

MARYLAND GAZETTE,

Containing the freshest Advices foreign and domestic.

THURSDAY, September 26, 1754.

The ADVENTURER. No. 46.

IT has been remarked, that Men are generally kind in Proportion as they are happy; and it is said even of the Devil, that he is good humoured when he is pleased. Every Act therefore by which another is injured, from whatever Motive, contracts more Guilt, and expresses greater Malignity, if it is committed in those Seasons, which are set apart to Pleasantry and Good-Humour, and brightened with Enjoyments peculiar to rational and social Beings.

Detraction is among those Vices, which the most languid Virtue has sufficient Force to prevent; because by Detraction, that is not gained which is taken away: "He who filches from me my good Name, says *Shakespeare*, enriches not himself, but makes me poor indeed." As nothing therefore, degrades human Nature more than Detraction, nothing more disgraces Conversation. The Detractor, as he is the lowest moral Character, reflects greater Dishonour upon his Company, than the Hangman; and he, whose Disposition is a Scandal to his Species, should be more diligently avoided, than he who is scandalous only by his Office.

But for this Practice, however vile, some have dared to apologize, by contending that the Report by which they injured an absent Character, was true: This, however, amounts to no more, than that they have not complicated Malice with Falshood, and that there is some Difference between Detraction and Slander. To relate all the Ill that is true of the best Man in the World, would probably render him the Object of Suspicion and Distrust; and if this Practice was universal, mutual Confidence and Esteem, the Comforts of Society, and the Endearments of Friendship, would be at an end.

There is something unspeakably more hateful in those Species of Villainy by which the Law is evaded, than in those by which it is violated and defied. Courage has sometimes preserved Rapacity from Abhorrence, as Beauty has been thought to apologize for Prostitution; but the Injustice of Cowardice is universally abhorred, and like the Lewdness of Deformity has no Advocate. Thus hateful are the Wretches who detract with Caution; and while they perpetrate the Wrong, are solicitous to avoid the Reproach: They do not say that *Chloe* forfeited her Honour to *Lysander*, but they say that such a Report has been spread, they know not how true. Those who propagate these Reports, frequently invent them; and it is no Breach of Charity to suppose this to be always the Case; because no Man who spreads Detraction, would have scrupled to produce it; and he who should diffuse Poison in a Brook, would scarce be acquitted of a malicious Design, though he should alledge that he received it of another who is doing the same elsewhere.

Whatever is incompatible with the highest Dignity of our Nature, should indeed be excluded from our Conversation: As Companions, not only that which we owe to ourselves but to others is required of us; and they who can indulge any Vice in the Presence of each other, are become obdurate in Guilt, and insensible to Infamy.

Reverence thyself, is one of the sublime Precepts of that amiable Philosopher, whose Humanity alone was an incontestable Proof of the Dignity of his Mind: *Pythagoras*, in his Idea of Virtue, comprehended intellectual Purity; and he supposed, that by him who revered himself, those Thoughts would be suppressed by which a Being capable of Virtue is degraded: This Divine Precept evidently pre-supposes a Reverence of others, by which Men are restrained from more gross Immoralities; and with which he hoped a Reverence of Self would also co-operate as an auxiliary Motive.

The great Duke of *Marborough*, who was perhaps the most accomplished Gentleman of his Age, would never suffer any Approaches to Obscenity in his Presence; and it was said by the late Lord

Cobham, that he did not reprove it as an Immorality in the Speaker, but revented it as an Indignity to himself: And it is evident, that to speak Evil of the Absent, to utter Lewdness, Blasphemy, or Treason, must degrade not only him who speaks, but those who hear; for surely that Dignity of Character which a Man ought always to sustain, is in Danger, when he is made the Confident of Treachery, Detraction, Impiety, or Lust: For he, who in Conversation displays his own Vices, imputes them; as he who boasts to another of a Robbery, pre-supposes that he is a Thief.

It should be a general Rule, never to utter any Thing in Conversation which would justly dishonour us if it should be reported to the World: If this Rule could be always kept, we should be secure in our own Innocence against the Craft of Knaves and Parasites, the Stratagems of Cunning, and the Vigilance of Envy.

But after all the Bounty of Nature, and all the Labour of Virtue, many Imperfections will be still discerned in Human Beings, even by those who do not see with all the Perspicuity of human Wisdom: And he is guilty of the most aggravated Detraction, who reports the Weakness of a good Mind discovered in an unguarded Hour; something which is rather the Effect of Negligence, than Design; rather a Folly, than a Fault; a Sally of Vanity, rather than an Eruption of Malevolence. It has therefore been a Maxim inviolably sacred among good Men, never to disclose the Secrets of private Conversation; a Maxim, which though it seems to arise from the Breach of some other, does yet imply that general Rectitude, which is produced by a Consciousness of virtuous Dignity, and a Regard to that Reverence which is due to ourselves and others; for to conceal any immoral Purpose, which to disclose is to disappoint; any Crime, which to hide is to countenance; or any Character, which to avoid is to be safe; as it is incompatible with Virtue, and injurious to Society, can be a Law only among those who are Enemies to both.

Among such, indeed, it is a Law which there is some Degree of Obligation to fulfil; and the Secrets even of their Conversation are, perhaps, seldom disclosed, without an Aggravation of their Guilt: It is the Interest of Society, that the Veil of Taciturnity should be drawn over the Mysteries of Drunkenness and Lewdness, and to hide even the Machinations of Envy, Ambition, or Revenge, if they happen to mingle in these Orgies among the Rites of *Bacchus*; seems to be the Duty of the Initiated, though not of the Prophane.

If he, who has associated with Robbers, who has repofed and accepted a Trust, and whose Guilt is a Pledge of his Fidelity, should betray his Associates for Hire, if he is urged to secure himself by the Anxiety of Suspicion, or the Terrors of Cowardice; or to punish others, by the Importunity of Resentment and Revenge; though the Public receives Benefit from his Conduct, and may think it expedient to reward him, yet he has only added to every other Species of Guilt, that of Treachery to his Friends: He has demonstrated, that he is so destitute of Virtue, as not to possess even those Vices which resemble it; and that he ought to be cut off as totally unfit for human Society, but that, as Poison is an Antidote to Poison, his Crimes are a Security against the Crimes of others.

It is, however, true, that if such an Offender is stung with Remorse; if he feels the Force of higher Obligations, than those of so iniquitous Compact; and if, urged by a Desire to atone for the Injury which he has done to Society, he gives in his Information, and delivers up his Associates, with whatever Reluctance, to the Laws; by this Sacrifice he ratifies his Repentance, he becomes again the Friend of his Country, and deserves not only Protection but Esteem: For the same Action may be either virtuous or vicious and may deserve either Honour or Infamy, as it may be performed upon different Principles; and, indeed, no Action can be morally classed or estimated, without some Knowledge of the Motive by which it is produced.

But as there is seldom any other Clue to the Motives of particular Actions, than the general Tenor of his Life by whom they are performed; and as the Lives of those who serve their Country by bringing it's Enemies to Punishment, are commonly flagitious in the highest Degree; the Ideas of this Service and the most fordid Villainy are so connected, that they always recur together: If only this Part of a Character is known, we immediately infer that the whole is infamous; and it is, therefore, no Wonder, that the Name by which it is expressed, especially when it is used to denominate a Profession, should be odious, or that a good Man should not always have a sufficient Fortitude, to strike away the Mask of Dissimulation, and direct the Sword of Justice.

But whatever may be thought of those, who discharge their Obligations to the Public by Treachery to their Companions; it cannot be pretended, that he, to whom an immoral Design is communicated by Inadvertence or Mistake, is under any private Obligation to conceal it: The Charge which devolves upon him, he must instantly renounce; for while he hesitates, his Virtue is suspended: And he who communicates such Design to another, not by Inadvertence or Mistake, but upon Pre-emption of Concurrence, commits an Outrage upon his Honour and defies his Repentment.

Let none, therefore, be encouraged to prophanize the Rites of Conversation, much less of Friendship, by supposing there is any Law, which ought to restrain the Indignation of Virtue, or deter Repentance from Reparation.

LONDON, June 19.

WE hear from Genoa, that two French Tartans have lately perished off Alaffio; but their Crews are saved.

The same Letters mention the great Consternation that there was in that City when the News first came of the Blockade of Bastia, and its neighbouring Forts. But that before the Letters came away the Senate had ordered the necessary Measures to be taken for sending speedy and powerful Relief.

June 20. On the 23^d of March last, was found driving ashore near the Island of Saints, a Ship of about 200 Tons Burthen, and in which was no living Creature, there were three dead Men found between Decks. There was in the Captain's Cabin, a flat Lead, with a Stamp or Figure like St. Paul's, with the Number 28930: And by a Bit of Paper found in the Ship, it appears that her Name is the *Britannia*, Francis Leech.

Several Men of War and Sloops will be put into Commission in a few Days.

Our Correspondent at Paris is very positive, that what he has so often intimated, will come to pass within the Compass of the present Month; that there will be a compleat Turn in respect to Men and Measures; and the Parliament reinstated in their ancient Privileges without any Submission.

It is said that six Men of War will be put into Commission in a few Days; but for what Part designed is not yet pretended to be known.

June 21. Private Letters from Petersburg and Stockholm give Hopes that we shall see no Disturbances in the North this Year, because the Russians are ready for Action on every Side, and Matters are not yet ripe enough for Sweden in other Parts of Europe; certain Events, they say, are waited for by France and her Allies; which are fitter to be guessed at, than to be committed to Paper; and in the mean Time the Difference about the Limits of Finland is industriously kept up, that the Swedes may have some Grounds for a War, besides their Engagements with France and Prussia.

June 25. Yesterday Morning early an Express came to the Admiralty Office, brought by his Majesty's Sloop the *Swan*, arrived in the Downs from New York.

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