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P H I L A D E L P H I A :

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The DRUID, No. I.

To the PRINTER of the PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE.

SIR,

IT is my intention, by your permission and assistance, to attempt the instruction or entertainment of the public once a month on miscellaneous subjects. This Letter shall serve as the first Paper, and shall be an introduction to those that are to follow, by pointing out the spirit and design of the undertaking, and the plan upon which it is to be conducted.

The title which I have assumed was not intended to carry any wit in it, and indeed not much meaning, further than what is common to all names, the distinction of one thing or person from another. It proved a matter of no little difficulty to fix upon a title, after so great a variety as the world has seen since the practice of periodical essays was first introduced. After a good deal of deliberation on a matter of very little moment, the above was suggested by the place which is now, and is likely to be my residence while I continue on earth. It is a small but neat house in a pleasant retired situation, surrounded with woods in all the simple majesty of their uncultivated state. Neither was it unsuitable to my time of life, the age of fifty, a cool and contemplative season, when men of education or business have generally seen as much of the world as satisfies their curiosity, and enables them to understand well enough what is passing in it,

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so that they have neither necessity nor inclination to mix again in its active scenes.

I was born and educated in Great Britain, and had all the advantage I could receive from a long residence in one of the most celebrated seats of learning in that happy kingdom. The prime and vigour of life I spent in the midst of public business, and had a thorough knowledge of the greatest part, and personal intimacy with not a few, of the persons most distinguished in rank, politics, or literature, for the last thirty years. From what circumstances, or with what views I came into this country, it is of no consequence for the reader to know: Suffice it therefore to say, that I was not transported by Sir John Fielding, but came of my own proper motion and free choice; and indeed have never met with any thing in passing through life that could be supposed either to sour the temper, or break the vigour of the mind. There are not a few who towards the close of life acquire a settled hatred or contempt of mankind, and seem disposed to avenge their own real or supposed calamities on the world in general, by the acrimony of their conversation, and the virulent satire of their writings. Productions dictated by such a spirit have often, it must be owned, such a poignant severity as deeply wounds the object of their resentment, and yet, I think, seldom adds to the relish of those for whom the entertainment is provided.

It has been generally supposed that

that satire and invective is the way of writing of all others most agreeable to the public, and the reason given for it is very little to the credit of human nature, *viz.* the prevalence of envy and malignity in the bulk of mankind. Had I been of this opinion, I would have cautiously avoided introducing the sentiment, at least so soon, as it would have been but a poor compliment to that very public whose attention I mean to solicit, and whose improvement I wish to promote. I confess that a thorough knowledge of the world, and extensive reading in history, have often produced mean thoughts of human nature. We see sometimes old hackneyed politicians discover a jealousy of the characters and an indifference to the sufferings of others, which surprises and offends men of less experience, who are therefore often laughed at for their weakness. This, in some instances, is the mistake of the observer, while the coolness and composure of spirit, the deliberate and self-collected carriage, which is the effect of time, is falsely called a callous or unfeeling disposition. But where the remark is just, and a real and general hatred of others has obtained full dominion, it would not be so decent to infer from it that mankind are universally worthless or incorrigible, as to impute it to the selfish meanness of that heart, in which it had taken place.

It is very common for authors to go to an extreme on the one hand or on the other, in speaking of human nature. Those philosophers who speak of it in such exalted terms as to contradict the truths of religion, have present experience and the history of past ages directly against them. The

most illustrious persons in the records of time, have derived the greatest part of their lustre itself, either from the singularity of their character, or, which is nearly the same thing, from the depravity of others, who needed their assistance for instruction or correction. It was smartly, at least, if not justly said by an author, not many years ago, that the wisdom of legislators, and admirable policy of states, and even the purity of moral precepts, are just such arguments for the dignity of human nature as gibbets are. There is, doubtless, no small degree of error, ignorance, prejudice, and corruption, to be found among men, but these, when properly viewed, serve rather to demonstrate the importance and necessity of information and instruction. There are not only particular instances in which the human mind has discovered the most exalted virtue as well as amazing powers, but the human race in general, with all its defects, is certainly the noblest and most valuable in this lower world, and therefore the most worthy of cultivation. To this may be added, that there is no circumstance in which there is a more manifest distinction between man and the inferior creatures, than that the individual is more helpless as well as the kind more noble; and therefore the intercourse of society and mutual assistance is absolutely necessary to his improvement and perfection.

But this is perhaps treating the subject in too abstract and philosophical manner, which I well know is not much to the taste of the present age. The importance of knowledge, and the power of intellectual light, will be readily confessed.

The questions to be seriously debated with himself by an author, at his first setting out, are, What encouragement he has to devote himself to the public service? and, what reason to think he hath any thing to communicate that is worthy of the public attention? Now, as to the *first* of these, it is my opinion, that though error, prejudice, and partiality, are very universal, that is to say, they have place in some degree in many persons of every rank, age, and country, yet their influence in each has, properly speaking, but a narrow sphere. Truth is much stronger than them all: They shew themselves chiefly in the smaller interests of particulars; but there is a candor and impartiality in a diffusive public, which may be in a great measure depended upon, and which will both hear truth and obey it. There is not perhaps a man in that public but has many prejudices and prepossessions; but these are confined within certain bounds, like the sphere of attraction of particular bodies, round himself; when you go beyond that sphere they are not felt, or they are felt very weakly. There is an observation I have sometimes made, which I do not remember to have read in any author, but which, if just, should teach every man to revere the public judgment. The remark is, that I can scarcely recollect any person well and intimately known to me, whose performances either in speaking or writing, had been exhibited to the world for any time, of whose talents and erudition the great plurality did not judge exactly in the same manner that I did myself. If they do justice to every other person, why should I doubt their doing it to me? Ig-

norance, prejudice, malice, or accident, may have some influence at first, but their effects are merely temporary, and are speedily effaced. Time is a diligent enquirer, and a just judge. I could almost say the same thing of a man's moral character, under two exceptions: If you go beyond the bounds of local politics, and abstract entirely from religious differences, every man is spoken of pretty nearly as he deserves. I am sufficiently aware that there are particular exceptions to this general theory, but I have not now time to enter upon them, and therefore shall leave them till they fall in my way in the discussion of such subjects as shall be undertaken in my future papers.

As to the *second* point, whether I have any thing to communicate that is worthy of the public attention? It is plain from the appearance of this paper, that I have already judged of it so far as to make the attempt; it is therefore too late for me, and too early for the reader, to take that matter into consideration. I shall, however, mention briefly the plan which I mean to follow. The general subject of these papers shall be the philosophy of human nature and of human life: I would willingly join science and reflection to experience and observation. Literature and morals, arts and industry, shall be my chief themes; and under one or other of these, every thing may be introduced that can in the least contribute to the happiness of social or private life. I must beg the reader to observe, that in handling all these subjects, I shall have a particular view to the state and interest of this rising country. As

in youth the human frame wears
2 C 2 its

its loveliest form; as the spring is the most charming season of the revolving year: so, a country newly planted, and every day advancing to a maturer state, affords the highest delight to a contemplative philosopher, and is, at the same time, the strongest invitation to activity and usefulness.

I am sensible that some will think the present an improper season for beginning on so extensive a plan. They will say the time calls not for speculation but action. Our industry is now all turned into one channel, the vigorous exertion of the spirit of defence. When liberty, property, and life are at stake, we must not think of being scholars but soldiers. When happy peace returns we shall be able to apply with proper attention and vigour to the improvement of our minds, as well as to the cultivation of the soil; till then we have other work upon our hands. I must inform the reader that these are mistaken reflections. There is such a connection among all the arts that improve or embellish human nature, that they are best promoted in conjunction, and generally go in a body. As I look without solicitude, or rather with unshaken confidence of success, on the present glorious and important struggle for the liberties of mankind; so I consider it as a proper season for the most ardent application to the improvement of this country in all respects. In times of public commotion the human mind is roused, and shakes off the incumbrances of sloth and self-indulgence. Those who put on the harness and go into the field, must be encouraged, assisted, and even supported, by the activity and industry of those who remain at home. Besides, I am much

mistaken if the time is not just at hand, when there shall be greater need than ever in America, for the most accurate discussion of the principles of society, the rights of nations, and the policy of states; all which shall have a place in the subsequent numbers of this paper. But above all, can it ever be unseasonable to lay before the public what tends to improve the temper and morals of the reader, which shall be the ultimate object of all my disquisitions? He who makes a people *virtuous* makes them *invincible*.

The reader will now in some degree understand the design and extent of this undertaking. As to wit and humour, I chuse to make no promises upon that head, lest I should break them. Most people perhaps differ from me, but I confess I would rather read a tedious argument than a dull joke. Yet the favours of the ingenious, as the saying is, (*post paid*) may perhaps enable me sometimes to gratify a reader of taste; only I must take the liberty of being pleased myself first, otherwise they shall sleep with me, or return to the authors. Some, perhaps, will wonder that I have said nothing of the delightful themes of love and gallantry, especially as it is so easy to establish a connection between the tender passion and military glory. The younger class of my readers may rest satisfied that they shall not want good advice enough, which may be applied to that and to every other subject; but I do not take myself to be qualified to paint the ardours of a glowing flame. I have not seen any killing eyes these several years. It was but yesterday that I smiled involuntarily on reading a poem in your last magazine, setting forth that

that both Beauty and Wiſdom had taken up their reſidence with a certain nymph, the one in her cheek the other in her tongue, and that they were reſolved never to depart, which I thought was a little unfortunate for all the reſt of the ſex. I wiſh every Strephon and Daphne heartily well, and that the exalted and rapturous phraſes of Arcadia, may be ſoon brought down to the compoſed diſcourſe of a quiet man and wife in Philadelphia; in which character, perhaps, they may ſometimes hear from me, I hope to their great benefit. I am, Sir,

Your moſt obedient ſervant,

THE DRUID.

Some ACCOUNT of the LIVES of
EMINENT PERSONS.

An Account of the life of the learned Mr.
GEORGE PſALMANAZAR.

MR Pſalmanazar was undoubtedly a Frenchman born: He had his education partly in a free ſchool, taught by two Franciſcan monks, and afterwards in a college of biſhops in an archiepiſcopal city, the name of which, as alſo thoſe of his birth-place and parents, remain yet inviolable ſecrets. Upon leaving the college, he was recommended as a tutor to young gentlemen; but ſoon fell into a mean rambling kind of life, that produced him plenty of diſappointments and miſfortunes. The firſt pretence he took up with was, that of being a ſufferer for religion, and procured a certificate that he was of Iriſh extract, and left his country for the ſake of the Roman Catholic religion, and was going on a pilgrimage to Rome. It was neceſſary, indeed, that he ſhould be equipped in the proper garb of a pilgrim; but not being in a condition to purchaſe one though it conſiſted only of a long ſtaff handſomely turned, and a ſhort leathern or oil-cloth cloak, he betook himſelf to the following ſtrata-gem. In a chapel dedicated to a miraculous ſaint, he obſerved that ſuch an one had been ſet up there as a monument of gratitude by ſome wandering pilgrim, come to the end of his journey, and

and though this chapel was never without a number of devotees, who prayed and burnt tapers before the image of the ſaint, he was not deterred from venturing in, and taking both ſtaff and cloak away at noon-day: He eſcaped without any enquiry after him, carried off the booty unmoleſted, made haſte to a private corner, threw the cloak about his ſhoulders, and ſtalked, in all ſanctified gravity, with the ſtaff in his hand, till he got out of the city: "Being thus accoutred (ſays he) and furniſhed with a proper paſs, I began at all proper places to beg my way in a fluent Latin, accouſing only clergymen, or perſons of figure, by whom I could be underſtood, and found them moſtly ſo generous and credulous, that I might eaſily have ſaved money, and put myſelf into a much better dreſs, before I had gone through a ſcore or two of miles; but ſo powerful was my vanity and extravagance, that as ſoon as I had got what I thought a ſufficient viaticum, I begged no more, but viewed every thing worth ſeeing, and then retired to ſome inn, where I ſpent my money as freely as I had obtained it." He tells us, that he frequently met with objects that made him ſhrink. In lonely places the carcaſſes of men rotting and ſtinking, by the wayſide, faſtened with ropes round their necks to poſts: Theſe were diſbanded ſoldiers and ſailors, who uſed, after the peace of Ryſwick, to infeſt the roads, and were in conſequence, hung up in ſcores at a time, and their bodies thus expoſed in *terrorem*. At other places were to be met with ſmall croſſes with inſcriptions, "pray for the ſoul of A. B. that was found murdered on the ſpot." At the age of ſixteen, when he was in Germany, he fell upon the wild project of paſſing for a Formoſan. He recollected that he had heard the Jeſuits ſpeak much of China and Japan, and was raſh enough to think that what he wanted of a right knowledge, he might make up by the ſtrength of a pregnant invention, which here, it muſt be confeſſed, found ample ſcope to work in. He ſet himſelf to form a new character and language, a grammar, a diviſion of the year into twenty months, a new religion, and what not! His alphabet was wrote from right to left, like the oriental tongues; and he ſoon inured his hand to write it with great readineſs. He now thought himſelf ſufficiently prepared to paſs for a Japaneſe converted to chriſtianity. He altered his Avignon certificate