

Inspector I, *New York Journal*, 20 September 1787

MR. GREENLEAF, I have in general observed, that the most sensible men are usually modest and reserved, and that a man of consummate impudence, with but a moderate share of understanding, moves in the world with the greatest eclat; but although the world may some times over-rate a shallow capacity, it is often-times undeceived by a man's vanity leading him a step too far in his ridiculous sallies.

A man's knowledge is frequently over-rated in vulgar estimation in consequence of his having a memory good enough to retain a number of harmonious words which he can retail out at pleasure.—I know a negro who cannot read, and yet can deliver an extempore rhapsody that will captivate weak minds, and give not offence, even to the ears of intelligent men.

I have also known an upstart attorney, palm himself upon a great and good man, for a youth of extraordinary genius, and under the shadow of such a patronage, make himself at once known and respected; but being sifted and bolted to the brann, he was at length found to be a superficial, self-conceited coxcomb, and was of course turned off, and disregarded by his patron.

I have known a blockhead publish pamphlets with borrowed phrases and arguments, by which he acquired a reputation he never was entitled to.

I have also known a man publish pieces of his own composition, which, on examination, I have found to be mere froth, calculated only to bewilder the understanding.

I have a son, who is a lad of tolerable capacity, and great shrewdness. This boy, who is about 12 years old, reads the Newspapers to me, every morning; I have taught this young shaver to turn all the frothy publications he meets with, into plain English, and, as a specimen of his improvement, I shall give you his interpretation of a piece which appeared a few days ago in the Daily Advertiser, written in the Creolian taste, by Tom S**t, a mustee, viz.

“Mungo here, Mungo there, Mungo every where,

What a terrible life am I led.”

PADLOCK.

“My dear masters, I am indeed leading a very hard life in your service; you are driving me from post to pillar, without paying me for my trouble, and I could earn ten times as much by working at home. Consider the great sacrifices I have made for you; by birth a subject of his Danish Majesty; I quitted my native soil in the Torrid Zone, and called myself a North American for your sakes.—I have since, not only ranted for you, and jockeyed for you, but even vouchsafed to give my august name to Phocion, a patriotic essay, manufactured by W. S. Esquire, and sent from England just after the evacuation, under cover to Chrononhotontologos, the king's printer. you

have therefore scarcely done me justice, in simply giving me your suffrages, when I stood in need of them, to pave the way for my future agrandizement. I must however remember with gratitude, that when my ambition led me to become an honorary member of the whig Society, I was not disappointed. My daddy, who was present to make interest for me, can evidence with how much chearfulness I was voted in.

“The important services I have rendered you, deserve much more than you will ever be able to pay me. I shall however be satisfied, with your compliance with one moderate request, which is, that you will be kind enough to discharge your old faithful steward George (who is grown so saucy, as to speak his mind without fearing any body) and put me, or my immaculate daddy, in his place.

“I am sorry you oblige me to speak so plainly, but I am constrained to do it, since your contempt and little notice taken of any late anonymous advertisement, convinces me, that you will not take a broad hint.” TOM S**T.

I have not leisure, at present, sir, to animadvert on the above curious performance, but shall conclude with a maxim of a great Philosopher which you will know how to apply.

Those actions which are denominated virtuous, have not any absolute and independent, but a relative beauty; and the source from which they derive their lustre, is the intention which guided them: if well intended, whether they produce good, or evil, they are equally virtuous: the producing good or evil are the accidents; the intention to produce good, is the essence of virtue.

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