

oaf added, “ *But* she is not handsome.”  
“ Coxcomb! the gentleman was saying what  
“ I was, not what I was not.”

“ Mrs. DISTAFF hath received the Dialogue  
“ dated Monday Evening, which she has sent  
“ forward to Mr. BICKERSTAFF at Maiden-  
“ head: and in the mean time gives her ser-  
“ vice to the parties.”

N. B. “ It is to be noted, that when any part  
“ of this Paper appears dull, there is a design  
“ in it.”

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N<sup>o</sup> 39. Saturday, July 9, 1709.

S T E E L E.



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*Quicquid agunt homines —*  
*nostris 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 ISAAC BICKERSTAFF, Esquire.

GRECIAN Coffee-house, July 7.

**A**S I am called forth by the immense love  
I bear to my fellow-creatures, and the  
warm inclination I feel within me, to stem, as  
far

far as I can, the prevailing torrent of vice and ignorance; so I cannot more properly pursue that noble impulse, than by setting forth the excellence of Virtue and Knowledge in their native and beautiful colours. For this reason, I made my late excursion to Oxford, where those qualities appear in their highest lustre, and are the only pretences to honour and distinction. Superiority is there given in proportion to men's advancement in Wisdom and Learning; and that just rule of life is so universally received among those happy people, that you shall see an earl walk bare-headed to the son of the meanest artificer, in respect to seven years more Worth and Knowledge than the nobleman is possessed of. In other places they bow to men's fortunes, but here to their understandings. It is not to be expressed, how pleasing the order, the discipline, the regularity of their lives, is to a Philosopher, who has, by many years experience in the world, learned to contemn every thing but what is revered in this mansion of select and well-taught spirits. The magnificence of their palaces, the greatness of their revenues, the sweetness of their groves and retirements, seem equally adapted for the residence of princes and Philosophers; and a familiarity with objects of splendour, as well as places of recess, prepares the inhabitants with an equanimity for their future fortunes, whether humble or illustrious. How was I pleased when I looked round at St.

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MARY'S,

MARY'S, and could, in the faces of the ingenuous youth, see ministers of state, chancellors, bishops, and judges. Here only is human life! Here only the life of man is that of a rational being! Here men understand and are employed in works worthy their noble nature. This transitory being passes away in an employment not unworthy a future state, the contemplation of the great decrees of Providence. Each man lives as if he were to answer the questions made to JOB, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who shut up the sea with doors, and said, 'Hitherto thou shalt come, and no farther?'" Such speculations make life agreeable, and death welcome.

But, alas! I was torn from this noble society by the business of this dirty mean world, and the cares of fortune: for I was obliged to be in London against the seventh day of the term, and accordingly governed myself by my Oxford almanack\*, and came last night; but find, to my great astonishment, that this ignorant town began the term on the twenty-fourth of the last month, in opposition to all the learning and astronomy of the famous University of which I have been speaking; according to which, the term certainly was to commence

\* A humorous allusion to the difference between the University and the Law terms, which still subsists. See N<sup>o</sup> 43.

on

on the first instant. You may be sure a man, who has turned his studies as I have, could not be mistaken in point of time; for, knowing I was to come to town in term, I examined the passing moments very narrowly, and called an eminent astronomer to my assistance. Upon very strict observation we found, that the cold has been so severe this last winter (which is allowed to have a benumbing quality) that it retarded the earth in moving round from Christmas to this season full seven days and two seconds. My learned friend \* assured me further, that the earth had lately received a shogg from a comet that crossed its *vortex*, which, if it had come ten degrees nearer to us, had made us lose this whole term. I was indeed once of opinion that the Gregorian computation was the most regular, as being eleven days before the Julian; but am now fully convinced, that we ought to be seven days after the chancellor and judges, and eighteen before the pope of Rome; and that the Oxonian computation is the best of the three.

These are the reasons which I have gathered from Philosophy and Nature; to which I can add other circumstances in vindication of the

\* Probably Mr. W. Whiston, of whose *friendship*, considering the services he did him, certainly STEELE might well have thought himself secure; but Whiston afterwards discovered himself *unfriendly* and ungrateful. See WHISTON'S "Memoirs," 2d Edit. 8vo. 2 Vol. 1753, p. 257, & *seqq*; and TAT. with *Notes*, cr. 8vo. Vol. VI. N<sup>o</sup> 251.

account

account of this learned body who publish this Almanack.

It is notorious to philosophers, that joy and grief can hasten and delay time. Mr. LOCKE is of opinion, that a man in great misery may so far lose his measure, as to think a minute an hour; or in joy make an hour a minute. Let us examine the present case by this rule, and we shall find, that the cause of this general mistake in the British nation, has been the great success of the last campaign, and the following hopes of peace. Stocks ran so high at the Exchange, that the citizens had gained three days of the courtiers; and we have indeed been so happy all this reign, that if the University did not rectify our mistakes, we should think ourselves but in the second year of her present majesty. It would be endless to enumerate the many damages that have happened by this ignorance of the vulgar. All the recognizances within the diocese of Oxford have been forfeited, for not appearing on the first day of this fictitious term. The University has been nonsuited in their action against the booksellers for printing CLARENDON *in Quarto*. Indeed, what gives me the most quick concern, is the case of a poor gentleman, my friend, who was the other day taken in execution by a set of ignorant bailiffs. He should, it seems, have pleaded in the first week of term; but being a Master of Arts of Oxford, he would not recede from the Oxonian Computation. He shewed

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Mr.

Mr. Broad the Almanack, and the very day when the term began; but the merciless, ignorant fellow, against all sense and learning, would hurry him away. He went indeed quietly enough; but he has taken exact notes of the time of arrest, and sufficient witnesses of his being carried into gaol; and has, by advice of the recorder of Oxford, brought his action; and we doubt not but we shall pay them off with damages, and blemish the reputation of Mr. Broad. We have one convincing proof, which all that frequent the Courts of Justice are witnesses of: the dog that comes constantly to WESTMINSTER on the first day of the term, did not appear until the first day according to the Oxford Almanack; whose instinct I take to be a better guide than men's erroneous opinions, which are usually biased by interest. I judge in this case, as King Charles the Second victualled his navy with the bread which one of his dogs chose of several pieces thrown before him, rather than trust to the asseverations of the victuallers. Mr. COWPER\*, and other learned counsel, have already urged the authority of this Almanack, in behalf of their clients. We shall, therefore, go on with all speed in our cause; and doubt not, but chancery will

\* SPENCER COWPER, brother to the first earl of the name, at that time a celebrated counsellor, and afterwards chief justice of the Common Pleas.

give

give at the end what we lost in the beginning, by protracting the term for us until Wednesday come seven-night. And the University Orator shall for ever pray, &c.

From my own Apartment, July 7.

The subject of DUELS \* has, I find, been started with so good success, that it has been the frequent subject of conversation among polite men; and a dialogue of that kind has been transmitted to me *verbatim* as follows. The persons concerned in it are men of honour and experience in the manners of men, and have fallen upon the truest foundation, as well as searched the bottom of this evil.

Mr. Sage. If it were in my power, every man that drew his sword, unless in the service, or purely to defend his life, person, or goods, from violence (I mean abstracted from all puncto's or whims of honour) should ride the wooden horse in the Tilt-yard for such first offence, for the second, stand in the pillory; and for the third be prisoner in BEDLAM for life †.

\* See TATLER, N<sup>o</sup> 8, 25, 26, 29, 31, and 38. SPEC. N<sup>o</sup> 84, N<sup>o</sup> 97, and N<sup>o</sup> 99. GUARD. N<sup>o</sup> 20, N<sup>o</sup> 129, N<sup>o</sup> 133, and N<sup>o</sup> 161; THEATRE, N<sup>o</sup> 19, and N<sup>o</sup> 26.

† See N<sup>o</sup> 30, and Note.



Col. *Plume*. I remember that a Rencounter or Duel was so far from being in fashion among the officers that served in the parliament-army, that on the contrary it was as disreputable, and as great an impediment to advancement in the service, as being bashful in time of action.

Sir *Mark*. Yet I have been informed by some old cavaliers, of famous reputation for brave and gallant men, that they were much more in mode among their party than they have been during this last war.

Col. *Plume*. That is true too, Sir.

Mr. *Sage*. By what you say, gentlemen, one should think that our present military officers are compounded of an equal proportion of both those tempers; since Duels are neither quite discountenanced, nor much in vogue.

Sir *Mark*. That difference of temper in regard to Duels, which appears to have been between the court and the parliament-men of the sword, was not (I conceive) for want of courage in the latter, nor of a liberal education, because there were some of the best families in England engaged in that party; but gallantry and mode, which glitter agreeably to the imagination, were encouraged by the court, as promoting its splendour; and it was as natural that the contrary party (who were to recommend themselves to the public for men of serious

rious and solid parts) should deviate from every thing chimerical.

Mr. *Sage*. I have never read of a Duel among the Romans, and yet their nobility used more liberty with their tongues than one may do now without being challenged.

Sir *Mark*. Perhaps the Romans were of opinion, that ill-language and brutal manners reflected only on those who were guilty of them; and that a man's reputation was not at all cleared by cutting the person's throat who had reflected upon it: but the custom of those times had fixed the scandal in the action; whereas now it lies in the reproach.

Mr. *Sage*. And yet the only sort of Duel that one can conceive to have been fought upon motives truly honourable and allowable, was that between the *Horatii* and *Curiatii*.

Sir *Mark*. Colonel PLUME, pray, what was the method of single combat in your time among the cavaliers? I suppose, that as the use of cloaths continues, though the fashion of them has been mutable; so Duels, though still in use, have had in all times their particular modes of performance.

Col. *Plume*. We had no constant rule, but generally conducted our dispute and tilt, according to the last that had happened between persons of reputation among the very top fellows for bravery and gallantry.

Sir *Mark*. If the fashion of quarrelling and tilting was so often changed in your time, Co-

lonel PLUME, a man may fight, yet lose his credit for want of understanding the fashion.

Col. *Plume*. Why, Sir MARK, in the beginning of July a man would have been censured for want of courage, or been thought indigent of the true notions of honour, if he had put up words, which, in the end of September following, one could not resent without passing for a brutal and quarrelsome fellow.

Sir *Mark*. But, Colonel, were Duels or Rencounters most in fashion in those days?

Col. *Plume*. Your men of nice honour Sir, were for avoiding all censure of advantage which they supposed might be taken in a Rencounter; therefore they used seconds, who were to see that all was upon the square, and make a faithful report of the whole combat; but in a little time it became a fashion for the seconds to fight, and I will tell you how it happened.

Mr. *Sage*. Pray do, Colonel PLUME, and the method of a Duel at that time, and give us some notion of the puncto's upon which your nice men quarrelled in those days.

Col. *Plume*. I was going to tell you, Mr. SAGE, that one Cornet Modish had desired his friend Captain Smart's opinion in some affair, but did not follow it; upon which Captain Smart sent Major Adroit (a very topping fellow of those times) to the person that had slighted his advice. The Major never enquired into the quarrel, because it was not the  
manner

manner then among the very topping fellows; but got two swords of an equal length, and then waited upon Cornet Modish, desiring him to chuse his sword, and meet his friend Captain Smart. Cornet Modish came with his friend to the place of combat; there the principals put on their pumps\*, and stripped to their shirts, to shew that they had nothing but what men of honour carry about them, and then engaged.

Sir *Mark*. And did the seconds stand by, Sir?

Col. *Plume*. It was a received custom until that time; but the swords of those days being pretty long, and the principals acting on both sides upon the defensive, and the morning being frosty, Major Adroit desired that the other second, who was also a very topping fellow, would try a thrust or two, only to keep them warm, until the principals had decided the matter, which was agreed to by Modish's second, who presently whipt Adroit through the body, disarmed him, and then parted the principals, who had received no harm at all.

Mr. *Sage*. But was not Adroit laughed at?

Col. *Plume*. On the contrary, the very topping fellows were ever after of opinion, that no man, who deserved that character, could serve as a second, without fighting; and the

\* See N<sup>o</sup> 35.

Smarts and Modishes finding their account in it, the humour took without opposition.

Mr. *Sage*. Pray, Colonel, how long did that fashion continue?

Col. *Plume*. Not long neither, Mr. *SAGE*; for as soon as it became a fashion, the very topping fellows thought their honour reflected upon, if they did not proffer themselves as seconds when any of their friends had a quarrel, so that sometimes there were a dozen of a side.

Sir *Mark*. Bless me! if that custom had continued, we should have been at a loss now for our very pretty fellows; for they seem to be the proper men to officer, animate, and keep up an army. But, pray, Sir, how did that sociable manner of tilting grow out of mode?

Col. *Plume*. Why, Sir, I will tell you: it was a law among the combatants, that the party which happened to have the first man disarmed or killed, should yield as vanquished: which some people thought might encourage the Modishes and Smarts in quarrelling to the destruction of only the very topping fellows; and as soon as this reflection was started, the very topping fellows thought it an incumbrance upon their honour to fight at all themselves. Since that time the Modishes and the Smarts, throughout all Europe, have extolled the French king's edict.

Sir *Mark*. Our very pretty fellows, whom I take to be the successors of the very topping fellows, think a quarrel so little fashionable, that they will not be exposed to it by any other man's vanity, or want of sense.

Mr. *Sage*. But, Colonel, I have observed in your account of Duels, that there was a great exactness in avoiding all advantage that might possibly be between the combatants.

Col. *Plume*. That is true, Sir; for the weapons were always equal.

Mr. *Sage*. Yes, Sir; but suppose an active adroit strong man had insulted an awkward or a feeble, or an unpractised sword's-man?

Col. *Plume*. Then, Sir, they fought with pistols.

Mr. *Sage*. But, Sir, there might be a certain advantage that way; for a good marksman will be sure to hit his man at twenty yards distance; and a man whose hand shakes (which is common to men that debauch in pleasures, or have not used pistols out of their holsters) will not venture to fire, unless he touches the person he shoots at. Now, Sir, I am of opinion, that one can get no honour in killing a man, if one has it all *rug*, as the gamesters say, when they have a trick to make the game secure, though they seem to play upon the square.

Sir *Mark*. In truth, Mr. SAGE, I think such a fact must be murder in a man's own private conscience,

conscience, whatever it may appear to the world.

Col. *Plume*. I have known some men so nice, that they would not fight but upon a cloak with pistols.

Mr. *Sage*. I believe a custom well established would outdo the grand Monarch's edict\*.

Sir *Mark*. And bullies would then leave off their long swords. But I do not find that a very pretty fellow can stay to change his sword when he is insulted by a bully with a long *Diego*; though his own at the same time be no longer than a pen-knife; which will certainly be the case if such little swords are in mode. Pray, Colonel, how was it between the hectors of your time, and the very topping fellows?

Col. *Plume*. Sir, long swords happened to be generally worn in those times.

Mr. *Sage*. In answer to what you were saying, Sir *Mark*, give me leave to inform you, that your knights-errant (who were the very pretty fellows of those antient times) thought they could not honourably yield, though they had fought their own trusty weapons to the stumps; but would venture as boldly with the page's leaden sword, as if it had been of enchanted metal. Whence, I conceive, there must be a spice of romantic gallantry in the composition of that very pretty fellow.

\* See SPEC. N<sup>o</sup> 97.

Sir

Sir *Mark*. I am of opinion, Mr. SAGE, that fashion governs a very pretty fellow; nature, or common sense, your ordinary persons, and sometimes men of fine parts.

Mr. *Sage*. But what is the reason, that men of the most excellent sense and morals, in other points, associate their understandings with the very pretty fellows in that chimæra of a Duel?

Sir *Mark*. There is no disputing against so great a majority.

Mr. *Sage*. But there is one scruple, Colonel PLUME, and I have done. Do not you believe there may be some advantage even upon a cloak with pistols, which a man of nice honour would scruple to take?

Col. *Plume*. Faith, I cannot tell, Sir; but since one may reasonably suppose that, in such a case, there can be but one so far in the wrong as to occasion matters to come to that extremity, I think the chance of being killed should fall but on one; whereas, by their close and desperate manner of fighting, it may very probably happen to both.

Sir *Mark*. Why, gentlemen, if they are men of such nice honour, and must fight, there will be no fear of foul play, if they threw up cross or pile who should be shot\*.

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\* See N<sup>o</sup> 205; THEATRE, N<sup>o</sup> 26. and "The Conscious Lovers," *passim*.