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THE SCRIBBLER.

MONTREAL.

THURSDAY, 2d AUGUST, 1821.

No. VI.

Nihil tam absurdè dici potest, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum.—CICERO.

There is no absurdity to be imagined that can not be equalled by the paradoxes of some philosophers.

In a scarce work, entitled *Athenian sports, or paradoxes merrily argued*, printed in 1707, some of the arguments are presented with such ludicrous sophistry and mock gravity, that they cannot fail to be entertaining, if not instructive. Under the mask of humour there are also occasional touches of deep research, and abstract reasoning, which it may be no unpleasant task to the Scribbler to develope, and enlarge upon, in some future number, as presenting congenial matter for the employment of a pen and a mind much attracted by the *nugæ curiosæ* of literature, and habituated to apply them to modern times, and daily occurrences. As texts therefore that may here-after be dilated upon, or as objects of curiosity in themselves, I present the following to my already numerous, and I hope not ungratified, readers.

Paradox II. *That no colours are real, but only appear such to us.* This is one that is demonstrable by natural and experimental philosophy, and since the dissemination of the Newtonian principles can scarcely be considered as a paradox.

Paradox V. *That it is the pleasantest life to be always in danger.* Here the following curious sophistry occurs. "If we say there is such a thing as danger beforehand, it may be fear or misapprehension, yet possibly the danger may never touch us: if we consider it in the present tense, it is not danger, but misery: and if we consider it in the præter tense, it is past and gone. Now, since all time is comprehended under these *three terms*, and this falls under none of them, it follows that this hath no time at all, which being inseparable to every existence, as the measure of its duration, it will be evident that *Danger is a mere nonentity, and those that fear it fear just nothing.*"

Paradox XX. *That inconstancy is a most commendable virtue,* is almost solely maintained by quoting from Cowley;

I never yet could see that face
Had not a dart for me;
From fifteen years to fifty's space,
They all victorious be.
Colour or shape, good limbs, or face,
Goodness, or wit, in all I find;
In motion, or in speech, a grace;
If all fail; still 'tis womankind.

If tall, the name of proper slays;
If fair, she's pleasant as the light;
If low her prettiness does please;
If black, what lover loves not night;
The fat, like plenty fills my heart;
The lean, with love makes me so too;
If strait, her body's Cupid's dart;
To me, if crooked, 'tis his bow.

Nay age itself does me to rage incline,
And strength to women gives, as well as wine.

*Him, who loves always one why should we
call*

More constant than the man loves always all.

In arguing this paradox the following quaint reason is assigned from Cornelius Agrippa, for the pre-eminence of the sex, under which title he wrote a treatise, "Women are the most excellent creatures, in that man is able to subject all things else, and to grow wise in every thing, but still persists a fool in woman."

Paradox XXI. *That content is the greatest misery.* "For alas! what is content? *hath it not a sound of restraint and sufferance*, and doth it not rather imply a lethargy than any active pastime? Joy it doth not amount to, but rather *a heavy privation of joy*. It signifies rest and imperfect" (more properly, involuntary) "acquiescence."

Paradox XXXII. *In praise of poverty.* "What, says St. Chrysostom, doth distinguish angels from men, but that they are not needy as we are? and it is ever observed

that men's desires increase with their riches, and consequently they that have most are the most needy; and therefore the poor, who have the least in the world, come nearest to angels, and those are the farthest off, who need the most." He who needs, says this father in another place, many things is a slave to many things, is himself the servant of his servants,^[1] and (A) depends more on them than they on him. So that the increase of worldly goods and honour being but the increase of our slavery and dependence, reduces us to a more real and effective misery. What hath the bravest of mortals to glory in? Is it greatness? *Who can be great on so small a round as the Earth?*

Paradox XXXIV. Is entitled *Nescience, or a paradox proving we know nothing*, and is capable of much greater ingenuity of argument than is made use of; but the following is curious. "All our knowledge seems to be false on the part of the object, there being but one true of itself, namely God, whom we know not, and can not know; because to know a thing inadequately is not to know it, and to know adequately is to comprehend, and to comprehend is to contain, and the thing contained must be less than that which contains it."

Paradox XXXVI, *proving that women ought to paint*, in a letter from a lady to Sir Richard (probably Steele.) Deformity is not nature. What is paint but a little more substantial wash? "You dare not say it is unlawful to remove any thing even from the face itself which renders it deformed or displeasing to the spectators: if you thought

so you would scarce practice quite contrary to your opinion. It is plain that nature designed man a grave and awful creature; it gave you beards to strike us with reverence; why then do you envy yourselves such an advantage?"—"What thou lovest in her face is *colour*, and *painting* gives that; but thou hates it not because it is, but *because thou knowest it*. If her face be painted on a board, thou wilt love both it and the board; canst thou loathe it then, when it speaks smiles, and kisses, because it is *painted*?"

Paradox XXXVIII. *There is but one external sense and not five*. This is a paradox which I am inclined to take up, and contend that it is a demonstrable truth. In the Athenian sports it is argued upon some very metaphysical grounds, and the physical question is entirely lost sight of.

Paradox CXVI, *proving that modest women may go stark naked*. I must not touch upon this paradox farther than to say, that the writer quotes the authority of St. Augustine for his assertion.

Paradox CXXII. *That the agreement between man and wife is chiefly owing to their being of a disagreeable temper*, is well argued; amongst other things, it is contended; "if both be knowing or skilful they will not esteem one another, but if one admire the other, there will be greater love between them. If both be prodigal, they will quickly see the bottom of the bag, whereas the thriftiness of the one, will make amends for the expensiveness of the other. If one be sad, the other being pleasant, will divert him; if not, they will both fall into the

excess either of sadness or joy. If one be profane, the party that is devout, will convert him by good example. If one be severe, it is good that the other be gentle: if one be passionate, that the other be patient."

As my motto expresses, there is no opinion too absurd to be found amongst the reveries of the learned. It was the opinion of the Talmudists, that Adam had two wives, *Lilis* and *Eve*, and that the children of the former were all devils. A grave query is added, whether the breed is extinct? Perhaps the heroines of the following histories, may be considered as descendants of *Lilis*.

In the *Theatrum Historiæ* of Francius, there is an account of the lady of Hieronymus de Mont Leon, who, although she had not seen her husband for four years before his death, yet had a posthumous son. The legitimacy of this child was disputed by her husband's brothers, and sentence was obtained by them against her. She, however, maintained that she had become pregnant by imagination, when dreaming of her husband during his life time, and appealed to the parliament of Grenoble. Francius gives a long account of the trial, of the witnesses produced, and their testimony, with the opinions of the *Doctores Medicæ*, and the *sage-femmes*, at length.—The result was that the legitimacy of the son was established by a decree of that parliament dated 13th February, 1637. The question was, however, again brought before the Sorbonne, at Paris, who reversed the sentence of the provincial parliament, not, as appears by the record of their solemn decision, *on account of the*

impossibility of the thing, but, on account of the consequences it might have in opening a door to excuse all unchaste wives.

In the seventh volume of the *Causes Célèbres*, the following *conte assez joli*, as the compiler of that laborious work calls it, serves to relieve the dryness and monotony of forensic detail and argument.

The confessor of a married lady, who, like many others, was a virtuous woman till she was found out, exhorted her, when on her death-bed, as the only condition on which she might expect pardon for her sins, to reveal to her husband the secret authors of the existence of four boys, whom illicit amours had introduced into his family. "Your salvation can alone be secured by this candid avowal," said the priest, "which if you do not make, eternal misery will be your portion."—Struck with horror and repentance, the lady called her husband and the four boys to her bedside. She then addressed the reputed father, saying, "Sir, pardon my calling you by that title, I dare not address you by a more tender one: hitherto you have reposed in the conviction that you are the father of these four children: my conscience compels me, in my present situation, to declare to you the truth. Alas! I have given you heirs which do not belong to you." Judge of the astonishment both of the husband and the children, whilst she continued: "This eldest boy owes his being to the Abbé — who came, you know, to pass the summer at our country-house. Afterwards you must recollect, you thought I was deficient in gracefulness of

motion; the dancing-master you gave me, was the father of the second. La Brie, your valet, whose fine figure you yourself used to praise to me, pleased me even better than he did you; to him you owe this other." She was proceeding thus, when the fourth boy, who, though only nine years of age, possessed much acuteness, interrupted her. He had perceived that his mother's inclinations seemed by degrees to have debased, and fearful that the one who succeeded to a valet in the fancy of the lady, would prove the lowest in the scale of paternity, exclaimed, in a supplicating tone, and throwing himself in tears at the foot of the bed. "Oh! my dear mamma, pray give me one of the best for *my* papa." But he was doomed to remain in uncertainty, for, exhausted by the efforts she had made, his mother, gave up the ghost, without naming her fourth paramour.

About the year 1798, as a couple were going to be married in Liverpool, and had proceeded as far as the church-yard gate, the gentleman stopped his fair comrade with the following unexpected address. "Mary, during our courtship I have told you most of my mind, but not all my mind: when we are married, I shall insist upon three things." "What are they?" asked the astonished lady. "In the first place," says he, "I shall lie alone; secondly, I shall eat alone; and lastly, I shall find fault where there is no occasion: can you submit to these conditions?" "O, yes, sir, very easily," she replied, "for if *you* lie alone, I *shall not*; if you eat alone, *I shall eat first*; and as to your finding fault without occasion, that I think may be prevented, for I will take care you shall never *want*

occasion." They were married.

In how far the full-blooded descendants of *Lilis* may exist in the present day, I can not tell; but I can not but confess that a slight tinge of relationship with that branch, greatly improves the pure blood of the *Eveites*; or in plain English, no woman can be perfectly agreeable without a spice of the devil in her composition, which is an original paradox invented by me, the Scribbler, as witness my hand, the day and year first above written.

LEWIS LUKE MACCULLOH.

The letter from the pivot-man of the Company of Independent Loungers on the Champ de Mars has been received, but too late for this number. It will appear next week. He has certainly made out a good case, which, if not amounting to a full justification, is a very admissible apology.

Timothy Single justly complains of a grievous evil in society: his communication will receive that favourable attention in the next number which it well deserves. *Jeremy Tickler*, tickles rather too roughly but his hint shall likewise not go unregarded. To ensure attention in the next number, letters should be left for Mr. Macculloh at the Publisher's on the previous Saturday evening.

Those ladies and gentlemen who have had the first numbers of the Scribbler for approval, but have declined subscribing, are respectfully requested to return them to the publisher, Mr. LANE; especially No. 1. which is getting out of print, and is wanted for fresh subscribers.



To be disposed of, a few Manuscript Sermons warranted originals, in a convenient form for pulpit-use. Apply by letter, post paid, to X. Y. Z., at Mr. Lane's, St. Paul street.

N. B.—Secrecy may be relied on.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] It has been said with great truth, that if you keep one servant, you may, if you have good luck, chance to get your work done, if you keep two, it will be but half done, but if you keep three, you may do it all yourself.—*Probatum est.* L. L. M.

Transcriber's Note: Obvious printer errors, including punctuation, have been corrected. All other inconsistencies have been left as they were in the original.

[The end of *The Scribbler* 1821-08-02 Volume 1, Issue
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