

nation to make use of. Among others it is said, There is a general murmuring among the people of France, though at the same time all my letters agree, that there is so good an understanding among them, that there is not one morsel carried out of any market in the kingdom, but what is delivered upon credit.

N° 3. Saturday, April 16, 1709.

S T E E L E.

Quicquid agunt homines—

nostri est farrago libelli.

Juv. Sat. i. 85, 86.

“Whate’er men do, or say, or think, or dream,
“Our medley Paper seizes for it’s theme.” P.

WILL’S Coffee-house, April 14.

THIS evening the Comedy*, called the COUNTRY WIFE, was acted in Drury-lane, for the benefit of Mrs. BIGNEL. The part which

* The Comedies of WYCHERLY bear a great resemblance to his personal character, in which there was little virtue, much wit, and more libertinism. These were, in the reign of CHARLES II. the first qualifications of a fine gentleman, and the most powerful recommendations to the favour of the

which gives name to the Play was performed by herself. Through the whole action she made a very pretty figure, and exactly entered into the nature of the part. Her husband, in the Drama, is represented to be one of those debauchees who run through the vices of the town, and believe, when they think fit, they can marry and settle at their ease. His own knowledge of the iniquity of the age makes him choose a wife wholly ignorant of it, and place his security in her want of skill to abuse him. The Poet, on many occasions, where the propriety of the character will admit of it, insinuates, that there is no defence against vice, but the contempt of it: and has, in the natural ideas of an untainted innocent, shown the gradual steps to ruin and destruction which persons of condition run into, without the help of a good education to form their conduct. The

the court. The example of the wit and libertine on the throne was more or less copied by all the beaux and rakes of the kingdom—

Regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis.

In the MS notes of OLDYS on LANGBAINE, it is written that the incidents of this Play were taken from a family of the name of FABER, *anglicè* SMITH, and others of their neighbourhood in Wiltshire, where the author was very intimate, and probably acted one of the principal bad characters himself. The present manners do not allow of plays of this loose cast, and such are most of the same date. The "Country Wife" was first acted in 1683, and afterwards as altered by LEE in 1765; but few attempts to separate the bad from the good in the plays of this period have succeeded, so closely have the authors interwoven the wit with the ribaldry.

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torment of a jealous coxcomb, which arises from his own false maxims, and the aggravation of his pain by the very words in which he sees her innocence, makes a very pleasant and instructive satire. The character of HORNER, and the design of it, is a good representation of the age in which that comedy was written; at which time love and wenching were the business of life, and the gallant manner of pursuing women was the best recommendation at court. To this only it is to be imputed, that a gentleman of Mr. WYCHERLY's character and sense condescends to represent the insults done to the honour of the marriage-bed, without just reproof; but to have drawn a man of probity with regard to such considerations had been a monster, and a poet had at that time discovered his want of knowing the manners of the court he lived in, by a virtuous character in his fine gentleman, as he would shew his ignorance, by drawing a vicious one to please the present audience. Mrs. BIGNEL did her part very happily, and had a certain grace in her rusticity, which gave us hopes of seeing her a very skilful player, and in some parts supply our loss of Mrs. VERBRUGGEN. I cannot be of the same opinion with my friends and fellow-labourers, the Reformers of Manners, in their severity towards plays; but must allow, that a good play acted before a well-bred audience, must raise very proper incitements to good behaviour, and be the most quick and most prevailing method of giving

giving young people a turn of sense and breeding. But as I have set up for a weekly historian, I resolve to be a faithful one; and therefore take this public occasion to admonish a young nobleman, who came flustered into the box last night, and let him know how much all his friends were out of countenance for him. The women sat in terror of hearing something that should shock their modesty, and all the gentlemen in as much pain out of compassion to the ladies, and perhaps resentment for the indignity which was offered in coming into their presence in so disrespectful a manner. Wine made him say nothing that was rude, therefore he is forgiven, upon condition he never will hazard his offending more in this kind*. As I just now hinted, I own myself of the 'SOCIETY FOR REFORMATION OF MANNERS†.' We have lower instruments than those of the family of BICKERSTAFF, for punishing great crimes, and exposing the abandoned. Therefore, as I design to have notices from all public assemblies, I shall take upon me only indecorums, improprieties, and negligences, in such as should give us better examples. After this declaration, if a fine lady

* See in the Dedication of this volume, in N^o 5. 9. 51. 64. 271, &c. a full account of the design of the TATLER.

† "This SOCIETY began in 1690; the total number of persons prosecuted by this SOCIETY, in or near London, in 44 years, is calculated at about 101,683, &c." See STOW's "Survey of London," Edit. 1755, vol. I. p. 144.

thinks fit to giggle at church, or a beau come in drunk to a play, either shall be sure to hear of it in my ensuing Paper. For, merely as a well-bred man, I cannot bear these enormities.

After the play we naturally stroll to this coffee-house, in hopes of meeting some new poem, or other entertainment, among the men of wit and pleasure, where there is a dearth at present. But it is wonderful there should be so few writers, when the art is become merely mechanic, and men may make themselves great that way, by as certain and infallible rules as you may be a joiner or a mason. There happens a good instance of this in what the hawker has just now offered to sale, to wit, “ * Instructions to Vanderbank: A Sequel to the “ Advice to the Poets: A Poem, occasioned “ by the glorious success of her Majesty’s arms, “ under the command of the Duke of Marlborough, the last year in Flanders.” Here you are to understand, that the Author, finding the poets would not take his advice, troubles himself no more about them; but has met with one VANDERBANK†, who works in arras, and makes very good tapestry hangings: there-

* By Sir RICHARD BLACKMORE. See SPECT. N^o 6. 339. TAT. N^o 14. contains a very proper apology for this raillery.

† This man was inimitable in his way; no person ever represented nature more happily in works of tapestry. See WALPOLE’s “ Anecdotes of Painting,” vol. v. p. 166. et seqq. 8vo. 1782. 5 vols.

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fore, in order to celebrate the hero of the age, he claps together all that can be said of a man that makes hangings :

Then, artist, who does Nature's face express
In silk and gold, and scenes of action dress;
Dost figur'd arras animated leave,
Spin a bright story, or a passion weave;
By mingling threads, canst mingle shade and light,
Delineate triumphs, or describe a fight?

Well, what shall this workman do? why?
to shew how great an hero the poet intends, he provides him a very good horse :

Champing his foam, and bounding on the plain,
Arch his high neck, and graceful spread his mane.

Now as to the intrepidity, the calm courage, the constant application of the hero, it is not necessary to take that upon yourself: you may in the lump, bid him you employ, raise him as high as he can; and if he does it not, let him answer for disobeying orders.

Let fame and victory in inferior sky
Hover with balanc'd wings, and smiling fly
Above his head, &c.

A whole poem of this kind may be ready against an ensuing campaign, as well as a space left in the canvas of a piece of tapestry for the principal figure, while the under-parts are working: so that in effect the Adviser copies
after

after the man he pretends to direct. This method should, methinks, encourage young beginners: for the invention is so fitted to all capacities, that by the help of it a man may make a receipt for a poem. A young man may observe that the jig of the thing is, as I said, finding out all that can be said in his way whom you employ to set forth your Worthy. *WALLER and †DENHAM had worn out the expedience of "Advice to a Painter:" this Author has transferred the work, and sent his Advice to the Poets; that is to say, to the Turners of Verse, as he calls them. Well; that thought is worn out also: therefore he directs his genius to the loom, and will have a new set of hangings in honour of the last year in Flanders. I must own to you, I approve extremely this invention, and it might be improved for the benefit of manufactory: as, suppose an ingenious gentleman should write a Poem of advice to a Callico-printer; do you think there is a girl in England, that would wear any thing but the "Taking of Lisle," or, "The Battle of Oudenarde?" They would certainly be all the fashion, until the heroes abroad had cut out some more patterns. I should fancy small skirmishes might do for under-petticoats, provided

* "Instructions to a Painter, &c." WALLER's Works. Lond. edit. 1722. p. 171.

† "Directions to a Painter, in 4 parts." 8vo. 1666. DENHAM's name is put to these pieces, but they are not collected in his works.

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they had a siege for the upper. If our Adviser were well imitated, many industrious people might be put to work. Little Mr. DACTILE, now in the room, who formerly wrote a song and a half, is a week gone in a very pretty work, upon this hint: he is writing an epigram to a young virgin who knits very well (it is a thousand pities he is a Jacobite); but his epigram is by way of advice to this damsel, to knit all the actions of the Pretender and the Duke of Burgundy's last campaign in the clock of a stocking. It were endless to enumerate the many hands and trades that may be employed by poets, of so useful a turn as this Adviser. I shall think of it, and, in this time of taxes, shall consult a great critic employed in the custom-house, in order to propose what tax may be proper to be put upon knives, seals, rings, hangings, wrought beds, gowns, and petticoats, where any of these commodities bear mottoes, or are worked upon poetical grounds.

St. JAMES's Coffee-house, April 15.

Letters from Turin of the third instant, N. S. inform us, that his Royal Highness* employs all his address in alarming the enemy, and perplexing their speculations concerning his real designs the ensuing campaign. Contracts are entered into with the merchants of Milan, for a

* Prince EUGENE.

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great number of mules to transport his provisions and ammunition. His Royal Highness has ordered the train of artillery to be conveyed to Susa before the twentieth of the next month. In the mean time, all accounts agree, that the enemy are very backward in their preparations, and almost incapable of defending themselves against an invasion, by reason of the general murmurs of their own people; which, they find, are no way to be quieted, but by giving them hopes of a speedy peace. When these letters were dispatched, the Marshal de Thesse was arrived at Genoa, where he has taken much pains to keep the correspondents of the merchants of France in hopes, that measures will be found out to support the credit and commerce between that state and Lyons: but the late declaration of the agents of Monsieur Bernard*, that they cannot discharge the demands made upon them, has quite dispirited all those who are engaged in the remittances of France.

From my own Apartment, April 15.

It is a very natural passion in all good members of the commonwealth, to take what care they can of their families. Therefore I hope the reader will forgive me, that I desire he would go to the play called the † STRATAGEM
this

* See TAT. N^o 5. N^o 9. and N^o 29.

† The BEAUX STRATAGEM. By G. FARQUHAR.
Acted at the Hay-Market, 4to. 1707. It was begun and
finished

this evening, which is to be acted for the benefit of my near kinsman Mr. JOHN BICKERSTAFF*. I protest to you, the gentleman has not spoken to me to desire this favour; but I have a respect for him, as well in regard to consanguinity, as that he is an intimate friend of that famous and heroic actor, Mr. GEORGE POWEL; who formerly played ALEXANDER THE GREAT in all places, though he is lately grown so reserved, as to act it only on the stage†.

finished in the course of six weeks, while the Author laboured under the illness of which he died, during the run of his play.

* A real Player of that name.

† A delicate animadversion on the irregularity of Mr. POWEL, who about this time began to sink in his reputation by his drunkenness. BOOTH was just then in danger of becoming addicted to the same vice; but, observing the distresses and contempt it brought upon POWEL, he formed a resolution to break it off, in which he persevered to the end of his life.

The following quotation from Mrs. Heywood, makes a proper and curious addition to the first note on this Paper.
 “ Loose as the age is said to have been in the reign of Charles
 “ II. it is indeed but of later years that vice dared to appear
 “ barefaced at the Theatre. In the reign of Charles II. I am
 “ told, no woman of an infamous character ever came to a
 “ play-house without a mask; and long since then, through-
 “ out the days of his successors JAMES, WILLIAM and
 “ MARY, and the greatest part if not all those of Q. ANNE,
 “ they retained that modest mark of a lewd life, or ex-
 “ changed it for a black hood pulled over their faces, after
 “ the manner of a veil, which *distinguished*, and at the same
 “ time *concealed* them, from the virtuous part of the assem-
 “ bly.” *FEMALE SPECTATOR*, B. v. p. 257.

N^o 4.