

N^o 14. Thursday, May 12, 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 its theme.” P.

From my own Apartment, May 10.

HAD it not been that my familiar had appeared to me, as I told you in my last, in person, I had certainly been unable to have found even words without meaning, to keep up my intelligence with the town; but he has checked me severely for my despondence, and ordered me to go on in my design of observing upon things, and forbearing persons; for, said he, the age you live in is such, that a good picture of any vice or virtue will infallibly be misrepresented; and though none will take the kind descriptions you make so much to themselves, as to wish well to the author, yet all will resent the ill characters you produce, out of fear of their own turn in the licence you must be obliged to take, if you point at particular persons.

persons. I took his admonition kindly, and immediately promised him to beg pardon of the author of the "Advice to the Poets," for my raillery upon his work; though I aimed at no more in that examination, but to convince him, and all men of genius, of the folly of laying themselves out on such plans as are below their characters. I hope too it was done without ill breeding, and nothing spoken below what a civilian (as it is allowed I am) may utter to a physician*. After this preface, all the world may be safe from my writings; for, if I can find nothing to commend, I am silent, and will forbear the subject: for, though I am a reformer, I scorn to be an inquisitor†.

It would become all men, as well as me, to lay before them the noble character of VERUS the magistrate‡, who always sat in triumph over, and contempt of, vice: he never searched after it, or spared it when it came before him: at the same time he could see through the hypocrisy and disguise of those, who have no pretence to virtue themselves, but by their severity to the vicious. This same VERUS was, in times past, Chief Justice (as we call it amongst us) in FELICIA. He was a man of

* Sir R. BLACKMORE. TAT. N^o 3. See also SWIFT's Works, vol. XVIII. p. 17.

† See TAT. N^o 42. POLUGLOSSA.

‡ Sir JOHN HOLT, Lord Chief Justice in the reign of K. WILLIAM III. and for some years after that king's death.

profound

profound knowledge of the laws of his country, and as just an observer of them in his own person. He considered justice as a cardinal virtue, not as a trade for maintenance. Wherever he was judge, he never forgot that he was also counsel. The criminal before him was always sure he stood before his country, and, in a sort, a parent of it. The prisoner knew, that though his spirit was broken with guilt, and incapable of language to defend itself, all would be gathered from him which could conduce to his safety; and that his judge would wrest no law to destroy him, nor conceal any that could save him. In his time there was a nest of pretenders to justice, who happened to be employed to put things in a method for being examined before him at his usual sessions: these animals were to VERUS, as monkeys are to men, so like, that you can hardly disown them; but so base, that you are ashamed of their fraternity. It grew a phrase, "Who would do justice on the justices?" That certainly would VERUS. I have seen an old trial where he sat Judge on two of them; one was called Trick-track, the other Tear-shift: one was a learned judge of sharpers; the other the quickest of all men at finding out a wench. Trick-track never spared a pick-pocket, but was a companion to cheats: Tear-shift would make compliments to wenches of quality, but certainly commit poor ones. If a poor rogue wanted a lodging, Trick-track sent him to

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gaol for a thief: if a poor whore went only with one thin petticoat, Tear-shift would imprison her for being loose in her dress. These patriots infested the days of VERUS, while they alternately committed and released each other's prisoners. But VERUS regarded them as criminals, and always looked upon men as they stood in the eye of justice, without respecting whether they sat on the bench, or stood at the bar.

WILL's Coffee-house, May 11.

Yesterday we were entertained with the Tragedy of THE EARL OF ESSEX*; in which there is not one good line, and yet a Play which was never seen without drawing tears from some part of the audience: a remarkable instance that the soul is not to be moved by words, but things; for the incidents in this drama are laid together so happily, that the spectator makes the play for himself, by the force which the circumstance has upon his imagination. Thus, in spite of the most dry discourses, and expres-

* By JOHN BANKS, 4to. 1685; the Prologue and Epilogue by DRYDEN. With all it's faults, it is affecting; and JONES, BROOKE, and RALPH, who have since written on the same story, have been very greatly obliged to it. They have followed not only BANKS, very nearly, in his plot and conduct, but adopted his very thoughts, and in many places copied whole periods from him. There are three French plays formed on this story. The younger Corneille in his, omits the incident of the *ring*, recorded by F. Osborne, Esq. and not ill authenticated. See WALPOLE's "Anecdotes of Painting, &c."

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sions almost ridiculous with respect to propriety, it is impossible for one unprejudiced to see it, untouched with pity. I must confess, this effect is not wrought on such as examine why they are pleased; but it never fails to appear on those who are not too learned in nature, to be moved by her first suggestions. It is certain, the person and behaviour of Mr. WILKS has no small share in conducing to the popularity of the play; and when a handsome fellow is going to a more coarse *exit* than beheading, his shape and countenance make every tender one reprove him with all her heart, without waiting until she hears his dying words.

This evening, *The Alchymist* was played*. This comedy is an example of BEN JONSON's extensive genius, and penetration into the passions and follies of mankind. The scene in the fourth act, where all the cheated people oppose the man that would open their eyes, has something in it so inimitably excellent, that it is certainly as great a master-piece as has ever appeared by any hand. The author's great address in shewing covetousness, the motive of the actions of the puritan, the epicure, the gamester, and the trader; and that all their endeavours, how differently soever they seem

* "The Alchymist" was first acted in 1610, and published in 4to. the same year. A statute for restraining the folly of *Alchemists*, 5 Hen. IV. was repealed a few years before this by the interest of Mr. BOYLE.

to tend, center only in that one point of gain, shews he had, to a great perfection, that discernment of spirit which constitutes a genius for comedy.

WHITE'S Chocolate-house, May 11.

It is not to be imagined, how far the violence of our desires will carry us towards our own deceit in the pursuit of what we wish for. A gentleman here this evening was giving me an account of a dumb Fortune-teller*, who outdoes Mr. PARTRIDGE, myself, or the Unborn Doctor, for predictions; all his visitants come to him full of expectations, and pay his own rate for the interpretations they put upon his shrugs and nods. There is a fine rich City-widow stole thither the other day (though it is not six weeks since her husband's departure from her company to rest), and with her trusty maid demanded of him, whether she should marry again, by holding up two fingers, like horns on her forehead. The wizard held up both his hands forked. The relic desired to know, whether he meant, by his holding up both hands, to represent that she had one husband before, and that she should have another? or that he inti-

* DUNCAN CAMPBELL, said to be deaf and dumb, who practised at this time on the credulity of the vulgar, and pretended to predict fortunes by the second sight, &c. SPEC. N^o 474; and N^o 560. The name of the quack-doctor who affected to be distinguished as "unborn," was KIRLEUS. See TAR. N^o 41. and *note*.

mated,

mated, she should have two more? The cunning man looked a little sour, upon which Betty jogged her mistress, who gave the other guinea; and he made her understand, she should positively have two more; but shook his head, and hinted that they should not live long with her. The widow sighed, and gave him the other half-guinea. After this prepossession, all that she had next to do was to make sallies to our end of the town, and find out who it is her fate to have. There are two who frequent this place, whom she takes to be men of vogue, and of whom her imagination has given her the choice. They are both the appearances of fine gentlemen, to such as do not know when they see persons of that turn; and, indeed, they are industrious enough to come at that character, to deserve the reputation of being such. But this town will not allow us to be the things we seem to aim at, and is too discerning to be fobbed off with pretences. One of these pretty fellows fails by his laborious exactness; the other, by his as much studied negligence. FRANK CARELESS, as soon as his valet has helped on and adjusted his cloaths, goes to his glass, sets his wig awry, tumbles his cravat; and, in short, undresses himself to go into company. WILL NICE is so little satisfied with his dress, that all the time he is at a visit, he is still mending it, and is for that reason the more insufferable; for he who studies carelessness has, at least, his work the sooner done of the two. The widow is distracted whom to

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take for her first man; for NICE is every way so careful, that she fears his length of days; and FRANK is so loose, that she has apprehensions for her own health with him. I am puzzled how to give a just idea of them; but, in a word, CARELESS is a coxcomb, and NICE a fop: both, you will say, very hopeful candidates for a gay young woman just set at liberty. But there is a whisper, her maid will give her to TOM TERROR the gamester. This fellow has undone so many women, that he will certainly succeed if he is introduced; for nothing so much prevails with the vain part of that sex, as the glory of deceiving them who have deceived others.

Desunt multa.

“ Mr. BICKERSTAFF has received letters
 “ from Mr. COLTSTAFF, Mr. WHIPSTAFF,
 “ and Mrs. REBECCA WAGSTAFF*; all which
 “ relate chiefly to their being left out in the
 “ genealogy of the family lately published; but
 “ my cousin who *writ* that draught, being a
 “ clerk in the Herald’s office, and being at pre-
 “ sent under the displeasure of the Chapter;
 “ it is feared, if that matter should be touched
 “ upon at this time, the young gentleman
 “ would lose his place for treason against the
 “ King of Arms.

“ CASTABELLA’s † complaint is come to
 “ hand.”

* TAT. N° 11.

† TAT. N° 16.

N° 15.