
The Life and Writings of De Foe must always prove a subject of interest to students of English literature; and, in spite of the voluminous labours of Mr Wilson, and the brilliant sketch of Mr Forster, the history of De Foe’s Life and Writings has still to be written.

Under these circumstances, I hope you will consent to reprint in *Notes and Queries* the following remarkable letters of De Foe, which were printed in *The London Review* of the 4th and 11th of June last, from the originals, then recently discovered in the State Paper Office.

There are many reasons which seem to me to render this course desirable. In the first place, the letters, by being printed in “N & Q,” will be so preserved as to be readily available for future use; and secondly, their appearance in your columns may elicit from De Foe’s admirers some satisfactory defence of the extraordinary conduct which these letters exhibit. The gentleman who communicated them to *The London Review*, accompanied them with as able introduction highly condemnatory of De Foe; though, I admit, not more so than the correspondence seems to justify; and those remarks called forth a controversy upon the subject in the columns of that journal, to which I would refer your readers.

All that I now ask is, for the insertion of the letters themselves, which appear to have been addressed to a Mr De La Faye, probably the Charles De La Faye, Esq., of the Secretary of State’s Office, whose library was sold in 17654. They are as follows:

I. Daniel de Foe to ----*

“Sir, I could not read without pain to-day in the public prints something of an account of that Traiterous Pamphlet being printed, I mean that which I shewed you and which I sent to my Lord Sunderland.

I beg you will please to assure his Lordship from me that the original which I shewed you is still in my hand, and has never been out of my keeping; nor has any eye seen it, or any copy been taken of it, that one excepted which I sent to his Lordship.

I here enclose a letter which I have stopt, which I think is worth his Lordship’s notice. I dare not yet come abroad, but hope to see you in three or four dayes if the cold weather abates.

I am, Sir,
Your most humble servant,
De Foe.
Newington, April 12, 1718.”

II.
“Sir, Though I doubt not but you have acquainted my Lord Stanhope with what humble sense of his lordship’s goodness I received the account you were pleased to give me, that my little services are accepted, and that his lordship is satisfied to go on upon the foot of former capitulations, &c., yet I confess, sir, I have been anxious on many accounts with respect as well to the service itself as to my own safety, least my lord may think himself ill served by me, even when I may have best performed my duty.

I thought it therefore not only a debt to myself, but a duty to his lordship, that I should give his lordship a short account, as clear as I can, how far my former instructions empowered me to act, and, in a word, what this little piece of secret service is, for which I am so much a subject of his lordship’s present favour and bounty.

It was in the ministry of my Lord Townshend, when my Lord Chief Justice Parker, to whom I stand obliged for the favour, was pleased so far to state my case, that notwithstanding the misrepresentations under which I had suffered, and notwithstanding some mistakes which I was the first to acknowledge, I was so happy as to be believed in the professions I made of a sincere attachment to the interest of the present Government, and, speaking with all possible humility, I hope I have not dishonoured my Lord Parker’s recommendation.

In considering, after this, which way I might be rendered most useful to the Government, it was proposed by my Lord Townshend that I should still appear as if I were, as before, under the displeasure of the Government, and separated from the Whigs, and that I might be more serviceable in a kind of disguise, than if I appeared openly, and upon this foot a weekly paper which I was at first directed to write in opposition to a scandalous paper called the *Shift shifted*, was laid aside, and the first thing I engaged in was a monthly book called *Mercurius Politicus*, of which presently. In the interval of this, Dyer, the News-Letter-writer, having been dead, and Dormer, his successor, being unable by his troubles to carry on that work, I had an offer of a share in the property as well as in the management of that work.

I immediately acquainted my Lord Townsend of it, who, by Mr Buckley, let me know it would be a very acceptable piece of service, for that letter was really very prejudicial to the public, and the most difficult to come at in a judicial way in case of offence given. My lord was pleased to add, by Mr Buckley, that he would consider my service in that case, as he afterwards did.

Upon this I engaged in it, and that so far, that though the property was not wholly my own, yet the conduct and government of the style and news was so entirely in me, that I ventured to assure his lordship the sting of that mischievous paper should be entirely taken out, though it was granted that the style should continue Tory, as it was, that the party might be amused, and not set up another, which would have destroyed the design: and this part I therefore take entirely on myself still.
This went on for a year, before my Lord Townshend went out of the office; and his lordship, in consideration of this service, made me the appointment which Mr Buckley knows of, with promise of a further allowance as service presented.

My Lord Sunderland, to whose goodness I had many years ago been obliged, when I was in a secret commission sent to Scotland, was pleased to approve and continue this service and the appointment annexed; and, with his lordship’s approbation, I introduced myself, in the disguise of a translator of the foreign news, to be so far concerned in this weekly paper of Mist’s as to be able to keep it within the circle of a secret management, also prevent the mischievous part of it; and yet neither Mist or any of those concerned with him have the least guess or suspicion by whose direction I do it.

But here it becomes necessary to acquaint my lord (as I hinted to you, sir), that this paper, called the Journal, is not in myself in property, as the other, only in management; with this express difference, that if any thing happens to be put in without my knowledge which may give offence, or if anything slips my observation which may be ill taken, his lordship shall be sure always to know whether he has a servant to reprove or a stranger to correct.

Upon the whole, however, this is the consequence, that by this management, the weekly Journal and Dormer’s Letter, as also the Mercurius Politicus, which is in the same nature of management as the Journal, will be always kept (mistakes excepted) to pass as Tory papers, and yet be disabled and enervated, so as to do no mischief or give any offence to the Government.

I beg leave to observe, sir, one thing more to his lordship in my own behalf, and without which, indeed, I may one time or other run the hazard of fatal misconstructions. I am, sir, for this service posted among Papists, Jacobites, and enraged High Tories—a generation who, I profess, my very soul abhors; I am obliged to hear traitorous expressions and outrageous words against his Majesty’s person and Government and his most faithful servants, and smile at it all as if I approved it; I am obliged to take all the scandalous and, indeed, villainous, papers that come, and keep them by me as if I would gather materials from them to put them into the news; nay, I often venture to let things pass which are a little shocking, that I may not render myself suspected.

Thus I bow in the house of Rimmon, and must humbly recommend myself to his lordship’s protection, or I may be undone the sooner, by how much the more faithfully I execute the commands I am under.

I forbear to enlarge. I beg you, sir, to represent these circumstances to his lordship in behalf of a faithful servant, that shall always endeavour to approve his fidelity by actions rather then words.
I am, Sir, your most humble servant,
De Foe.
Newington, April 26, 1718.

P.S. I send you here one of the letters stopt at the press, as I mentioned to you; as to the manuscripts of Sultan Galga, another villainous paper, I sent that copy to my Lord Sunderland. If the original be of any service, it is ready at your first orders.”

The allusions in the preceding letter to the scandalous paper called the *Shift Shifted*, to the *Mercurius Politicus*, to Dyer’s, afterwards Dormer’s, *Letter*, and to Mist’s *Journal*, are all valuable contributions to that history which has still to be written, the *History of English Periodical Literature*.

III.

“Sir, I am extremely concerned that the *Journal* of this day has copied from the *Post-Boy* that ridiculous paragraph of the Pretender’s being in the list of the Queen Dowager’s legitimate children, and I have spoken my mind very freely to him of it.

But, sir, I think, in consequence of what I wrote last to you, it is my duty to assure my lord that I have no part in this slip, but that Mr Mist did it after I had looked over what he had gotten together, which it seems was not sufficient; and though I would, if I may presume so far, intercede for him, yet my lord may be assured I have no concern in it, directly or indirectly. ’This, sir, I say, I thought myself obliged to notice to you, to make good what I said in my last, (viz.) that if any mistake happened my lord should always know whether he had a servant to reprove or a stranger to punish.

I am, Sir, your most humble servant,
De Foe.
May 10, 1718.

P.S. He has renewed his promise to me that he will be more wary, and I do think verily it was not done maliciously. But that I leave as I find it.

Address to - De la Faye, Esq., Present.”

IV.

“Sir, When I had the favour of seeing you last, you were pleased to mention to me my particular concern, and that you would interest yourself in that part for me. The exceeding kindness of that offer, sir, encourages me to give you this trouble, and to observe to you that the half year expired the 17th inst.
I need say no more, but to ask you pardon for this freedom, and leave the rest to your own time and methods, and shall attend at what time you please to appoint.

I hope I have kept the difficult people I have to do with within the bounds of duty, and am in hopes to draw them gradually into yet narrower limits of respect. It is a hard matter to please the Tory party, as their present temper operates, without abusing, not only the Government, but the persons of our governors, in everything they write; but to the best of my skill, I cause all letters and paragraphs which look that way to be intercepted, and stopped at the press.

I am a little alarmed at a prosecution against Morphew in the King’s Bench Court for a passage in the *Mercurius Politicus*, which began in a private person sueing Morphew on pretence of damages on a paragraph, printed from another printed paper, of a person hanged at York, for three half-pence. But it seems the Court, resenting a line or two in it as a reflection on the judges, have made it a public cause, and have committed Morphew till sentence, which it is feared will be severe.

But, sir, I think myself obliged to lay before my Lord Stanhope the following particulars, in case they should offer to concern me in it. First, that it is two year[s] or more since this was done, and, consequently, before the capitulation made in my Lord Townshend’s time, when all former mistakes of mine were forgiven. Secondly, that the thing itself was not mine, neither can any one pretend to charge it on me, otherwise than it might be said I saw or overlooked the book; nor, indeed, can they prove so much as that. So that I can in nowise be said to have failed in my duty on account of this latent affair, which, indeed, seems to me to be but trifling in itself.

I have an entire dependence on my lord's justice and goodness; that no offence formerly committed (were this really so) shall be remembered to my prejudice. However, I thought it my duty to give his lordship this account, that my enemies may not anticipate me by giving wrong and injurious accounts of it before me.

I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

De Foe.

May 23, 1718.

N.B. The words, as I hear them, which the judges take offence at, are in the introducing the story of the fellow that was executed, saying, it was a piece of justice unmixed with mercy.”

V.

“Sir, Since our last conference I have entered into a new treaty with Mr Mist. I need not trouble you with the particulars, but in a word he
professes himself convinced that he has been wrong, that the Government has treated him with lenity and forbearance, and he solemnly engages to me to give no more offence.

The liberties Mr Buckley mentioned, viz., to seem on the same side as before, to rally the Flying Post*, the Whig writers, and even the word ‘Whig,’ &c., and to admit foolish and trifling things in favour of the Tories. This, as I represented it to him, he agrees is liberty enough, and resolves his paper shall for the future amuse the Tories, but not affront the Government.

I have freely told him that this is the only way to preserve his paper, to keep himself from a jail, and to secure the advantages which now rise to him from it, for that he might be assured the complaint against him was so general that the Government could bear it no longer.

I said, sir, all that could be said on that head, only reserving the secret of who I spoke from; and concluded that unless he would keep measures with me and be punctual in these things, I could not serve him any farther or be concerned any more.

Thus far, sir, I have acted, I hope in a right method, in pursuance of which, in his next paper, he is to make a kind of a declaration in answer to two letters printed in his last, wherein he shall publish his resolution not to meddle with or write anything offensive to the Government.

In prosecution, also, of this reformation, he brought me this morning the enclosed letter; which, indeed, I was glad to see, because, though it seems couched in terms which might have been made public, yet has a secret gall in it, and a manifest tendency to reproach the Government with partiality and injustice, and (as it acknowledges expressly) was written to serve a present turn. As this is an earnest of his just intention, I hope he will go on to your satisfaction.

Give me leave, sir, to mention here a circumstance which concerns myself, and which, indeed, is a little hardship upon me, viz., that I seem to merit less when I intercept a piece of barefaced flagrant treason at the Press than when I stop such a letter as this inclosed, because one seems to be of a kind which no man would dare to meddle with. But I would persuade myself, sir, that stopping such notorious things is not without its good effect, particularly because as it is true that some people are generally found who do venture to print anything that offers, so, stopping them here is some discouragement and disappointment to them, and they often die in our hands.

I speak this, sir, as well on occasion of what you were pleased to say upon that letter which I sent you formerly about Killing no Murder, as upon another with verses in it, which Mr Mist gave me yesterday; which, upon my word, is so villainous and scandalous, that I scarce dare to send it without your order, and an assurance that my doing so shall be taken well.
For I confess it lies a peculiar insolence in it against his Majesty’s person, which (as blasphemous words against God) are scarce fit to be repeated.

I am the more concerned you should know this also, because, if I guess right, and Mr Mist is of that opinion too, it is the same hand that the manuscript which I showed Mr Buckley, of Sultan Galga, was written in, and, I suppose, comes from the same quarter.

If you please to order my sending it, I shall obey, and, in the meantime, assure you no eye shall see it.

Here has been a very barbarous attempt made by Curl, the bookseller, upon Mr Mist (viz.) to trepann him into words against the Government, with a design to inform against him. I think Mist has escaped him; but if he brings it into your office, I shall lay a clear state of the matter before you. I know the Government is sufficient to itself for punishing offenders, and is above employing trepanns to draw men into offences on purpose to resent them.

I am, Sir, your most humble and obedient servant,
De Foe.
Newington, June 4, 1718.”

VI.

“Sir, I gave you the trouble of a letter a few days ago. The account I gave you there of the conditions I had engaged Mr Mist to, will I hope be satisfactory, and particularly in his performance of those conditions.

I suppose you will remember I hinted when I had last the favour of waiting on you, that there was a book printing at his house scandalously reflecting on my Lord Sund[erland] that Mist was willing, as a testimony of his sincerity, to consent to a method how to put it into his lordship’s hands.

I have gotten the sheets into my hands in performance of this promise, and would gladly receive your commands about them.

I believe the time is come when the journal, instead of affronting and offending the Government, may many ways be made serviceable to the Government, and I have Mr Mist so absolutely resigned to proper measures for it, that I am persuaded I may answer for it.

I am, Sir, your most humble and obedient servant,
De Foe.
June 13, 1718.”

Such are the extraordinary letters, which reveal to us De Foe “bowing in the house of Rimmon;” and in which the future biographer of that remarkable writer will
assuredly find materials for a new, and I fear not more favourable, view of the moral character of Daniel De Foe.

L.O.