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In Four Volumes

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The WHIG-EXAMINER.

 N^o 1. *Thursday, September 14. 1710.*

*Nescia mens hominum fati fortisque futura,
 Et servare modum, rebus sublata secundis!
 Turno tempus erit, magno cum optaverit emptum
 Intactum Pallanta, & cum folia ista diemque
 Oderit -----*

THE design of this work is to censure the writings of others, and to give all persons a rehearing, who have suffered under any unjust sentence of the *Examiner*. As that Author has hitherto proceeded, his paper would have been more properly entitled the *Executioner*: at least his examination is like that which is made by the rack and wheel. I have always admired a Critic that has discovered the beauties of an author, and never knew one who made it his business to lash the faults of other writers, that was not guilty of greater himself; as the hangman is generally a worse malefactor, than the criminal that suffers by his hand. To prove what I say, there needs no more than to read the annotations which this Author has made upon Dr. *Garth's* Poem, with the preface in the front, and a riddle at the end of them. To begin with the first: Did ever an advocate for a party open with such an unfortunate assertion? *The collective body of the Whigs have already engrossed our riches*: That is, in plain English, the Whigs are possessed of all the riches in the nation. Is not this giving up all he has been contending for these six weeks? Is there any thing more reasonable, than that those who have all the riches of the nation in their possession, or if he likes his own phrase better, as indeed I think it is stronger, that those who have already *engrossed* our riches, should have the management of our publick Treasury,

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sure, and the direction of our fleets and armies? But let us proceed: *Their representative the Kit-Cat have pretended to make a Monopoly of our sense.* Well, but what does all this end in? If the author means any thing, it is this, That to prevent such a Monopoly of sense, he is resolved to deal in it himself by retail, and sell a pennyworth of it every week. In what follows, there is such a shocking familiarity both in his railleries and civilities, that one cannot long be in doubt who is the Author. The remaining part of the preface has so much of the pedant, and so little of the conversation of men in it, that I shall pass it over, and hasten to the riddles, which are as follows.

The R I D D L E.

SPHINX *was a monster, that would eat
Whatever stranger she could get;
Unless his ready Wit disclos'd
The subtle riddle she propos'd.*
Oedipus was resolved to go,
And try what strength of parts could do:
Says Sphinx, *On this depends your fate;
Tell me what animal is that,
Which has four feet at morning bright?
Has two at noon, and three at night?
'Tis man, said he, who weak by nature,
At first creeps, like his fellow-creature,
Upon all four: As years accrue,
With sturdy steps he walks on two:
In age, at length, grown weak and sick,
For his third leg adopts the stick.
Now in your turn, 'tis just, methinks,
You should resolve me, Madam Sphinx,
What stranger creature yet is he,
Who has four legs, then two, then three;
Then loses one, then gets two more,
And runs away at last on four.*

The first part of this little mystical Poem is an old riddle, which we could have told the meaning of, had not the Author given himself the trouble of explaining it; but as for the exposition of the second, he leaves us altogether in the dark. The riddle runs thus: What creature is it that walks

walks upon four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs at night? This he solves, as our forefathers have done for these two thousand years; and not according to *Rabelais*, who gives another reason why a man is said to be a creature with three legs at night. Then follows the second riddle: What creature, says he, is it that first uses four legs, then two legs, then three legs; then loses one leg, then gets two legs, and at last runs away upon four legs? Were I disposed to be splenatick, I should ask if there was any thing in the new garland of riddles *so wild, so childish, or so flat*: But though I dare not go so far as that, I shall take upon me to say, that the Author has stolen his hint out of the garland, from a riddle which I was better acquainted with than the *Nile* when I was but twelve years old. It runs thus, Riddle my riddle my ree, what is this? Two legs sat upon three legs, and held one leg in her hand; in came four legs, and snatched away one leg; up started two legs, and flung three legs at four legs, and brought one leg back again. This Enigma, joined with the foregoing two, rings all the changes that can be made upon four legs. That I may deal more ingenuously with my Reader than the abovementioned Enigmatist has done, I shall present him with a key to my riddle; which upon application he will find exactly fitted to all the words of it: one leg is a leg of mutton, two legs is a servant maid, three legs is a joint stool, which in the Sphinx's country was called a tripod; as four legs is a dog, who in all nations and ages has been reckoned a quadruped. We have now the exposition of our first and third riddles upon legs; let us here if you please, endeavour to find out the meaning of our second, which is thus in the Author's words:

*What stranger creature yet is he,
That has four legs, then two, then three;
Then loses one, then gets two more,
And runs away at last on four?*

This riddle, as the Poet tells us, was proposed by *Oedipus* to the Sphinx, after he had given his solution to that which the Sphinx had proposed to him. This *Oedipus*, you must understand, though the people did not believe it, was son to a King of *Thebes*, and bore a particular grudge to the Tre——r of that Kingdom; which made him so bitter upon *H. L.* in this Enigma.

*What stranger creature yet is he,
That has four legs, then two, then three?*

By

By which he intimates, that this great man at *Thebes* being *weak by nature*, as he admirably expresses it, could not walk as soon as he was born, but, like other children, fell upon all four when he attempted it; that he afterwards went upon two legs, like other men; and that in his more advanced age, he got a white staff in Queen *Jocasta's* court, which the Author calls his third leg. Now it so happened that the Treasurer fell, and by that means broke his third leg, which is intimated by the next words, *Then loses one*—Thus far I think we have travelled through the riddle with good success.

*What stranger creature yet is he
That has four legs, then two, then three?
Then loses one—*

But now comes the difficulty that has puzzled the whole town, and which I must confess has kept me awake for these three nights;

*—————Then gets two more,
And runs away at last on four.*

I at last thought the treasurer of *Thebes* might have walked upon crutches, and so ran away on four legs, *viz.* two natural and two artificial. But this I have no authority for; and therefore upon mature consideration do find that the words (*Then gets two more*) are only Greek expletives, introduced to make up the verse, and to signify nothing; and that *runs*, in the next line, should be *rides*. I shall therefore restore the true ancient reading of this riddle, after which it will be able to explain it self.

Oedipus speaks:

*Now in your turn, 'tis just methinks,
You should resolve me, Madam Sphinx,
What stranger creature yet is he,
Who has four legs, then two, then three;
Then loses one, then gains two more,
And rides away at last on four?*

I must now inform the Reader, that *Thebes* was on the continent, so that it was easy for a man to ride out of his dominions on horseback, an advantage that a *British* Statesman would be deprived of. If he would run away, he must do it *in an open boat*; for to say of an *Englishman* in this sense, that he runs away on all four, would be as absurd as to say, he clapped spurs

spurs to his horse at St. James's gate, and galloped away to the Hague.

Before I take my farewell of this subject, I shall advise the Author for the future to speak his meaning more plainly. I allow he has a happy talent at doggrel, when he writes upon a known subject: where he tells us in plain intelligible language, how *Syrisca's* ladle was lost in one hole, and *Hans Carvel's* finger in another, he is very jocular and diverting; but when he wraps a lampoon in a riddle, he must consider that his jest is lost to every one, but the few merry wags that are in the secret. This is making darker satyrs than ever *Persus* did. After this cursory view of the *Examiner's* performance, let us consider his remarks upon the Doctor's. That general piece of raillery which he passes upon the Doctor's considering the Treasurer in several different views, is that which might, fall upon any Poem in *Waller*, or any other writer who has diversity of thoughts and allusions: and tho' it may appear a pleasant ridicule to an ignorant Reader, is wholly groundless and unjust. I do likewise dissent with the *Examiner*, upon the phrases of *passions being poised*, and of the *retrieving merit from dependence*, which are very beautiful and poetical. It is the same cavilling spirit that finds fault with that expression of the *pomp of peace among the woes of war*, as well as of *offering unasked*. As for the *Nile*, how *Icarus* and *Phaeton* came to be joined with it, I cannot conceive. I must confess they have been formerly used to represent the fate of rash ambitious men; and I cannot imagine why the Author should deprive us of those particular Similes for the future. The next Criticism upon the stars, seems introduced for no other reason but to mention Mr. *Bickerstaff*, whom the Author every where endeavours to imitate and abuse. But I shall refer the *Examiner* to the frog's advice to her little one, that was blowing it self up to the size of an Ox:

—Non si te ruperis, inquit,
Par eris—

The allusion to the victim may be a Gallimatia in French politicks, but is an apt and noble allusion to a true English spirit. And as for the *Examiner's* remarks on the word *bleed* (though a man wou'd laugh to see impotent malice so little able to contain it self) one cannot but observe in them the temper of the Banditti whom he mentions in the same paper, who always murder where they rob. The last observation is upon the line, *Ingratitude's a weed of every clime*. Here he is very much out of humour with the Doctor, for having called that the *weed*, which *Dryden* only terms the *growth*, of every Clime. But, for God-sake, why so much tenderness for ingratitude?

But

But I shall say no more. We are now in an age wherein impudent assertions must pass for arguments: and I do not question but the same, who has endeavoured here to prove that he who wrote the *Dispensary* was no Poet, will very suddenly undertake to shew, that he who gained the battle of *Blenheim* is no General.

N^o 2. *Thursday, September 21.*

----- *Arcades ambo*
Et cantare pares-----

I Never yet knew an Author that had not his admirers. *Bunyan* and *Quarles* have passed through several editions, and please as many Readers, as *Dryden* and *Tillotson*: The *Examiner* had not written two half sheets of paper, before he met with one that was astonished at the force he was master of, and approaches him with awe, when he mentions State-subjects, as *encroaching on the province that belonged to him*, and treating of things that deserved to pass under his pen. The same humble Author tells us, that the *Examiner* can furnish mankind with an *Antidote to the poyson that is scattered through the nation*. This crying up of the *Examiner's* Antidote, puts me in mind of the first appearance that a celebrated *French* quack made in the streets of *Paris*. A little boy walked before him, publishing, with a shrill voice, *Mon pere guerit toutes sortes de maladies, My father cures all sorts of distempers*: To which the Doctor, who walked behind him, added in a grave and composed manner, *L'enfant dit vrai, The child says true*.

That the Reader may see what party the Author of this Letter is of, I shall shew how he speaks of the *French King* and the *Duke of Anjou*, and how of our greatest Allies, the *Emperor of Germany* and the *States-General*. *In the mean while the French King has withdrawn his troops from Spain, and has put it out of his power to restore that monarchy to us, was he reduced low enough really to desire to do it. The Duke of Anjou has had leisure to take off those whom he suspected, to confirm his friends, to regulate his revenues, to increase and form his troops, and*
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