

Tatler 9 (April 28, 1709) (Steele and Swift)

No. 9.

From Thursday, April 28, to Saturday, April 30, 1709.

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Will's Coffee-house, April 28.

This evening we were entertained with "The Old Bachelor," a comedy of deserved reputation. In the character which gives name to the play, there is excellently represented the reluctance of a battered debauchee to come into the trammels of order and decency: he neither languishes nor burns, but frets for love. The gentlemen of more regular behaviour are drawn with much spirit and wit, and the drama introduced by the dialogue of the first scene with uncommon, yet natural conversation. The part of Fondlewife is a lively image of the unseasonable fondness of age and impotence. But instead of such agreeable works as these, the town has this half age been tormented with insects called "easy writers," whose abilities Mr. Wycherley one day described excellently well in one word: "That," said he, "among these fellows is called easy writing, which any one may easily write." Such jaunty scribblers are so

justly
laughed at for their sonnets on Phillis and Chloris, and
fantastical
descriptions in them, that an ingenious kinsman of mine, of
the
family of the Staffs, Mr. Humphrey Wagstaff by name, has, to
avoid their
strain, run into a way perfectly new, and described things
exactly as
they happen: he never forms fields, or nymphs, or groves,
where they are
not, but makes the incidents just as they really appear. For
an example
of it; I stole out of his manuscript the following lines: they
are a
Description of the Morning, but of the morning in town; nay,
of the
morning at this end of the town, where my kinsman at present
lodges.

*Now hardly here and there an hackney coach
Appearing, showed the ruddy morn's approach.
Now Betty from her master's bed had flown,
And softly stole to discompose her own.
The slipshod 'prentice from his master's door,
Had pared the street, and sprinkled round the floor.
Now Moll had whirled her mop with dext'rous airs,
Prepared to scrub the entry and the stairs.
The youth with broomy stumps began to trace
The kennel edge, where wheels had worn the place.
The smallcoal-man was heard with cadence deep,
Till drowned in shriller notes of chimney-sweep.
Duns at his lordship's gate began to meet;
And Brickdust Moll had screamed through half a street;
The turnkey now his flock returning sees,
Duly let out at nights to steal for fees.
The watchful bailiffs take their silent stands;*

And schoolboys lag with satchels in their hands.

All that I apprehend is, that dear Numps will be angry I have published these lines; not that he has any reason to be ashamed of them, but for fear of those rogues, the bane to all excellent performances, the imitators. Therefore, beforehand, I bar all descriptions of the evenings; as, a medley of verses signifying, grey-peas are now cried warm: that wenches now begin to amble round the passages of the playhouse: or of noon; as, that fine ladies and great beaux are just yawning out of their beds and windows in Pall Mall, and so forth. I forewarn also all persons from encouraging any draughts after my cousin; and foretell any man who shall go about to imitate him, that he will be very insipid. The family stock is embarked in this design, and we will not admit of counterfeits: Dr. Anderson and his heirs enjoy his pills, Sir. William Read has the cure of eyes, and Monsieur Rozelli can only cure the gout. We pretend to none of these things; but to examine who and who are together, to tell any mistaken man he is not what he believes he is, to distinguish merit, and expose false pretences to it, is a liberty our family has by law in them, from an intermarriage with a daughter of Mr. Scoggan, the famous droll

of
the last century. This right I design to make use of; but will
not
encroach upon the above-mentioned adepts, or any other. At the
same
time I shall take all the privileges I may, as an Englishman,
and will
lay hold of the late Act of Naturalisation to introduce what I
shall think fit from France. The use of that law may, I hope,
be
extended to people the polite world with new characters, as
well as the
kingdom itself with new subjects. Therefore an author of that
nation,
called La Bruyère, I shall make bold with on such occasions.
The last
person I read of in that writer, was Lord Timon. Timon, says
my
author, is the most generous of all men; but is so hurried
away with
that strong impulse of bestowing, that he confers benefits
without
distinction, and is munificent without laying obligations. For
all the
unworthy, who receive from him, have so little sense of this
noble
infirmity, that they look upon themselves rather as partners
in a spoil,
than partakers of a bounty. The other day, coming into Paris,
I met
Timon going out on horseback, attended only by one servant. It
struck me
with a sudden damp, to see a man of so excellent a
disposition, and that
understood making a figure so very well, so much shortened in
his
retinue. But passing by his house, I saw his great coach break

to pieces
before his door, and by a strange enchantment, immediately
turned into
many different vehicles. The first was a very pretty chariot,
into which
stepped his lordship's secretary. The second was hung a little
heavier;
into that strutted the fat steward. In an instant followed a
chaise,
which was entered by the butler. The rest of the body and
wheels were
forthwith changed into go-carts, and ran away with by the
nurses and
brats of the rest of the family. What makes these misfortunes
in the
affairs of Timon the more astonishing, is, that he has a
better
understanding than those who cheat him; so that a man knows
not which
more to wonder at, the indifference of the master, or the
impudence of
the servant.

White's Chocolate-house, April 29.

It is matter of much speculation among the beaux and oglers,
what it is
that can have made so sudden a change, as has been of late
observed, in
the whole behaviour of Pastorella, who never sat still a
moment till she
was eighteen, which she has now exceeded by two months. Her
aunt, who
has the care of her, has not been always so rigid as she is at
this
present date; but has so good a sense of the frailty of woman,

and
falsehood of man, that she resolved on all manner of methods
to keep
Pastorella, if possible, in safety, against herself, and all
her
admirers. At the same time the good lady knew by long
experience, that
a gay inclination, curbed too rashly, would but run to the
greater
excesses for that restraint: therefore intended to watch her,
and take
some opportunity of engaging her insensibly in her own
interests,
without the anguish of an admonition. You are to know then,
that miss,
with all her flirting and ogling, had also naturally a strong
curiosity
in her, and was the greatest eavesdropper breathing. Parisatis
(for so
her prudent aunt is called) observed this humour, and retires
one day to
her closet, into which she knew Pastorella would peep, and
listen to
know how she was employed. It happened accordingly, and the
young lady
saw her good governante on her knees, and after a mental
behaviour,
break into these words: "As for the dear child committed to my
care, let
her sobriety of carriage, and severity of behaviour, be such,
as may
make that noble lord, who is taken with her beauty, turn his
designs to
such as are honourable." Here Parisatis heard her niece nestle
closer to
the keyhole: she then goes on; "Make her the joyful mother of
a numerous

and wealthy offspring, and let her carriage be such, as may make this noble youth expect the blessings of an happy marriage, from the singularity of her life, in this loose and censorious age." Miss having heard enough, sneaks off for fear of discovery, and immediately at her glass, alters the sitting of her head; then pulls up her tucker, and forms herself into the exact manner of Lindamira: in a word, becomes a sincere convert to everything that's commendable in a fine young lady; and two or three such matches as her aunt feigned in her devotions, are at this day in her choice. This is the history and original cause of Pastorella's conversion from coquetry. The prudence in the management of this young lady's temper, and good judgment of it, is hardly to be exceeded. I scarce remember a greater instance of forbearance of the usual peevish way with which the aged treat the young, than this, except that of our famous Noye, whose good nature went so far, as to make him put off his admonitions to his son, even till after his death; and did not give him his thoughts of him, till he came to read that memorable passage in his will: "All the rest of my estate," says he, "I leave to my son Edward (who is executor to this my will) to be squandered as he shall think fit: I leave it him for that purpose, and

hope no better from him." A generous disdain and reflection, upon how little he deserved from so excellent a father, reformed the young man, and made Edward, from an errant rake, become a fine gentleman.

St. James's Coffee-house, April 29.

Letters from Portugal of the 18th instant, dated from Estremos, say, that on the 6th the Earl of Galway arrived at that place, and had the satisfaction to see the quarters well furnished with all manner of provisions, and a quantity of bread sufficient for subsisting the troops for sixty days, besides biscuits for twenty-five days. The enemy give out, that they shall bring into the field 14 regiments of horse, and 24 battalions. The troops in the service of Portugal will make up 14,000 foot, and 4000 horse. On the day these letters were despatched, the Earl of Galway received advice, that the Marquis de Bay was preparing for some enterprise, by gathering his troops together on the frontiers. Whereupon his Excellency resolved to go that same night to Villa-Vicosa, to assemble the troops in that neighbourhood, in order to disappoint his designs.

Yesterday in the evening Captain Foxon, aide-de-camp to Major-General Cadogan, arrived here express from the Duke of Marlborough. And this day

a mail is come in, with letters dated from Brussels of the 6th of May,
N.S., which advise, that the enemy had drawn together a body, consisting
of 20,000 men, with a design, as was supposed, to intercept the great
convoy on the march towards Lille, which was safely arrived at Menin and
Courtray, in its way to that place, the French having retired without
making any attempt.

We hear from the Hague, that a person of the first quality is arrived in
the Low Countries from France, in order to be a plenipotentiary in an
ensuing treaty of peace.

Letters from France acknowledge, that Monsieur Bernard has made no
higher offers of satisfaction to his creditors than of £35 per cent.

These advices add, that the Marshal Boufflers, Monsieur Torcy (who
distinguished himself formerly, by advising the Court of France to
adhere to the treaty of partition), and Monsieur d'Harcourt (who
negotiated with Cardinal Portocarrero for the succession of the crown of
Spain in the House of Bourbon), are all three joined in a commission for
a treaty of peace. The Marshal is come to Ghent: the other two are
arrived at the Hague.

It is confidently reported here that the Right Honourable the

Lord

Townshend is to go with his Grace the Duke of Marlborough into Holland.