

*Containing the freshest advices, Foreign and Domestic.*

WEDNESDAY, January 20, 1748.

*From a late public Paper.*

On the bad CONSEQUENCES of GAMING.

*Sic ne perdidit non cessat perdere lusor.* OVID.

CERTAIN author, speaking of play, tells us, that in his opinion the devil invented cards, in order to inveniency himself for the loss of Paganism. On them, says he, we see kings, queens, and knaves painted, which supply the places of images in the old times, and keep people in as fatal, and almost as foolish an idolatry as ever was practised in the darkest days of Heathenism. Then, continues he, they worshipped their fanatical deities with fond priimes and idle games, which is what they continue to do now, since, without straining matters much, every different sort of game may be considered in this light. In these kind of societies, the Pagans wasted their time, corrupted their manners, and consumed their wealth; which is exactly the misfortune of our modern gamblers; they throw away their precious moments in this ridiculous exercise, make it the source of the most racking and uneasy passions, and are often by its consequences, reduced to beggary and despair.

THE father of Greek history, Herodotus, informs us, that play was invented by the *Lydians*; and he assigns for this a very remarkable cause. They were distressed by a long and grievous famine, which left them very little to eat, and nothing to do. In this situation, they invented all sorts of games for amusement, that they might have something to exercise their thoughts, and hinder them from feeling the severe pangs of hunger. After twelve years spent in this melancholly manner, their king sent a colony of his subjects into *Italy*, who fixed themselves in *Tuscany*, and from them the knowledge of play was derived to the *Romans*; from whom some think it came to us; but others, more jealous of the honour of their country; affirm, that we were gamblers long before, and that *Brutus* brought this branch of polite literature directly from *Greece*, when he made his famous expedition thither at the head of the *Gauls*.

FOR my part, I should value myself much more on being able to predict the Time in which it will be forgot, than on fixing exactly the date when it came in; for, without question, it is become at present, not only a reigning vice, but a political evil; it affects us not only in our morals, but in our circumstances; for, taking the time consumed in it, and the wrong turn of mind it gives to all its votaries, I dare say, it may be justly considered as one of the principal causes of those misfortunes of which we complain at present. I say nothing of the loss of money, because I would not put it in the power of any trifling sharper, to remark, that by play in general, there can be nothing either lost or won. He would perhaps tell you, for this subject, that play, like a strong wind, agitates the sails of our wealth, drives it now on one shore and then on another, but still without lessening the quantity; which is true. When it is of great importance to the nation; upon what side it is driven. If, instead of visiting the coasts of industry and commerce, it can be turned into the ports of idleness and idleness; the consequence will be in a short time fatal to the quantity of our wealth, tho' playing, strictly speaking, be not the immediate cause of it.

THERE are a set of people in the world, who, as in other respects, so in this, pretend to plead privilege; and, if you censure gaming before them, tell you gravely, that it is indeed scandalous in any but persons of Quality. Put this into plain English; and it will stand thus: The best people in *G. Britain* have a right to give the worst example. What is title? what is

Quality? Is it not a mark of eminence? does it not pass for a kind of Royal stamp, which signifies the worth and virtue of him who wears it? If so, shall it ever be pleaded as a privilege for want of worth? Forbid it heaven! Let the Quality of *G. Britain* be the most excellent in *G. Britain*. The family of *Montmorency* in *France*, were wont to value themselves on being the first Noblemen in *Europe*, and the famous Constable of that name, did an action, even at play, which ought to perpetuate his memory. He was at an assembly at *Montpelier*, where there was very high play at *Basset*. A poor Gentleman who was behind, and saw the Constable put 3000 pistoles upon a card, said softly to one who was near him, *Ombut à sum! it would make me easy for life!* It happened that the Constable won; when, turning quick upon the Gentleman who spoke, *I made that stake, Sir,* (says he) *for you*, and gave him the whole 6000 pistoles. This was the Act of a man of Quality, and shewed that he played from custom, not from passion.

THERE are another set of people, who plead the large fortunes they enjoy, in bar to any impeachment of this kind; but a little consideration is sufficient to shew with how small appearance of reason. If such persons are in any kind of trade, gaming is altogether unjustifiable, let them be ever so opulent. It is repugnant to their course of life, has a tendency to destroy credit, and, besides all this, in case unforeseen misfortunes should befall a man, this practice will subject him to grievous suspicions, even tho' they should be altogether groundless. But if they are people absolutely unconcerned in trade, and in circumstances ever so affluent, they have no more a right to commit this than any other folly. If they persist in it they cannot well exercise authority in their family; for, if a father indulges one vice, the son will think it, if not a reason, an excuse at least, for indulging another; and so will servants. It is true, you may correct both; but what then? you will amend neither; and tho' you should change the latter ever so often, you will at the same time only change their faults; your example will always authorize one as well as the other.

BUT there are many who insist upon custom: It is the fashion (say they) to play at public places, and one had as good be dead as out of the fashion. And better too (say I) than be in it, if it is a bad one. It was once well observed in the house of Commons, when custom was pleaded in excuse of a bad discharge of a high office: *It is the custom* (said a great lawyer) *to rob upon Shooter's hill; is it therefore lawful?* It custom and fashion be on the side of gaming, good sense, and the laws of the land, are against it; and ought we to prefer the practice of idle and unthinking people, to the sentiments of the wisest, and to the settled judgment of the legislature? A bad custom is not only a bad thing, but perhaps is the worst of all things; and therefore it behoves every one, who values peace of mind or public approbation, to oppose his example against every bad custom; it is impossible to merit the appellation of a good man, if we do bad things.

HOW then are we to pass our time? What can we do in public places? How shall people amuse themselves when they are together? These are indeed questions easily asked, and so hard twenty more. I will mention but one: Is time given us purely to get rid of it? If an assembly is composed of both sexes, properly qualified by education, can they find nothing better to do than to look on a ball whirling round, or upon painted pieces of paper? Is not this being children all our lives? is it not as idle, tho' not quite so innocent, as making dice or building card houses? Ought we not to be ashamed of what forces us upon such silly pretences? or can we imagine that our conduct can be vindicated to the world, by such things as would not save us from a whipping at school?