



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

**The Works Of the late Right Honorable Henry St. John,
Lord Viscount Bolingbroke**

In Five Volumes, complete.

Bolingbroke, Henry St. John

London, 1754

[Occasional Writer.]

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-60759](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-60759)

OCCASIONAL WRITER.
THE

OCCASIONAL WRITER.

Fidens animi atque in utrumque paratus.

VIRG.

Vol. I.

3

THE

THE
OCCASIONAL WRITER

THE
OCCASIONAL WRITER

THE

3

Vol. I

T H E
OCCASIONAL WRITER.

N U M B E R I.

Inscribed to the PERSON, to whom alone it can belong.

Most Noble S I R,

I AM one, whose ambition it hath been, ever since I came into the world to distinguish myself as a writer; in which, I fairly confess, I had not only the view of raising my reputation, but that of establishing my fortune. A prospect, which seemed very reasonable in a time of general peace and universal affluence; in an age so particularly polite, that it is even the fashion to appear knowing in all the elegant arts and sciences; and that to whatever branch of them a genius shall think fit to turn himself, he is sure it will be to one that is in vogue.

THE first essays of my pen made a good deal of noise in the world: they filled foreign journals, and were translated into several languages. The Sorbonne, and both our mother Universities, returned me thanks for having reconciled several

disputes, and solved several difficulties in chronology and history, which had perplexed the learned world, from the impartial EUSEBIUS, down to the circumstantial PRIDEAUX; my philosophical Poems were received with the greatest applause; and it is well known, that if the gay part of the world read my ANTI-LUCRETIUS for amusement, the gravest divines have not disdained to borrow arguments from it in their disputes with the materialists.

ANIMATED by such success, in one part of my aim, I proceeded with indefatigable labor, till continual disappointments, in the other, rendered me at length more indifferent to that imaginary good, applause, and less patient of that real evil, want. I began then to compare my condition with that of several great authors both antient and modern; and finding upon the comparison that they had not been better treated than myself, I was soon led by my reflections to discover the true reason of our ill fortune in the world; I was soon convinced that they and I had been on a wrong pursuit; that ministers of state pay no respect to the brightest talents, when they are misapplied, and esteem all talents to be so, which are not wholly employed about the present time, and principally dedicated to the service of their administration; neither can I say this proceeding is unjust, how much soever I suffer by it.

If we write for posterity, we must not complain that the care of rewarding our merit is left to posterity; and if we neglect to serve the state, those, who are appointed to preside over it, break no rule of equity when they neglect us. SPENCER has been amply recompensed by posterity for his Fairy Queen; but the wise treasurer BURLEIGH declined the payment of an hundred pounds, which QUEEN ELIZABETH ordered

dered him, and left this admirable poet to starve. Had SPENCER applied himself to more serious studies, had he excelled in physics, in metaphysics, or even in the first philosophy, or in theology, instead of excelling in wit and poetry, the "amabiles insaniae" of Horace, his usage would have been the same no doubt. Even the greatest productions of these studies are but trifles in the account of a consummate statesman, and may properly enough be distinguished from the others in his sense, by the title of "insaniae severiores."

OUR English ministers, to their honor be it spoken, have at all times proceeded upon this admirable principle; the most excellent sermons, the most elaborate treatises, have not been sufficient to procure the advancement of some divines, whilst a sorry pamphlet or a spiritual libel has raised others to the highest dignities of the church. As it has fared with mere divinity, so has it fared with mere eloquence: as one never caused the divine, so the other never caused the lawyer to be distinguished. But we know that if either of them be employed in a court-cause, he never fails of making his fortune. The same fate has attended writers of another kind; the celebrated Tatlers, and Spectators, had no reward except from booksellers and fame. But when those authors made the discovery I have made, and applied their talents better, in writing the Englishman and the Freeholder, one was soon created a knight, and the other became secretary of state. In short, without enumerating any more instances, I may confidently affirm, that this has been the case from the days of BURLEIGH to this time; how much sooner it began to be so, I hope, sir, you will not give me the leisure to enquire.

FROM the moment I resolved to become a state-writer, I mentally devoted myself to your service: and I do it now in
this

this public and most solemn manner. Employ me, sir, as you please; I abandon myself intirely to you; my pen is at your disposition, and my conscience in your keeping. Like a lawyer, I am ready to support the cause, in which, give me leave to suppose that, I shall be soon retained, with ardor; and, if occasion be, with subtilty and acrimony. Like a Swiss, I will behave myself with equal boldness and fidelity; my pen is my fortune, and I think it as honorable to offer it, as offer my sword, without enquiring in a general battle, or in private skirmishes, at what relation or friend I strike. I cancel at once all former obligations and friendship, and will most implicitly follow your instructions in panegyric on yourself and friends, in satyr on your adversaries, in writing for or against any subject; nay, in writing for or against the same subject, just as your interest, or even your passions, may render it expedient.

I AM not ignorant that when CARNEADES offered to argue for virtue, and then against it, CATO proposed to drive that great philosopher and orator out of Rome. But CATO was a man of narrow principles and of too confined an understanding. He considered virtue abstractedly, without any regard to time, to place, and to that vast variety of conjunctures, which happens in the course of human affairs. In common life, morality is no doubt necessary, and therefore Legislators have been careful to enforce the practice of it; but whenever morality clashes with the interest of the state, it must be, and it always has been, laid aside. These are my opinions: and it is a great comfort to my conscience to find them confirmed by the practice of some reverend persons, whose examples ought to be of greater weight with me, than that of a wretched pagan. I shall therefore shew my self neither squeamish nor whimsical in pursuing the enterprize to which I offer my services, but shall remain firmly persuaded, that all the moral vices,

vices, I may be occasionally guilty of in so good a course, will be exalted into political virtues.

AFTER this plain and honest account, which I have given of myself, it may be allowed me to say, that you cannot find a person better qualified for your service, or more worthy to be lifted, among those who draw their pens in your cause, and of whom I am willing to hope that you have a greater and an abler body in reserve, than you have hitherto judged proper to bring into the field.

IT is evident, that a minister, in every circumstance of life, stands in as much need of us public writers as we of him. In his prosperity he can no more subsist without daily praise, than we without daily bread, and the farther he extends his views the more necessary are we to his support. Let him speak as contemptuously of us as he pleases, for that is frequently the manner of those who employ us most, and pay us best; yet will it fare with his ambition as with a lofty tree, which cannot shoot its branches into the clouds, unless its root work into the dirt, from which it rose, on which it stands, and by which it is nourished.

IF a minister falls into adversity, shall he take up the pen in his own defence? would not the case be as deplorable for him to be left to write, as for a prince to be left to fight in his own quarrel? Believe me, sir, whenever fortune abandons you, and who knows how soon that may happen, you will find yourself in a very forlorn state. At the name of your successor, those crowds, that attend your levee, will vanish like spirits at the dawn of day. None will remain about you, but such as no other administration will condescend to employ: and we may therefore very probably behold you, which would
be

be a pitiful fight indeed, endeavouring to secure a safe retreat with H***** on one side of you, and L***** on the other, two grotesque personages, exactly paired and nearly allyed, but surely as little fit to support a minister in his decline, as to adorn his triumph. In such a turn as this, you may depend on my utmost efforts to keep up a spirit for you; and I can make no doubt of being seconded by several of my fellow-writers, since I am certain you will not scruple to share some part of that fortune, which your industry and parsimony have raised, with those who unite to save the whole; and since we shall be reasonable enough not to expect above sixpence in the pound out of it, which cannot well amount to more than fifteen or twenty thousand pounds. A trifling sum for so great a service and so weighty a purse!

You may perhaps, after all I have said, be still apt to think that these are wild discourses, which have no other foundation but my desire to render myself necessary. You may refine too much in your reflections on my conduct, and too little in those you make on your present situation; or if you judge rightly of this, it is not impossible but you may depend too much on your own vigilance and dexterity. Should any of those flatterers, who often betray their patrons into a fatal security, speak to you much in the same manner, as sleep addresses himself to Palinurus in the fifth book of the *Aeneis*.

-----Palinure, ferunt ipsa aequora classẽm,
Aequatae spirant aerae, datur hora quieti;
Pone caput, fessosque oculos furare labori.

You would answer, I am persuaded, as this Pilot did.

Mene falis placidi vultum, fluctusque quietos
Ignorare jubes? mene huic confidere monstro? But

But PALINURUS slept, and you know the consequence.

BE not therefore displeas'd if a sincere and zealous servant rouses you, admonishes you not to trust too much to appearances, and shews you danger when perhaps you least expect it. You have sail'd long in a smooth sea with gentle and favorable gales. We believe your courage and your abilities extremely great, but we believe it implicitly; for you have not had foul weather enough to give any considerable proofs of either. These circumstances, which might be abus'd to inspire security, I urge as reasons why you should be alarmed; for the element you have to deal with is by the laws of nature inconstant: and therefore the longer you have been without a storm the more reason you have to expect one. There is no surer presage of an hurricane than just such a dead calm as I have observed for some time.

To speak without a figure: I would not have you flatter yourself, that the undisturbed quiet you have so long enjoyed is merely owing to your own integrity and political merit, or to the uncommon prosecution of hawkers and pamphleteers, which has been carried on by the direction of one of your principal instruments, and indeed a most vigorous statesman. This quiet, sir, is owing to deep and inveterate designs, which it becomes me to lay before you, without any regard to the censure I may incur, of revealing private conversation, and of breach of trust. Know then, that from the time you came into a fulness of power, many were shocked at the manner in which you seized it, and at the use you made of it. They said that both were hurtful, indecent, and even shameless. They went still farther, and affirmed, that your conduct was foolish with regard to your own interest, since it was foolish for a man to trust to

one single expedient of government, who had several in his power; and especially to such an expedient as that of money, which would equally serve to support him or to hang him. These persons however, notwithstanding their discontent, resolved to lie quiet, till your mal-administration should become so glaring as to justify their opposition, even in his majesty's sight: they said they would not follow your example; and upon that occasion they remembered with some sharpness how you did your utmost to distress the king's affairs, upon the first disgust you received; nay they were malicious enough to call to mind some personal reflections*, which the heat of your imagination, and your familiarity with majesty, betrayed you into, and for which they faucily wished what I dare not name. These seditious spirits flattered themselves that you would do your own business when you had the full swing of your power. They were acquainted, they said, with the presumption and distrust, with the boldness and pusillanimity, with the indiscretion and cunning, and with fifty other contradictions, which made up your character: and upon these they depended for putting a speedy end to your administration. This end they imagine to be now at hand; for thus they reason. A minister, who is attacked on his management of the public revenue, and has all the advantages of money and authority on his side, may escape tho he is guilty; but if he is innocent, the proceedings against him in such a case must necessarily confirm his power, and establish his reputation: nothing more desirable than such an attack can happen to him. But our present minister, say these malignants, directly stops all enquiry: in public he evades giving such accounts as the representatives of the people have a right to demand; in pri-

* See a pamphlet called An Answer to an infamous Libel, intituled, Sedition and Defamation displayed. Printed for R. Francklin.

vate

vate he is modest and discreet enough to laugh at those who think him such a fool as to furnish proofs against himself. Can a minister keep his ground long, who has no other defence than an implied confession of his guilt? will such a behaviour be endured in a nation hitherto free, and where there remain at least some sparks of honor and of love of the country?

THESE and many other reflections, which for brevity sake I omit, upon your particular conduct, and upon our domestic affairs, are frequently thrown out. But, sir, I confess to you, that I tremble when I hear the same persons discourse concerning the state of the nation with regard to her foreign interests. They affirm and they offer to demonstrate, that the affairs of Europe never were in greater confusion, and that the part we take upon ourselves is such an one, as no nation ever acted which was not betrayed, or whose ministers were not infatuated. That you are so, they say, is past dispute, whether you have conducted these affairs yourself, or have left them to those men of eminent talents, who are concerned in this part of your administration: they insist that nothing could have happened to us, if you had intirely neglected our foreign interests, worse than what you have brought upon us, by running into the other extreme. For they ask, what is the fruit of your continual negotiations, supported by a vast expence, and carried on as busily as if the welfare of Great Britain had been at stake in every dispute which has happened on the continent? They answer for you, and they defy you to contradict them, that we have made the quarrels of other people our own; and that we find ourselves engaged as principals, in some cases where we have but a very remote concern, and in others where we have no concern at all. That our commerce suffers and runs the risque of being lost, not for a time, but for ever, in several branches, much more beneficial to us than the

Offend trade; and that our right to keep those important possessions, which were yielded to us in the most solemn and authentic manner, is come, by dint of negotiation, from being indisputable, to be called in question. In a word, that to restore the public tranquility, and to settle our own interests, we must engage in a new war and conclude a new peace: that you have contrived to make it impossible for us to do one, without fighting against the very principle for which we have fought ever since the revolution, or to attempt the other without lying under the particular circumstance, that our principal allies will be as much in earnest as our enemies to wrest out of our hands the chief advantages which we obtained by the treaty of Utrecht. At the time when these treaties were made, continue they, your great minister cried aloud and spared not. He complained, as much as any man, that the exorbitant power of France was not sufficiently reduced; and that the barriers of our allies, on the Rhine and in the Netherlands, were left too weak: and is it under his administration that we are to see a pretence given to the French, and an opportunity thrown into their hands, of strengthening their power, and of extending their barriers? When I tell these objectors that your brother answers for the court of France, they laugh in my face, and reply, "Well he may, and so might any of those, who were in the French interest, have done at the time when the triple alliance was broken, and France was encouraged by England to fall upon the Dutch." The ministers, who are answered for, would be as weak as he, who answers for them, if they did not see the advantage in the present juncture, and did not take a secret malicious pleasure in making us, who contributed so much to reduce their power, become the instruments of raising it again. In the case of a war then, we have, according to this reasoning, which really, sir, has an air of truth, nothing so much to fear as the assistance of our chief ally; and
in

in the case of a treaty, not only France, but Holland likewise, must be against us in that important article of Gibraltar and Port-Mahon, and in all particular advantages of commerce, which we have enjoyed, and may find it reasonable to pretend to. The late duke of Orleans, as dear a friend as he was to us, insisted strenuously, that we should give up the places before-mentioned; pretended a promise to this effect, and himself obliged in honor to see this promise kept. Every one, who knows any thing of the transactions of those times, knows with how envious an eye the Dutch beheld the separate privileges in trade, and the sole possession of Gibraltar, and of the island of Minorca, which we obtained at the last peace; and what lengths they would have gone to facilitate the negotiations, which at that time they opposed, if they might have been admitted to a share in these advantages.

THE danger of an immediate invasion, and the engagements entered into by the emperor and the king of Spain to insult us with their fleets, and to conquer Great Britain and Ireland for the pretender, have been very industriously propagated by those, who are already in your pay, and by me, who stand a candidate for this honor, but am hitherto a volunteer in your service. I am sorry to tell you, sir, but Heaven forbid that I should conceal so material a circumstance from your knowledge, we do not succeed. We raise a spirit, but this spirit turns against you. There are more people than ever against the pretender; and zeal for supporting the present establishment never ran higher. But this zeal is not any longer without knowledge: it is directed to its proper object, and there is no possibility of leading it hoodwinked to serve any other purposes. Some incredulous wretches there are, who smile when we talk to them of invasions and the pretender, and who content themselves to reply, that the machine is very seasonably introduced,
and

and according to the rules of art. The greater number take fire, and lay this new distress, which we threaten them with, at your door; for, they say, that we disobliged Spain some years ago, to tie the emperor the more firmly to us, and that we have since that time disobliged the emperor, by affecting a closer correspondence, and greater union of councils with France than ever was known between the two nations. They send us to that excellent treatise, "The barrier treaty vindicated," to learn our true and lasting interest in foreign alliances, and there they pretend that we shall find the condemnation of all your measures: they lament the miserable scene, which they apprehend may soon be opened, his majesty's foreign dominions exposed to all the calamities of war, and perhaps in danger of being lost; we ourselves struggling against domestic enemies, and defending our coasts against invasions: these mischiefs brought upon us by a conjunction of the emperor, our old ally, with the king of Spain his rival; a conjunction so unnatural, that nothing but the highest resentment at our behavior to them both could have brought it about: in short, to finish up the picture, Great Britain reduced in this distress to lean solely upon France, and the faith of that court to become our chief security.

UPON the whole matter, your enemies, sir, the substance of whose private conversation I have now honestly reported to you, conclude very insolently that you have filled up the measure of your iniquity and your folly, and that you must sink, or the nation must sink under the weight of that calamity which you have brought and suffered to be brought upon her.

As shocking as this account must be to your ears, I promise myself that the sincerity and plainness with which I have given it, will be agreeable to you; and that you will receive
 5 into

N^o I. THE OCCASIONAL WRITER. 143

into your bosom a man whose affection for your person and zeal for your service, must be above all suspicion, after giving you intelligence of so high a nature, without any stipulation for the discovery.

I EXPECT to hear from you in eight days from the date hereof; if I do not, you shall hear again from him, who is,

Most noble SIR,

Your honor's

most devoted servant,

From my Garret,
Jan. 1726-7.

THE OCCASIONAL WRITER.

THE

THE OCCASIONAL WRITER.

NUMBER II.

To the fame.

Most Noble S I R,

I THINK myself obliged in honor to let the world know, that you have treated all my propofals to write in your fervice with a contempt unufual from one in your ftation; for I have feen the times when every little poultry prostitute of his pen found countenance and encouragement. Thefe wretches are fure of both, whenever there are any bad meafures to be juftified, or any bold ftrokes to be given; and the croaking of thefe ravens has always, in my imagination, boded fome mischief or other to the commonwealth.

FOR this reafon, I took upon me the character of a moft infamous libeller, in my firft addrefs to you, that I might be able to make a furer judgment of our prefent condition, and know better what expectations to entertain; fo that I own I am moft agreeably difappointed in not receiving any letter or meffage

message from you. I own, that instead of biting you, I am fairly bit myself.

SOME malicious refiners may pretend, perhaps, that an address of such a nature, made in so public a manner, could meet with no other treatment, even from a minister who was willing to accept the proposal. Malice, I say, may refine thus, and endeavor to depreciate a virtuous action, which cannot be denied, by supposing such motives to it as cannot be proved. The practice is too common, and especially where men are divided into parties, where public disputes create and nourish private animosities, and where perpetual feuds irritate the natural malignity of the heart. But far be it from me to judge with so little charity; I am willing to believe, sir, that you declined the offers made you, not on account of the public address, by which they were conveyed, but because you disdained to support a virtuous administration by a venal pen.

WHEN I meet a man with loaded pistols in his pocket, or a dagger under his cloak, I suspect that he is going upon no very honorable designs. Housebreakers and coiners have been detected, by having their tools found about them. Informers, spies, and hireling scribblers are the tools of an evil statesman; and when I see all such discouraged, and none of them about a minister, I think myself obliged to suppose that his designs are honorable, and his measures directed to the public good.

I TAKE this opportunity therefore of begging your pardon for the trial I presumed to make. The liberty indeed was great; but since it has turned so vastly to your honor, I hope to be the more easily forgiven. Shall I own it, sir? my hopes go still farther; you disdained me under the feigned character which I assumed; from the same principle of honor, from the

same consciousness of merit, you will, nay, you must afford me some share of your esteem, when I appear, as I intend to do for the future, under my own. These papers shall breathe nothing but zeal to promote the honor of his majesty, the security of our present happy establishment, and in one word, the good of our country. The same spirit, which animates you and me, shall animate them: and I cannot doubt of your approbation, when I co-operate with you to these purposes, which were certainly the sole inducements you had to enter into business; as it is manifest that you continue at the head of affairs for no other reasons.

THE truth is, however, (for I think it becoming a friendship, which is likely to grow as intimate as ours, that I should disguise nothing from you) two things have lately happened, which gave some little shock to my good opinion of you. The first is an unwillingness you manifested, that the true state of the national debts should be known by the nation; and the severe censure you passed on such persons, as were desirous to give their countrymen a fair account of their condition in a part so essential, that our being a nation, or not a nation, depends almost entirely, in this crisis, on our running or not running farther into debt. The other is the publication of a pamphlet supposed to be written by your direction, which is evidently designed to keep us no less in the dark as to all our affairs abroad.

As to the first, that matter has been taken up already; and will, I doubt not, in all places, and in all manners, be so thoroughly sifted, that we shall no longer be at a loss, either as to the revenue, and the real charges upon it, or as to the whole management of it. In which examination, sir, let me advise you, as a friend, to act an ingenuous part, that suspi-
cions

cions may not increase, and that I may not be obliged to write to you in a stile, to which I shall turn my pen with reluctance.

As to the latter, I hope, it will be likewise examined; and if I was able to take such a task on myself, I should, I am persuaded, in doing so, but make a second trial of you to your glory, and knit the bands of our friendship the closer, by answering a pamphlet of so pernicious consequence, and writ with so ill a design. But I know my own unfitness to inform, to instruct, and to rouse our countrymen, some from their lethargy, and some from their golden dreams. I may toll the alarm-bell, but persons of greater strength and skill must be called upon to raise it, and to ring it out in the ears of the nation.

WE are grown more easy, nay, more willing than ever, to be imposed upon; and we do more than half the work of those who find their account in deluding us. Almost every man considers himself as a single person; those few, who extend their considerations farther, seldom or never carry them beyond the narrow system of a family, or a party. And thus it happens, that private interest is become the criterion, by which judgments are formed upon public affairs. The man, whoever he be, who is at any time in fashion, has nothing to do but to hold out that purse, which the more he empties it, the surer he is to fill. After which let him declaim imperiously, and assert boldly, without regarding proof, or condescending to argue; let one of his tools write a pamphlet in much the same strain, and the work is done, the opinion of mankind is settled, the crowd repeats what the orator has said, and the author writ; the clamor is echoed back on all sides, and these echoes, the reverse of all others, strengthen by repetition.

tion. Thus the corrupt lead the blind, and the blind lead one another; the still voice of reason is drowned in popular clamor, and truth is overwhelmed by prejudice.

THIS is a true account of what happens frequently; it is so far from being a description drawn from imagination, that I could give several instances, and perhaps shall have occasion to quote some, of such gross impositions on the common sense of mankind, offered in this manner, and offered with success, as no one would be bold enough to attempt putting on the weakest man in Britain in private conversation.

THERE are therefore, GOD knows, but too many reasons for him to despond, who entertains a thought of prevailing on the generality of people, to lay aside their prejudices, to check their passions, and to consider the state of the nation in a due extent, and in a true light; and yet such is our condition, such a crisis are we in, that if we do not take and execute this resolution now, it may very probably be out of our power to do it hereafter to any good purpose.

IN our senate we hear of great dangers, which we have to apprehend from abroad; and if we believe what is said in a foreign * state, we are exposed to very great ones at home. I am willing to hope, that both one and the other are magnified; but they may grow to be such in reality as they are represented to be, if we do not take more than ordinary care; first, to weigh in a just balance each of the many evils which threaten the nation; and secondly, if we do not penetrate into every one of the causes, which have combined to bring them upon us. Should we fail in the first point, we may increase our dangers from abroad; by over-rating those at home,

* Vide Letter from Stockholm.

and by applying ourselves solely to prevent the latter. But I believe no one thinks us disposed to run into this extreme; we are much more likely to run into the other, and to increase our dangers at home, by over-rating those which we apprehend from abroad. Should we fail in the second point, and neglect to penetrate into all the causes which combine to bring our present distress upon us, palliative remedies alone will be applied, in the use of which we may very probably expire after a tedious languor, but from which we cannot expect a radical cure.

CONVINCED therefore, that if we neglect the present moment, if every man does not think and write, and speak and act for his country at this time, according to his best talents, and according to the opportunities which he has of exerting them, we shall soon be in every sense a ruined nation.

I CONFESS, that I am impatient, however low my hopes of success run, till some abler pen accepts the invitation, which "the enquirer into the reasons of the conduct of Great Britain" gives to every member of this community, till an enquiry is made, according to the right which he is pleased to allow, into our present state, and into the measures, which have led to it. But then this enquiry must be made upon better principles, and with an honest view than he has, who made this, which lies before me: the person, who accepts his invitation, should be one who would blush to follow his example; for he acts the part of an apologist, where he professes to act that of an impartial enquirer: he seems very zealous for the success of the cause which he pleads, and very indifferent what means he employs to procure this success; many things are disguised, many are concealed, and hardly any are represented in their natural and proper light. Fallacy, sophism, and a
puerile

puerile declamation, swell the elaborate treatise; but there was a design perhaps, as well as habit, in such a manner of writing upon this occasion, since a bad cause must be defended by such means; and, therefore, by such pens as would disgrace and weaken a good one; since it may possibly appear, upon a fair examination, that the cause he is retained in is none of the best.

IF this should appear, I am apt to believe, that those, who set him at work, will not be much concerned; they could not look on this pamphlet as any thing better than a momentary expedient to mislead and inflame. If it has that effect, if it serves to keep up the delusion till all the jobs, which are to be done, are done; the ends, which they proposed to themselves, are perhaps answered. But if this nation should awaken to a sense of their true interest, and if the British spirit should once more revive amongst us, it might very well happen that these persons would have made a faulty reckoning; for surely, after having exercised the justice of the nation, by censuring in one parliament a treaty of peace, which has been approved in another, it will not be thought strange, if we punish, at one time or another, those who have negotiated us out of peace and tranquility, into war and confusion, altho the wisdom of the nation should think fit to support, for the present, the measures of these ministers.

THE enquirer supposes the whole face of affairs in Europe to have received the great alteration which he is so much surprised at, within the space of the last year; but I cannot agree with him, that the turn has been so sudden as he represents it. "The calm hardly to be paralleled by any past prospect," as this great master of stile expresses himself by a figure of Hibernian rhetoric, was accompanied, as calms frequently are, by
many

many signs of an approaching storm; which signs did not escape the observation of the failors, and even passengers in our vessel, tho they escaped that of our able pilots, who were, it seems, all that while in a most serene security. The particular evils, which we apprehend at present, were known to our ministers above a year ago, if it be true, as the enquirer affirms, that the treaty of Hanover, and negotiations in consequence of it, are "the steps, which the court of Great Britain thought fit to take as soon as possible, after the danger we were in appeared evident beyond all contradiction." But before the particular danger appeared, the general danger was evident enough. When the treaty of Vienna was made, our ship struck; but we had been sailing among rocks and shoals long before, ever since we quitted our port, and launched out to sea, on the wise errand of convoying other people safe to theirs.

HE therefore, who is desirous to make the enquiry proposed, in such a manner as may be of real use to the public, must take up things much higher than this partial writer was instructed to do. Many things happened during the congress of Cambray, which deserve to be explained; and there are treaties both previous and subsequent to the quadruple alliance, which deserve to be commented upon.

NAY, there seems to be a necessity of going farther back than this reign, or even than this century, if we design to be thoroughly acquainted with the original of our present distress. When we have taken a general survey of the conduct of Britain, with relation to the affairs of Europe, for about two hundred years, we shall come much better prepared to discover our true point of interest; and by observing how we have departed from it, we shall learn how to return to it.

THIS

THIS part I will venture to undertake; and what I shall say upon it, may serve at least as an introduction to that work, which, I hope, will be performed by some abler hand.

THE foundations of the grandeur of France, and those of the grandeur of the house of Austria, were laid very near at the same period. FERDINAND and ISABELLA began the latter; and in CHARLES the fifth their grandson, and almost immediate successor, it was carried up to that exorbitant height, which made Europe tremble under his reign, under that of his son, and upon some occasions even later. The progress which France made was not so rapid, but was perhaps as sure; she shared with her rival the spoils of the house of Burgundy, by the address and vigor of LEWIS the eleventh, who not only extended the bounds, and strengthened the frontier of that close compact body, whose very figure is an addition to the force of it, but assured it's inward tranquility better, and rendered that monarchy more formidable than it had been in the time of his predecessors, when the authority of the prince was less.

THE forming of two such powers, in Europe, made it the interest of all other princes and states, to keep as much as possible a balance between them. And here began that principle of English policy to be established, which, however true and wise in itself, has hardly ever been truly and wisely pursued.

WE should take things rather too high, if we went up to the reign of king HENRY the seventh, tho even there some observations are to be made, which have relation to our present subject.

FREQUENT and important occasions of acting on this principle presented themselves in the time of HENRY the eighth. Some he took, some he neglected, and some he managed ill; for to say the truth, the whole conduct of this prince was a continued course of extravagance, violence, and levity: his vices glared through the best actions of his life. He exercised the tyranny, and practised the bloody precepts of the church of Rome, even while he was delivering us from the papal yoke. His deliberations for peace or war seemed often to have a mixture of humor in them; and his own passions, as well as WOLSEY's, made him hold the balance of Europe, if he did hold it, with an uneven hand.

THE reformation, which began in his time in Germany, and which was completed by EDWARD the sixth, and by queen ELIZABETH, in England, gave occasion to a new division of interests; and made it of the utmost importance to the welfare of this nation, not only to preserve a balance between the two great powers of Europe, but to support the protestant cause against them both. The first of these was to be done by throwing as much as the occasion might require of our weight, sometimes into one, and sometimes into the other of these scales; but the latter could be effected by nothing less than a constant adherence to that side which was for a long time the weakest, and which, I doubt, is so still.

BOTH these principles were pursued by queen ELIZABETH, with the greatest wisdom, and with the greatest success. To illustrate this fully, it would be necessary to run through the annals of her glorious reign. But a few general observations will suffice for our present purpose. When she came to the crown, the nation was divided between two powerful parties, exasperated by religious zeal; Ireland was papist, Scotland was

under the immediate influence of France, and the queen of that kingdom, married to the dauphin of France, disputed her title to the crown of England. In short, the surest support she had amidst all these difficulties, besides the firmness of her mind, and the penetration of her understanding, was in PHILIP the second, whom she disobliged by refusing to make him her husband; and who could not fail of being, on many accounts, as he proved to be, her most implacable and dangerous enemy. She kept measures for a while with him, nay, perhaps, with the court of Rome, and soon settled her government, and established her power: her own kingdom was the first and principal object of her care; and she judged very wisely, that, in order to be considerable abroad, she must begin by making herself so at home. Her revenue was administered with the utmost frugality, industry was encouraged, manufactures improved, and commerce extended: she was far from neglecting foreign alliances, but her negotiations were conducted with great art and little expence, and the engagements she took were always necessary, seldom chargeable. She supported the protestant cause in France, with good offices, with loans of money; and upon some pressing occasions with troops. But she never depended on the gratitude of HENRY the fourth, and was neither surpris'd nor unprepared when he made returns very unworthy of the obligations he had to her. The Dutch could not have sustained their revolt from Spain, nor have formed their commonwealth, without her assistance. She helped them powerfully, but she exacted cautionary towns from them, as a security for her reimbursement, whenever they should be in a condition to pay; and in the mean time as a check, to keep them under the influence and direction of England. By such methods as these, her own country grew rich and flourishing, while she not only preserved a balance of power abroad, but contributed extremely to reduce Spain from being the terror
of

of Europe, to that low state, into which it fell under the successors of king Philip the second.

THE reign of king JAMES the first, is not to be read without a mixture of indignation and contempt. He came to the crown with great advantages; but a bad head, and a worse heart, hindered him from improving any of them. He lost the opportunity of uniting the two kingdoms; he suffered his revenue to be ill administered; his ministers were notoriously corrupt, and he himself very profuse.

INSTEAD of asswaging, he fomented disputes by his pedantry; established such principles of government, and raised such a spirit in the clergy, as could hardly fail to produce the terrible effects which followed in the reign of his son.

SUCH a management of domestic affairs would have put it out of his power, if it had been his inclination to act a wiser part in foreign affairs: but he had no such inclination. Twelve years he suffered himself to be amused with the Spanish match; he countenanced at least the popish, and he absolutely neglected the protestant interest, both in France and Germany. Instead of helping the dispositions, which appeared, to take the imperial crown out of the house of Austria, he favored the cause of that family, and abandoned his own children to the resentment of the emperor and the popish league. When the thirty years war began in 1618, the liberty of Germany, and the whole protestant interest, were in the utmost peril. The sole measures, which he took for the support of either, consisted in simple embassies, ridiculous letters, and languid negotiations. Queen ELIZABETH defeated the ambitious designs of the Spanish branch of the Austrian family; king JAMES favored those of the German branch of the same family.

OVER the succeeding reign, and all that followed, to the restoration of king CHARLES the second, let us draw a veil.

DURING this time the decay of the Spanish monarchy increased apace, the liberties of Germany were asserted, and the power of the emperor bounded by the treaties of Westphalia; but another power, that of France, began to rise very fast on the foundations laid long ago. RICHELIEU and MAZARINE had given that crown a great superiority in the affairs of Europe, and the prince who wore it, resolved to maintain and augment this superiority, at the expence of all his neighbours.

The attack which LEWIS the fourteenth made upon the Low Countries in 1667, shewed, both in the manner of it, and in the pretence taken for it, what Europe had to expect from this prince. On this occasion the triple alliance was made; and happy had it been, if the same principles of policy had continued to prevail. But the king who sat on our throne, with better sense and more courage than his grandfather, was at least as unfit as he to defend the liberties of Europe, and perhaps more unfit to defend the protestant interest.

KING CHARLES the second joined his councils and his arms to those of France; and when he could not openly assist, he privately abetted the usurpations of that crown. He might, by conforming to the desires of his people, who were in his and their true interest, have had the immortal honor of preserving a balance of power in Europe; but he chose the eternal infamy of helping to destroy this balance; and not content to be the ally of a prince, whose enemy he ought to have been, he condescended to be his instrument, and even his pensioner. This conduct, which took so much strength from that side, which was already too weak, and which added so much to that

that which was already too strong, established the absolute superiority of France, and left Spain, Germany, Italy, and the Seventeen provinces, nay and Britain too, in consequence, at her mercy.

THIS terrible face of things did not mend on the accession of king JAMES the second to the throne. Whatever his politics were, religion would have got the better of them. Bigotry must have cemented a close union between him and the king of France, who was alone able and willing to assist him in the work he had undertaken at home. But the greatness of our danger, as it sometimes happens, saved us; and in saving us, saved all Europe. The revolution in our government caused a total change in our conduct. A prince, who had been long at the head of a weak but resolute opposition to France, mounted our throne; and the principles of maintaining a balance between the great powers of Europe, and of supporting the protestant interest, came once more into fashion in this kingdom, after having been for near a century, either neglected, or acted against.

THE body of the nation resumed these principles with warmth, and has supported them ever since with unparalleled spirit and vigor. But let it be said without offence, since it may be said with truth, and since it is necessary that it should be said upon this occasion, we have not pursued them with as much wisdom as zeal. If we have erred in our politics since the revolution, it is sure we have erred on the right side. But errors on the right side are errors still, and may, in time, prove as fatal as errors on the other; and are, in one respect at least, more dangerous, as they are less attended to at first, or guarded against.

BETWEEN

BETWEEN all extremes there is a certain middle point, which men of genius perceive, and to which men of honor adhere in private and in public life.

THUS avarice and prodigality are at an immense distance; but there is a space marked out by virtue between them, where frugality and generosity reside together. Thus again, to abandon those, whom it is our interest to support, is an excess of folly; and to support the interests of other people, to the ruin of our own, is an excess of folly likewise. But there are lines described by prudence, between these two excesses, within which our common interests meet, and may proceed together.

IT would be an invidious as well as tedious task, to go through all the instances, which might be produced; wherein we have, under pretence of preserving a balance of power in Europe, gratified the passions of particular men, and served the turns of private interest, till we have rendered that principle, in a reasonable pursuit of which our safety and our glory consist, the occasion of real danger to the interest, and of reproach to the wisdom of our nation. A few of these instances will suffice to deduce the progress of our mistaken policy, to evince the truth of what has been advanced in general, and to fix the application of the whole to the present conjuncture; wherein I apprehend, that we are about to pay the price not only of late errors, but a long series of errors.

THE war, which began in 1688, was no doubt a very necessary war. It was necessary to extinguish the rebellion in Scotland; it was necessary to reduce Ireland; it was necessary to assert the new establishment of our government. These were our immediate interests; but we had remote interests likewise

likewise concerned, which were of themselves sufficient to engage us to enter, at least as allies and friends, into the war. The empire was in danger by the taking of Philipsburgh, and other enterprizes of the French; and Holland lay once more open to their invasions, by the seizing of Bonne. In the course of this war, Ireland was reduced; all the efforts against the government in England and Scotland were defeated; and, by the peace, France acknowledged king WILLIAM.

As unfortunate as we had been on the Rhine and in Flanders, every thing, which the French had taken in the course of the war from our allies, was restored at Ryfwic; and Luxembourg, which France had usurped before the war, was likewise given up. Thus far all was well. The points, which England contended for, were carried; and our allies recovered by treaty more than they had lost by war.

IF a common guaranty of this treaty had been entered into as soon as those powers acceded who refused to sign when England and Holland did, the tranquility of Europe would have been better secured than it was at this time, or at the peace of Nimeghen; at least England would have engaged, as far as it became her to do, even upon the principle of maintaining the balance of power, and no farther.

BUT, instead of taking this step, we took another, which proved fatal in its consequences. The death of CHARLES the second, king of Spain, without children, was then in prospect. The pretensions of France were known, and its power had been lately felt. Whenever the case should happen, a war seemed to be unavoidable. But this war must have been made by France alone, for the conquest of the Spanish monarchy; which, as powerful as we then thought her, and as insolent as she

really was, she would not have engaged in lightly. Neither could she have supported it, if she had, since even with Spain on her side, she could not have supported the last, if the mines of Peru had not been unaccountably left open to her.

ON the apprehension, however, of such a war, and on the specious pretence of preserving a balance of power in Europe, the partition treaties were made; that is, without the knowledge of the king of Spain, we disposed of his inheritance; without the consent of the emperor, and in concert with his adverse party, we settled the rights contested between the house of Austria and Bourbon; and we engaged to make this partition good by arms.

I DO not enter into the reasons for and against this treaty, which may be drawn from the particular stipulations contained in it, but content myself to observe, in general, what impolitic measures we were at this period betrayed into, by an over-weening desire to preserve the balance of power; and how much reason we have to be always on our guard against errors of this kind, since a prince, whom genius and experience had rendered the greatest man of his age, was not exempt from them, but drew both England and Holland fatally into them.

WHENEVER this balance is in real danger by the exorbitant growth of one power, or by the union of more, other princes and states will be alarmed of course. All of them ought, and most of them will take measures for their common security. But the wise councils amongst them will, upon every such occasion, proportion their measures, and the engagements they enter into, not according to the nature of the danger considered generally, but according to the immediate or remote relation, which it has to each of them; and according to the
strength,

strength, situation, or any other circumstance, which may be peculiar to each of them.

To do otherwise, would be to lose sight of our own particular interest in the pursuit of a common interest. It would be nothing better than setting up for the DON QUIXOTES of the world, and engage to fight the battles of all mankind. The state, which keeps it's own particular interest constantly in view, has no invariable rule to go by; and this rule will direct and limit all it's proceedings in foreign affairs; so that such a state will frequently take no share, and frequently a small share in the disputes of it's neighbours, and will never exert it's whole strength, but when it's whole is at stake. But a state, who neglects to do this, has no rule at all to go by, and must fight to negotiate, and negotiate to fight again, as long as it is a state; because, as long as it is a state, there will be disputes among it's neighbours, and some of these will prevail at one time, and some at another, in the perpetual flux and reflux of human affairs.

IF the kings of France and Spain, and the emperor, had made an agreement amongst themselves, about the succession to the dominions of Spain, consistent with the common interest of Europe, and considering the partiality which the court of Spain had, at that time, for the house of Austria, there was little room to fear, that such an agreement would have been too favorable to the house of Bourbon. If any such partition had been made, I say, no objection would have remained, either as to the right or manner of making it, and we might have escaped a war. If these princes had done nothing of this kind, we might have been engaged upon the king of Spain's death, as I said before, in a defensive war, for preserving the dominions of our old allies, and the liberties of

Europe, against the usurpations of our antient enemy. But instead of waiting to be auxiliaries in a defensive war, we put ourselves under a necessity of being principals in an offensive one; and by affecting to secure the balance of power, when we had neither call nor right to meddle, we reduced our affairs to this absurd alternative, that we must either make an offensive war as principals, against the emperor and Spain, in order to conquer for France, which was equally impolitic and unjust, or against France and Spain, in order to conquer for the emperor, under the greatest disadvantages possible; which happened to be the case.

THE partition treaties forced the king of Spain to make a will in favor of the house of Bourbon; and the Spaniards threw themselves into the arms of France, to prevent the dismemberment of their monarchy.

THUS was the balance of power lost by our meddling where we had nothing to do, even before it could have been in danger, if we had not meddled at all. We lost it, and the emperor knew that we must restore it for our own sakes, which could be done no otherwise than by conquering for him; and this he left us to do the best we could. While we fought his battles, he lent us the Austrian title, the person of his son, the present emperor, and little else. We neglected every thing, and sacrificed every thing in the prosecution of this quarrel. But the imperial councils were so far from neglecting any thing, or sacrificing any thing to it, that they seemed wholly taken up for some years in settling the affairs of Hungary to their satisfaction; and they sacrificed to an idle refinement in politics the greatest opportunity which we ever had, or must ever hope to have; I mean that of destroying the naval force of
France,

France, by the taking of Toulon. This they deliberately and almost avowedly hindered.

IF ever people were called upon to think of their own immediate interests, we were so at this time. Whether we could then have put an end to the expensive war we were engaged in for the house of Austria, in a manner consistent with the public interest of Europe, I am not able to determine. Certain it is in fact, that far from entertaining any such thoughts, we redoubled our spirit and our efforts in the prosecution of the war. As we acquired new allies, we enlarged our engagements; and as we obtained new victories, we extended our views. The grand alliance formed by king WILLIAM, for restoring a balance of power in Europe, proposed no other objects than sufficient barriers, security to trade, and reasonable satisfaction to the house of Austria*. These were thought, by that great prince, all the points necessary to be contended for. But, instead of confining ourselves to so narrow a plan, we judged that the balance of power could not be effectually restored, unless we wrested the whole Spanish monarchy from the house of Bourbon, to give it to the house of Austria. For this prize we fought, and fought with as little regard to all other interests, as if we had defended our own altars, and our own houses.

MUST we not acknowledge, upon this occasion, sir, the shortness of human foresight? The very measure, which we pursued at so great expence of blood and treasure (because nothing less could secure the balance of power in Europe, and even the trade of this kingdom, and the protestant succession, against the invasions of France and the pretender) that very

* Vide G. Al. Art. 8.

IF we had succeeded in our attempts to set the crown of Spain on the head of the present emperor, and his brother the emperor JOSEPH had lived, would our danger from the union of these two brothers not have been at least as great as that which is apprehended from the union of the present emperor, and of the present king of Spain, rivals almost from their cradles, and by a long course of opposition, such inveterate enemies, that they could hardly be kept, as the enquirer assures us, "within the bounds of common decency towards one another, by all the address of two powerful mediators in a public treaty?" Might not the same address, that threw these enemies into one another's arms, (for it will appear they did not run thither so unaccountably) and united them in designs destructive to the commerce and rights of other nations, have succeeded equally well between the two brothers, especially since, in this case, there would have been but half the work to do? The union would have been formed to our hands, and our address could only have been shewn, in giving such proper provocations, as might have inspired the designs.

Would CHARLES have been less favorable to the trade of his brother's subjects, at any place in the Austrian dominions, than PHILIP shews himself to the trade of the subjects of CHARLES? Would JOSEPH not have concurred to assist his brother to regain Gibraltar, and the island of Minorca, at least, as zealously as we can suppose that CHARLES concurs to assist PHILIP, either by good offices, or, if you please, to have it so, by force of arms? Would not a league between the two brothers have been as much a popish league as that which we are so much alarmed at, between the surviving brother
and

and the present king of Spain? Would not the first have made use of the pretender, as the latter is said to do, and as every prince or state, with whom we happen to be at variance, may be provoked to do? In short, I may safely challenge the author of the enquiry, as great a casuist as he is, to shew any difference between the two cases which I have compared together, except this, that we might have been exposed to great dangers from that settlement of Europe, which we fought to bring about, than we are, or can probably be exposed to, from that which we were so solicitous to prevent. But the case is still stronger than I have put it. For even after the death of the emperor JOSEPH, his present imperial majesty continued his claim to the whole Spanish monarchy; and you, and I, and many of us, continued to support his claim, and opposed with all our force the negotiations of peace, which were begun upon a different principle. Happily we failed of success. The many, who remonstrated, "That we were hastening apace to make him a power too great and too formidable; and that we should find in him, at last, the enemy we then dreaded only in another," prevailed. Had they not, in what a condition should we have been at this time? Would the emperor have been more grateful, or less powerful, with the crown of Spain and the Indies, added to so many others? If the union between him and the king of Spain is so formidable to us, how much more reason should we have had to apprehend the consequences to our trade, and in the end, to our liberties and our religion themselves, if these divided powers had been united in the same ungrateful person, as it is the mode at present to call the emperor?

IF DON CARLOS should marry the eldest arch-duchess, if the emperor should die without issue male, if the king of France should die without issue male, if the prince of Asturias should

should die without issue male, and the princes of the blood in France and Spain should not support the validity of the renunciations, all which is within the bounds of possibility, "Don CARLOS may be at once emperor, king of France, and king of Spain; and have the vast strength and riches of all these powers united and centered in him." This terrible object stares our speculative enquirer in the face, and disturbs his head. It disturbs, very probably, those excellent heads, who set him a scribbling, who can see so far into futurity at present; and who, not very long ago, were unable to discern the nearest and most probable events. Let us consider now, what consequence of this kind might have happened, if, for securing a balance of power in Europe, the present emperor had been likewise king of Spain. If then the king of France, instead of marrying the daughter of STANISLAUS, had married the eldest daughter of the emperor, which surely had been within the bounds of possibility, there would remain but one chance at this time, viz. the emperor having a son, to save us from the combination of such a power, as would in reality form what we commonly, tho improperly, call universal monarchy; since there would be nothing else, which could hinder LEWIS the fifteenth, from being king of France, of Spain, and of the West-Indies, master of all the Austrian dominions, and, by consequence, emperor. The truth I would inculcate by what I have said is this, that as the partition treaty threw too much weight into the scale of Bourbon, to the destruction of the balance of power in Europe; so the necessary consequence of the war we made to restore this balance must have been, if we had succeeded according to our desires, to destroy it again, by throwing too much weight into the scale of Austria. This has been proved by the event, and the enquirer demonstrates it, or he demonstrates nothing.

As

As far, therefore, as we have brought this deduction, that is, to the end of the last war, it is manifest that the notion of preserving a balance of power in Europe has, for the reasons touched upon above, and which every man will extend in his own thoughts, proved to us like an ignis fatuus; in the pursuit of which we have been led from difficulty to difficulty, and from danger to danger,

If we enquire, whether the treaties of Utrecht and Baden did afford us an opportunity of correcting our errors, and of profiting by our experience, it will be found that they did; since all the points, which had been in contest were then settled, and this settlement acquiesced in by all the parties to the war, except the emperor, who kept up still his claim against PHILIP the fifth.

BUT the keeping up this claim could not have endangered the public tranquility. He was unable to attack Spain for want of a maritime force, or even Sicily, which was covered besides by the guaranty of the neutrality of Italy; and this neutrality served likewise to hinder Spain from attacking him. There might have been a war of the pen, and there could have been no other between them.

AT the worst, if the king of Spain had invaded any part of Italy, the guarantees of the neutrality might easily have prevented such an attempt; and in so doing they would have observed the treaties, and kept the peace, far from breaking either one or the other.

IN such a state of foreign affairs, we had certainly an opportunity of looking carefully after our own. The king of Spain had no pretence to ask for any alteration in the settle-

ment so lately established with his own consent; and the emperor could not have complained of his majesty for observing treaties, which he would not have made, but which he found made; nor for refusing to enter into a new war on this account.

WHETHER we improved this opportunity, or not, what our present condition is, and by what steps we have been reduced to it, I leave to the enquiry of some person more capable than myself. Let it suffice, that I have endeavored to remove some delusions, which have affected even men of the best understandings, and the best intentions; and to prepare the minds of my countrymen to consider, at this critical point of time, what our national interest really is, without being biased in their judgments by what they may have thought of it on any former occasions.

I am,

Most noble SIR,

Your honor's

most devoted servant,

February 3,
1726-7.

THE OCCASIONAL WRITER.

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

JUST after I had sent these sheets to the press, a paper, intitled, "A letter to the Occasional Writer," was brought to me. I have read this stiff pedantic piece, with more attention than it deserves, tho I read it cursorily; and notwithstanding the pains which the author takes to pass for you, I am ready to acquit you of the scandal. You would certainly have writ better, and your pen at least would not have appeared so near a-kin to that of the Craftsman Extraordinary.

WHO this author supposes the Occasional Writer to be, I cannot guess. Such a wretch as he describes is, I believe, to be found no where, nor even such an image of guilt and misery any where, except in the horrors of his own mind. I shall therefore, with a decent contempt for this scurrilous scribbler, and without any concern about his imaginary correspondent, continue these inoffensive letters, in great tranquility and sedateness, as often as occasion invites me, or as I find myself in the humor.

VOL. I.

Z

THE

T H E
OCCASIONAL WRITER.

N U M B E R III.

To the same.

--- Quis te, juvenum confidentissime, nostras
Jussit adire domos? Quidve hinc petis? inquit. At ille,
Scis Proteu, scis ipse; neque est te fallere cuiquam.

VIRG.

Most Noble S I R,

WHEN I write the postscript to my last letter, I believed firmly that the answer to the Occasional Writer was neither writ by you, nor published by your order. Many considerations determined me to this opinion. For instance: I could not think, that in order to vent yourself in a fit of railing, you would draw a picture out of your own imagination, which cannot pass for that of the person who writ to you, even in the low and vile character he assumed, and which you will hardly venture to own that you meant to be the resemblance of any man in Britain. I could not persuade myself that you would give occasion, as I apprehend very much that you may have done, to the drawing of another picture after the life, which no one will mistake, and which you will not be curious to place in your collection of paintings. I have, with the rest of mankind, a great re-
gard

gard for some of your friends; but I have, with the rest of mankind likewise, a great regard for your particular enemies, among whom it seemed impossible to me that you, who know them so well, should presume to find either slaves or criminals, or insolvent debtors. I dare affirm, that there is not one of them, who ever "mortgaged his estate for more than it's value, or reduced himself near the necessity of living by contribution."

THESE are some of the motives which induced me to acquit you of the scandal, as I then thought it, of writing this paper. But, upon better information, and farther reflection, I have changed my opinion; and I see nothing inconsistent with my respect for you, in believing that you did write it.

As great an advantage as it is in all the affairs of life for a man to keep his temper, it is often excusable, and perhaps sometimes even praise-worthy, to lose it. When a minister is contradicted in matters relating to his administration, and when busy people shall presume to ask his reasons, instead of submitting to his authority, can we wonder if his passion transports him into rhodomontades, and if he behaves himself a little wildly? But when the virtue of a minister like you, whose whole life has been one bright example of public and private virtue, shall be suspected, so far as to be tempted to passion; who can refuse him even applause, if his generous soul, transported with a just indignation, breathes forth such expressions, as might, upon a less occasion, pass for indecent ribaldry?

THIS was your case, most noble sir, in the trial which I presumed lately to make, with too much boldness perhaps, but surely with a very good design. A man writes to you from

Z 2

his

his garret; describes himself as a prostitute scribbler, and offers you the service of his pen: this, and this alone, appears to you; upon which a noble indignation seizes you, and you strike boldly, tho' you strike in the dark. There is really somewhat fine in this sally of resentment, and it confirms, in the highest degree, the sentiments I have long entertained of your integrity, of your ability, and of a certain grace which accompanies and gives a lustre to every part of your conduct.

THE share I have had in this adventure, affords me great satisfaction. Your anger fell on a feigned character, and hurts me not; but the honor of having drawn an answer from a first minister, and an answer in print, accrues to me, and is such a one, as the greatest of our weekly authors could never boast.

GIVE me leave therefore to be transported in my turn, but to be transported with joy, and to insert an abstract of your answer in this paper, as BALZAC placed at the head of his works a letter from the cardinal de RICHLIEU. I consult my own honor, it must be confessed, in doing this; but I consider still more that just applause and admiration which I, with the rest of the world, am obliged on this occasion to give you.

To those parts of the Occasional Writer's letter, which shew that you are at this juncture in want of such services as the scoundrel he personated might be fit to do, you make no reply. The want you seem to admit, but the offer of service you reject: let the public hear in what manner.

ABSTRACT of the M-----r's ANSWER to
the Occasional Writer.

Pag. 1. " **T**HO you have not signed your name, I know
" you. Because a man who is without all
" principles of honesty, who in no one thing can be relied
" upon, a betrayer of his friend, a traitor to his prince, an
" enemy to his country, a perjured, ungrateful, unfaithful
" rascal, must be you; one who is a composition of all these,
" can be only you.

Pag. 2. " You are an infamous fellow, who make a repu-
" tation of doing mischief; and HEROSTRATUS and NERO
" were not greater villains than you.

" You are of so profligate a character, that in your prof-
" perity no body envied you, and in your disgrace no body
" pities you.

" You were in the interest of France, and of the pope, as
" hath appeared by your writings, and you went out of the
" way to save yourself from the gallows.

Pag. 3. " You are a fellow who have no conscience at all,
" or a damnable complying one: and if you would lend it to
" me, it would be of no use to me.

" You have no abilities; you are an emancipated slave, a
" proscribed criminal, and an insolvent debtor: and I am
" not in such a desperate forlorn condition, to employ a fellow
" who hath no talents.

Pag.

Pag. 4. " You have been a traitor, and should be used like
 " one. And I love my master so well, that I will never ad-
 " vise him to use you, lest you should jostle me out of my
 " employment.

" The majority are of my opinion. One side rails at you,
 " the other dislikes you ; and that PALINURUS would deserve
 " to be drowned indeed, who let you have the rudder, if he
 " could help it.

Pag. 5. " I do not value what you or your company say of
 " me ; neither am I to be frighted with a parliamentary scru-
 " tiny. You rail at me, because you envy me ; and I despise
 " all that a man in the impotence of disgrace can do against
 " me, who could never terrify me in the zenith of his
 " power."

Then follow these admirable arguments.

Pag. 6, 7, 8. " I. You may talk what you will of France,
 " Spain, and the emperor, power is fluctuating, and perhaps I
 " know who is Britain's enemy as well as another. II. Tho'
 " we did lend the emperor a helping hand, we are not to let
 " him do what he pleases ; and when we set him up, it was
 " good politics, and now it is equally good to take him down.
 " III. I do not question but we shall humble him. IV. I must
 " tell you plainly, you and I, as to foreign affairs, differ widely
 " in opinion. V. When our neighbours grow saucy and en-
 " croaching, it is high time to look about us, and not to be
 " taken napping. VI. I know you are like the emperor, be-
 " cause he is like yourself in ingratitude ; and you hate our
 " friend France, because you were well received there.

" IF

“ IF any body says any thing of me, pray, tell them ALL
“ THESE THINGS. But for all that, I will not give you
“ an employment.

“ I know you to be so hot-headed, that when you have
“ read this, you will vent all your malice against me. But I
“ do not value it; for I would rather have you my enemy
“ than my friend.

“ CHANGE your names, and be as abusive and scurrilous as
“ you please, I shall find you out. I am ARISTABUS; you
“ are PROTEUS. You may change to a flame, a lion, a bull,
“ or a bear, I shall know you, baffle you, conquer you, and
“ contemn you. All your opposition will redound to my
“ honor and glory. And so, fir, I scorn your proffered ser-
“ vices. Sir,

“ Your most, &c.”

How great! how free! how bold! how generous! Well may those who have the honor of a near approach to you, extol the noble openness of your nature, which displays itself in this uncommon manner; and think that temper in a statesman, truly admirable, which loses itself so gloriously. Did ever minister speak so plainly, or lay himself so open to any man, and especially to such a man as you supposed yourself writing to at that time? Far from discovering hatred and contempt of such wretches, persons in your situation have generally encouraged, and even feared them. Nay, they have sometimes aspired to be themselves of that class; and SENECA's Apocolocyntosis upon CLAUDIUS, is not the sole instance of ministers, who have dipped their pens in satyr, to rail at the memory of a dead prince.

But

BUT now, after this honorable declaration which you have made, after this great example which you have given, let every mercenary scribbler, every tool of secret service, tremble and despair. Long may you live, most noble sir, the just model of a minister, who scorns the assistance of flattery, falsehood, artifice, or corruption.

I HAVE devoted myself to your service, and shall certainly attend you through every stage of your fortune: as long as we both draw vital air, you shall feel the effects of my zeal in your cause, and I promise you very solemnly, that from henceforward I will live for no other purpose; so that I am persuaded you will hear with pleasure the three engagements which I think it proper to take with the public and with you.

THE first is, that my pen shall constantly preserve decency and good manners, and shall never be stained with any abuse of particular persons. I will chastise vice, I will expose folly, and I will combat error, wherever I find them. But I will never touch upon any unalterable defects in figure, in family, in birth, in any kind whatsoever; much less will I allow myself to hint at any particular scandal, or even to mention any real misfortune, which may equally befall the best and the worst of men; unless I am forced by my subject to it, and unless I can soften the evil by the very manner of recalling it to memory. To attack a vice, a folly or an error, is correction. To attack the person is defamation. He who writes an invective, does a silly thing, because he loses his end; and the wisest of men has said, "he that uttereth slander is a fool." Even truth loses it's force in an invective, as it does in a panegyric; in one, it is thrown into the lump with malice, in the other, with flattery; and he who is guilty of the first, that is, he who writes against the man, not against his crimes,
his

N^o III. THE OCCASIONAL WRITER. 177

his follies, or his errors, seldom proves any thing more than his own envy, and the other's superiority. To conclude this head, he, who writes an invective, does a base and wicked thing; because his design is to disturb the quiet, and destroy the peace of another man, but not to reform him, or to serve the public. The pen of such a writer, like one of those scourges, of which the profound MEIBOMIUS has writ so learnedly, while it chastises the person, serves only to provoke the vice.

THE second obligation, which I lay myself under, and which equally becomes a man who writes in the cause of truth, is that of intire disinterestedness.

I KNOW the generosity of your nature, I know what places and pensions have been the rewards of some very mean performances in verse and prose; and that R. R. state-writer, of whom we are obliged to ask blessing, is most certainly not at the head of our profession. These examples, and a due consideration of the importance of my services, teach me sufficiently what expectations I might entertain, without any risque of a disappointment. But I have neither ambition of this kind, nor avarice. My fortune is above wanting the necessaries, and my philosophy above wanting the superfluities of life. I therefore discharge you from all obligation of rewarding my services; and I wish, for the sake of your ease, your honor, and your safety, my example was likely to be followed.

WHEN we behold a great man among a croud of disinterested friends, we know that they follow his virtues, and his merit; when we hear an orator bring over the majority of an unprejudiced audience to his opinion, we must impute it to the force of his eloquence. But surely it is as rare for a minister to have disinterested friends, as an unprejudiced audience; so

that a number of followers can be no proof of his personal virtues, or a majority of his eloquence.

THE antients placed great happiness in their *inemptae dapes*; I would rather you should place yours in the *inempti amici*. But alas! sir, as amiable as you are, this happiness will hardly fall to your lot, in our degenerate age; and I know not whether to maintain your power, you may not be forced to tarnish the lustre of your glorious administration. The king has indeed the hearts of the people; his service will always be supported by a national concurrence, because his views are always directed to the national good. This part is easy and secure, but when once men come to distinguish between the king's service and yours, there will arise another part not so easy nor secure. You have blended them pretty artfully together hitherto, but I doubt the discrimination is at hand. When that comes, you will be reduced to a melancholy alternative; which I beg you to think of, and to prepare for. To quit your power and your pretensions, and to quit them before you have established in your room that dear brother of yours, who does you so much service at home, by tiring the ****, and the nation so much honor abroad by diverting the C*** of F***, would indeed be hard. But on the other hand, be pleased to consider that this nation has gone very far into corruption already; that there is a point of corruption, to which no nation can arrive and recover their liberties, if they are lost; or even preserve them, if they are not lost, according to MACHIAVEL's observation; and that whoever is the instrument of plunging his country irretrievably into this abyss, I use a word you seem fond of, will fall into a terrible abyss himself, and have no superiority any where, but where the briber stands before the bribed, as the devil stands before the sinner.

N^o III. THE OCCASIONAL WRITER. 179

You see, sir, how my zeal transports me, and carries me upon the least hint, which may be improved to your honor or service, even out of my subject. I return to it, and the third engagement which I take, is to observe a strict impartiality.

To do otherwise, would be to act contrary to my nature, and to the dictates of my reason. I have a natural abhorrence of injustice; and I considered, when I first drew my pen, in how particular a manner it behoves us political writers to be on our guard, against falling into any partiality. The judge is circumscribed by forms, to the observance of which he is bound; he has the law open before him; the parties, on whom he sits in judgment are generally indifferent to him, and far from having any of his passions awakened, the whole man is sometimes prone to sleep. When there is room to suspect a judge of partiality in a particular case, it is agreeable to the practice of some countries that he should decline presiding at the trial, or be obliged to withdraw at the requisition of the party. With all these, and many other precautions which wise constitutions have established, it is neither easy nor safe for the venerable sages of the law to exercise partiality. But we political writers are not under the same restraints, and are exposed to strong temptations. No forms are prescribed to regulate our proceedings; no particular laws adapted to the particular cases which may occur, lie open before us. The general law of reason is the only rule we have to follow; the application of this rule requires the most nice exactness, and we are obliged to make this application often, in pronouncing judgment on men and things, when we are the most warmly engaged in those civil contests, which the duty of our profession exposes us to, and even when our tempers are ruffled by opposition. From which consideration, the difficulty of preserving a strict impartiality may
A a 2 evidently

evidently appear: give me leave, however, to illustrate this matter a little farther.

IN the Athenian commonwealth, the citizen who took no side was deemed indifferent to the public good, and was branded for his infamous neutrality. Now, if such an obligation as this lay upon every private citizen in that democratical government, it is certain, that we public persons, at least, ought to think ourselves under the same obligation, even in this limited monarchy of ours. Indifference must be a crime in us, to be ranked but one degree below treachery; for deserting the commonwealth is next to betraying it. Our duty must oblige us in all public disputes to take the best side, and to espouse it with warmth: this warmth will beget warmth; for you know, sir, that the worst side is not always the worst defended. Provocations will multiply daily, and we may be attacked in the most sensible parts. You, sir, yourself, may for aught I know be insulted, and your spotless character may be defiled by some saucy scribbler: in this licentious age, nothing is held sacred; under the specious pretence of free-thinking, the providence, and the very being of God, have been openly called in question, and reflections on your administration may possibly steal into the world.

SUPPOSE, for a moment, that any thing so monstrous as this should happen, that you should be directly inveighed against, or which perhaps is more poignant, ironically commended; and then consider how difficult it would be for a professed admirer of you, heated in the contest, to keep his temper, and to preserve his impartiality: you must agree with me, the task would be extremely difficult.

But

BUT I am sure you will agree likewise, that as difficult as it would be, a conscientious man ought to impose it upon himself.

THE ill effects of partiality in us political writers, when it carries us to give unjust and false representations of men and things will not be thought of little moment by you, who labor for fame, and expect a great part of your reward from posterity, as posterity is to receive a great part of the advantages which your wise and virtuous administration procures, in “reviving, supporting, and extending credit, in opening so comfortable a prospect of the payment of our debts, in strengthening us abroad by so many beneficial alliances, and above all in amending our morals, by the total discouragement of every kind of artifice and corruption.”

THE civil magistrate may give away a man's estate, or take away his life; but we can do, and often have done more; we set the general characters and particular actions of men in what light we please, and deliver them down, sometimes very unjustly, under the most amiable or the most hateful colors to future ages: for the rash sentence we pronounce is eagerly received, and as eagerly transmitted by those who are animated with the same passion.

IN this manner are unjust, and even false representations established. They become the general opinion of mankind, and then, altho our works should grow out of date as fast as a Gazette, which it must be confessed happens very frequently; yet still the mischief is done, the historian perpetuates the slander which the politician broached, and triumphs in the cotemporary authority, upon which he writes to serve the present turn, or to satisfy resentment of party; such persons as have no other crime but that of differing in opinion from us,
and

and such events as have no other demerit but our dislike of the persons who bring them about, are loaded with infamy. Posterity is imposed upon as well as the present age, and the children continue the fathers vengeance, without having the fathers provocation.

THIS faint sketch of some consequences that follow the partiality of political writers, and of the danger wherein we all stand of being transported by our own passions, or hurried by those of other people, so far to be answerable for such consequences, may suffice to shew how much reason there is for a man who undertakes the career I am entering upon, to be watchful over himself, and to lay himself under as strong a restraint as I do by this solemn engagement.

INDEED, as the world goes, it is only by running into extremes that a state-writer can effectually please his party, or serve himself; the eye of party sees nothing but quite white, or quite black, observes no degrees between them, and can distinguish no middle color that partakes of both. The greatest genius in writing may be exposed to share the fate of the greatest genie in painting. ANNIBAL CARACHE, who followed nature and truth with the utmost exactness, found his noblest works discountenanced and neglected. He thereupon advised GUIDO and CARAVAGIO, his two favorite scholars, to take quite another manner, to trace nothing faithfully, but to outrage all they represented, the one by painting in the darkest, and the other in the lightest manner. By these means both of them were sure of admirers, and both of them grew rich.

To imitate these painters, is all our party-writers aim at; whether their manner be black or white satyr, or panegyric, no matter. Their principle is to lay their colors on thick, and
to

N^o III. THE OCCASIONAL WRITER. 183

to be equally in an extreme. But I hope, for my own part, to prove that I am not of this number. On the contrary, I will endeavor to excel in a much more difficult way, in softnings and middle teints; and yet by these to form a manner so strong, as shall be sufficient for my own reputation, and for your service. To you, who have so fine a taste in painting, this attempt will, I flatter myself, be agreeable, and will secure the continuance of your favor to,

Most noble Sir,

Your honor's

most devoted servant,

February 13,
1726-7.

THE OCCASIONAL WRITER.

THE