

N^o 386. *Friday, May 23.*

Cum Tristibus severè, cum Remissis jucundè, cum Senibus gravitèr, cum Juventute comiter vivere. Tull.

THE Piece of *Latin* on the Head of this Paper is part of a Character extremely vicious, but I have set down no more than may fall in with the Rules of Justice and Honour. *Cicero* spoke it of *Catiline*, who, he said, lived with the Sad severely, with the Chearful agreeably, with the Old gravely, with the Young pleasantly; he added, with the Wicked boldly, with the Wanton lasciviously. The two last Instances of his Complaisance I forbear to consider, having it in my Thoughts at present only to speak of obsequious Behaviour as it sits upon a Companion in Pleasure, not a Man of Design and Intrigue. To vary with every Humour in this manner, cannot be agreeable, except it comes from a Man's own Temper and natural Complexion; to do it out of an Ambition to excel that way, is the most fruitless and unbecoming Prostitution imaginable. To put on an artful Part to obtain no other End but an unjust Praise from the Undiscerning, is of all Endeavours the most despicable. A Man must be sincerely pleased to become Pleasure, or not to interrupt that of others: For this reason it is a most calamitous Circumstance, that many People who want to be alone or should be so, will come into Conversation. It is certain, that all Men who are the least given to Reflexion, are seized with an Inclination that way; when, perhaps, they had rather be inclined to Company: but indeed they had better go home, and be tired with themselves, than force themselves upon others to recover their Good-Humour. In all this the Cases of communicating to a Friend a sad Thought or Difficulty, in order to relieve a heavy Heart, stands excepted; but what is here meant, is that a Man should always go with Inclination to the Turn of the Company he is going into, or not pretend to be of the Party.

Party. It is certainly a very happy Temper to be able to live with all kinds of Dispositions, because it argues a Mind that lies open to receive what is pleasing to others, and not obstinately bent on any Particularity of its own.

THIS is it which makes me pleased with the Character of my good Acquaintance *Acasto*. You meet him at the Tables and Conversations of the Wise, the Impertinent, the Grave, the Frolick, and the Witty; and yet his own Character has nothing in it that can make him particularly agreeable to any one Sect of Men; but *Acasto* has natural good Sense, Good-nature and Discretion, so that every Man enjoys himself in his company; and tho' *Acasto* contributes nothing to the Entertainment, he never was at a Place where he was not welcome a second time. Without these subordinate good Qualities of *Acasto*, a Man of Wit and Learning would be painful to the Generality of Mankind, instead of being pleasing. Witty Men are apt to imagine they are agreeable as such, and by that means grow the worst Companions imaginable; they deride the Absent or rally the Present in a wrong manner, not knowing that if you pinch or tickle a Man till he is uneasy in his Seat, or ungracefully distinguished from the rest of the Company, you equally hurt him.

I was going to say, the true Art of being agreeable in Company, (but there can be no such thing as Art in it) is to appear well pleased with those you are engaged with, and rather to seem well entertained, than to bring Entertainment to others. A Man thus disposed is not indeed what we ordinarily call a good Companion, but essentially is such, and in all the Parts of his Conversation has something friendly in his Behaviour, which conciliates Mens Minds more than the highest Sallies of Wit or Starts of Humour can possibly do. The Feebleness of Age in a Man of this Turn, has something which should be treated with respect even in a Man no otherwise venerable. The Forwardness of Youth, when it proceeds from Alacrity and not Insolence, has also its Allowances. The Companion who is formed for such by Nature, gives to every Character of Life its due Regards, and is ready to account for their Imperfections, and receive their Accomplishments as if they were his own. It must appear that you receive Law from, and not give it to your Company, to make you agreeable.

I.

I remember *Tully*, speaking, I think, of *Anthony*, says, That *in eo facietæ erant, quæ nullâ arte tradi possunt: He had a witty Mirth, which could be acquired by no Art.* This Quality must be of the Kind of which I am now speaking; for all sorts of Behaviour which depend upon Observation and Knowledge of Life, is to be acquired; but that which no one can describe, and is apparently the Act of Nature, must be every where prevalent, because every thing it meets is a fit Occasion to exert it; for he who follows Nature, can never be improper or unseasonable.

HOW unaccountable then must their Behaviour be, who, without any manner of Consideration of what the Company they have just now entered are upon, give themselves the Air of a Messenger, and make as distinct Relations of the Occurrences they last met with, as if they had been dispatched from those they talk to, to be punctually exact in a Report of those Circumstances: It is unpardonable to those who are met to enjoy one another, that a fresh Man shall pop in, and give us only the last part of his own Life, and put a stop to ours during the History. If such a Man comes from *Change*, whether you will or not, you must hear how the Stocks go; and tho' you are ever so intently employed on a graver Subject, a young Fellow of the other end of the Town will take his place, and tell you, Mrs. Such-a-one is charmingly handsom, because he just now saw her. But I think I need not dwell on this Subject, since I have acknowledged there can be no Rules made for excelling this way; and Precepts of this kind fare like Rules for writing Poetry, which, 'tis said, may have prevented ill Poets, but never made good ones.

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Saturday,