

## MARYLAND GAZETTE

Containing the freshest Advice, Foreign and Domestic.

WEDNESDAY, February 17, 1748.

To the Publisher of the MARYLAND GAZETTE.

Quarquam ridendum dicere verum  
Quid vult?

HORATII SATIRAR. LIB. I.

**R**IDICULE is an universal Ingredient in Conversation. In the politest Companies it often takes Place. This seems to be the Salt and Seasoning of Life, giving to it a grateful Relish; hence we find it as natural for one Man to laugh at another, and to be mightily excited to Mirth, upon the Contemplation of the Character and Behaviour of his Neighbour, as it is to breathe the common Air.

But tho' Ridicule be a prevailing and favourite Topic, we often find it ill-placed, or misapplied, being employed on such Subjects as in no ways admit of it. 'Tis possible for a ready Genius this Way, to throw a ridiculous Colour over the most serious Things, and turn Nature herself into a Buffoon, tho' armed with the most solemn Truths, and adorn'd with the most excellent Embellishments and Beauties; but such luxuriant and ungoverned Wit, seldom emits its Weapons, without having them recoil upon itself; and some Time or other, after the whole Ship of extravagant Banter is evacuated, the Venders themselves stand alone upon the creaking Scene, and become the Butt of Mirth and Laughter for the Multitude.

A Genius, or Turn for Ridicule, varies widely in different Men: Some dull Mortals there are, who may be said to have no perceptible Talent this Way, whose Life is one continued Series of lumpish stupidity, or Moroseness. These Fellows are incapable of discerning the Ridiculous in any Thing; and tho' such Clod pates never join in the Laugh, yet by their stubborn Solemnity, or Blockishness, they afford a good Fund of Mirth for those round them. These are such indelible Fellows as do not understand Railery. Some Men there are, tho' few, who apply ridicule with Propriety, and upon such Subjects only as deserve it: their Wit is what we may call *Steering*, or of the *right Species*: But Numbers there are, of such a risible Disposition, so prone to Mirth, that they will laugh at every the least Occurrence, and be diverted beyond Measure with each Object that presents itself, serious, inoffensive, or contemptible. Trifles, and Things of Importance with them, wear the same Fool's Cap; and sometimes the Calamities, Misfortunes, and natural Deformities of their Neighbours, will prove the Subject of their Laughter; which deprecable Objects, in true Mirthful Minds, would rather excite Tears. I have known a Man's Poverty and Rags attribute towards a good Joke; a well-meaning honest Fellow has been obnoxious to Ridicule, because he went and adulterated his Behaviour; one who flutters in speaking, has prov'd an excellent Subject for Laughter; an unbecoming Sound or Syllable in a Man's Name, has made him a standing Jest, and a Butt for Punsters; and it is well known, what a large Fund of Mirth, hump back, bandy-legs, pot-belly, a disbursted hat, or a nose of an uncommon Shape and Size, have afforded to Men a merry risible Disposition: But these to every judicious Man, must appear at first sight, not to be the proper Objects of Ridicule; because natural Defects, and casual Misfortunes, are by no means to be ranked with Vice, Folly, or Falshood; and only these last can properly come under the Lash of a just and well-grounded Ridicule. In fine, I may say, whatever deviates from the known Standard of Truth and Nature, is as to introduce Vice or Absurdity into Morals, is absolutely to itself ridiculous; but whatever does not deviate from this Rule of Standard, in the moral and natural System, is not, nor possibly can it ever be the just Subject of Ridicule: Therefore, as it is neither against Nature, nor against Truth, that a Man should be poor, awkward, ragged, crump-shoulder'd, &c. he is not in such Cases the proper Subject for Ridicule; for these Defects are not at all inconsistent with the natural and ordinary Course of Things; for

are they properly to be termed Deformities in either the Natural or Moral System. But Falshood, Affectation, Pride, Lust, Avarice, Drunkenness, Gluttony, and such like Vices, so far counteract Truth and Nature, and disturb the Order and Decorum of Society, that a Man possess'd of any or all of these Vices, is the just and proper Object of Ridicule; nor can Riches, Grandeur, or Birth, however great and conspicuous, ever screen him from its just and vindictive Lash.

Ridicule, when justly applied, may be reckon'd the greatest Specific against human Vice and Folly: For as Pride among Men is a ruling Passion, nothing will more effectually work a Reformation in the Vicious, than rousing their Pride, by setting the Palm of Shame to work, in Opposition to it, if you can once effectually excite it; for as the general Drift of every Man, is the acquiring and keeping of a good Character and Reputation, and the Esteem of the Community where he resides, there is nothing he will more carefully shun; than what has a Tendency to destroy or expunge that good Name or Character; that is, if he be not an abandoned Reprobate, or is not altogether sunk among the filthiest Dregs of the People; or, in fewer Words, if he is neither above Censure, nor below it: Consequently, if you can once make a Man ashamed of such Things as will actually have this Effect, he will strenuously shun them; but in this Method of Cure, or Course of Physic, if I may call it so, the bad Humours only are to be purged away, and the good corrected; I mean, nothing is to be represented as vicious or foolish, but what is actually so, nor nothing elegant, virtuous, or praise-worthy, but what deserves that Character: A Pop or Coxcomb, for Instance, is capable of being thus operated upon; but so long as he believes, and is convinced, that all Virtue consists in the Thousand a Year, a Coach, Equipage, and Livery, Lace, Gay Pastimes, and the modish Cut of a Coat; and all Vice in their Contraries, viz. Poverty, and being out of Fashion, he is miserably mistaken, and in the wrong Box, to attain to what is really Virtuous and Good; and if a Lady imagines a fine Skin, forc'd Shape, affected Air, mincing Step, a coquetish Behaviour, and Precedency of Place in all Assemblies and Companies, to be the distinguishing Marks of Merit, she is as much bewilder'd as the Pop; and without a Guide to set her Right, will blunder on from Absurdity to Absurdity, 'til she turns Old, Ugly, and utterly Ridiculous.

If it were then possible to apply Ridicule in such an effectual Manner, as to operate Right upon Mankind, this would then promote the Reformation of Manners, than whole Carloads of cry moral Harangues, and Volumes of fine speculative Sermons. It were then to be wished, that every one who pretends to use this Talent of Ridicule, would use it right, by applying it only with Judgment to proper Objects; thus will it be more effectual than it commonly proves; for the Use of it, where not justly applicable, will serve rather to bring it into Contempt, which is the Fate of the best and most approved Remedies, when us'd, or rather abus'd, by old Women and Quacks.

From the Pennsylvania Gazette, No. 697.

## THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

THE grand basis of the reformation, and support of the protestant cause, is the right of private judgment. But I renounce all methods of imposition, violence, and persecution, not *there* because they are *popish*, but because they are *unnatural*, *inhuman*, and *anti-christian*: and I plead for the right of private judgment, not *merely* as *the protestant* claims but as *the* one of those *fixed and original* rights of human Nature which the gospel has revived and re-established.

Man is, by his *original Constitution*, a moral and accountable being: And from hence it follows, that the right of conscience