

N^o 23. Thursday, June 2, 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.

WHITE’S Chocolate-house, May 31.

THE generality of mankind are so very fond of this world, and of staying in it, that a man cannot have eminent skill in any one art, but they will, in spite of his teeth, make him a Physician also, that being the science the worldlings have most need of. I pretended, when I first set up, to Astrology only; but, I am told, I have deep skill in Medicine. I am applied to now by a gentleman for my advice in behalf of his wife, who, upon the least matrimonial difficulty, is excessively troubled with fits, and can bear no manner of passion without falling into immediate convulsions. I must confess it is a case I have known before, and remember the party was recovered by certain words pronounced in the midst of the fit,

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by

by the learned doctor who performed the cure. These ails have usually their beginning from the affections of the mind: therefore you must have patience to let me give you an instance, whereby you may discern the cause of the distemper, and then proceed in cure as follows:

A fine town-lady was married to a gentleman of ancient descent in one of the counties of Great-Britain, who had good-humour to a weakness, and was that sort of person, of whom it is usually said, he is no man's enemy but his own: one who had too much tenderness of soul to have any authority with his wife; and she too little sense to give him any authority, for that reason. His kind wife observed this temper in him, and made proper use of it. But, knowing it was below a gentlewoman to wrangle, she resolved upon an expedient to save decorum, and wear her dear to her point at the same time. She therefore took upon her to govern him, by falling into fits whenever she was repulsed in a request, or contradicted in a discourse. It was a fish-day, when, in the midst of her husband's good-humour at table, she bethought herself to try her project. She made signs that she had swallowed a bone. The man grew pale as ashes, and ran to her assistance, calling for drink. "No, my dear," said she, recovering, "it is down; do not be frightened." This accident betrayed his softness enough. The next day she complained, a lady's chariot, whose husband had not half his estate, had a crane-

crane-neck, and hung with twice the air that hers did. He answered, “Madam, you know my income; you know I have lost two coach-horses this spring.”——Down she fell.——“Hartshorn! Betty, Susan, Alice, throw water in her face.” With much care and pains, she was at last brought to herself, and the vehicle in which she visited was amended in the nicest manner, to prevent relapses; but they frequently happened during that husband’s whole life, which he had the good fortune to end in few years after. The disconsolate soon pitched upon a very agreeable successor, whom she very prudently designed to govern by the same method. This man knew her little arts, and resolved to break through all tenderness, and be absolute master as soon as occasion offered. One day it happened, that a discourse arose about furniture: he was very glad of the occasion, and fell into an invective against china, protesting, he would never let five pounds more of his money be laid out that way as long as he breathed*. She immediately fainted

* About this time a fashion of collecting useless pieces of china began to be very prevalent. It was indulged for some years at great expence, and to astonishing degrees. Nothing was to be seen but vast pyramids of this ware in beaufets, on chimney-pieces, and wherever they could be placed; inso-much that houses in those days looked more like shops full of this merchandize for sale, than habitations furnished with such things for use, or convenience. ADDISON ridicules this absurdity in a Paper finished after his best manner.

fainted.—He starts up as amazed, and calls for help.—The maids run to the closet.—He chafes her face, bends her forward, and beats the palms of her hands: her convulsions increase, and down she tumbles on the floor, where she lies quite dead, in spite of what the whole family, from the nursery to the kitchen, could do for her relief.

While every servant was thus helping or lamenting their mistress, he, fixing his cheek to hers, seemed to be following in a trance of sorrow; but secretly whispers her, “My dear, this will never do: what is within my power and fortune, you may always command; but none of your artifices: you are quite in other hands than those you passed these pretty passions upon.” This made her almost in the condition she pretended; her convulsions now came thicker, nor was she to be held down. The kind man doubles his care, helps the servants to throw water in her face by full quarts; and when the sinking part of the fit came again, “Well, my dear,” said he, “I applaud your action; but I must take my leave of you until you are more sincere with me; farewell forever: you shall always know where to hear of me, and want for nothing.” With that he ordered the maids to keep plying her with

ner. LOVER, N^o 170. “What do I know whether *China* be dear or no? I once took a fancy to go mad for it, but now it is off.” SWIFT’S Works, vol. XXII p. 55. cr. 8vo.

hartshorn,

hartshorn, while he went for a physician; he was scarce at the stair-head when she followed, and, pulling him into a closet, thanked him for her cure; which was so absolute, that she gave me this relation herself, to be communicated for the benefit of all the voluntary invalids of her sex.

From my own Apartment, May 31.

The public is not so little my concern, though I am but a student, as that I should not interest myself in the present great things in agitation. I am still of opinion the French king will sign the preliminaries. With that view, I have sent him, by my familiar, the following epistle, and admonished him, on pain of what I shall say of him to future generations, to act with sincerity on this occasion.

“ London, May 31, 1709.

“ ISAAC BICKERSTAFF, Esquire, of Great-
“ Britain, to LEWIS XIV. of France.

“ THE surprizing news which arrived this
“ day, of your majesty’s having refused to sign
“ the treaty your ministers have in a manner
“ sued for, is what gives ground to this ap-
“ plication to your majesty, from one, whose
“ name perhaps, is too obscure, to have ever
“ reached your territories; but one, who, with
“ all the European world, is affected *with* your
“ determinations. Therefore, as it is mine

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“ and the common cause of mankind, I pre-
“ fume to expostulate with you on this occasion.
“ It will, I doubt not, appear to the vulgar
“ extravagant, that the actions of a mighty
“ prince should be balanced by the censure of
“ a private man, whose approbation or dislike
“ are equally contemptible in their eyes, when
“ they regard the thrones of sovereigns. But
“ your majesty has shewn, through the whole
“ course of your reign, too great a value for
“ liberal arts, to be insensible that true fame
“ lies only in the hands of learned men, by
“ whom it is to be transmitted to futurity,
“ with marks of honour or reproach, to the end
“ of time. The date of human life is too
“ short to recompence the cares which attend
“ the most private condition. Therefore it is,
“ that our souls are made as it were too big
“ for it; and extend themselves in the prospect
“ of a longer existence, in a good fame, and
“ memory of worthy actions, after our decease.
“ The whole race of men have this passion in
“ some degree implanted in their bosoms,
“ which is the strongest and noblest incitation
“ to honest attempts: but the base use of the
“ arts of peace, eloquence, poetry, and all the
“ parts of learning, have been possessed by souls
“ so unworthy of those faculties, that the names
“ and appellations of things have been con-
“ founded by the labours and writings of pro-
“ stituted men, who have stamped a reputation
“ upon such actions as are in themselves the
“ objects

“ objects of contempt and disgrace. This is
 “ that which has misled your majesty in the
 “ conduct of your reign, and made that life,
 “ which might have been the most imitable,
 “ the most to be avoided. To this it is, that
 “ the great and excellent qualities, of which
 “ your majesty is master, are lost in their ap-
 “ plication: and your majesty has been carry-
 “ ing on for many years the most cruel tyranny,
 “ with all the noble methods which are used
 “ to support a just reign. Thus it is, that it
 “ avails nothing that you are a bountiful mas-
 “ ter; that you are so generous as to reward
 “ even the unsuccessful with honour and
 “ riches*; that no laudable action passes un-
 “ rewarded in your kingdom†; that you have
 “ searched all nations for obscure merit: in a

* One of his ministers, in excuse for his ill-success in a
 business committed to his care, saying, “ That he had ra-
 “ ther been unfortunate than culpable;” it was answered,
 “ That the king had no farther occasion for his service, for
 “ though he gave pensions, he did not give employments to
 “ the *unfortunate*.”

† This passage receives some illustration from the fol-
 lowing extract of a letter of M. COLBERT to ISAAC VOS-
 SIUS, in June, 1662:

“ Sir, Though the king is not your sovereign, he wishes
 “ nevertheless to be your benefactor, and commanded me
 “ to send you the inclosed letter of exchange, as a mark of
 “ his esteem, and a pledge of his protection. It is noted
 “ by every body how worthily you tread in the steps of the
 “ celebrated VOSSIUS your father.—These things being
 “ known to his majesty, he takes a pleasure in rewarding
 “ your merit, &c. COLOMIEZ, *Bibl. Chois.* p. 182. edit.
 1700.

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“ word,

“ word, that you are in your private character
 “ endowed with every princely quality; when
 “ all that is subjected to unjust and ill-taught
 “ ambition, which, to the injury of the world,
 “ is gilded by those endowments. However,
 “ if your majesty will condescend to look into
 “ your own soul, and consider all its faculties
 “ and weaknesses with impartiality; if you
 “ will but be convinced, that life is supported
 “ in you by the ordinary methods of food, rest,
 “ and sleep; you will think it impossible that
 “ you could ever be so much imposed on, as
 “ to have been wrought into a belief, that so
 “ many thousands of the same make with your-
 “ self, were formed by Providence for no other
 “ end, but by the hazard of their very being
 “ to extend the conquests and glory of an in-
 “ dividual of their own species. A very little
 “ reflection will convince your majesty, that
 “ such cannot be the intent of the Creator;
 “ and, if not, what horror must it give your
 “ majesty to think of the vast devastations your
 “ ambition has made among your fellow-crea-
 “ tures! While the warmth of youth, the flat-
 “ tery of crowds, and a continual series of suc-
 “ cesses and triumph, indulged your majesty in
 “ this illusion of mind, it was less to be won-
 “ dered at, that you proceeded in this mistaken
 “ pursuit of grandeur; but when age, disap-
 “ pointments*, public calamities, personal

* An allusion to M. MAINTENON's letter in N° 19.
See also N° 24, and N° 26.

“ distempers,

“ distempers, and the reverse of all that makes,
 “ men forget their true being, are fallen upon
 “ you; heavens! Is it possible you can live
 “ without remorse? Can the wretched man be
 “ a tyrant? Can grief study torments? Can
 “ sorrow be cruel?

“ Your majesty will observe, I do not bring
 “ against you a railing accusation; but, as you
 “ are a strict professor of religion, I beseech your
 “ majesty to stop the effusion of blood, by re-
 “ ceiving the opportunity which presents itself
 “ for the preservation of your distressed people.
 “ Be no longer so infatuated, as to hope for
 “ renown from murder, and violence: but con-
 “ sider that the great day will come, in which
 “ this world and all its glory shall change in a
 “ moment; when nature shall sicken, and the
 “ earth and sea give up the bodies committed
 “ to them, to appear before the last tribunal.
 “ Will it then, O king! be an answer for
 “ the lives of millions, who have fallen by the
 “ sword, ‘ They perished for my glory?’
 “ That day will come on, and one like it is
 “ immediately approaching: injured nations
 “ advance towards thy habitation: vengeance
 “ has begun its march, which is to be diverted
 “ only by the penitence of the oppressor.
 “ Awake, O monarch, from thy lethargy! Dis-
 “ dain the abuses thou hast received: pull
 “ down the statue which calls thee immortal:
 “ be truly great: tear thy purple, and put on
 “ sackcloth. I am, “ Thy generous enemy,
 “ ISAAC BICKERSTAFF.”