

N^o 18. Thursday, May 20, 1709.

STEELE AND ADDISON*.

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.

From my own Apartment, May 20.

IT is observed too often that men of wit do so much employ their thoughts upon fine speculations, that things useful to mankind are wholly neglected; and they are busy in making emendations upon some enclitics† in a Greek author, while obvious things, that every man may have use for, are wholly overlooked. It

* That the “Distress of the News-writers” was written by ADDISON, we are assured by STEELE, in his preface to TAT. vol. IV. See also his dedication of ADDISON’s “Drummer” to Mr. Congreve. The first part of the Paper on sign-posts is likewise very much in ADDISON’s manner.

† “Enclitics” are particles of speech in the Greek language, which throw back the accent on the preceding syllable, and coalesce with other words, so as to form only one word

Γλαυκόντε Μεδούλατε Θερσίλοκόντε :

T.
would

would be an happy thing, if such as have real capacities for public service were employed in works of general use; but because a thing is every body's business, it is nobody's business; this is for want of public spirit. As for my part, who am only a student, and a man of no great interest, I can only remark things, and recommend the correction of them to higher powers. There is an offence I have a thousand times lamented, but fear I shall never see remedied; which is, that in a nation where learning is so frequent as in Great-Britain, there should be so many gross errors as there are in the very directions of things, wherein accuracy is necessary for the conduct of life. This is notoriously observed by all men of letters when they first come to town (at which time they are usually curious that way) in the inscriptions on sign posts. I have cause to know this matter as well as any body; for I have, when I went to Merchant-Taylors school*, suffered stripes for spelling after the signs I observed in my way; though at the same time I must confess staring at those inscriptions first gave me an idea and curiosity for medals: in which I have since arrived at some knowledge†. Many a man has
lost

* "Merchant-Taylors School" was founded by the worshipful company, whose name it bears, 3 ELIZ. an. 1561. See Stow's "Survey," &c. vol. I. p. 189.

† The passage in which the writer claims "some knowledge in medals," may lead the reader into an opinion that

lost his way and his dinner by this general want of skill in orthography *: for, considering that the painters are usually so very bad, that you cannot know the animal under whose sign you are to live that day, how must the stranger be misled, if it be wrong spelled, as well as ill painted? I have a cousin now in town, who has answered under batchelor at Queen's college,

that ADDISON was the author of this part of the Paper, as well as of the "*Distress of News-writers*;" and so he might really be, for any thing that appears to the contrary. It ought, however, to be observed, that his "*Dialogues on the Usefulness of ancient Medals*" was a posthumous publication; for though they are said to have been written while he was travelling in 1702, they were not published till after his death, which happened in 1719.

* The orthography here humourously ridiculed might nevertheless be agreeable to the modes of spelling at the times when the *signs* to which they refer were first adopted. As to the *signs* themselves, the subjects of merriment in this and following Papers, whimsical and inexplicable as they may seem, it furnishes much entertainment, and some instruction, to trace them to their originals, which generally may be done with great probability, and often with certainty, on the following principle. Persons who had been wards, pages, or servants to kings, queens, noblemen, cardinals, bishops, gentlemen, &c. on quitting the houses or vicinities of their patrons, masters, &c. to settle in business for themselves, might probably, for a variety of reasons, place over the doors of their houses, offices, shops, inns, taverns, &c. the crest, badge, or some part of the arms of the families in which they had lived, or with which they were, or chose to be connected. They probably wore likewise badges, or *liveries*, in the manner they are still worn by watermen. Of the truth or plausibility of this principle, the inquisitive even at this day, may easily find in every street, signal and amusing instances. See TAT. N° 87. SPEC. N° 28, and N° 66.

whose

whose name is HUMPHREY MOPSTAFF (he is a-kin to us by his mother): this young man, going to see a relation in Barbican, wandered a whole day by the mistake of one letter, for it was written, "this is the Beer," instead of "this is the Bear." He was set right at last, by inquiring for the house, of a fellow who could not read, and knew the place mechanically, only by having been often drunk there. But, in the name of goodness, let us make our learning of use to us, or not. Was not this a shame, that a philosopher should be thus directed by a cobbler? I will be sworn, if it were known how many have suffered *in this kind* by false spelling since the Union, this matter would not long lie thus. What makes these evils the more insupportable is, that they are so easily amended, and nothing done in it. But it is so far from that, that the evil goes on in other arts as well as orthography; places are confounded, as well for want of proper distinctions, as things for want of true characters. Had I not come by the other day very early in the morning, there might have been mischief done: for a worthy North Briton was swearing at Stocks Market, that they would not let him in at his lodgings; but I, knowing the gentleman, and observing him look often at the king on horseback, and then double his oaths, that he was sure he was right, found he mistook that for Charing Cross, by the erection of the like statue

statue in each place.* I grant, private men may distinguish their abodes as they please: as one of my acquaintance who lives at Marybone†, has put a good sentence of his own invention upon his dwelling-place‡, to find out where he lives: he is so near London, that his conceit is this, “the country in town;” or, “the town in the country;” for you know, if they are both in one, they are all one. Besides that the ambiguity is not of great consequence; if you are safe at the place, it is no matter if you do not distinctly know where the place is. But to return to the orthography of public places; I

* These two equestrian statues were very unlike. The one was made by the famous LA SEUR, for King CHARLES I. the other was originally intended for JOHN SOBIESKI, king of Poland, and, *mutatis mutandis*, erected in honour of King CHARLES II. The *Turk* underneath the horse was cleverly metamorphosed into OLIVER CROMWELL; but his *turban* escaped unnoticed, or unaltered, to testify the truth. The one is of brass blackened, the other was of white marble, &c. The statue in Stocks Market, with the conduit and all its ornaments, were removed to make way for the Mansion-house, the first stone of which was laid by MICAJAH PERRY, Esq. then lord mayor, Oct. 25, 1739. See SPEC. N^o 462. and *Note*.

† The Duke of BUCKINGHAM is *humourously* said to have lived at *Marybone*, as he was almost every day on the bowling-green there, and seldom left it until he could see no longer.

‡ On Buckingham-house, now the Queen's palace, were originally these inscriptions. On the front, “*Sic siti lætantur Lares.*” On the back front, “*Rus in urbe.*” On the side next the road, “*Spectator fastidiosus sibi molestus.*” On the north side, “*Lente incæpit, citò perfecit.*”

propose, that every tradesman in the cities of London and Westminster shall give me six pence a quarter for keeping their signs in repair, as to the grammatical part; and I will take into my house a Swiss Count * of my acquaintance, who can remember all their names without book, for dispatch sake, setting up the head of the said foreigner for my sign; the features being strong, and fit for hanging high.

† The approach of the peace strikes a panic through our armies, though that of a battle could never do it, and they almost repent of their bravery, that made such haste to humble themselves and the French king. The Duke of MARLBOROUGH, though otherwise the greatest general of the age, has plainly shewn himself unacquainted with the arts of husbanding a war. He might have grown as old as the Duke of Alva, or Prince Waldeck in the Low Countries, and yet have got reputation enough every

* Probably JOHN JAMES HEIDEGGER, Esq. a writer of operas, and an *arbiter elegantiarum*, remarkable for his vast memory and coarse features. See TAT. N^o 12. and *note*, where he is styled a surgeon, in allusion to an employment assigned to him in that Paper. The title of *Count* was given to him in derision. N.

† ADDISON was the writer of that part of this PAPER which describes the distress of the News-writers. See *Pref.* to TAT. vol. IV. and Ded. of "The Drummer" to Mr. CONGREVE. On the undeniable testimony of STEELE himself, it is therefore evident, that the list of ADDISON's papers delivered by STEELE to Mr. Tickell, is defective, and likewise that ADDISON contributed to the TATLER before the 26th of May, for this Paper N^o 18, is dated May 20, 1709.

VOL. I.

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year

year for any reasonable man : for the command of General in Flanders hath been ever looked upon as a provision for life. For my part, I cannot see how his Grace can answer it to the world, for the great eagerness he hath shewn to send an hundred thousand of the bravest fellows in Europe a-begging. But the private gentlemen of the infantry will be able to shift for themselves ; a brave man can never starve in a country stocked with hen-roosts. “ There is “ not a yard of linen, “ says my honoured progenitor Sir JOHN FALSTAFF*, “ in my whole “ company ; but as for that,” says this worthy knight, “ I am in no great pain ; we shall find “ shirts on every hedge.” There is another sort of gentlemen whom I am much more concerned for, and that is the ingenious † fraternity of which I have the honour to be an unworthy member ; I mean the news-writers of Great Britain, whether Post-men or Post-boys‡, or
by

* See SHAKSPEARE, Hen. IV. act III. scene 2. edit. JOHNSON and STEEVENS.

† In the year 1709 it appears, that there were fifty-five regular papers published every week, besides a vast number of postscripts, &c. that were hourly hawked about the streets. See “ Anecdotes of Mr. BOWYER,” p. 493. At this present date, in November 1783, there are published in London nine daily-papers, and nine which appear three evenings in the week ; besides the Gazette, three Sunday Monitors, and a variety of Weekly Miscellanies. Provincial news-papers also, almost unknown in the days of BICKERSTAFF, are very numerous. N.

‡ “ The Post-boy” was a scandalous weekly paper, by ABEL ROPER ; and “ The Flying Post,” was conducted by

by what other name or title soever dignified, or distinguished. The case of these gentlemen is, I think, more hard than that of the soldiers, considering that they have taken more towns, and fought more battles. They have been upon parties and skirmishes, when our armies have lain still; and given the general assault to many a place, when the besiegers were quiet in their trenches. They have made us masters of several strong towns many weeks before our generals could do it; and completed victories, when our greatest captains have been glad to come off with a drawn battle. Where Prince Eugene has slain his thousands, BOYER † has slain his ten thousands. This gentleman can indeed be never enough commended for his courage and intrepidity during this whole war: he has laid about him with an inexpressible fury; and, like the offended Marius of ancient Rome, made such havoc among his countrymen, as must be the work of two or three ages to repair. It must be

by GEORGE RIDPATH. It is remarkable, that both ROPER and RIDPATH died on the same day. N.

† ABEL BOYER, author of "The Political State," embraced every opportunity of animadverting on SWIFT, who, in return, treated him with affected contempt, and real cruelty. "One BOYER, a French dog, has abused me in a pamphlet; and I have got him in a messenger's hands; the Secretary promises me to swinge him.—I must make that rogue an example for a warning to others." SWIFT'S Works, vol. XXIII, p. 64. N.

N 2

confessed,

confessed, the redoubted Mr. BUCKLEY * has shed as much blood as the former; but I cannot forbear saying (and I hope it will not look like envy) that we regard our brother BUCKLEY as a kind of *Drawcansir* †, who spares neither friend nor foe; but generally kills as many of his own side as the enemies. It is impossible for this ingenious sort of men to subsist after a peace: every one remembers the shifts they were driven to in the reign of King Charles the Second, when they could not furnish out a single paper of news, without lighting up a comet in Germany, or a fire in Moscow. There scarce appeared a letter without a paragraph on an earthquake. Prodigies were grown so familiar, that they had lost their name, as a great poet of that age has it. I remember Mr. DYER ‡, who is justly looked upon by all the fox-hunters in the nation as the greatest statesman our country has produced, was particularly famous for dealing in whales; insomuch, that in five months time (for I had the curiosity to examine his letters on that occasion) he brought

* SAMUEL BUCKLEY, printer of "The Gazette," and also of "The Daily Courant." He died Sept. 8. 1741. N.

† The name of a principal character in the *Rehearsal*.

‡ "DYER's Letter;" a news-paper of that time, printed in Italian characters in imitation of writing, which, according to Mr. ADDISON, was intitled to little credit. Honest Vellum, in "The Drummer," act II. scene 1. cannot but believe his master is living (amongst other reasons) "because the news of his death was first published in DYER's Letter." See SPECT. N^o 43. and N^o 457.

three into the mouth of the river Thames, besides two porpusses, and a sturgeon. The judicious and wary Mr. ICHABOD DAWKS * hath all along been the rival of this great writer, and got himself a reputation from plagues and famines; by which, in those days, he destroyed as great multitudes, as he has lately done by the sword. In every dearth of news, Grand Cairo was sure to be unpeopled.

It being therefore visible, that our society will be greater sufferers by the peace than the soldiery itself, insomuch that the Daily Courant is in danger of being broken, my friend DYER of being reformed, and the very best of the whole band of being reduced to half-pay; might I presume to offer any thing in the behalf of my distressed brethren, I would humbly move, that an appendix of proper apartments, furnished with pen, ink, and paper, and other necessaries of life, should be added to the hospital of Chelsea, for the relief of such decayed news-writers as have served their country in the wars; and that for their exercise they should compile the annals of their brother veterans, who have been engaged in the same service, and are still obliged to do duty after the same manner.

* ICHABOD DAWKS, "another poor, epistolary historian," as he is called, SPECT. N^o 457. See TATLER, N^o 178; and "Anecdotes of Mr. BOWYER," p. 493. N.

I cannot be thought to speak this out of an eye to any private interest; for as my chief scenes of action are coffee-houses, play-houses, and my own apartment, I am in no need of camps, fortifications, and fields of battle, to support me; I do not call for heroes and generals to my assistance. Though the officers are broken, and the armies disbanded, I shall still be safe, as long as there are men, or women, or politicians, or lovers, or poets, or nymphs, or swains, or cits, or courtiers, in being.

* * This day is published, a Treatise called, "The Difference between Scandal and Admonition," by Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. and on the 1st of July next, you may expect "A Prophecy of Things past;" wherein the Art of Fortune-telling is laid open to the meanest capacity. And the Monday following "Choice Sentences" for the company of Masons, and Bricklayers, to be put upon new houses, with a translation of all the Latin sentences that have been built of late years; together with a Comment upon Stone-walls. *By the same Hand, TATLER in folio, N° 17.*

N° 19.