

N^o 17.

Tuesday, May 19, 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, May 18.

THE discourse has happened to turn this evening upon the true Panegyric, the perfection of which was asserted to consist in a certain artful way of conveying the applause in an indirect manner. There was a gentleman gave us several instances of it. Among others, he quoted (from Sir FRANCIS BACON, in his “Advancement of Learning,”) a very great compliment made to Tiberius*, as follows. In a full debate upon public affairs in the senate, one of the assembly rose up, and with a very grave air said, he thought it for the honour and dignity of the commonwealth, that

* An allusion to an instance of artful flattery practised by MESSALA VALERIUS, and recorded, but somewhat differently, by TACITUS. *Ann. lib. l. cap. 8.*

Tiberius should be declared a god, and have divine worship paid him. The emperor was surprized at the proposal, and demanded of him to declare, whether he had made any application to incline him to that overture? The senator answered, with a bold and haughty tone, "Sir, in matters that concern the common-wealth, I will be governed by no man." Another gentleman mentioned something of the same kind, spoken by the late duke of BUCKINGHAM to the late earl of ORRERY; "My lord," (says the duke, after his libertine way) "you will certainly be damned. "How, my lord!" says the earl, with some warmth. "Nay, (said the duke) "there is no help for it, for it is positively said, Cursed is he of whom all men speak well*." This is taking a man by surprise, and being welcome when you have so surprized him. The person flattered receives you into his closet at once; and the sudden change of his heart, from the expectation of an ill-wisher, to find you his friend, makes you in his full favour in a moment. The spirits that were raised so suddenly against you, are as suddenly for you. There was another instance given of this kind at the table: a gentleman, who had a very great favour done him, and an employment bestowed upon him, without so much as being personally known to his

* His grace misquotes, and perverts the obvious meaning of the passage of Sacred Scripture, which he thought it witty thus impiously to apply. See LUKE vi. 26.

benefactor,

benefactor, waited upon the great man who was so generous, and was beginning to say, he was infinitely obliged.—“Not at all,” says the patron, turning from him to another, “had I known a more deserving man in England, he should not have had it.”

We should certainly have had more examples had not a gentleman produced a book which he thought an instance of this kind: it was a pamphlet, called “The Naked Truth.” The idea any one would have of that work from the title was, that there would be much plain dealing with people in power, and that we should see things in their proper light, stripped of the ornaments which are usually given to the actions of the great: but the skill of this author is such, that he has, under that rugged appearance, approved himself the finest gentleman and courtier that ever writ. The language is extremely sublime, and not at all to be understood by the vulgar: the sentiments are such as would make no figure in ordinary words; but such is the art of the expression, and the thoughts are elevated to so high a degree, that I question whether the discourse will sell much. There was an ill-natured fellow present*, who hates all panegyric mortally; “P—— take him,” said he, “what the devil means his NAKED TRUTH, in speaking nothing but to the advantage of all whom he

* An oblique stroke at Mr. John Dennis.

mentions?

“ mentions? This is just such a great action as
“ that of the champion’s on a coronation-day,
“ who challenges all mankind to dispute with
“ him the right of the sovereign, surrounded
“ with his guards.” The gentleman who produced the treatise desired him to be cautious, and said, it was *writ* by an excellent soldier, which made the company observe it more narrowly; and (as critics are the greatest conjurers at finding out a known truth) one said, he was sure it was writ by the hand of his sword-arm. I could not perceive much wit in that expression; but it raised a laugh, and, I suppose, was meant as a sneer upon valiant men. The same man pretended to see in the style, that it was an horse-officer; but sure that is being too nice; for though you may know officers of the cavalry by the turn of their feet, I cannot imagine how you should discern their hands from those of other men. But it is always thus with pedants; they will ever be carping; if a gentleman, or a man of honour, puts pen to paper. I do not doubt but this author will find this assertion too true, and that obloquy is not repulsed by the force of arms. I will therefore set this excellent piece in a light too glaring for weak eyes, and, in imitation of the critic LONGINUS, shall, as well as I can, make my observations in a style like the authors of whom I treat, which perhaps I am as capable of as another, having “ an unbounded force
“ of thinking, as well as a most exquisite ad-
“ dress,

“ dress, extensively and wisely indulged to me
 “ by the supreme powers.” My author, I will
 dare to assert, shews the most universal know-
 ledge of any writer who has appeared this cen-
 tury: he is a poet and merchant, which is
 seen in two master-words, “ Credit blossoms:”
 he is a grammarian and a politician; for he
 says, “ The uniting of the two kingdoms is
 “ the emphasis of the security of the Protestant
 “ succession.” Some would be apt to say, he is
 a conjurer; for he has found, that a republic
 is not made up of every body of animals, but
 is composed of men only, and not of horses.
 “ Liberty and property have chosen their re-
 “ treat within the emulating circle of an human
 “ commonwealth.” He is a physician; for he
 says, “ I observe a constant equality in its
 “ pulse, and a just quickness of its vigorous
 “ circulation.” And again, “ I view the strength
 “ of our constitution plainly appear in the san-
 “ guine and ruddy complexion of a well-con-
 “ tented city.” He is a divine: for he says,
 “ I cannot but bless myself.” And indeed this
 excellent treatise has had that good effect upon
 me, who am far from being superstitious, that
 I also “ cannot but bless myself*.”

* There are two or three publications under the title of
 “ Naked Truth;” the pamphlet alluded to here, is said to
 have been written by a lawyer of the name of Nelmy; but if
 WILLIAM *Viscount* GRIMSTON was not the author, he was
 the defender of it, against the writer of this Paper. See TAT.
 N^o 21, and *note*.