
N° 27. Saturday, June 11, 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.

WHITE’S Chocolate-house, June 9.

PACOLET being gone a-strolling among the men of the sword*, in order to find out the secret causes of the frequent disputes we meet with, and furnish me with materials for my treatise on duelling; I have room left to go on in my information to my country readers, whereby they may understand the bright people whose memoirs I have taken upon me to write. But in my discourse of the twenty-eighth of the last month, I omitted to mention the most agreeable of all bad characters, and that is, a RAKE†.

A Rake

* See N° 25. N° 26. N° 28. N° 29. N° 31. and N° 38.

† The compiler of STEELE’S life in the BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA, concludes it with the following quotation from SHIELS’S “Lives of the Poets.” “STEELE however
was

A Rake is a man always to be pitied; and if he lives, is one day certainly reclaimed; for his faults proceed not from choice or inclination, but from strong passions and appetites, which are in youth too violent for the curb of

“ was certainly the most agreeable, and (if we are allowed “ the expression) the most innocent RAKE that ever trod “ the rounds of indulgence.” STEELE’s own acknowledgement, TAT. N^o 271, might perhaps have suggested, and does certainly justify, this unfavourable, but not unfriendly account of him. “ I shall not (says he) carry my “ humility so far as to call myself an avaricious man, but “ at the same time must confess, my life is at best but pardonable. With no greater character than this, a man “ would make but an indifferent progress in attacking prevalent and fashionable vices, which Mr. BICKERSTAFF “ has done with a freedom of spirit that would have lost “ both its beauty and efficacy had it been pretended to by “ Mr. STEELE.”—With this laudable spirit of unsparing censure, Mr. BICKERSTAFF exposes here to ridicule, and abhorrence, what was notoriously blameable and odious in Mr. STEELE. The Paper for the benefit of its readers presents them with an instructive picture of vicious life, from an original very amiable, however faulty; and for whom it is difficult not to indulge some degree of favourable partiality.

The book here quoted, has been miscalled “ CIBBER’s “ Lives of the Poets,” but was the compilation of ROBERT SHIELS. Dr. JOHNSON’s “ Lives of the English Poets,” vol. III. p. 183. edit. 8vo. 1781. The bookseller contends that he gave *fifteen golden* guineas for the use of T. CIBBER’s name,—that he had an undoubted right to suppress the true name of the biographer—and to manage so with the name of the son, as to excite an opinion, that the publication was the work of the father.

It is probable that Dr. JOHNSON cleared the work of his amanuensis from errors; it is certain he added to its beauties. The quotation relative to STEELE is a proof of this, equal to the evidence of a thousand witnesses.

reason, good sense, good manners, and good-nature: all which he must have by nature and education, before he can be allowed to be, or to have been of this order. He is a poor unwieldy wretch, that commits faults out of the redundancy of his good qualities. His pity and compassion make him sometimes a bubble to all his fellows, let them be never so much below him in understanding. His desires run away with him through the strength and force of a lively imagination, which hurries him on to unlawful pleasures, before reason has power to come in to his rescue. Thus, with all the good intentions in the world to amendment, this creature sins on against Heaven, himself, his friends, and his country, who all call for a better use of his talents. There is not a being under the sun so miserable as this: he goes on in a pursuit he himself disapproves, and has no enjoyment but what is followed by remorse; no relief from remorse, but the repetition of his crime. It is possible I may talk of this person with too much indulgence; but I must repeat it, that I think this a character which is the most the object of pity of any in the world. The man in the pangs of the stone, gout, or any acute distemper, is not in so deplorable a condition, in the eye of right sense, as he that errs and repents, and repents and errs on. The fellow with broken limbs justly deserves your alms for his impotent condition; but he that cannot use his own reason is in a
much

much worse state; for you see him in miserable circumstances, with his remedy at the same time in his own possession, if he would, or could use it. This is the cause that, of all ill characters, the Rake has the best quarter in the world; for when he is himself, and unruffled with intemperance, you see his natural faculties exert themselves, and attract an eye of favour towards his infirmities.

But if we look round us here, how many dull rogues are there, that would fain be what this poor man hates himself for? All the noise towards * fix in the evening, is caused by his mimics and imitators. How ought men of sense to be careful of their actions, if it were merely from the indignation of seeing themselves ill drawn by such little pretenders! Not to say, he that leads is guilty of all the actions of his followers; and a Rake has imitators whom you would never expect should prove so. Second-hand vice, sure, of all is the most nauseous. There is hardly a folly more absurd, or which seems less to be accounted for (though it is what we see every day), than that grave and honest natures give into this way, and at the same time have good sense, if they thought fit to use it; but the fatality (under

* In 1709 it would seem that the dinners of people of quality and fashion in London concluded about six in the evening; and that the gentlemen hurried to the coffee-houses about this hour; the expression of *noise* seems to imply that they had drunk pretty freely. See TAT. N^o 263.

which most men labour) of desiring to be what they are not, makes them go out of a method in which they might be received with applause, and would certainly excel, into one, wherein they will all their life have the air of strangers to what they aim at.

For this reason, I have not lamented the metamorphosis of any one I know so much as of NOBILIS, who was born with sweetness of temper, just apprehension, and every thing else that might make him a man fit for his order. But instead of the pursuit of sober studies and applications, in which he would certainly be capable of making a considerable figure in the noblest assembly of men in the world; I say, in spite of that good nature, which is his proper bent, he will say ill-natured things aloud, put such as he was, and still should be, out of countenance, and drown all the natural good in him, to receive an artificial ill character, in which he will never succeed; for NOBILIS is no Rake. He may guzzle as much wine as he pleases, talk bawdy if he thinks fit; but he may as well drink water-gruel, and go twice a-day to church, for it will never do. I pronounce it again, NOBILIS is no Rake. To be of that order, he must be vicious against his will, and not so by study or application. All "Pretty Fellows" are also excluded to a man, as well as all inamoratoes, or persons of the epicene gender, who gaze at one another in the presence of ladies. This class, of which I am
giving

giving you an account, is pretended to also by men of strong abilities in drinking; though they are such whom the liquor, not the conversation, keeps together. But blockheads may roar, fight, and stab, and be never the nearer; their labour is also lost; they want sense: they are no RAKES.

As a RAKE among men is the man who lives in the constant abuse of his reason, so a COQUETTE among women is one who lives in continual misapplication of her beauty. The chief of all whom I have the honour to be acquainted with, is pretty Mrs. Toss: she is ever in practice of something which disfigures her, and takes from her charms, though all she does tends to a contrary effect. She has naturally a very agreeable voice and utterance, which she has changed for the prettiest lisp imaginable. She sees what she has a mind to see at half a mile distance; but poring with her eyes half shut at every one she passes by, she believes much more becoming. The CUPID on her fan and she have their eyes full on each other, all the time in which they are not both in motion. Whenever her eye is turned from that dear object, you may have a glance, and your bow, if she is in humour, returned as civilly as you make it; but that must not be in the presence of a man of greater quality: for Mrs. Toss is so thoroughly well-bred, that the chief person present has all her regards. And she who giggles at divine service, and laughs at
her

her very mother, can compose herself at the approach of a man of a good estate.

WILL's Coffee-house, June 9.

A fine lady shewed a gentleman of this company, for an eternal answer to all his addresses, a paper of verses, with which she is so captivated, that she professed the author should be the happy man in spite of all other pretenders. It is ordinary for love to make men poetical, and it had that effect on this enamoured man: but he was resolved to try his vein upon some of her confidants or retinue, before he ventured upon so high a theme as herself. To do otherwise than so, would be like making an heroic poem a man's first attempt. Among the favourites to the fair one, he found her parrot not to be in the last degree: he saw Poll had her ear, when his sighs were neglected. To write against him had been a fruitless labour; therefore he resolved to flatter him into his interest in the following manner:

To a Lady, on her PARROT.

When nymphs were coy, and love could not prevail,
The gods disguis'd were seldom known to fail;
LEDA was chaste, but yet a feather'd JOVE
Surpriz'd the fair, and taught her how to love.
There's no celestial but his heaven would quit,
For any form which might to thee admit.
See how the wanton bird, at every glance,
Swells his glad plumes, and feels an amorous trance;
The queen of beauty has forsook the dove:
Henceforth the parrot be the bird of love.

It

It is indeed a very just proposition to give that honour rather to the parrot than the other volatile. The parrot represents us in the state of making love: the dove, in the possession of the object beloved. But, instead of turning the dove off, I fancy it would be better if the chaise of VENUS had hereafter a parrot added (as we see sometimes a third horse to a coach), which might intimate, that to be a parrot, is the only way to succeed; and to be a dove, to preserve your conquests. If the swain would go on successfully, he must imitate the bird he writes upon: for he who would be loved by women, must never be silent before the favour, or open his lips after it.

From my own Apartment, June 10.

I have so many messages from young gentlemen who expect preferment and distinction, that I am wholly at a loss in what manner to acquit myself. The writer of the following letter tells me in a postscript, he cannot go out of town until I have taken some notice of him, and is very urgent to be somebody in it, before he returns to his commons at the university. But take it from himself.

“ To ISAAC BICKERSTAFF, Esquire, Monitor-General * of Great-Britain.

“ S I R,

Sheer-Lane, June 8.

“ I HAVE been above six months from the university, of age these three months, and so

* See N^o 9. N^o 24. N^o 26. and N^o 28. *notes.*

“ long

“ long in town. I was recommended to one
 “ Charles Bubbleboy * near the Temple, who
 “ has supplied me with all the furniture he says
 “ a gentleman ought to have. I desired a cer-
 “ tificate thereof from him, which he said
 “ would require some time to consider of; and
 “ when I went yesterday morning for it, he
 “ tells me, upon due consideration, I still want
 “ some few odd things more, to the value of
 “ threescore or fourscore pounds, to make me
 “ complete. I have bespoke them; and the
 “ favour I beg of you is, to know, when I am
 “ equipped, in what part or class of men in
 “ this town you will place me. Pray send
 “ me word what I am, and you shall find me,
 “ Sir, your most humble servant,

“ JEFFRY NICKNACK.”

I am very willing to encourage young be-
 ginners, but am extremely in the dark how to
 dispose of this gentleman. I cannot see either
 his person or habit in this letter; but I will
 call at CHARLES's, and know the shape of his
 snuff-box, by which I can settle his character.
 Though indeed, to know his full capacity, I
 ought to be informed whether he takes Spanish
 or Musty †.

* CHARLES MATHER, a toyman in Fleet-street.

† A quantity of musty snuff was captured in the Spanish
 fleet which was taken, or burnt at Vigo in 1703; it soon
 became fashionable to use no snuff but what had this musty
 flavour. Time, and the tricks of the tobaccoists and per-
 fumers, put an end at last to this absurd custom.