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In Four Volumes

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N^o 148. Tuesday, March 21. 1709.

----- *Gustus elementa per omnia querunt,
Nunquam animo pretiis obstantibus*-----

Juv.

From my own Apartment, March 20.

HAVING intimated in my last paper, that I design to take under my inspection the Diet of this great City, I shall begin with a very earnest and serious exhortation to all my well-disposed Readers, that they would return to the food of their forefathers, and reconcile themselves to Beef and Mutton. This was that Diet which bred that hardy race of mortals who won the fields of *Cressy* and *Agincourt*. I need not go up so high as the history of *Guy* Earl of *Warwick*, who is well known to have eaten up a Dun Cow of his own killing. The renowned King *Arthur* is generally looked upon as the first who ever sat down to a Whole roasted Ox (which was certainly the best way to preserve the Gravy;) and it is further added, that he and his Knights sat about it at his Round table, and usually consumed it to the very bones before they would enter upon any debate of moment. The *Black Prince* was a professed lover of the Brisket; not to mention the history of the Sirloin, or the Institution of the Order of Beef-eaters, which are all so many evident and undeniable marks of the great respect which our warlike Predecessors have paid to this excellent food. The tables of the ancient Gentry of this nation were covered thrice a day with hot Roast-beef; and I am credibly informed by an Antiquary who has searched the Registers in which the Bills of Fare of the Court are recorded, that instead of Tea and Bread and Butter, which have prevailed of late years, the Maids of Honour in Queen *Elizabeth's* time were allowed three Rumps of Beef for their breakfast. Mutton has likewise been in great repute among our valiant Countrymen, but was formerly observed to be the food rather of men of nice and delicate appetites, than those

those of strong and robust Constitutions. For which reason, even to this day, we use the word Sheep-biter as a term of reproach, as we do a Beef-eater in a respectful and honourable sense. As for the flesh of Lamb, Veal, Chicken, and other Animals under Age, they were the invention of sickly and degenerate palates, according to that wholesome remark of *Daniel* the Historian, who takes notice, That in all taxes upon Provisions, during the reigns of several of our Kings, there is nothing mentioned besides the flesh of such Fowl and Cattle as were arrived at their full growth, and were mature for slaughter. The Common people of this kingdom do still keep up the taste of their Ancestors; and it is to this that we in a great measure owe the unparalleled victories that have been gained in this reign: For I would desire my Reader to consider, what work our countrymen would have made at *Blenheim* and *Ramillies*, if they had been fed with Fricacies and Ragoufts.

For this reason we at present see the florid Complexion, the strong Limb, and the hale Constitution, are to be found chiefly among the meaner sort of people, or in the Wild Gentry, who have been educated among the woods and mountains: Whereas many great families are insensibly fallen off from the Athletick Constitution of their Progenitors, and are dwindled away into a pale, sickly, spindle-legged generation of Valetudinarians.

I may perhaps be thought extravagant in my notion; but I must confess, I am apt to impute the dishonours that sometimes happen in great families to the inflaming kind of diet which is so much in fashion. Many dishes can excite desire without giving strength, and heat the body without nourishing it: As Physicians observe, that the poorest and most dispirited blood is most subject to Fevers. I look upon a *French* Ragouft to be as pernicious to the stomach as a glass of spirits; and when I have seen a young Lady swallow all the instigations of high Soupes, seasoned Sauces, and forced Meats, I have wondered at the Despair or tedious sighing of her lovers.

The rules among these false delicates, are to be as contradictory as they can be to nature,

Without expecting the return of hunger, they eat for appetite, and prepare dishes not to allay, but to excite it.

They admit of nothing at their tables in its natural form, or without some disguise.

They are to eat every thing before it comes in season, and to leave it off as soon as it is good to be eaten.

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They are not to approve any thing that is agreeable to ordinary palates; and nothing is to gratify their Senses, but what would offend those of their Inferiors.

I remember I was last summer invited to a friend's house, who is a great admirer of the *French* cookery, and (as the Phrase is) *eats well*. At our sitting down, I found the table covered with a great variety of unknown dishes. I was mightily at a loss to learn what they were, and therefore did not know where to help my self. That which stood before me I took to be a roasted Porcupine, however did not care for asking questions; and have since been informed, that it was only a larded Turkey. I afterwards passed my eye over several Hashes, which I do not know the names of to this day; and hearing that they were Delicacies, did not think fit to meddle with them.

Among other Dainties, I saw something like a Pheasant, and therefore desired to be helped to a wing of it; but to my great surprize, my friend told me it was a Rabbet, which is a sort of meat I never cared for. At last I discovered, with some joy, a Pig at the lower end of the table, and begged a Gentleman that was near it to cut me a piece of it. Upon which the Gentleman of the house said, with great civility, I am sure you will like the Pig, for it was whipped to death. I must confess, I heard him with horror, and could not eat of an Animal that had died such a tragical death: I was now in great hunger and confusion, when, methought, I smelled the agreeable favour of Roast-beef, but could not tell from which dish it arose, though I did not question but it lay disguised in one of them. Upon turning my head, I saw a noble Sirloin on the Side-table smoaking in the most delicious manner. I had recourse to it more than once, and could not see, without some indignation, that substantial *English* dish banished in so ignominious a manner, to make way for *French* kickshaws.

The Dessert was brought up at last, which in truth was as extraordinary as any thing that had come before it. The whole, when ranged in its proper order, looked like a very beautiful winter-piece. There were several Pyramids of candy'd sweetmeats, that hung like Icicles, with fruits scattered up and down, and hid in an artificial kind of frost. At the same time there were great quantities of Cream beaten up into a Snow, and near them little plates of Sugar-plumbs, disposed like so many heaps of Hail-stones, with a multitude of Congelations in Jellies of various colours. I was indeed so pleased with the several objects which lay before me, that I did not care for displacing any of them, and was half angry

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with the rest of the company, that for the sake of a piece of Lemmon-peel, or a Sugar-plumb, would spoil so pleasing a picture. Indeed, I could not but smile to see several of them cooling their mouths with lumps of Ice, which they had just before been burning with Salts and Peppers.

As soon as this show was over I took my leave, that I might finish my dinner at my own house: For as I in every thing love what is simple and natural, so particularly in my food; two plain dishes, with two or three good-natured, chearful, ingenious friends, would make me more pleased and vain, than all that pomp and luxury can bestow. For it is my Maxim, *That he keeps the greatest table, who has the most valuable company at it.*

N^o 152. *Thursday, March 30. 1710.*

*Dii, quibus Imperium est animarum, umbræque silentes,
Et Chaos, et Phlegethon, loca nocte silentia late,
Sit mihi fas audita loqui, sit numine vestro
Pandere res alta terra et caligine mersas.*

Virg.

From my own Apartment, March 29.

A Man who confines his speculations to the time present, has but a very narrow province to employ his thoughts in. For this reason, persons of studious and contemplative natures often entertain themselves with the history of past Ages, or raise schemes and conjectures upon Futurity. For my own part, I love to range through that half of Eternity which is still to come, rather than look on that which is already run out; because I know I have a real share and interest in the one, whereas all that was transacted in the other can be only matter of curiosity to me.

Upon this account, I have been always very much delighted with meditating on the Soul's Immortality, and in reading the several notions which the wisest of men, both ancient and modern, have entertained on that subject. What the opinions of the greatest Philosophers have been,

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