

Defoe Daniel

**An Appeal to Honour and
Justice, Though It Be of
His Worst Enemies.**



Daniel Defoe
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Being A True Account of His Conduct in Public Affairs.:*

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APPEAL, &c

I hope the time is come at last when the voice of moderate principles may be heard. Hitherto the noise has been so great, and the prejudices and passions of men so strong, that it had been but in vain to offer at any argument, or for any man to talk of giving a reason for his actions; and this alone has been the cause why, when other men, who, I think, have less to say in their own defence, are appealing to the public, and struggling to defend themselves, I alone have been silent under the infinite clamours and reproaches, causeless curses, unusual threatenings, and the most unjust and injurious treatment in the world.

I hear much of people's calling out to punish the guilty,

but very few are concerned to clear the innocent. I hope some will be inclined to judge impartially, and have yet reserved so much of the Christian as to believe, and at least to hope, that a rational creature cannot abandon himself so as to act without some reason, and are willing not only to have me defend myself, but to be able to answer for me where they hear me causelessly insulted by others, and, therefore, are willing to have such just arguments put into their mouths as the cause will bear.

As for those who are prepossessed, and according to the modern justice of parties are resolved to be so, let them go; I am not arguing with them, but against them; they act so contrary to justice, to reason, to religion, so contrary to the rules of Christians and of good manners, that they are not to be argued with, but to be exposed, or entirely neglected. I have a receipt against all the uneasiness which it may be supposed to give me, and that is, to condemn slander, and think it not worth the least concern; neither should I think it worth while to give any answer to it, if it were not on some other accounts of which I shall speak as I go on. If any young man ask me why I am in such haste to publish this matter at this time, among many other good reasons which I could give, these are some: —

1. I think I have long enough been made *Fabula Vulgi*, and borne the weight of general slander; and I should be wanting to truth, to my family, and to myself, if I did not give a fair and true state of my conduct, for impartial men to judge of, when I am no more in being to answer for myself.

2. By the hints of mortality, and by the infirmities of a life of sorrow and fatigue, I have reason to think I am not a great way off from, if not very near to, the great ocean of eternity, and the time may not be long ere I embark on the last voyage. Wherefore, I think I should even accounts with this world before I go, that no actions (slanders) may lie against my heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, to disturb them in the peaceable possession of their father's (character) inheritance.

3. I fear – God grant I have not a second-sight in it – that this lucid interval of temper and moderation, which shines, though dimly too, upon us at this time, will be but of short continuance, and that some men, who know not how to use the advantage God has put into their hands with moderation, will push, in spite of the best prince in the world, at such extravagant things, and act with such an intemperate forwardness, as will revive the heats and animosities which wise and good men were in hopes should be allayed by the happy accession of the king to the throne.

It is and ever was my opinion, that moderation is the only virtue by which the peace and tranquillity of this nation can be preserved. Even the king himself – I believe his majesty will allow me that freedom – can only be happy in the enjoyment of the crown by a moderate administration. If his majesty should be obliged, contrary to his known disposition, to join with intemperate councils, if it does not lessen his security, I am persuaded it will lessen his satisfaction. It cannot be pleasant or agreeable, and I think it cannot be safe, to any just prince, to

rule over a divided people, split into incensed and exasperated parties. Though a skilful mariner may have courage to master a tempest, and goes fearless through a storm, yet he can never be said to delight in the danger; a fresh, fair gale, and a quiet sea, is the pleasure of his voyage, and we have a saying worth notice to them that are otherwise minded, *Qui amat periculum, periebat in illo.*

To attain at the happy calm, which, as I say, is the safety of Britain, is the question which should now move us all; and he would merit to be called the nation's physician that could prescribe the specific for it. I think I may be allowed to say, a conquest of parties will never do it; a balance of parties may. Some are for the former; they talk high of punishments, letting blood, revenging the treatment they have met with, and the like. If they, not knowing what spirit they are of, think this the course to be taken, let them try their hands; I shall give them up for lost, and look for their downfall from that time; for the ruin of all such tempers slumbereth not.

It is many years that I have professed myself an enemy to all precipitations in public administrations; and often I have attempted to show, that hot councils have ever been destructive to those who have made use of them. Indeed, they have not always been a disadvantage to the nation, as in king James II.'s reign, when, as I have often said in print, his precipitation was the safety of us all: and if he had proceeded temperately and politicly, we had been undone. *Felix quem faciunt.*

But these things have been spoken when your ferment has been too high for anything to be heard; whether you will hear it now or no, I know not; and therefore it was that I said, I fear the present cessation of party arms will not hold long. These are some of the reasons why I think this is the proper juncture for me to give some account of myself, and of my past conduct to the world; and that I may do this as effectually as I can, being perhaps never more to speak from the press, I shall, as concisely as I can, give an abridgment of my own history during the few unhappy years I have employed myself, or been employed, in public in the world.

Misfortunes in business having unhinged me from matters of trade, it was about the year 1694 when I was invited by some merchants, with whom I had corresponded abroad, and some also at home, to settle at Cadiz, in Spain, and that with offers of very good commissions. But Providence, which had other work for me to do, placed a secret aversion in my mind to quitting England upon any account, and made me refuse the best offers of that kind, to be concerned with some eminent persons at home in proposing ways and means to the government, for raising money to supply the occasions of the war then newly begun. Some time after this I was, without the least application of mine, and being then seventy miles from London, sent for to be accountant to the commissioners of the glass duty, in which service I continued to the determination of their commission.

During this time there came out a vile abhorred pamphlet

in very ill verse, written by one Mr. Tutchin, and called The Foreigners, in which the author – who he was I then knew not – fell personally upon the king himself, and then upon the Dutch nation; and after having reproached his majesty with crimes that his worst enemy could not think of without horror, he sums up all in the odious name of foreigner.

This filled me with a kind of rage against the book, and gave birth to a trifle, which I never could hope should have met with so general an acceptance as it did; I mean The True-born Englishman. How this poem was the occasion of my being known to his majesty; how I was afterwards received by him; how employed; and how, above my capacity of deserving, rewarded, is no part of the present case, and is only mentioned here, as I take all occasions to do, for the expressing the honour I ever preserved for the immortal and glorious memory of that greatest and best of princes, and whom it was my honour and advantage to call master, as well as sovereign; whose goodness to me I never forgot, neither can forget; and whose memory I never patiently heard abused, nor ever can do so; and who, had he lived, would never have suffered me to be treated as I have been in the world. But Heaven for our sins removed him in judgment. How far the treatment he met with from the nation he came to save, and whose deliverance he finished, was admitted by Heaven to be a means of his death, I desire to forget for their sakes who are guilty; and if this calls any of it to mind, it is mentioned to move them to treat him better who is now, with like principles of

goodness and clemency, appointed by God and the constitution to be their sovereign, lest He that protects righteous princes avenge the injuries they receive from an ungrateful people by giving them up to the confusions their madness leads them to.

And in their just acclamations at the happy accession of his present majesty to the throne, I cannot but advise them to look back and call to mind who it was that first guided them to the family of Hanover, and to pass by all the popish branches of Orleans and Savoy; recognising the just authority of parliament in the undoubted right of limiting the succession, and establishing that glorious maxim of our settlement, viz., that it is inconsistent with the constitution of this protestant kingdom to be governed by a popish prince. I say, let them call to mind who it was that guided their thoughts first to the protestant race of our own kings in the house of Hanover; and that it is to king William, next to Heaven itself, to whom we owe the enjoying a protestant king at this time. I need not go back to the particulars of his majesty's conduct in that affair; his journey in person to the country of Hanover and the court of Zell; his particular management of the affair afterwards at home, perfecting the design by naming the illustrious family to the nation, and bringing about a parliamentary settlement to effect it; entailing the crown thereby in so effectual a manner as we see has been sufficient to prevent the worst designs of our Jacobite people in behalf of the pretender; a settlement, together with the subsequent acts which followed it, and the Union with Scotland, which made it

unalterable, that gave a complete satisfaction to those who knew and understood it, and removed those terrible apprehensions of the pretender (which some entertained) from the minds of others, who were yet as zealous against him as it was possible for any to be. Upon this settlement, as I shall show presently, I grounded my opinion, which I often expressed, viz., that I did not see it possible the Jacobites could ever set up their idol here, and I think my opinion abundantly justified in the consequences; of which by and by.

This digression, as a debt to the glorious memory of king William, I could not in justice omit; and as the reign of his present majesty is esteemed happy, and looked upon as a blessing from heaven by us, it will most necessarily lead us to bless the memory of king William, to whom we owe so much of it. How easily could his majesty have led us to other branches, whose relation to the crown might have had large pretences! What prince but would have submitted to have educated a successor of his race in the protestant religion for the sake of such a crown? But the king, who had our happiness in view, and saw as far into it as any human sight could penetrate; who knew we were not to be governed by inexperienced youths; that the protestant religion was not to be established by political converts; and that princes, under French influence, or instructed in French politics, were not proper instruments to preserve the liberties of Britain, fixed his eyes upon the family which now possesses the crown, as not only having an undoubted relation to it by blood, but as being first

and principally zealous and powerful asserters of the protestant religion and interest against popery; and, secondly, stored with a visible succession of worthy and promising branches, who appeared equal to the weight of government, qualified to fill a throne and guide a nation, which, without reflection, are not famed to be the most easy to rule in the world.

Whether the consequence has been a credit to king William's judgment I need not say. I am not writing panegyrics here, but doing justice to the memory of the king my master, whom I have had the honour very often to hear express himself with great satisfaction in having brought the settlement of the succession to so good an issue; and, to repeat his majesty's own words, that he knew no prince in Europe so fit to be king of England as the elector of Hanover. I am persuaded, without any flattery, that if it should not every way answer the expectations his majesty had of it, the fault will be our own. God grant the king may have more comfort of his crown than we suffered king William to have!

The king being dead, and the queen proclaimed, the hot men of that side, as the hot men of all sides do, thinking the game in their own hands, and all other people under their feet, began to run out into those mad extremes, and precipitate themselves into such measures as, according to the fate of all intemperate councils, ended in their own confusion, and threw them at last out of the saddle.

The queen, who, though willing to favour the high-church party, did not thereby design the ruin of those whom she did

not employ, was soon alarmed at their wild conduct, and turned them out, adhering to the moderate counsels of those who better understood, or more faithfully pursued, her majesty's and the country's interest. In this turn fell sir Edward Seymour's party, for so the high men were then called; and to this turn we owe the conversion of several other great men, who became whigs on that occasion, which it is known they were not before; which conversion afterwards begat that unkind distinction of old whig and modern whig, which some of the former were with very little justice pleased to run up afterwards to an extreme very pernicious to both.

But I am gone too far in this part. I return to my own story.

In the interval of these things, and during the heat of the first fury of highflying, I fell a sacrifice for writing against the rage and madness of that high party, and in the service of the dissenters. What justice I met with, and, above all, what mercy, is too well known to need repetition.

This introduction is made that it may bring me to what has been the foundation of all my further concern in public affairs, and will produce a sufficient reason for my adhering to those whose obligations upon me were too strong to be resisted, even when many things were done by them which I could not approve; and for this reason it is that I think it necessary to distinguish how far I did or did not adhere to, or join in or with, the persons or conduct of the late government; and those who are willing to judge with impartiality and charity, will see reason to use me the

more tenderly in their thoughts, when they weigh the particulars.

I will make no reflections upon the treatment I met with from the people I suffered for, or how I was abandoned even in my sufferings, at the same time that they acknowledged the service I had been to their cause; but I must mention it to let you know that while I lay friendless and distressed in the prison of Newgate, my family ruined, and myself without hope of deliverance, a message was brought me from a person of honour, who, till that time, I had never had the least acquaintance with, or knowledge of, other than by fame, or by sight, as we know men of quality by seeing them on public occasions. I gave no present answer to the person who brought it, having not duly weighed the import of the message. The message was by word of mouth thus: – "Pray, ask that gentleman what I can do for him?" But in return to this kind and generous message, I immediately took my pen and ink, and wrote the story of the blind man in the gospel, who followed our Saviour, and to whom our blessed Lord put the question, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Who, as if he had made it strange that such a question should be asked, or as if he had said that I am blind, and yet ask me what thou shalt do for me? My answer is plain in my misery, "Lord, that I may receive my sight?"

I needed not to make the application. And from this time, although I lay four months in prison after this, and heard no more of it, yet from this time, as I learned afterwards, this noble person made it his business to have my case represented to her majesty,

and methods taken for my deliverance.

I mention this part, because I am no more to forget the obligation upon me to the queen, than to my first benefactor.

When her majesty came to have the truth of the case laid before her, I soon felt the effects of her royal goodness and compassion. And first, her majesty declared, that she left all that matter to a certain person, and did not think he would have used me in such a manner. Probably these words may seem imaginary to some, and the speaking them to be of no value, and so they would have been had they not been followed with further and more convincing proofs of what they imported, which were these, that her majesty was pleased particularly to inquire into my circumstances and family, and by my lord treasurer Godolphin to send a considerable supply to my wife and family, and to send to me the prison money to pay my fine and the expenses of my discharge. Whether this be a just foundation let my enemies judge. Here is the foundation on which I built my first sense of duty to her majesty's person, and the indelible bond of gratitude to my first benefactor.

Gratitude and fidelity are inseparable from an honest man. But, to be thus obliged by a stranger, by a man of quality and honour, and after that by the sovereign under whose administration I was suffering, let any one put himself in my stead, and examine upon what principles I could ever act against either such a queen, or such a benefactor; and what must my own heart reproach me with, what blushes must have covered my face

when I had looked in, and called myself ungrateful to him that saved me thus from distress, or her that fetched me out of the dungeon, and gave my family relief? Let any man who knows what principles are, what engagements of honour and gratitude are, make his case his own, and say what I could have done more or less than I have done.

I must go on a little with the detail of the obligation, and then I shall descend to relate what I have done, and what I have not done, in the case.

Being delivered from the distress I was in, her majesty, who was not satisfied to do me good by a single act of her bounty, had the goodness to think of taking me into her service, and I had the honour to be employed in several honourable, though secret services, by the interposition of my first benefactor, who then appeared as a member in the public administration.

I had the happiness to discharge myself in all these trusts so much to the satisfaction of those who employed me, though oftentimes with difficulty and danger, that my lord treasurer Godolphin, whose memory I have always honoured, was pleased to continue his favour to me, and to do me all good offices with her majesty, even after an unhappy breach had separated him from my first benefactor, the particulars of which may not be improper to relate; and as it is not an injustice to any, so I hope it will not be offensive.

When, upon that fatal breach, the secretary of state was dismissed from the service, I looked upon myself as lost; it being

a general rule in such cases, when a great officer falls, that all who came in by his interest fall with him; and resolving never to abandon the fortunes of the man to whom I owed so much of my own, I quitted the usual applications which I had made to my lord treasurer.

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