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N° 33. Saturday, June 25, 1709.

S T E E L E.

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*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.

By Mrs. JENNY DISTAFF, Half-Sister to  
Mr. BICKERSTAFF.

From my own Apartment, June 23.

**M**Y brother has made an excursion into the country, and the work against Saturday lies upon me. I am very glad I have got pen and ink in my hand; for I have for some time longed for his absence, to give a right idea of things, which I thought he put in a very odd light, and some of them to the disadvantage of my own SEX. It is much to be lamented, that it is necessary to make discourses, and publish treatises, to keep the horrid creatures, the MEN, within the rules of common decency.

I gladly embrace this opportunity to express myself with the resentment I ought, on people who take liberties of speech before that SEX,

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of

of whom the honoured names of MOTHER, DAUGHTER, and SISTER are a part: I had like to have named WIFE in the number; but the senseless world are so mistaken in their sentiments of pleasure, that the most amiable term in human life is become the derision of fools and scorers. My brother and I have at least fifty times quarrelled upon this topic. I ever argue, that the frailties of women are to be imputed to the false ornaments, which men of wit put upon our folly and coquetry. He lays all the vices of men upon womens' secret approbation of libertine characters in them. I did not care to give up a point; but, now he is out of the way, I cannot but own I believe there is very much in what he asserted: but if you will believe your eyes, and own, that the wickedest and wittiest of them all marry one day or other, it is impossible to believe, that if a man thought he should be for ever incapable of being received by a woman of merit and honour, he would persist in an abandoned way; and deny himself the possibility of enjoying the happiness of well governed desires, orderly satisfactions, and honourable methods of life. If our SEX were wise, a lover should have a certificate from the last woman he served, how he was turned away, before he was received into the service of another: but at present any vagabond is welcome, provided he promises to enter into our livery. It is wonderful, that we will not take a footman without

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credentials

credentials from his last master; and in the greatest concern of life, we make no scruple of falling into a treaty with the most notorious offender in this behaviour against others. But this breach of commerce between the Sexes, proceeds from an unaccountable prevalence of custom, by which a Woman is to the last degree reproachable for being Deceived, and a Man suffers no loss of credit for being a Deceiver.

Since this tyrant humour has gained place, why are we represented in the writings of men in ill figures for artifice in our carriage, when we have to do with a professed impostor? When oaths, imprecations, vows, and adorations, are made use of as words of course, what arts are not necessary to defend us from such as glory in the breach of them? As for my part, I am resolved to hear all, and believe none of them; and therefore solemnly declare no vow shall deceive me, but that of Marriage: for I am turned of twenty, and being of a small fortune, some wit, and (if I can believe my lovers and my glass) handsome, I have heard all that can be said towards my undoing; and shall therefore, for warning-sake, give an account of the offers that have been made me, my manner of rejecting them, and my assistances to keep my resolution.

In the sixteenth year of my life, I fell into the acquaintance of a lady extremely well known in this town for the quick advancement  
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of her husband, and the honours and distinctions which her industry has procured him, and all who belong to her. This excellent body sat next to me for some months at church, and “took the liberty, which,” she said, “her years, and the zeal she had for my welfare, gave her claim to, to assure me, that she observed some parts of my behaviour which would lead me into errors, and give encouragement to some to entertain hopes I did not think of. What made you,” said she, “look through your fan at that lord, when your eyes should have been turned upwards, or closed in attention upon better objects?” I blushed, and pretended fifty odd excuses;—but confounded myself the more. She wanted nothing but to see that confusion, and goes on; “Nay, child, do not be troubled that I take notice of it; my value for you made me speak it; for though he is my kinsman, I have a nearer regard to virtue than any other consideration.” She had hardly done speaking, when this noble lord came up to us, and led her to her coach.

My head ran all that day and night on the exemplary carriage of this woman, who could be so virtuously impertinent, as to admonish one she was hardly acquainted with. However, it struck upon the vanity of a girl, that it may possibly be, his thoughts might have been as favourable of me, as mine were amorous of

him; and as unlikely things as that have happened, if he should make me his wife. She never mentioned this more to me; but I still in all public places stole looks at this man, who easily observed my passion for him. It is so hard a thing to check the return of agreeable thoughts, that he became my dream, my vision, my food, my wish, my torment.

That mistress of darkness, the lady SEMPRONIA\*, perceived too well the temper I was in, and would, one day after evening service, needs take me to the Park. When we were there, my lord passes by; I flushed into a flame. "Mrs. DISTAFF †," says she, "you may very well remember the concern I was in upon the first notice I took of your regard to that lord; and forgive me, who had a tender friendship for your mother (now in her grave) that I am vigilant of your conduct." She went on with much severity, and after great sollicitation prevailed on me to go with her into the country, and there spend the ensuing summer out of the way of a man she saw I loved,

\* STEELE probably adopted this name in allusion to a similar character finely drawn by SALLUST, for a beautiful bad woman of this name in *Rome*. The infamous person held up here to public detestation, was notorious about this time, and is said to be the same mentioned in TAT. N° 3, and N° 54. under the title of *Madam D'ÉPINGLE*; whether this last was a true or only a fictitious name, is not worth enquiry. See SALLUST, *Bell. Catil. cap. xxi.*

† See N° 10; N° 13; and *Notes*. MRS. *Distaff* was at this time turned of twenty; and no longer *Miss*.

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and one whom she perceived meditated my ruin, by frequently desiring her to introduce him to me: which she absolutely refused, except he would give his honour that he had no other design but to marry me. To her country-house a week or two after we went: there was at the farther end of her garden a kind of wilderness, in the middle of which ran a soft rivulet, by an arbour of jessamine. In this place I usually passed my retired hours, and read some romantic or poetical tale until the close of the evening. It was near that time, in the heat of summer, when gentle winds, soft murmurs of water, and notes of nightingales, had given my mind an indolence, which added to that repose of soul, twilight and the end of a warm day naturally throws upon the spirits. It was at such an hour, and in such a state of tranquillity I sat, when, to my inexpressible amazement, I saw my lord walking towards me, whom I knew not until that moment to have been in the country. I could observe in his approach the perplexity which attends a man big with design; and I had, while he was coming forward, time to reflect that I was betrayed; the sense of which gave me a resentment suitable to such a baseness: but, when he entered into the bower where I was, my heart flew towards him, and, I confess, a certain joy came into my mind, with an hope that he might then make a declaration of honour and passion. This threw my eye upon him with such tenderness,

derness, as gave him power, with a broken accent, to begin. “Madam—you will wonder  
 “—for it is certain, you must have observed  
 “—though I fear you will misinterpret the  
 “motives—but by heaven, and all that is  
 “sacred! if you could”—Here he made a  
 full stand, and I recovered power to say,  
 “The consternation I am in you will not,  
 “I hope, believe—an helpless innocent maid  
 “—besides that, the place”—He saw me  
 in as great confusion as himself; which attrib-  
 uting to the same causes, he had the auda-  
 ciousness to throw himself at my feet, talk of  
 the stillness of the evening, and then ran into  
 deifications of my person, pure flames, con-  
 stant love, eternal raptures, and a thousand  
 other phrases drawn from the images we have  
 of heaven, which ill men use for the service  
 of hell, when run over with uncommon ve-  
 hement. After which he seized me in his  
 arms: his design was too evident. In my ut-  
 most distress, I fell upon my knees—“My  
 “lord, pity me, on my knees—on my knees  
 “in the cause of virtue, as you were lately in  
 “that of wickedness. Can you think of de-  
 “stroying the labour of a whole life, the pur-  
 “pose of a long education, for the base ser-  
 “vice of a sudden appetite; to throw one that  
 “loves you, that doats on you, out of the  
 “company and the road of all that is virtuous  
 “and praise-worthy? Have I taken in all the  
 “instructions of piety, religion, and reason,  
 “for

“ for no other end, but to be the sacrifice of lust,  
“ and abandoned to scorn? Assume yourself,  
“ my lord; and do not attempt to vitiate a  
“ temple sacred to innocence, honour, and  
“ religion. If I have injured you, stab this  
“ bosom, and let me die, but not be ruined,  
“ by the hand I love.” The ardency of my  
passion made me incapable of uttering more;  
and I saw my lover astonished, and reformed  
by my behaviour: when rushed in SEMPRONIA.  
“ Ha! faithless base man, could you  
“ then steal out of town, and lurk like a  
“ robber about my house for such brutish  
“ purposes!”

My lord was by this time recovered, and fell  
into a violent laughter at the turn which SEMPRONIA  
designed to give her villainy. He bowed to me with the utmost respect: “ Mrs.  
“ DISTAFF,” said he, “ be careful hereafter  
“ of your company;” and so retired. The  
fiend SEMPRONIA congratulated my deliverance  
with a flood of tears.

This nobleman has since very frequently  
made his addresses to me with honour; but  
I have as often refused them; as well know-  
ing that familiarity and marriage will make  
him, on some ill-natured occasion, call all  
I said in the arbour a theatrical action. Be-  
sides that, I glory in contemning a man, who  
had thoughts to my dishonour. If this meth-  
od were the imitation of the whole sex,  
innocence would be the only dress of beauty;  
and

and all affectation by any other arts to please the eyes of men, would be banished to the stews for ever. The conquest of passion gives ten times more happiness than we can reap from the gratification of it; and she, that has got over such a one as mine, will stand among Beaux and Pretty Fellows, with as much safety as in a summer's day among grasshoppers and butterflies.

P. S. I have ten millions of things more against men, if I ever get the pen again.

N<sup>o</sup> 34. Tuesday, June 28, 1709.

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Juv. Sat. i. 85, 86.

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By ISAAC BICKERSTAFF, Esquire.

WHITE'S Chocolate-house, June 25.

HAVING taken upon me to cure all the distempers which proceed from *Affections* of the MIND, I have laboured, since I first kept