Designing “A general Panegyrick on all Ranks and Degrees of Men”, I shall next present the Reader with

**A Secret History of the Weekly Writers, &c.**

I call it *A Secret History*, as it discovers such things of our Town Authors, as have hitherto lain concealed. And I call them *Weekly Writers*, to distinguish them from “The Moderator”, “Wandering Spy”, “Rehearsal”, “London Post”, Interloping “Whipster”, and that rabble of scandalous Hackneys, who merit no place in our “Panegyrick”; and for that reason, are kicked to my “Living Elegy”, as being fit for no company or honour but a House of Correction. And there I leave them, whilst I give the World “A Secret History of those Weekly Writers that deserve a Panegyrick”.

And here I shall send a distinct challenge to “The Review”, “Observator”, “Gazette”, “Post-Master”, “Post-Man”, “Post-Boy”, “Daily Courant”, “English Post”; for these eight are Authors of credit; and for that reason I will say the worst that I know of them, to provoke them to a Paper Duel.

And the first that deservedly leads the way in our “Secret History”, is Daniel De Foe. This man has done me a sensible wrong, by interloping with my “Question-Project”. Losers may have leave to speak; and I here declare, I am £200 the worse for De Foe’s clogging my “Question-Project”. His answering Questions Weekly put a stop to my “Monthly Oracle”: for, though his answers were false and impertinent (and for that reason his interloping continued but a few weeks), yet, being published every Tuesday, they ruined my “Monthly Oracle”: for most are seized with the Athenian Itch, and chuse rather to be scratched *Weekly*, than stay till the *Month* is out for a perfect cure. Such a dolt as I have laid the Plan of near Fifty Books (besides Sixty which I have written since my confinement). Then it is strange that such a first-rate Author as Daniel De Foe should be so barren of new Projects, that he must interlope with mine; but the mischief he endeavoured to do me will fall on his own head; for I have now set up a “Whipping-Post”, and resolve to lash him (if he dare draw either pen or sword) until he has done me justice. And in the mean time I will take the satisfaction to tell the World, that whatever questions De Foe has answered shall be all answered again (with the best of his Thoughts, and my own Improvements); my resolution being to publish an entire Volume of the “New Oracle” every year, till the “Question-Project” is completed. To this sneaking injustice of interloping, De Foe has added that of reprinting a Copy he gave me. He could not but know that the *giving* or *selling* a Copy gives the same right to the Printer: and therefore, till he gives me satisfaction upon this head, “he continues to pick my pocket.” And if he thinks that expression harsh, I am ready to meet him, when and where he pleases, to prove it. But, though De Foe has wronged me in these Copies, and once in protecting his Platonic Friend, yet I must do him that justice to say, “he is a very ingenious useful Writer.” And I hope (as much as he talks of debt) lie is in no danger from Serjeants.
His Body should not be confin’d
Who’s a true Monarch in his Mind;
One who with his majestic Pen
May give the Law to other Men.

Then, if De Foe quarrels with this “Journal”, he shall never fail of an Answer.
And, to provoke him to fall upon me, I now draw upon him in an honourable Challenge; I mean, I here dare him to answer the following questions:

1. Whether the Author of “The True-Born Englishman”, “Reformation of Manners”, &c. has not, contrary to all Grammar and good sense, mistaken himself in the use of this and that, these and those? And, whether a Gentleman who does not know how to dispose of such little words as these may, notwithstanding, be well enough qualified for a Judge of Style and good Language, and to answer all new and curious Questions, as he pretended? I must take the liberty to imagine that Author has never met with this rule in the common Syntax, “Hic et ille, cum ad duo antiposita referuntur; hic ad posterius et proprius; ille ad prius et remotius propriac usitatissimac referri debet.”

2. What authority has the Author of the “Review” for his Metamorphosis of Time into a Female? Where is the Rod and the Ferula!

3. Whether there be any such thing as a “Genus Epicorum”?

4. Whether have the Grecians a Casus sextus? If not, why do we meet with this verse in Juvenal,

   “Penelope melius, levius torquetis Arachne,”

and with many mixed sentences, such as these, in other Authors, [Greek text] genere, [Greek text] nihil altius, nunquam in majore [Greek text] fui, [Greek text] [ditto] [ditto] [ditto] &c.?

5. Whether can Father Lilly be defended for putting Vir among his “Masculine acute crescentia”; and Mulier also as an exception to “Mascula in er, scil. acutac crescentia”?

When De Foe has given a satisfactory answer to this Challenge, I shall send him a third; for this is the second Pass I have made at Daniel De Foe in vain; so that if he does not answer it now, I will post him up for a --- Friend. But, if he thinks good to answer my Challenge (I mean to review that nonsense I charge him with), I will either renew the fight, or fairly own him the Victor. But, to do him justice again, take him with all his failings, it must be acknowledged that De Foe is a man of good parts, and very clear sense. Whatever he says upon the subject of Peace and War is so true and correct, that (like Pythagoras’s ipse dixit) it might almost stand for an infallible Rule. He is master of the English tongue; can say what he please upon any subject; and, by his printing a Poem every day, one would think rhimed in his sleep. It is his misfortune that a prejudiced person should write his Character. But (with all my revenge) I cannot but own, his thoughts upon any subject are always surprizing, new, and singular; and, though he writes for bread, could never be hired to disgrace the quill, or to wrong his conscience. And, which crowns his Panegyrick, he is a person of
true courage. It is true, I have reason to think Daniel De Foe dares not quarrel with John Dunton: but I believe he fears nothing on earth but myself: and he says as much, in telling the world “I adhere firmly to Truth, and resolve to defend it against all extremities.” He “reviews” without fear, and acts without fainting. -- He is not daunted with multitudes of enemies; for he faces as many, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, as there are foes to Moderation and Peace. Loyalty to the Queen is his Guide, and Resolution his Companion; and a lawful occasion makes him truly brave. It was this sent him to Weymouth, Exeter, Crediton, to preach Peace and Moderation to the High-flyers: and, though they had not the manners to thank him, yet I hope to see them all on their knees, for not listening to his wholesome doctrine. -- “Peace!” It is a dangerous experiment the Western Tackers could not approve of; and for that reason the Weymouth Gothams had fettered him, whipped him, and perhaps burnt him, had not his known courage (and “great Party of Two Men”), set him above their malice. To sum up all: De Foe has Piety enough for an Author, and Courage enough for a Martyr. And, in at word; if ever any, Daniel De Foe is “a True Englishman”; and for that reason, he is more respected by men of honour and sense, than he can be affronted by Alderman B---, Justice S---, and the rest of the Western blockheads. Now, if such an Author as this should attack my Journal, I shall think there is reason for it, and will endeavour to answer him. And, to speak the truth, it is pity this Peace-making Traveller should have any enemy but Error, and such a weak assailant as John Dunton.

[p. 438]

Thus have I finished “The Secret History of the Weekly Writers”; viz. “The Review”; “Observator”; “Gazette”; “Flying-Post”; “Post-Man”; “Post-Boy”; “Daily Courant”; and the “English-Post”. Now, if you ask me which of these Eight Newspapers are the best, I should answer, “They are all best;” for, “The Observer” is best to towel the jacks, &c; “The Review” is best to promote Peace; “The Flying-Post” is best for the Scotch News; “The Post-Boy” is best for the English and Spanish News; “The Daily Courant” is the best Critick; “The English Post” is the best Collector; “The London Gazette” has the best authority; and “The Post-Man” is the best for every thing. And they are all so good, or rather best, as to deserve an answer, if they quarrel with this “Journal”.

I have here challenged eight of our Weekly Writers to a Paper Duel; and, as they are men of learning and worth, I hope they will accept of it. […]

---

1 The Character of Dr Samuel Annesley.
2 As he will find, if he consults the Athenian Chronicle, Number 16.
3 See his Review, Volume II, Number 75.
4 Ibid.
5 They are De Foe’s words, in his Review, Volume II, Number 75.
6 See his Character more at large in the History of my Life and Errors, page 180. And in De Foe’s Review, Volume II, Number 75.