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SOME
REMARKS.

ON THE

Minute Philosopher.

In a LETTER from a Country
Clergyman to his Friend in London.

(i. e. Lord John Hervey.)



L O N D O N :

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Dear S I R,

I Have received the Books you were so good to send me, have read some of them, and return you my Thanks for them all.

It is extremely kind and charitable in you, to give me now and then these Proofs of your Remembrance, and your Desire to entertain me; since the disagreeable Situation of a Country Clergyman with a small Living, not born a Fool, nor educated a Blockhead, is generally such, that his Taste and Understanding are as much above the Company he can keep, as his Fortune and his Circumstances are below the Company he would keep: And as Reading, in this

Situation, is his only Resource, and Books his only Companions, he has no more Commerce with the Living, than with the Dead ; and is no otherwise acquainted with any of the ingenious Men among his Contemporaries, than with those who lived two thousand Years ago.

This being my Case, in this obscure and remote Corner of the World, where Literature is as great a Stranger as Politeness, I need add nothing more to convince you that these Remittances, from time to time, which you are so good to make me, are the only Amusements my Solitude allows.

You desire to know my Opinion of the *Minute Philosopher* in particular ; and tho' my Opinion is not worth asking, or worth giving, yet since you insist upon it, as a Tax I am to pay for the Continuance of your Bounty, I shall, for fear you should stop your Hand, give you my Thoughts of this Performance, crude and indigested, just as they occur ; and will tell you
plainly,

plainly, naturally, and sincerely, without any of the Affectation and Refinement of a Critic, and with all the Freedom and Confidence of a Friend, what I think of the Design of this Author ; his Manner of pursuing it ; how far the Book will answer that Design ; and what Effect I should guess it would have in the World.

As to the Style, I think it does not want Spirit ; the Diction is raised, and tolerably well kept up : He seems to have a Flow of Words ; but often betrays more Affectation in chusing and coining them, than is to be found in any Writers, but those who consult Sound rather than Sense, and prefer the Harmony of a round well turn'd Period, to the more manly simple Beauty of a strong, accurate, and intelligible Meaning.

I conclude, from the many Quotations with which this Work abounds, the pompous Authorities he cites, and the great Number of celebrated Authors which he takes occasion to mention,

tion, that he has Learning, and Knowledge, or at least that he has Reading. I think he sometimes shows Ingenuity, and sometimes Wit; but that both the one and the other are generally very improperly placed; that he is often unclear, oftener unfair, and always unsatisfactory: That he introduces Personages, without preserving Characters: That he is monstrously and manifestly partial, with a Profession of Candor; Rhapsodical, with a Pretence to Method; Inconclusive, with an Affectation of Argument; and that he has least Perspicuity, where the Reader will naturally have most Curiosity. Which last is, in my Opinion, an irremissable Sin; I think no Beauty can atone for the want of Perspicuity in Writing; any more than any Virtues, for the want of Charity in Religion: The principal Merit, as well as the original Use of Language, being certainly to explain: Those Authors therefore, who analyze Propositions, till they puzzle, instead of illustrating

dicule; and *the Fable of the Bees*, that sneers a little at our modern *Reverend and Right Reverend Apostles*, who are paid for preaching what they do not practise, and propagating what they do not understand; are Books from which *Christianity* has not received half so dangerous a Wound, as it will do from the Hand of this Friend. Those Wags only show there are a great many ludicrous things to be said against Christianity; but this puzzling Zealot will tempt People to believe, there is nothing seriously and argumentatively to be said for it.

I know, *Christianity as old as the Creation*, and some other Books of a later Date, which I could name, by controverting some of our most ancient Tenets and establish'd Doctrines, have attack'd the Effence of our Religion in a graver way: But the natural Answer to those profane Ralliers, and these more serious Assailants, shou'd be, That as there is nothing in Nature which is not liable to Ridicule,
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in the Hands of Men of Wit, Invention, Pleasantry, and Humour; so there is not any Proposition so clear; but by quibbling, cavilling, and playing upon Words, Men of Learning, Letters, and Sophistry, may obscure and perplex it.

Such Answers as these would do, for the Defence of the Forms, Customs, and Ceremonies of our Religion, for all the Garnishing and Embroidery of Christianity; and if they demand of us an Explication of Fundamentals, and a Scrutiny into Essentials; pray tell me, Sir, When every body knows we declare its Principles are Mysteries, and that the chief Merit of its Practitioners and Followers is Faith, whether any body but an injudicious, sanguine Fellow, who loves to hear himself prate, would ever come swaggering from behind such Entrenchments, and pretend to define the obscure Circumstances of the one, or illustrate the Objects of the other.

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Would any body, who wish'd well to the Cause, if they understood its Interest, go this way to work to defend it? Did our *Saviour* himself, the *Apostles*, the *Evangelists*, the *primitive Christians*, or the *Fathers*, set us this Example? Does not *St. Paul*, in the second Chapter of his Epistle to the *Colossians*, and the eighth Verse, expressly forbid this manner of preaching and defending the Gospel? *Beware* (says he) *lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

If the Tenets of *Christianity* were reconcilable to *Reason*, why were they call'd *Mysteries*? If they admitted of *Demonstration*, why would *Faith* be required in its Professors? *Miror quia absurdum est, & credo quia impossibile est*, are the Words of *Tertullian*: And those who are for lessening the *Aburdities*, and softening the *Impossibilities*, must either do it, prompted by the *Vanity* of *Innovation*, and a *De-*
fire

fire to alter the Basis on which our Religion has triumphantly stood for these Seventeen hundred Years; or from a malicious Pleasure they would take in endeavouring to depretiate the Virtue and Piety of those well-disposed People, who measure their Merit to God by the Difficulty they find in reconciling their Belief to their Comprehension; and say (like the Learned Dr. *Brown* in his *Religio Medici*) *That as Faith is our chief Merit to God's Favour, they are sorry he has made the Objects of it so easy; and that he would not have the Goodness to impose something more incomprehensible than the Trinity, the immaculate Conception, &c. that they might show with what implicit Alacrity their ductile Opinions were ready to receive it.*

How many good Christians there are, who believe Enquiry so heinous a Sin, that they vow and preserve as strict a Chastity of Mind, as any Monastic Votary ever did of their Body: Who would think it as great a Pollu-

tion of the one to exercise their Reason, as the most conscientious *Cartusian* would think it of the other to propagate his Species ; and, like good Protestants, imagine they make God Almighty as welcome a Compliment in sacrificing the noblest Faculty of their Understanding, as the Papist fancies he pays him in foregoing the favourite Occupation of his Body.

that And surely this is the way of thinking, ~~it~~ is the Duty and Business of the Priesthood, at least, to propagate and encourage ; it can never be their Interest to join Issue with heretical Sceptics, and plead *pro* and *con* on Points that leave *all* at Stake, and bring the *whole* into Dispute. The *Pulpit* ought to do by the *Gospel*, as *Westminster-Hall* does by the *Law* ; which is, to determine by Authority, Prescription, and Precedents, what is Law ; and not to examine the Right which the first Legislator had to institute it, and make it such.

I am

I am so fully convinced of this being the proper Office of a Divine, that for my own Part, when any of these cavilling Genius's, who have a mind to hamper us Sticklers for Christianity, talk of *Enquiry*, I always answer, *Mystery*; when they ask for *Proof*, I cry, *Faith*; if they raise *Doubts*, I quote *Authority*; and whenever they mention *Reason*, I bid them consult *Tradition*. By these means, fighting with my own Weapons, and never encountering them with their Arms, I always stand my Ground, and make my Party good.

I stick to the ancient Manner of Disputing; when Controversies in Religion used to turn upon the different Expositions of this or that particular Text; the various Readings in Manuscripts; various Interpretations of celebrated Commentators; various Opinions of the Fathers, &c. Heretofore these Points only were debated; all Disputes were about the Leaves, the Fruit, or the Branches of the Tree:
But

But the modern Monsters of Impiety, are not content with trimming, and pruning, and lopping, but are for setting the Axe to the very Root, and felling the whole to the Ground. In this licentious, inquisitive Age, People are come to consider, not what is meant in the Gospel, but whether that Meaning, when it is agreed upon, be worth the Search, or the Gospel itself worth minding; And instead of desiring to have the Doctrines of Christ explained, want to have the Divinity of his Mission itself authenticated. Whereas that is a Point that ought never to come into Play, any more than the King at Chess: Whenever they give him Check, your only Resource is to cover it; and when you cannot cover it any longer, the Game is lost.

Where therefore these riotous Attacks of our Foes, and this imprudent Defence of our Friends will end, I tremble to think. Such new Ways of fighting with Christianity, will, I fear, make

make short Work; for *Reason*, in these Controversies, like *Gunpowder* in War, is an Innovation that will blow up and demolish that in a Month, which according to the ancient Methods of attacking, might, like old *Troy*, have held out a Siege of many Years, in Credit and Safety.

This being the Case, surely those Champions for Christianity, who consent to meet their Antagonists upon such Terms, and accept the Challenge, are almost as much to blame as those who send it; since by entering the Lists in this manner, if they do not absolutely betray, at least they very foolishly and unwarrantably expose, what they ought to employ all their Art, as well as Force, to defend.

If the Author of the *Minute Philosopher* would set forth the Advantages which Christian Countries, for the most part, enjoy superior to the rest of the known World; if he would content himself with asserting roundly, that it is merely from their

Religion that these Advantages accrue ; if he would insist from the Authority of the inspired Expositors of God Almighty's Intentions, that God is determined to prosper the Faithful, and confound the Unbelieving ; and that the apparent Difference between the Prosperity of Christians and Infidels results from no other Cause : If he would tell us, that without some Religion we should lose at least one Tie, and perhaps the strongest that keeps Order in Society, and Peace among Mankind ; and that to these social Advantages no Religion leads so directly as that of Christ : If he would satisfy himself with this manner of declaiming, and not weaken his Assertions by aiming at Proofs, he would do well ; he would walk in the Paths that were set before him, and run no Risque of losing his Way. But then let him leave the Dispute there ; let him take all this for granted, and then tell those who would reject the Doctrines of Christ, because they may
 have

have some Doubts about his Original, and are puzzled upon the Chapter of *Overshadowing*, the *Incarnation*, &c. that they are just as much in the right to reject and explode for such Reasons, the beneficial, noble Institutions contained in the Gospel, as the *Egyptians* would be to make no Advantage of the Overflowings of the *Nile*, because Naturalists and Philosophers may have had some Disputes about its Source.

Supposing, for the sake of Argument, (what I am otherwise far from allowing) that the sanguine Followers of Christ, in the early Days of the Propagation of the Gospel, did say a little more of him with regard to his Parentage, than was strictly and literally true; what is that to the main Point? Does that make his Doctrines a worse System of Morality? Does it destroy the Correspondence between the Suggestions of Natural Religion, and the material Tenets of his? Does it prove the Practice of his Rules less

conducive to the general Good of Mankind, or less proper and profitable Regulations for the Conduct of a civilized People? Was *Alexander* a less able Captain, or his Conquests less glorious, because his Flatterers, in their mean Adulation, told a few Fables about his Birth; and in order to deify his Extraction on his Father's Side, said, that *Jove* lay with his Mother in the Shape of a *Serpent*? All the wrangling and jangling upon the strict literal Meaning of *Moses* being inspired; and the contesting God's personal Appearance to him on *Mount Sinai*, in order to deprectate *Moses's* Wisdom as a Legislator, is just as ridiculous.

Would it not be a senseless Conclusion, and an absurd way of arguing, to say, that the Laws of *Numa Pompilius* were good for nothing, and not well calculated to promote the growing Prosperity of his infant *Rome*, because, in order to make them more willingly received by a superstitious People, he pretend-

pretended they were dictated to him by a Divinity? Would his endeavouring to enhance their Value by giving them a Merit they had not, depreciate their true Worth, and take away the Merit they really had?

But not to go to remote Times or foreign Countries for Instances of this Sort, every body knows a recent Example of what I would intimate, by a home Incident: The Story of the Warming-pan was very proper to be given out and inculcated when the Revolution was but young; it had its Weight, induced many perhaps to come into the Revolution, and help'd the Cause of Liberty among some, whose dull Souls the Cause of Liberty alone would not have been sufficient to fire and persuade: But when the good Effects of the Revolution, and its beneficial Tendency to the Nation in general, came by Experience and long Trial to be felt; those Frauds that were necessary in its Commencement to deceive People into

their own Good, became gradually quite ufelefs; and no body now troubles his Head, nor has a long while, nor ever will again, whether the Pretender is, or is not an Impoftor. It is fufficient, that every one fees and feels the Utility and Advantages of his having been once thought fo: And whether fome of thofe Principles on which the Revolution, the Prefervation of the Conftitution, and our prefent happy Eftablifhment were founded, be ftill enthufiaftically believed, or now laugh'd at and exploded, it is no matter; for whatever the Caufe was, the Effects are good; and fince they are fo, no body that has common Senfe, or common Prudence, would wifh to alter the Government, whether it owes its Settlement, as to the Pretender's Birth, to Error or Truth.

But the Author of the *Minute Philofopher* will be always infifting on the Points he ought never to touch; and perpetually introducing Reason, Probability,

bability, and such sort of Auxiliaries, to fight on his Side, in Questions, where the Moment he brings them into the Field, they are sure to desert and turn against him. And in order, as he fancies, by these means, to show his Dexterity and Ingenuity in maintaining what is hardest to defend, he runs the risque of ruining his Cause, by fighting on the most disadvantageous Ground he can pick out, and turning the Heat of the Battel to that Corner, where he must know himself weakest, and most vulnerable.

I must own, I conceived some Prejudice against his Book, from the moment I found it was written in Dialogue; tho', I know, that manner of writing has the Sanction of Antiquity for its Support, and great Names among the ancient Philosophers to plead in its Behalf. But there never was any thing written in that way, (that ever I saw at least) but what to me appears stiff, forced, and unfair. And as Unfairness is the Fault of all
 Faults

Faults in Polemical Writings, that must be most irksome to every candid Reader; so all impartial People must be oftner shock'd and provok'd at the Dialogue-Writer, than they can be at any other; as he is generally guilty of a double Injustice; whilst, by exaggerating and misrepresenting both Sides of the Question, he enhances the real Value of the one, and depreciates that of the other, with equal Sophistry.

Besides these, there are two other Errors, one of which, all Dialogue-Writers are apt to fall into. The one is, making the Character they have a mind to prove in the wrong, talk so much as if he was in the right, that they find it a little difficult afterwards to refute him; which is manifestly the Case in the *Archbishop of Cambray's* Dialogue between the *Pyrhonist* and his *Neighbour*, upon *Scepticism*; and in that famous Passage in *Milton*, between *Raphael* and *Adam*, upon *Fore-knowledge* and *Free-will*; for these

these Authors all along give the *Heterodox* Disputant the best of the Argument, tho' they arbitrarily decide for the *Orthodox* Reasoner at the last.

The other Error, so common to the Dialogue-Writers, is the *Scylla* to this *Charibdis*; for when they do not let the Disputant they design to overthrow, argue so well, that they do not know how to make their Heroe answer him; they make him talk so ill, and so like a driveling Fool, that no wise Man would take the Trouble of answering him at all.

The Author of the *Minute Philosopher*, has, by a peculiar Felicity in his Method, found Means, (opposite as these Faults may seem) to unite them in his Performance: For tho' upon the whole, he seems determined to make *Alciphron* and *Lyesicles*, a Pair of most consummate Coxcombs; yet as they now and then deviate from these Characters, and stumble upon some material, puzzling Truths; so he has made them, at different times,
hold

hold forth with so much Sense and so much Nonsense, so much Reason, and so much Absurdity ; so much Learning, and so much Ignorance ; so much Wit, and so much Folly ; and, in short, so very well and so very ill ; that the Dress these two Personages appear in, is as much a Patch-work, and as little Uniform, as a *Harlequin's Coat* ; and for that Reason, upon Recollection, the properest Habit they can wear ; since all the Use he seems to design them for, is mounting the Stage like a couple of *Merry-Andrews*, merely to set forth the Virtue and Value of all that wretched Stuff, which those grave Quacks, *Euphranor* and *Crito* endeavour to put off, and cram down your Throat, as a Specific for that epidemical, contagious, dangerous Disease of the present Times, which they call *Infidelity*.

I own, in describing some of the Symptoms of this Distemper, and displaying the Causes of it, our Author often suggests a great deal of Truth ;
but

but then he sticks so close to the Mountebank's Character, when he comes to define the Cure, that his Receipt, like their Pills, is a mere *Nostrum*; what no Body understands but himself; and what every one who swallows, must swallow implicitly.

By this manner of proceeding therefore, he has stated *Scepticism*, and the strongest Objections to our excellent Religion, in so clear a Light, that they are levell'd to almost the meanest Capacity, and comprehensible to every common Reader; whilst all the Answers to those Objections, are so abstruse, so thin-spun, so wire-drawn, and so sublimated, that to Heads less exalted in the Clouds, and Understandings more terrestrial than his own, they are as unintelligible as the *Sybill's* Book, and no more calculated for universal Commerce and Apprehension, than the Confusion of Languages at the *Tower of Babel*.

For my own Part, I confess, I have in many Places read him over and over
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again, in order to find out, if not what he did say, at least what he design'd to say ; but I have never done it with Success; the more I have consider'd him, the more I have been bewilderd ; and the closer I have examined him, the less I have been satisfied. This, perhaps, he would tell me, was owing more to my want of Apprehension, than his want of Perspicuity ; and if he should, I would be very ready to allow it; for I freely acknowledge, I have no very clear, separating, metaphysical Head ; and tho' *Euphranor* and *Crito* have brought me to believe all metaphysical Points are definable, as Matter is divisible, *ad infinitum*, yet I am no more able to penetrate into all the subtile Distinctions of these analyzing Gentlemen with my course Understanding, than I should be to split a Hair, or cleave a Grain of Sand with a common Hatchet.

I doubt not, but in answer to this, our Author would tell me, his Book
was

was not written for such illiterate, thickscull'd Fellows as myself: But then I should certainly reply, that if it was not, it can never answer the End he says he propos'd; since, as bad as my Head is, if he writes for the Bulk of the People, and will take Mankind at an Average, perhaps he will not find above a Tythe of them better qualify'd to be his Readers than myself. If therefore his Design was to stop the Growth of Infidelity, by giving warning to the Weak, and instructing the Ignorant, he has pursued it ill: And if this was not his Design, he prevaricates with the Publick, and affects a Merit to them, which he has no Pretence to; whilst he sat down to write, not influenc'd by the Zeal of an alarm'd *Christian*, but prompted by the Vanity of an *Author*; and was more desirous to engage our Admiration, than to avert our Danger.

But if he only wrote to the Learned, why did he not write, as Sir *Isaac Newton* did his *Principles*, in *Latin*?

that he might not perplex those poor People, whom all these glaring Rays will dazzle, but never enlighten. Or if he did really write to the Multitude, why did he not write in a Style, as well as a Language, which we can understand? Or at least, why did he not make the Principles he would instil, as plain as those he would eradicate; and the Arguments *for* Christianity, as intelligible as those *against* it.

It will be in vain for him to lay hold of this Confession I have made of not understanding his Book, in order to tell me, it is then absurd and impertinent in me to find fault with it, and condemn it; that being the very Reason why I condemn it: It may be very fine and very good *in itself*, but it may be *too* fine, and *too* good, to answer the End. Every Body must own, that the Step of a fine Dancer is more genteel and delicate than that of a *Foot-post*; but it makes no Way, and is no more fit for travelling, than *Metaphysics*

taffysics are for convincing ; they are both pretty Amusements, but neither of them of any Use ; the one may entertain the Reader, and the other the Spectator ; but the Performer in both Cafes, after a great many ufelefs Turns and showing his Skill, ends juft where he began, and leaves People juft where he found them.

The *Minute Philosopher's* taking this refined Way of endeavouring to convince People, puts me in mind of a Story I once heard, of a Nobleman ^{n...le} with a vaft Fortune, fome Prodigality ^{in n...e}, and no Averfion to Popularity ; who, having a mind to outdo every body that had gone before him, and entertain the Freeholders of his County juft before an Election, with fome better Stuff than they had ever been ufed to upon the like Occafion, refolved to treat them all with *Champaign* ; the Confequence of which was, that thefe Animals, who for a Quarter of the Expence in Port, and Ale, and Brandy, would have done any thing
he

he bad them ; spit out the Champain, shook their Heads, call'd it four Syder, and voted against him. Whoever attempts to persuade and convince, in *Metaphysics*, will have the same Fate : Nor can the *Minute Philosopher* be angry with me for telling this Story, since my allowing it applicable, supposes his Reasoning the *Champain* of its kind. And if any invidious Reader, to abuse both him and me, should say, that if the Nobleman had given his Mob *four Cyder*, and call'd it *Champain*, my Parallel would have been juster, that is none of my Fault.

I own, for my own Part, I look upon the Class of Metaphysical Writers, as *Euphranor* says an ingenious *Florentine* did upon the Works of *Ariosto*, when he compared them to a Garden of Melons, where those that are good, are excellent ; but for one that is so, you meet with a thousand that are good for nothing. How many *Minute Philosophers*, H---ns, C---es, and candid *Examiners of Re-*
S. - ny *velation,*

velation, does one drudge through and sleep over, because one has once tasted a *Locke*, a *Clarke*, and a *Chub*.

I have been told, that one of the best Metaphysicians that ever wrote, being once ask'd, whether he thought that it was possible to form any Proposition in *Metaphysics* that might not be very plausibly controverted; he answer'd very fairly, that he believ'd not. How *Metaphysics* then can be thought proper Spectacles to see the Christian Religion through, and to illustrate Points that ought to be the Objects of universal Belief, is past my Comprehension.

I am so much of the Opinion of this great Man, that I never read any Metaphysical Book upon Religion, which I did not think was either like *Woollaston's Religion of Nature delineated*, a Series of Consequences built on the sandy Foundation of some very controvertable *Postulatum*; or else a Chain of Syllogisms, Definitions and Inferences, that, like a circular
Line

Line drawn a little excentrically, may go round and round a million of times, and never come to any Conclusion, but what will seem as abrupt at the last Round, as it would have done at the first.

By such Arguers I have often been led through an ingenious, speculative, entertaining, Zig-zag Labyrinth of Words, where, from the Beginning to the End of a long *Folio*, I have been amused with a Dissection of Terms, instead of an Explanation of Things; and a System of *Hypotheses*, instead of a Plan for *Proof*.

Such Performers have often made me consider fine Writers in *Metaphysics* like fine Riders in a *Manage*; who certainly reverse the original Use of riding, as the others do of writing: the Design of riding being, I suppose, to go with more Ease, and more Expedition, than one could on Foot; and of writing, to explain one-self to more People than one has Opportunities of talking to. But as the *Metaphysicians*

physicians are, by writing, only more deliberately verbose, and more universally puzzling; so the Horsemen of this Class show their Address, their Skill, and their Dexterity, only by making their Horse go backwards, or side-ways, or round, and all ways, with much more Trouble, as well as slower, than they could have gone on foot; and when they have sweated, and puff'd, and labour'd round and round, for two or three Hours, the Standers-by cry, *It is very fine*; and these *Metaphysical Jockies* get down just where they got up.

It is impossible to help seeing the *Minute Philosopher*, in his *prancing* Performance, in this Light. I consider him as *curveting* and *passaging*, in his logical, sophistical *Manage*: And whilst he is pawing, and snorting, and champing his Foam, and kicking, and throwing Dirt at *Scepticks*, *Schismaticks*, *Hereticks*, *Deists*, *Free-thinkers*, *Latitudinarians*, and *Atheists*, all in a Lump; I must own,

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he capers so much in Rule, turns so nimbly, and gives himself so much Agitation to so little purpose, that I think he is a *Metaphysician* as completely *dress'd*, and as well *upon his Haunches*, as any I ever saw in my Life.

But since the *Minute Philosopher* pretends his Book is written with an Intention only to administer an Antidote to the Poison of Free-thinking, to give a Solution to the Doubts of modern Scepticks, and stop the Apostacy of the present Times; why does he immediately, in his first Dialogue, by a quick Gradation, (not to be parallel'd by any thing but Sir *John Falstaff's* Account of his sixteen Men in *Buckram*) work up his Free-thinkers into avow'd, confirm'd *Atheists*? Will any body pretend to affirm gravely, that *Atheism* is the Error of this Age, and the Characteristick of a modern *Free-thinker*? And if it is not; if there is not one *Atheist* in a Million of *Free-thinkers*, or perhaps not one *Atheist*

theist among them all, will it not be very natural for every one of those Patients, to whom this Doctor designs to prescribe, to say he mistakes their Case, and does not know their Distemper: That he writes Bills, and gives Medicines for one Disease, when they complain of another; and that consequently they shall let all that Trumpery-stuff he sends them, lie untouch'd upon their Shelf? If I had a few Spots of the *Scurvy*, or some slight cutaneous Eruptions upon the Surface of my Body, and a Man should tell me he had a Specifick for the Plague, and advise me to take his nasty Compound; should I swallow it, or naturally tell him, that as I had not the Plague, his nauseous Drugs would be of no use to me?

Yet this is the manner of the *Minute Philosopher*; he deals with all his Patients as I have heard the *Montpellier Doctors* do with theirs: If you come to them for Advice for any Distemper whatever, that is incidental to

a human Body; they cry immediately, *Sir, you are pox'd; Sir, you must flux.* If you swear till you are black in the Face, that you never had to do with a Woman in your Life, it is all one: Then they cry it is hereditary, and that you are infected without knowing it; whilst the Burden of their Song is still, You are pox'd, and must flux.

This Author insisting upon all Free-thinkers being Atheists, is a *Postulatum* exactly in the Style with that of the *Montpelier-Doctors*; with this Difference only in the Consequence, that if it were so, they could cure you of the one; whereas, if he has nothing better than what he has produced, to apply to the other, he would leave every Body just as sick as he found them.

The Argument *Crito* makes use of in the tenth Section of this first Dialogue, for indulging People in their Belief of a Future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, is certainly a
good

good one ; and his Quotation from *Tully* is very properly apply'd. But all this is saying nothing at all for the Certainty, nor even for the Probability of a future State. His Inference from these Arguments can only be, that if People are so lucky to feed themselves with such Hopes, and enjoy such a Persuasion, it would be extremely unkind in those who are not so sanguine, to endeavour to dispossess them of so much Pleasure, by trying to eradicate the Seeds of so flattering an Opinion.

Let this be granted ; but what then ? If I had been the Madman who fancied all the Ships in the Harbour of *Athens* his own, I should not perhaps have thank'd the *Doctor-Hales* of that Country for curing me of the Delusion : But because that poor Fellow might be happy in it, I would not go about assuring other People they were in the wrong for not trying to be all as mad as him ; nor would I pronounce, because the Fallacy of that Opinion

was

was more agreeable than Truth, that therefore it was not Fallacy. Such Ways of arguing hurt the Cause he means to defend, by inducing People to imagine, that there are no better Arguments to support it : And I assure the *Minute Philosopher*, I am as far from being of that Class, who treat the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State, as *a Castle in the Air*, and a little Reverſion in *Eutopia*, as I am from thinking he has taken the proper Methods to refute and convert thoſe who are.

At the latter end of the 12th Section in this Dialogue, when he mentions the frequent Neglect of ſaying *Grace* before and after Meat, as one of the enormous Crimes conſequent to Free-thinking, and an Instance of the increaſing Licentiousneſs of the Age, one would imagine (as *Cæſar* ſays of *Caffius* in the Play) that he mock'd himſelf, and meant to turn his own Cenſures into Ridicule ; ſince no one Inſtitution for Divine Worſhip,
perhaps,

perhaps, is more liable to Objection, than this, especially as we use it ; for the addressing ourselves to Heaven, every time we sit down to a Table heap'd with unnecessary Slaughter, and luxurious Profusion, because Food is necessary for our Support, seems to me no more a reasonable Act of Christian Piety, than it would be for any intemperate *Whoremonger* to throw up a little Hymn of Praise in a *Bawdy-House*, because the World would cease without the Use of Women.

If our Author thinks *Grace* necessary to our Food, because we cannot subsist without it ; it is certain, we can as little subsist without getting rid of it ; and consequently, a Grace of Thanks to God would be just as proper after its *Exit*, as before its *Entrance* ; nay more so ; because we are sure it is allowable, by the Laws of Self-Preservation, to disburden ourselves of it when it is there ; whereas it is much more disputable whether we have a Right to assassinate all those

poor Animals, which our Taste prompts us to destroy, and which nothing but being inured by Custom could perhaps have brought us to such a Pitch of Cruelty, as to be able to destroy without Remorse or Reflection: To such Practices it is so far from being clear that *Grace* is a proper Accompaniment, that I believe there are many who might doubt, whether it is not adding to the Crime of all the superfluous Murders, of Intemperance and Luxury, as it is making God Almighty a Party to that Crime, whilst we pretend to suppose the Effects of our own Violences, Injustices and Gluttony, are nothing more than a fulfilling of his Will, and a grateful Acceptance of his Donations.

If we should see a *Cannibal*, or a *Hottentot*, drinking the Blood, mangling the Flesh, and tearing out the Guts of a human Creature; if we should see him performing this murderous, butcherly Ceremony upon his Knees, and thanking Heaven all the
while

while for its Bounty, in delivering this unfortunate Being into his Hands, and providing it for the Gratification of his Appetite; what should we think of him? And if there are many People, who doubt our having a better Right to kill a Chicken, than the *Cannibal* has to kill one of us; how shocking and how absurd must it appear to such People, to see Men, who pretend to Devotion, preach Temperance, and profess Equity, Compassion and Benevolence to their Fellow-Creatures, lifting up their Eyes to Heaven, and thanking God for having put it in their Power to do that, for which they ought rather to ask his Forgiveness, deprecate his Wrath, and implore his Mercy?

To imagine that God Almighty, in filling the Earth, the Air, and the Sea, with such Variety and Multitudes of Animals, acted only in the Character of *Butcher, Poulterer* and *Fishmonger* to Mankind, is not having any very exalted Idea of his Occupations, tho'

it is having a very high one of our own Dignity and Importance: And if this was not his Design in these Productions, and that we only interpret the natural Power we have to destroy them, a natural Right, it is mocking God Almighty, to put this sacred, devout Face on so cruel and unjust a Proceeding; and a Band of hungry Highway-Men, who stop a Stage-Coach in order to plunder, rob, and murder the Passengers, may with equal Reasonableness, when they begin this Operation, lift up their Eyes and Hands to Heaven, and bless God's holy Name, for having created these Passengers to their Use, provided the Stage-Coach for their Wants, and deliver'd it into their Hands.

The second Dialogue design'd chiefly for an Answer to *the Fable of the Bees*; is, in my Opinion, as chicaning, as loose and as unfair, as any other Part of this incoherent Medley: For instead of answering what *the Author of the Fable of the Bees* really says,
 he

he supposes him to have said Things which he does not say, and answers them ; which is carrying his Zeal for *Orthodoxy*, and his *Knight-Errantry* against *Free-Thinkers* and *Free-Writers* so far, that it puts one a little in mind of *Don Quixote*, who fancy'd he saw Giants and Magicians in every Passenger he met upon the Road ; and by this means, (never seeing any thing in its true Light, or calling any thing by its true Name) was perpetually fighting with *Phantoms* of his own raising, and the unsubstantial *Scarecrows* of his own disturb'd Imagination.

The Letter to *Dion*, which you sent me among these other Books, amply sets forth the want of Candor in the *Minute Philosopher*, with regard to the Author of *the Fable of the Bees* ; who therein defends himself with that Life, Wit, Spirit, good Humour and Pleasantness, which every Body must allow to be the Characteristics of all his Writings. But at the same time,

that this *wanton Author* exposes the Sophistry of his Commentator, I cannot say he makes use of none in the Defence of his own Text. His Explanation of the Title of his Book is forc'd ; and his Apology for that Part of it, relating to publick Stews, very lame : There are many more Instances one might give of the same Kind ; but as my Design now is not to criticise the Letter-writer, I shall not expatiate farther on those Passages where he has aim'd at justifying himself without doing it : That I think the *Minute Philosopher*, in his manner of attacking *the Fable of the Bees*, equally injudicious and unfair, is all I meant to say ; and if there were no other Answer to be given to this Book, than what he has given, any candid Reader must conclude it unanswerable.

The Author of the Letter to *Dr. Waterland*, when he condemns the manner in which that *cool, candid Divine* went about to answer *Christianity as old as the Creation*, adds a little
Sketch

Sketch of the Manner in which he ought to have answer'd it ; and if you will allow me the Liberty of a short Digression, I will, in a very few Words, do the same thing with regard to the *Minute Philosopher*, and *the Fable of the Bees*.

In the first Place, I would not have deny'd, but that the Author of the *Fable of the Bees* had told a great many Truths ; but I would have said, and have proved too, that he had (like *Rochefoucault*) told a great many disagreeable ones, and what are much less fit to be told, than if they were not Truths.

I would have said, that his endeavouring to show, that People do Actions they have reason to be proud of, from Motives, which if nicely scrutinized, they would have reason to be ashamed of, will never contribute to the multiplying such Actions ; and that if Actions, which are beneficial to Mankind and Society, often proceed from the same Principles with some
 2 that

that are detrimental, it would be more for the Benefit of the World, to have such Sources lie conceal'd; as the Discovery of these two Streams, flowing from the same Fountain, will take away one of the chief Inducements many People have for doing what is good; which is the Pride and the Vanity of being thought to act upon better, nobler, and more laudable Principles than their Neighbours.

If it could be proved, that *Herostratus*, who fired the Temple of *Ephesus*, and *Decius*, who threw himself, for the sake of his Country, into the Gulph that open'd in *Rome*, acted both from the same Motive, and were equally influenced by the Vanity of being mentioned in History, and perpetuating their Names to Posterity, for as long as those of *Rome* and *Ephesus* should be known; if this, I say, could be demonstrated, I would be glad to ask the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*, whether he thinks it would promote and encourage that Virtue
call'd

call'd *the Love of one's Country*, to shew that the most renown'd Patriot in Antiquity, and the most infamous *Incendiary*, were in the same Way of Thinking, and actuated by the same Passion? If it would not, the Conclusion is obvious; and he must either allow that it would be an improper Topick for Speculation to examine such a Proposition, and of Disservice to any Community to prove it; or he must deny that the Spirit of *Patriotism* is of any Use to that Society where it is most in Force.

Neither can I agree with the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*, even in the fundamental Principles of his whole Book, which is, *that private Vices are publick Benefits*. I do not mean, that I cannot agree with him according to the ludicrous Exposition he has made of it, in his Letter to *Dion*; but as he has really explained it by the Tenor, Scope, and Drift of the whole original Book.

If

If he went no farther, than to say that Luxury is inseparable from what is call'd a rich, flourishing Nation; and that a prosperous People are generally vicious in proportion to their Prosperity; perhaps his Assertion might be too well founded: But when he says their Vices and their Luxury (in order to take off the Odium of these two Names) are the Occasion of their Wealth and their Prosperity, I think he mistakes, and carries his Encomiums on Vice and Luxury too far: For tho' Luxury is too often the Consequence of Prosperity, I cannot agree, that it is always the Source of it: I think it is the *Child* of Prosperity, but not the *Parent*; and that the Vices which *grow* upon a flourishing People, are not the Means by which they *became so*.

The *Romans* were originally a hardy, rough, robust, warlike, industrious People; from their Industry and Hardiness, they grew powerful; from being powerful, they grew rich;
from

from their Riches, they grew luxurious and vicious, and from a long Course of Vice and Luxury, they degenerated still farther, into the most scandalous Corruption, and the most abandon'd Profligacy; till at last this Degeneracy (enervated as they were, both in Body and Mind) brought them to Slavery, Decay, and Ruin.

But by this Gradation, it should seem to me, not that they were rich and flourishing, because they were vicious and luxurious; but that they were vicious and luxurious, from being rich and flourishing; and that this Progress, from Lowliness to Grandeur, and from Grandeur to Decay, shews, tho' their Vices proceeded from their Opulence, yet their Opulence proceeded from their Virtues; and that *Luxury* laid the Foundation, not of their Prosperity, but of their Ruin.

The same Progress that appears in the Revolution and Vicissitude of this great State, may be often seen too in the Fortunes of particular People. A

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laborious, ingenious, industrious Man of low Birth grows rich ; his Riches produce Plenty ; Plenty, Indulgence ; Indulgence, Repletion ; and Repletion, Laziness and Diseases. And it would be just as fair, and as well reason'd, to say, that this Man's Diseases, which were the Effects of his Riches, were the occasion of them ; as to say, that the Luxury and Vices of a State, which are the Fruits of its Prosperity, are the Seeds of it.

So much for *the Fable of the Bees*. I shall now return to the *Minute Philosopher* ; but as it would be tedious both to you and me, should I follow this irregular, dodging Leader, through all the wild twisting Paths into which he wanders, in the Course of what he calls Reasoning ; and examine every Dialogue separately ; so I shall only cursorily touch on some of those Points, which I think the grossest Defects, and the most glaring Absurdities, of this Performance.

And

And as he assures us, that his Book (if it goes no farther) is at least an irrefragable Answer to *Atheism*; I cannot, without some little Notice, pass over his fourth Dialogue, where he seems to lay the whole Stress of his Argument; and to think he has put the Demonstration of a God in so much a clearer Light, than any Body ever set it to View before.

The Treatise from whence this Quintessence of Proof is extracted, was, I think, publish'd in a detach'd Piece, by way of an Essay upon Vision, several Years ago; and, if I mistake not, the Effect it then had upon Mankind was, that the *Ignorant* stared, and the *Learned* laugh'd. However, this Reception did not discourage him from a Republication; nor will the Republication, I fancy, alter the Reception: *The Author*, and *the Publick*, will both of them think just as they did; the one will not have a worse Opinion of it, nor the other a better; and according to the *Doxology*, as it was in the

Beginning, is now, and ever shall be, &c.

If instead of a Revival of this Essay, he had only figuratively said by way of Text, to his Proofs of a God, that *every Thing we see speaks one*; he would have said what thousands have said before; what every Body would have comprehended, and almost every Body have allowed: But when in order to vary the Phrase, and strike out something new, he tells us, *God speaks to our Eyes in every Thing we see, and that Form and Figure answer to Sound and Articulation*; from the Affectation of *Novelty*, he falls into *Obscurity*; and in order to say Things, which no Body but himself ever *said*, he says them in a Manner which no Body but himself can ever *understand*.

The only Part of his Explication of this Thesis, that is within my Comprehension, does not seem to me, I own, much to the Honour of God; and the rest of it, is as little so: I am glad,

glad, for the Sake of the Cause, his Arguments are not more intelligible.

For if any body was to say of me, what he says of God Almighty, that the Use I make of Language is to deceive; that I take advantage of People's not seeing well at a Distance, to misrepresent Things; or of their not hearing well, to misreport them: If I was to tell People, as *Euphranor* or *Crito* (I have forgot which) says God Almighty tells us, *that square Things are round; and that vast, rough, opaque Bodies, were little, smooth, luminous Things, no bigger than Sixpences*: I fancy when those I conversed with had experimentally often discover'd, that this was my common Practice, and that I seldom told them a word of Truth; they would be apt to call me a great Liar, warn every body not to believe me, and say nothing but a Fool would ever mind a word I said.

Yet if God Almighty would avow the *Minute Philosopher* for his Interpreter, this is the manner in which
that

that pious Author tells us God talks to his Creatures ; and this the Hinge on which that orthodox Demonstrator makes the whole Proof of the Being of a *God* to turn.

The best Answer that can be given to this systematical Rhapsody, I think, is *Euphranor's* own Words at the summing of it up. *Alcypbron* first very naturally observes, *that this strange Language affects People but little.* To which *Euphranor* replies, *The Reason of that is, that it is familiar to us, and that Frequency lessens our Admiration of things, tho' in themselves never so admirable.* Then follows (*Euphranor* still speaking) what I should think would have suited much better with the sneering Part of *Lysicles's* Character: *Hence a common Man, who is not used to think and make Reflexions, would probably be more convinced of the Being of a God, by one single Sentence heard once in his Life from the Sky, than by all the Experience he has had of this visual Language, so constantly address'd*

address'd to his Eyes, and so plainly declaring the Nearness, Wisdom, and Providence of him with whom we have to do.

I agree entirely in this Opinion with *Euphranor*; I freely own myself one of these *common Men*, and believe Mankind in general made up of such *common Men*, that I cannot imagine there is one so *uncommon* (not excepting the Author of the *Minute Philosopher* himself) as not to be more sensibly affected with *that single Sentence from the Sky*, which would want no Interpreter, than with all this visual Language; which, even after his Interpretation, wants a Dictionary as much as it did before it: For, as Mr. *Locke* says of *Pere Malbranche's recherche de la Verité*; *As there are many Expressions herein, which carry with them no clear Idea to my Mind, they are likely to remove but little of my Ignorance by their Sound.*

The Story of the *Fox-Chace*, with the Description of the Sportsmen, at
the

the Beginning of the fifth Dialogue, is as well set forth, as it is ill placed; no body could have told the Story better, or have apply'd it worse. For what has it to do there? It is just as improper, and as foreign to the Subject, where he has put it, as the Figures of a *Dog* and a *Fox*, and Men with *long Whips*, *short Wigs*, and *dirty Boots*, would be in a Picture of *the School of Athens*, or *the last Supper*.

In the dressing a rural Scene, I confess him excellent; *Claude Lorrain* never drew more romantic Landskips; *enamel'd Meads*, *leafy Groves*, *bubbling Springs*, *harmless Flocks*, and *fertile Plains*. In short, all *Pastoral Painting* seems so well adapted to his Genius, that if a Supplement was to be written to *Astrea*, or *Pembroke's Arcadia*, I know no *Philosopher* in the World so fit for such an Undertaking, as the *Minute Philosopher*.

And, if weary of *metaphysical Novels*, he should ever turn his Pen to
any

any of a softer Kind; if from the Luxuriancy of his Imagination, and Love of Variety, he should change the Style of his *Romances*, from the *Philosophic* to the *Tender*; from theological *Opinion*, to amorous *Sentiments*, and instead of treating of *Schoolmen* and *Free-thinkers*, should write of *fighing Nymphs* and *perjur'd Swains*; the Sale of his *Minute Philosopher* would be such a Trifle to the Profits of this Production, that for two Editions of the one, there would be twenty of the other: Not a *Green-sickness Girl*, nor an *idle School-boy*, but would have him in their Hand; and so differently would his Readers; treat him in a Performance of that sort, that I dare say no body would begin it, that would not read it out.

All that *Alciphron* says upon *Grace*, at the Beginning of the last Dialogue, is sensible, and little of a piece with what is put into his Mouth in the subsequent Part of it, where his Prom-

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pter seems afraid of letting him maintain it. A reasonable *Chinese*, on whom the Light of the Gospel had yet but dawn'd, whose Eyes were not yet quite open'd by *Grace* to the broad Sunshine of Conviction, would, I fancy, talk just so to some *Missionary*, who had got no farther in his Conversion, than telling him *what* he was to believe, without having yet produced the irrefutable Reasons we have to give *why* he should believe it.

All that *Euphranor* and *Crito* allege, by way of Answer to *Alcyphron* on this Head, in their Parallel between *Grace* and *Force*, is very ingenious perhaps, but in my Opinion very insufficient. What they say (if I comprehend it) amounts to no more than this. *You see* (say they) *all the various Effects of Force; and since without having any abstract Idea of Force, you will, from its Operations, allow there is such a thing, why will you not, from the same way of reasoning, admit of such a thing as Grace?*

For

For my part, I am fully convinc'd there is such a thing as *Grace*, but not by this Argument; and therefore, had I been *Alcyphron*, instead of saying, as he does, that *I do not know what to think of it*, I would certainly have made this Answer, " That the Reason why I admit there is such a thing as *Force*, and doubt whether there is any such thing as *Grace*, is, because I can impute the Operations of *Force* to no Cause but *Force*; whereas what they would tell me are the Effects of *Grace*, may be ascribed to almost as many different Causes, as we see Effects. As for Example: People may pray from *Timidity*, as well as *Grace*; they may reverence *God's Ministers* from *Ignorance*, as well as *Grace*; they may be charitable from *Ostentation*, as well as *Grace*; *honest* (as many are dishonest) from *Policy* and *Interest*, as well as *Grace*; and may without *Grace* even be good *Christians* .

“ *stians* in *England*, as they would
 “ have been *good Mahometans*, if they
 “ had been born in *Turky*; from *E-*
 “ *ducation*, *Accident*, and *implicit*
 “ *Credulity*.

But to enumerate all the Places, where he makes these absurd Disputants, *Alciphron* and *Lysicles*, give the worst Answers they can to support what they have advanc'd, would be endless. It would be equally tedious, to produce all the Instances of his making them say things, which perhaps other People might say of them, but which it is impossible to imagine they could be such Fools to say of themselves.

Lysicles says in praise of Free-thinking, in the 24th Section of the second Dialogue, that *among the Women*, it has introduced, instead of those old fashion'd things, Prayers and the Bible, the grateful Amusements of Drams, Dice, and Billet-doux; and that the fair Sex have now nothing to do, but to
 dress

dress and paint, drink and game, adorn and divert themselves.

Now supposing the Doctrines of any mistaken Advocate for Liberty, did lead directly to this Degree of Libertinism and Licentiousness; I wou'd be glad to ask, whether any Man of common Sense believes such a one would, in order to gain Profelytes to his Opinion, show the Tendency and Consequences of it in this Light? And if this were true, whether it is a Truth which an Enemy, or a Friend to Free-thinking, would expose?

It is full as improbable, that any Fellows should be so absurdly infatuated, as to acknowledge, that their only Reason for not admitting the Validity of any Doctrine, was its being *handed down from their Ancestors, received by most of their Contemporaries, establish'd by Law, and supported by Authority*; yet at the winding up of the Dispute, when these two Combatants have nothing farther to object, they

they still refuse to yield; tho' they acknowledge these to be the only Motives they have left, for controverting or exploding any of the main Tenets of the Christian Religion; the Truth and Beauty of which, their two *able Antagonists*, have with so much Method, Learning, and Perspicuity, progressively and unanswerably demonstrated.

I will expatiate no farther on Particulars; but for fear you should find my incoherent Comment, as unintelligible as his incoherent Text; and a Meaning as hard to be extracted out of the one, as the other; I shall, in a few very short Heads, recapitulate the Substance of all I meant to suggest in these Remarks.

First, That as the *Minute Philosopher* professes writing to the *Free-thinkers* of the present Age, he should have left *Atheism* quite out of the Question; because it is not the Error of these Times.

Secondly,

Secondly, That if it were, he is likelier (by telling People, *his* are the best Arguments to prove a God) to make, than to convert *Atheists*.

Thirdly, That *Metaphysics* are an improper Method to take for the support of *Christianity*; because whatever is design'd for common Use, should be levell'd to common Apprehensions, and whatever is to be universally received, ought to be universally understood.

Fourthly, That as *Metaphysics* are generally the most obscure of all Writings, so his Writings are the most obscure of all *Metaphysics*.

And *Lastly*, That by his Manner of handling every Proposition, he always does one of these three Things: He either begs the Question by some arbitrary Decision at the End of the Dispute, which he had just as good a
Right

Right to make at the Beginning of it; (as in the 16th Section of the first Dialogue; and the 2d of the fifth) or he puzzles and perplexes the Question so much, that no Body can pick out any Decision at all; (as in his visual Language;) or else, he inadvertently gives up the Question, by some Slip in the Course of his Reasoning, which he can never afterwards retrieve: The strongest Instance that can be given of this Sort of Blunder, is when *Euphranor* says to *Alciphron*; *Pray hold, and let me see if I understand you; for if your Foundation is not clear, and your Premises what I comprehend, I shall never admit any Conclusions or Consequences from them, tho' never so justly drawn.*

I defy any *Free-thinker*, in so few Words, to make a stronger Objection to the whole System of Christianity: What more forcible can be urged in behalf of *Sceptical* inquisitive Minds?

What

What can strike deeper into the Tenets and Doctrines of a Religion, whose *Foundation* is *Mystery*; and whose *Premises*, the *Trinity in Unity*, the *immaculate Conception*, the *mortal Immortality*, and the *coeval Existence of a Father and a Son* ?

I have protracted these Reflections far beyond the common Limits of a Letter: But as I take this strange Book to be an inexhaustible Fund for Ridicule and Objection; so I must acknowledge these Remarks (long as they are) to be rather Hints for an Answer, than a full Answer to it. And tho' a lonely, idle, Country Life, may in some Measure have been the occasion of my extending the Trouble I have given you to this unconscionable Length; yet remember you drew that Trouble on your self, by setting me to work; consequently I have a Right to have it look'd upon, not as the Effects of an impertinent Propensity

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fity to giving my Opinion, but as
a Proof of my implicit Obedience to
your Commands. I am,

Dear Sir, &c.

