

Lee, William. 'Daniel Defoe on Assassination of Rulers'. *Notes and Queries*. 3rd Series. VIII (8 July 1865): 21-23.

By way of text, I quote from the proceedings of the Middlesex Sessions, as reported in the newspapers of Saturday, December 9, 1721 :

“On Tuesday last one Archibald Todd, who kept a chandler’s shop in St Giles-in-the-Fields, was try’d before the Bench of Justices at Hicks’s Hall upon an Indictment for cursing his Majesty, and saying he hoped to see the Pretender here before Christmas; and that then he (the same Todd) would be the first that should venture his Life to shoot his Majesty King George thro’ the Head, which traitorous words he uttered in the hearing of three Witnesses.”

The above, and other similar overt offences about the same time,¹ were but practical consequences of the doctrine then being inculcated by Cato’s Letters in *The London Journal*. The loyal and conservative newspapers, the legislature, and public opinion, were roused to indignation. Government proceedings were taken against the journal, which were partially defeated by the subterfuge of putting forward Benjamin Norton Defoe,² as its legal printer and publisher; while the author of the Letters (John Trenchard) transferred his services to the *British Journal*, and I believe escaped the hand of justice.

Among other papers, the *Flying Post* of December 14 to 16, contained a letter denouncing the principles so advocated; and as (for the purpose of refutation) it states Cato’s doctrine clearly and succinctly, I quote it as follows :

“That it is lawful, nay highly necessary for any Person, by any method, though never so base, to destroy all whom he takes to be Tyrants, Usurpers, or Oppressors of the Publick.”

It could not be expected that so zealous a Protestant and loyal a subject as Daniel Defoe, who had written and suffered so much for the Revolution, and the Succession of the House of Hanover, would remain silent. Hence the following Introductory Letter by him in Applebee’s *Original Weekly Journal*, December 16, 1721:

“Sir, It is easy to entangle a Cause by subtilty of Words and by long Harangues; and when Men are resolv’d to impose artfully upon Mankind, they often make such Circumstances as may amuse and confound the Judgments of their Readers : This is call’d by the *Moderns* fineness of Reasoning : And it must be confess’d that Men by these Methods have frequently reason’d themselves and others into, and out of, the worst and the best Principles, as well in Civil as in Religious Affairs. Thus all the most damnable Heresies and even Principles destructive of Religion itself, have been brought into the World; and Fautors and Champions of Error have seduced Thousands from the true Religion; nay, to testify the Antiquity of it,

the Devil thus deluded the first and best of Women, persuading her, by his sophistic pretended Oratory, that it could be no Crime to encrease Knowledge; that if the eating the Fruit would make her wise, it did not consist with the Goodness of her Creator to forbid it, and that such a Command must be the Effect of a jealous Knowledge of her being able to be a Goddess herself; or of Envy, lest she should attain to a Perfection of Knowledge equal to him that forbade it; with this hellish Oratory the subtle Fiend deluded the unthinking ambitious Soul of Eve, and brought her to commit Treason against Heaven.

By the same Arts, and deriv'd from the same Fountain, have we a secret hellish Plot carrying on among us at this Time, to deface all Principles of Christianity in the Souls of Men, and Principles of Loyalty in the Minds of Subjects : These two hellish Designs have been propagated by a set of Free-Thinkers and Deists in Religion, Independent Whigs, and such as set up even Heathenism for Christian Doctrine; Principles which naturally lead us to be Commonwealth- Men, and Rebels in matters of Government, and Levellers in matters of Property. One would think that the late unnatural War, which ended in the most unnatural Murder that ever was committed since the Crucifixion of our Blessed Saviour, should have ingrafted in the mind of every loyal Subject a principle of Horror at the very Thoughts of Murder and Assassination, let the Person propos'd be who it will : But we have a set of Men, who, having first made themselves popular by writing a News-Paper fill'd with Clamour at private Grievances, tho' not sparing the King himself, are now instructing us in two Principles equally abhorr'd by all Christians, viz. Self-Murder, and Assassination of others; both which the Christian Doctrine, much more the reformed Protestant Doctrine, abhors : The Authors of the *London Journal* have set up this new Undertaking, such I must call it; I do not doubt but the End will prove that the old Leaven is in the Lump, and that the Doctrine of KING-KILLING is at the bottom of it all; that they will tell us, some time or other, as plainly as they dare, that if Justice, *as they call it*, is not executed on every Statesman who they please to call VILLAIN, for that has been one of their most gentle Appellations, every private Man has a Right to execute it himself; and as this is but one Step lower than an Assault upon the Head of all Government, 'tis as evident that all the Particulars are contain'd in the general Proposal, and that this is but a Preludium to that of assassinating Monarchs, and Monarchy itself, as has been once already our case. We have had many Essays of this Nature in this Kingdom : the first was that of a Pamphlet written in the late Usurper's time, entitled *Killing no Murder*; if ever the Killing any potent Robber, or powerful Thief in the World, was lawful, the laying Hands on such a Wretch as Cromwell must have been so; Julius Caesar was nothing that he was not; but Cromwell was much that Julius Caesar was not. Cromwell was the Murderer of the King, and even of the Monarchy itself; he was the Robber of his Country, and of all Civil Right; he overthrew not the Laws only, but the Legislature itself; not the Lord's Anointed Governor, but the Government itself : and it is remarkable,

that this very Parricide justified himself from the same Example of Brutus, which these Men extol; and his Flatterers call'd him Brutus, and the Deliverer of his Country, as may be seen in several of the vile Harangues made to him, and Poems made in Compliment to him and his Tyranny, on that Occasion. O Loyal Britons! How can you bear this Language in your Streets? Is not this making way for Rebellion and Blood? For Murder and Assassination to rage again among you?

It may require some Time to follow these disguis'd Phanaticks, thro' all the Parts of their bloody Principles : The Scots Scribbler concern'd in this Libel, the *London Journal*, could not fail of bringing hither those Tenets own'd upon the Scaffold by the bloody Murderers of the Archbishop of St Andrews in his Country; where they defended the Assassination of that Reverend Prelate on the very self-same Principles on which Brutus and Cassius murder'd Julius Caesar . I shall give you a larger Account of those two Assassinations, and set them in a clear View one against the other, and you will find that the very Reasons which these Men give for justifying Brutus, in assassinating Julius Caesar , were given by the Rebels in 1648, for cutting off King Charles the First, and by the Murderers in Scotland for assassinating and murdering in cold Blood the Archbishop of St Andrews.

As for their Hero, whose Name they vainly assume, I shall also prove to you, that he was a proud, vain, haughty Wretch, and, that in his killing himself as he did, he was a rascally Coward; that he neither understood the Nature of Life, his own Fame as a Man, or his Duty to the Commonwealth; and I may add, that they who have wickedly and profanely stil'd him the God-like Cato, as Mr Dennis very handsomely expresses it, neither understood what God-like means, or what Cato's Circumstances at that time were, much less what Examples they ought to recommend as Patterns of Heroick Virtue to Christians; besides I shall go a step or two towards proving that these Men are Traytors too, as well as Phanaticks; and the Treason lyes at the Bottom of all their Writings on these Things.

I am, SIR, your most humble Servant,
"Anticatonist"

This was followed up in the same Journal of December 23, 1721, thus :

Sir, As we have new Doctrines as well as new Politicks put upon us every Day, by the haughty and dog-native [sic?] writers in the *London Journal*, give me Leave to proceed a little farther in the exposing that Libel, who now declares against Heaven as well as against Men.

Dr Prideaux, who handled the point of the Death of Julius Caesar , has done it with a just Moderation, tho' with much Vigour and Soundness of Judgment;

and it is one of the least weighty Inferences which he draws from that History, that Divine Justice declared itself in that matter, otherwise than those do who plead for it : For, says the Reverend Doctor, 'It pursued every one of them with such a just and remarkable Revenge, that they were every Man of them, cut off in a violent manner, in a short time after, either by their own or other Men's Hands.'

But Dr Prideaux could not foresee that he should have a Set of Men come upon the Stage, with whom, in Argument, the Declarations of Divine Justice were of no Weight, neither would be allow'd to pass as anything in the case.

We, who profess the Name of Christian, and who keep our Eyes up to the Hand of Divine Justice, have observ'd, and considering Christians do ordinarily observe, how Divine Justice pursues the Hands that are dipt in Blood; and how Murtherers very rarely Escape the Vengeance of Heaven.

Moreover, do we not take it for an evident Declaration of Divine Justice against the horrid Murther of King Charles the First, of blessed Memory, That as in the Assassination of Julius Caesar, the Murtherers were pursued with such a just and remarkable Vengeance, that almost every one of them was call'd to an Account for it, and every one of the principal Actors in it was cut off in a violent manner in a short time after! In like manner the Murtherers of the Archbishop of St Andrews were brought to speedy Justice; and those who escaped the Hand of Man, Vengeance suffered them not to live; of which I have promised you a farther Account.

Nor did the Divine Justice satisfy itself in bringing the Actors of that direful Tragedy to their End, I mean that of the Murther of King Charles; but it overthrew the whole Usurpation; they sunk under the Blast of Heaven into all manner of Confusion, and at length in Destruction and Death; and this, considering Christians; I say, cannot but take Notice of, as an open Declaration of Divine Justice against the horrid Fact; nay, it has always, in all Ages, been understood thus; and be it of good Princes, or of bad, Divine Justice has so warmly pursued their Murtherers, that very few have ever escaped in the World who have lifted up their Hand against them.

But we are arrived to an Age wherein we can say what we please, and justify what we say : The first Argument brought to justify Brutus in the villainous Assassination of Julius Caesar is, that Julius Caesar was an ill Man, and the like: This has been the Foundation on which all publick Murthers have been justify'd : Nothing can be said of Julius Caesar which the Regicides did not say of the Blessed Martyr, whom they condemn'd to Death. Now, indeed, if I were to speak of Brutus, I might enter upon a Vindication of Julius Caesar ; but as I am speaking to Christians who live under another Law, part of which says, *Vengeance is Mine, I will repay : Avenge not yourselves, but give place*

unto Wrath; I say, to Christians, who give any Weight to Divine Laws, all Pretence to justify the Act of Brutus, from the Crimes of, is taken away.

But then say these Men, we insist that it was a good Action then, and that Brutus reveng'd his Country's wrong only; now if I prove that had done his Country no wrong, but that he was vested with as legal an Authority and Power as the People of Rome themselves had, or as any of the lawful Princes of the World had, then I shall easily prove that Brutus, besides being an ungrateful Ruffian to his Benefactor, was a Traytor and Murtherer of his lawful Superior and Governor.

To blacken Julius Caesar, in order to prepare to prove him justly murther'd, the *London Journal* takes the same Method that the Conspirators did to animate one another in the Murther – namely, that had for his Title only Power gain'd by Violence : That acquiring and exercising Power by force, is Tyranny; nor, says the Journalist, did ever any reasonable Man say, that Success was a Proof of Right.

Here he runs a length, needless to follow, about usurping Power and calling it lawful Authority; and at last brings his truly Phanatical Inference as follows : “Against any Man,” says he, “using lawless Force, every Man has a Right to use Force.” Which is false; for then a private Man may go and assassinate the Person of any Prince, who his Country is at War with, which is a Thing all good Men detest and abhor.

But come we nearer to these new Advocates for the King-Killing Doctrine : Let us take our turn, and look a little who were they whom had thus Usurp'd upon, and how came they by those Liberties which he is said thus to have invaded? Obtained they not they city they liv'd in, the Dominions they were possess'd of, the Country they rul'd in, by the same Robbery and Violence that he exercis'd over them? Were they anything more or less than a Band of valiant Thieves, who merited to be rooted out from under Heaven? And shall Julius Caesar be censur'd for making himself the Head of this Bold Troop of Plunderers? Was not his Title to rule them as good as their Title to rule the Latines? And had not he as much Right to tyrannize over them, and to murther and destroy them, as their Title was to attack the Tuscans, to besiege the Venetians, to make continual War upon the Samnites, to Murther the Citizens of Locri and of Capua, and many other Commonwealths and Cities, who they reduced by this like lawless Force?

How came these People call'd Romans into the World? How seated they in Italy? How arriv'd they to that Country, which they then call'd their own dear Country? How could Brutus have the Impudence to say he murther'd for the Love of his dear Country? He should have said it was for the Love of that Land which the Thieves and Rogues his Ancestors had, by lawless Force,

taken from the lawful Possessors of, and whose rightful Dominions they, against all Right and Justice, possessed.

But thus can Thieves and Robbers cant of Justice and Right, when they have got honest Men's Goods and Lands in their Possession : And thus the Roman People, being themselves a Race of Thieves and mighty Robbers, had no Reason to object that Julius Caesar having led out their Armies to commit more Robberies in their Names, and by their consent (for that it must be allow'd he did), usurp'd a little more Authority than they gave him; in which he did nothing but what he had been employ'd before to do upon other Nations, much more Innocent than they; and for this Brutus murther'd him, which was a villainous Act in him, whatever Julius Caesar had done; and had no Principle in it but this, that he murther'd him because he would not rob any more in the People's name, and with their Armies, as he had done before, but would rob by his own Authority, and in his own Name; which he had, Forsooth, every Jot as much right to do, as they had to do all that been done before in their Names.

I am, Sir,
Your most humble Servant,
“Anti-King Killer”

Out of consideration for your limited space I think it better to break off here. The remainder of Defoe's writings on the subject shall be forwarded in a short time.

William Lee

Lee, William. 'Daniel Defoe on Assassination of Rulers'. *Notes and Queries*. 3rd Series. VIII (5 August 1865): 101-3.

In the former *Notes and Queries* I perhaps carried too far a desire to let Defoe speak for himself; and adverted only, in my introductory remarks, to the external circumstances which induced him to write on this subject. After reading his Letters in your columns, I think I ought to have premised, that *Applebee's Original Weekly Journal*, in which they and the following appeared, was a Tory Paper, that the arrangement between Defoe and the Government was, that he should "seem to be on that side", and should "rally the Whigs", and, with such qualification, I might then have reiterated my statement in page 246 of your last volume "I have not found that he actually wrote in any Tory journal anything contrary to the liberal principles he had always professed." Defoe was a great constitutional patriot. No man could be more truly loyal than he was. Here, he is the same loyal patriot as ever, but we see him behind a Tory mask.

As a mere acquaintance, Defoe is now perhaps chiefly known by the distorted, and discoloured caricature of Mr Walter Wilson who has portrayed him as a bigoted, antichurch, radical Dissenter.

Those, however, who have thoroughly studied his writings know him to have been always a liberal Conservative in politics; and, although a Dissenter, yet a firm supporter of the Church of England. Moreover, few men have been throughout a long life so consistent in politics and religion. These Letters on Assassination of Rulers were written after he was sixty years of age; but all the same doctrines, opinions, and sentiments are to be found in his *Reviews*, and still earlier Essays.

Apologising for this long preface, the next Letter is from *Applebee's Journal*, December 30, 1721:

"Sir, I find you have given us two very pertinent Answers to the King-Killing Principles of the *London Journal*, and to their falling upon the Reverend Dr Prideaux for censuring the Murtherers of Julius Caesar. Admit me, I entreat, to put in a Word or two upon that way of Writing, and of that known opinionated Writer, who would celebrate his Pen at this Time, by recommending the Murther of Princes, and the villainous Practice of Assassination, which Doctrine if it be receiv'd no Christian Prince can be safe, no not in his Bed-chamber. It must be confess'd, that as this Writer is call'd a Whig, and a Commonwealth's Man, it is no great wonder that he is in favour of the King-Killing Doctrine; but that Herd of People had ordinarily more Policy than to profess openly the very Murthering Principle itself; they rather disguis'd themselves with a Mask of Moral Virtues, the better to conceal the hellish Liberty they took, and that they might put it in Practice with safety to themselves.

But let us enquire into the knavish Disguise of their Writing in this *London Journal*, and you will find an evident contradiction between their Writings and their Designs; and, that what they aim at, and what they pretend, stand opposite to one another, as directly as the Evening and Morning, as Light and a Depravity. of Light, which we call Darkness.

They pretend to write against Rogues, but with the very Spirit of a Rogue; they justify the horrid Principle of Murthering Princes, and yet at the same time pretend to support the Authority of Princes.

They write against Tyranny with a Spirit of Tyranny, condemning assum'd Power to Rule, and yet justify an assum'd Power to Kill and Destroy.

They write against Persecution, with a Spirit of Persecution, for they tell us of the Superiority of Conscience; and yet, against all Conscience and Honour, prompt the World to commit Parricide and Murther, and to Assassinate their Rulers.

They write against invading Liberty, and yet rob men of the liberty of professing just Principles, in opposition to Atheism, Deism, Free-Thinking, and Irreligion.

They write with a pretence of Religion and Morality, and yet justify Self-Murther, the worst of all Immoralities, and inconsistent with the very essentials of Religion, namely, Resignation to the Will of Heaven.

They write with a loud pretence of Obedience to lawful Princes, and yet give up the greatest Part of all Obedience, namely, the Obedience to the Laws of their Country.

They plead for the Conduct of Brutus, Cassius, Cato, and Others, who, according to the brutal Notion of Liberty, took the Liberty to be their own Murtherers; having said something very faintly to excuse them, they bring it in as a corroborating Evidence, that several People in these Christian Times do the same Thing; that Men in Fight defend a Town to the last Extremity, till they are sure to Die; others blow themselves up and the Ships they are in, with several other Instances.

Now had not this Wretch been as ignorant in the Laws of War, as he is in those of Christianity, he should have remember'd to have added, that by the Laws of War, such as defend Towns in mere Fury and Desperation ought to have no Quarter given them; and if in the Storming them, any of them happen to be taken Prisoners they may be Hang'd up as Murtherers, for pushing their Defence beyond the Rules of War; such are not said to defend a Town like Men of Honour, but like Enemies to Mankind, and for the sake of Destroying

brave Men; and many Examples might be given, where such have been taken and Hang'd.

Defending a Town like Men of Honour, is to defend it as long as there is any possibility of Defending it effectually, or any room to hope for Relief; but when the Garrison see the Mines ready to Spring, the Storm ready to be given, no Relief at hand, or likely to be brought them, when holding out any longer is impossible, and no delaying the Enemies' Affairs, or other End obtain'd, but mere desperate Resolution, both to destroy themselves and others; Such Men are not to be used any otherwise than as Criminals, deserving to be cut in pieces in the Breach, and hang'd up afterwards if they escape; for this is not Bravery but Madness and Rage, and is neither any Part of Bravery or Christianity.

The Governor of the Castle of Alicant, where Colonel Richards and an English garrison lay daring the late War was of this Number : The French and Spanish Generals besieg'd the Place; it was thought impregnable before, but the French Engineers shew'd an extraordinary Skill in their Work, and had made their Way under the very Body of the Place; when they had all things ready, the French General summoned the Garrison, and, as it was related here, offer'd to show them the Mines, to let them see that they could not fail ruining the whole Castle; nay, it was said that some Officers did go out to see them, and acquainted the Governor how it was, and persuaded him to retreat, the Enemy offering still very honourable Conditions; that upon refusing, they told them to an Hour when they would spring their mines, and gave them time till then to capitulate; nay, some said, entreated them to consider that they had done all that Men of honour could do; but that they. still were obstinate, upon which the Mines were sprung, and blew them all up, not a Man escaping : Now was this Bravery? Or rather, were not they who refused the generous offers of their Enemies, Murtherers, and merited to be hang'd for throwing away the Lives of so many brave Men as perished with them? This is the Bravery and the Christianity of that mad Fellow Cato, who the *London Journal* calls (blasphemously) God-like, who ought, if he had had courage, to have reserv'd himself for the further Service of his Country, and have look'd in the face, wherever he could have Animated any to take Arms against him, and at last he should have Dyed fighting for the Liberty of his Country, not basely regarding his private Liberty only, and kill'd himself because he could not resist in that one City, which was the case of Cato; and, in a few Words, he Kill'd himself only for mere Pride and Cowardice, namely, the Fear of falling into his Enemy's Hands, which a Man of true Christian courage would have boldly ventur'd : But it was Dying for fear of Shame, which was both Cowardice, and the extreme of Pride. I shall take a Time to let you see how easily Cato might have carried the War against on, longer than he did; and how, had he encourag'd the Romans by his Example, rather to Fight for the common Liberty, than to Die for private Liberty, he had done good Service, and might by his Reputation in the Army have hazarded

's Fortune, and perhaps have saved his Country : All which Advantages he lost to his Country by his Rashness, Pride and Cowardice, which this new Principle of the *London Journal* Scribblers would Christen by the false Names of Gallantry, and a Love of Liberty.

Your Friend and Servant.”

He resumes the subject in *Applebee's Journal*, January 6, 1722, as follows :

“Sir, No man that has read the *London Journal* for some time past, could suppose that all that long Rhapsody of Exclamation against Julius Caesar , and the Eulogium in praise of the most execrable Ruffians that Murther'd him, was with Design only to set out the Story of that Murther in proper colours, and acquaint our People with what was done at that time, and to go no farther; he that thought so, knows little of the Men, or of their Principles : I always told you it had an Application in reserve, and that it was to refer to our times, wherein they would have the same thing acted over again; and it is evident to impartial Men, that they are animating all the Ruffians they can reach to undertake the like wickedness : They have now brought their Harangue to the intended Point, and give us, in plain English words, the meaning of it, namely, that all Men are born free; that they are to be govern'd no further than is for their good; that when it is otherwise, of which they are to be themselves the judges, they can do as Brutus did; and this these Conspirators call Liberty, as their Predecessors in Rebellion did some few years ago. Now you cannot serve your Country more in any Thing that can be made the subject of a publick Paper; neither can you do any Thing more agreeable to those who have a due regard to their Country's true Liberty, than in turning your Pen, and the Pens of all those who assist you with their Letters, against the contagious Phanatical Principles of that vilest of all Libels, the *London Journal*. I was indeed for some time of Opinion, that slighting and contemning a Libel of such a mean and base Import, was the best Method to be taken; and I was the more confirm'd in that Opinion, because I saw the wisest and best of Men of all Professions Vote it to the most infamous Uses, as a most infamous Paper; and particularly as it was known to be the Work of a Set of the worst and most infamous Writers : But, as little criminals which are pass'd over by the clemency of a Government grow more insolent, till at length they make their Punishment become necessary; so these lesser and baser Writers of Scandal, growing Insolent, by the forbearance of the Publick, and by the backwardness of wise Men to meddle with them, are now arriv'd to a presumptuous height, offensive to God and Man; it is highly needful that you, and every good Man, should oppose them, that the Poison of their corrupt Principles may not infect others, and especially weaker Judgments, who may not be fully establish'd in the Foundations of Christian Society, and of true Christian Liberty, which consists in Obedience, not in Rebellion and Murther.

I have read that in the Spartan Government it was decreed, that whosoever was found Guilty of spreading about Principles pernicious to the Good of the Commonwealth, should lose his Freedom of the City, be bound Hand and Foot, and sold for a Slave. We who have so fresh in our remembrance the mischievous consequences of the unbounded Liberty which these Men teach, namely, of murdering and assassinating Princes, should not want to be admonish'd of the Mischiefs which those Tenets may still bring upon the State. None can be so weak as to persuade us that these Men have nothing in their view, but the telling us the Story of Brutus and Cassius, and of the Murder of Julius Caesar, or of the Value of legal Liberties : Do these Men content themselves with reciting the History? Or, do they recite it to recommend the Example of Murdering Princes? Wherefore do they applaud the Murderers? Wherefore do they justify the Assassination itself? And wherefore plead for the Liberty of doing such Actions, but to prepare the Minds of Men to relish the like Villainy, tho' it were to be practis'd upon the King, or upon any of his Ministers of State? Why the Justice of the Nation forbears to punish the Publishers of such dangerous Tenets as these, is best known to those who have the Power thereof in their Hands, and who best know when to strike : But it is the Duty, in the meantime, of every loyal subject to enter his Protestation against Murderers, against Men claiming Liberty for a cloak to Licentiousness, and against Men publishing murderous Principles; and therefore (as before) you cannot do your Country better Service than to shew your Detestation of those things, and more especially of the wicked knot of Men concern'd in propagating them. It is evident what these Men aim at, and that they are carrying on a Conspiracy against the Monarchy, and against the Government of Great Britain; and albeit the Conspirators are known to be Men of base Characters, and of vile Principles, meriting the Contempt of all good People; yet as we see nothing is more catching than an evil Example, so, I think, nothing calls for more speedy correction : in evil Examples it is observ'd, that, like the Plague, the highest and best Person, whether for Quality or Character, is capable of receiving Infection from the contagious Breath of the meanest Beggar. Evil Examples are Infectious in the most intense Degree of Infection; for they infect the mind, corrupt and poison the Principles; and they do it in these Ages of Vice with but too much Success; and the Conspirators in the case before us are not ignorant thereof, and are the more adventurous in spreading their evil Morals and evil Principles in this Part of the World.

It is true that the Conspirators are known to be Persons whose Names are Infamous, being Men whose Practice has long been to sow Divisions and Disaffection among the People in Civil Matters, and prophane and blasphemous Principles in religious Matters : Nay the Conspiracy itself is form'd to represent us to ourselves as born free from the Government, either of God or the King, spinning their Notions of personal Independency, which they call Liberty, to so fine a length as to bring Men to claim a Liberty to rebel against their Maker, and to murder their Sovereign.

To this End, the Conspirators represent the most execrable Murther of the gallantest Man who was at that Time in the World, and the boldest of all Assassinations, as a lawful Zeal arising from a Love of Liberty; and to support it the Conspirators run out into their old Republican Topicks of lawless Force, Tyranny, and the Abuse of Power, which, they say, was guilty of: I shall finish my Letter with referring your Readers to the Judgement of our Saviour himself, concerning that very lawless Power of Julius Caesar and the Conspirators; could they Blush for themselves, they may see their bloody King-Killing Principles condemn'd, and Obedience recommended, even to that lawless Force, which, they say, may be opposed with Force.

Render to the Things which be 's, are the Words of our Blessed Lord, who order'd his Disciples to pay Tribute for him: Now it is manifest, that all the s, whether Augustus, Nero, or Tiberius, or any of them, exercis'd the same lawless Force as did Julius Caesar, and founded their Empire upon the Ruins of Roman Liberty, as he did, and therefore might as lawfully be assassinated and Murther'd; but notwithstanding all that, our Lord calls the Tribute 's Right, and, AS SUCH, causes it to be paid. Submitting in all things to the Government of those Tyrants, which these Conspirators say might lawfully be murther'd and assassinated by private Hands: Let the example of JESUS CHRIST, and, after him, of his Apostles and Servants, be opposed to the Tenets published by the Conspirators, and then let every indifferent Man judge whether they give us right Notions of Liberty, or whether they have not merited to be detested of all honest Men.

Your Friend and Servant."

If we consider that when Defoe wrote these four Letters he had the responsibility of several other newspapers; and that in the latter part of the same year, and the beginning of 1722, there issued from his restless pen – within about four months – *Moll Flanders*, *The History of the Plague*, *Religious Courtship*, and *Colonel Jaque* [sic], we have strong proof that his loyal spirit was greatly excited by the treasonable doctrines against which he found time to write so much.

The same considerations will account for the repetitions, and evident want of time to correct his manuscript, particularly in the last Letter of the four.

Daniel Defoe was not a poet. In supposing himself so he was mistaken. He was fond of writing verse, and in that form his sentiments are invariably just, and clearly expressed. His lines are mostly rough, but often terse and forcible; and it has been well said that some of his poems constitute as fine doggerel as can be found in the English language. When his mind was much stirred upon political subjects his thoughts had a tendency to run into verse by way of climax; and, as the following is the only sonnet I know of composition, I give it to your readers from the same newspaper as the last preceding letter:

“ the Great, the Generous, the Brave,
Who conquer’d to set free, and fought to save;
Travers’d the World, subdued it by his Name,
And humbl’d Empires bow’d beneath his Fame.
No Man beyond his Mercy could offend,
A clement Enemy, a faithful Friend :
But who can vile Ingratitude dispute?
He fell a Sacrifice to Brutal Brute,
From whom our King-Destroyers take their Name;
Brutal their Crime, and Brutish is their Fame.
and Charles, two martyr’d Heroes, live,
Their Fame shall Time and History survive :
While Cato’s cowardice his Glory stains,
And nothing but his want of Fame remains.”

With this I conclude, for the present, my contributions from the hitherto unknown writings of Daniel Defoe, feeling that *Notes and Queries* has done him ample justice for the injury attempted against his character and memory in the *London Review*.

William Lee

¹ A letter was picked up in Tower Street the same month, threatening the King and the Royal Family with death. –W.L.

² He was the eldest son of Daniel Defoe. Unfortunately there was no other connection between them. –W.L.