an Air of Satisfaction upon the Approach of one of these Talkers. The Man of ready Utterance sat down by him, and rubbing his Head, leaning on his Arm, and making an uneasy Countenance, he began; 'There is no manner of News To-day. I cannot tell what is the Matter with me, but

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‘ I slept very ill last Night ; whether I caught Cold or no,  
 ‘ I know not, but I fancy I do not wear Shoes thick  
 ‘ enough for the Weather, and I have coughed all this  
 ‘ Week : It must be so, for the Custom of washing my  
 ‘ Head Winter and Summer with cold Water, prevents  
 ‘ any Injury from the Season entering that Way ; so it  
 ‘ must come in at my Feet ; But I take no Notice of it :  
 ‘ as it comes so it goes. Most of our Evils proceed from  
 ‘ too much Tenderness ; and our Faces are naturally  
 ‘ as little able to resist the Cold as other Parts. The  
 ‘ *Indian* answered very well to an *European*, who asked  
 ‘ him how he could go naked ; I am all Face.

I observed this Discourse was as welcome to my general Inquirer as any other of more Consequence could have been ; but some Body calling our Talker to another Part of the Room, the Inquirer told the next Man who sat by him, that Mr. such a one, who was just gone from him, used to wash his Head in cold Water every Morning ; and so repeated almost *verbatim* all that had been said to him. The Truth is, the Inquisitive are the Funnel of Conversation ; they do not take in any thing for their own Use, but merely to pass it to another : They are the Channels through which all the Good and Evil that is spoken in Town are conveyed. Such as are offended at them, or think they suffer by their Behaviour, may themselves mend that Inconvenience ; for they are not a malicious People, and if you will supply them, you may contradict any thing they have said before by their own Mouths. A farther Account of a thing is one of the gratefulest Goods that can arrive to them ; and it is seldom that they are more particular than to say, The Town will have it, or I have it from a good Hand : So that there is room for the Town to know the Matter more particularly, and for a better Hand to contradict what was said by a good one.

I have not known this Humour more ridiculous than in a Father, who has been earnestly solicitous to have an Account how his Son has passed his leisure Hours ; if it be in a Way thoroughly insignificant, there cannot be a greater Joy than an Inquirer discovers in seeing him follow so hopefully his own Steps : But  
 this



this Humour among Men is most pleasant when they are saying something which is not wholly proper for a third Person to hear, and yet is in it self indifferent. The other Day there came in a well-dressed young Fellow, and two Gentlemen of this Species immediately fell a whispering his Pedigree. I could overhear, by Breaks, She was his Aunt; then an Answer, Ay, she was of the Mother's Side: Then again in a little lower Voice, His Father wore generally a darker Wig; Answer, Not much. But this Gentleman wears higher Heels to his Shoes.

AS the Inquisitive, in my Opinion, are such merely from a Vacancy in their own Imaginations, there is nothing, methinks, so dangerous as to communicate Secrets to them; for the same Temper of Inquiry makes them as impertinently communicative: But no Man, though he converses with them, need put himself in their Power, for they will be contented with Matters of less Moment as well. When there is Fuel enough, no matter what it is ——— Thus the Ends of Sentences in the News-Papers, as, *This wants Confirmation, This occasions many Speculations, and Time will discover the Event,* are read by them, and considered not as mere Expletives.

ONE may see now and then this Humour accompanied with an insatiable Desire of knowing what passes, without turning it to any Use in the world but merely their own Entertainment. A Mind which is gratified this Way is adapted to Humour and Pleasantry, and formed for an unconcerned Character in the World; and, like my self, to be a mere Spectator. This Curiosity, without Malice or Self-interest, lays up in the Imagination a Magazine of Circumstances which cannot but entertain when they are produced in Conversation. If one were to know from the Man of the first Quality to the meanest Servant the different Intrigues, Sentiments, Pleasures, and Interests of Mankind, would it not be the most pleasing Entertainment imaginable to enjoy so constant a Farce, as the observing Mankind much more different from themselves in their secret Thoughts and publick Actions, than in their Night-caps and long Periwigs?

Mr.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

PLUTARCH tells us, that *Caius Gracchus*, the Roman, was frequently hurried by his Passion into so loud and tumultuous a way of Speaking, and so strained his Voice as not to be able to proceed. To remedy this Excess, he had an ingenious Servant, by Name *Licinius*, always attending him with a Pitch-pipe, or Instrument to regulate the Voice; who, whenever he heard his Master begin to be high, immediately touched a soft Note; at which, 'tis said, *Caius* would presently abate and grow calm.

UPON recollecting this Story, I have frequently wondered that this useful Instrument should have been so long discontinued; especially since we find that this good Office of *Licinius* has preserved his Memory for many hundred Years, which, methinks, should have encouraged some one to have revived it, if not for the publick Good, yet for his own Credit. It may be objected, that our loud Talkers are so fond of their own Noise, that they would not take it well to be checked by their Servants: But granting this to be true, surely any of their Hearers have a very good Title to play a soft Note in their own Defence. To be short, no *Licinius* appearing and the Noise increasing, I was resolved to give this late long Vacation to the Good of my Country; and I have at length, by the Assistance of an ingenious Artist, (who works to the Royal Society) almost completed my Design, and shall be ready in a short Time to furnish the Publick with what Number of these Instruments they please, either to lodge at Coffee-houses, or carry for their own private Use. In the mean time, I shall pay that Respect to several Gentlemen, who I know will be in Danger of offending against this Instrument, to give them notice of it by private Letters, in which I shall only write, *Get a Licinius*.

I should now trouble you no longer, but that I must not conclude without desiring you to accept one of these Pipes, which shall be left for you with *Buckley*; and which