

Defoe Daniel

**Second Thoughts are Best: Or  
a Further Improvement of a  
Late Scheme to Prevent Street...**



Даниэль Дефо

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# **Daniel Defoe**

## **Second Thoughts are Best: Or a Further Improvement of a Late Scheme to Prevent Street Robberies**

### **MAJESTY, SACRED AND MOST AUGUST!**

Permit a loyal subject, in the sincerity of his heart, to press through the crowds of courtiers who surround your royal person, and lay his little mite, humbly offered for the public welfare, at your majesty's feet.

Happy is it for me, as well as the whole kingdom, we have a king of such humanity and affability; a king naturalized to us, a king who loves us, a king in whose person as well as mind, the whole hero appears: the king of our hearts; the king of our wishes!

Those who are dissatisfied with such a monarch, deserve to be abandoned of God, and have the devil sent to reign over them. Yet such there are, (pity they should wear human forms, or breathe the free air of Britain!) who are so scandalously fickle, that if God himself was to reign, they would yearn after their darling monarch the prince of darkness.

These are they who fly in the face of majesty, who so abuse the liberty of the press, that from a benefit it becomes an evil, and demands immediate regulation.

Not against your majesty only, but against many of your loyal subjects, are arrows shot in the dark, by lurking villains who wound the reputations of the innocent in sport. Our public newspapers, which ought to contain nothing but what is instructive and communicative, being now become public nuisances, vehicles of personal, private slander, and scandalous pasquins.

Let the glory be yours, most gracious sovereign! to suppress this growing evil; and if any hints from your most faithful subject can be of the least use, I live but to serve, to admire, and pray for your majesty.

Who am,  
Most gracious Sovereign,  
Your Majesty's  
Most loyal, most dutiful, most obedient  
subject and servant,

*Andrew Moreton.*

## THE PREFACE

Nothing is more easy than to discover a thing already found out. This is verified in me and that anonymous gentleman, whom the public prints have lately complimented with a Discovery to Prevent Street Robberies; though, by the by, we have only his vain *ipse dixit*, and the ostentatious outcry of venal newswriters in his behalf.

But to strip him of his borrowed plumes, these are to remind the public, that about six months ago, in a treatise, entituled, *Augusta Triumphans*: or, the Way to make London the most flourishing City in the Universe, I laid down a plain and practicable scheme for the total suppression and prevention of street robberies, which scheme has been approved of by several learned and judicious persons.

Oh! but say the advocates of this second-hand schemist, our project is to be laid before the parliament. Does that make his better, or mine worse? Have not many silly projects been laid before parliaments ere now? Admit it be not the same (as I have but too much reason to fear it is,) cannot the members of both houses read print as well as written hand? Or does he think they are so prejudiced to dislike a thing the worse for being offered without view of gain? I trust Andrew Moreton's scheme, generously offered for the public good, will meet with as fair a reception as that of this hireling projector.

Mine is already published; let him generously follow my example, and no doubt, if his scheme be preferred, the government will reward him.

If my antagonist be necessitous, where is the merit? he does it for his own sake, not for the public. If he be not necessitous, what a sordid wretch is he to withhold his scheme for lucre? putting it up at public sale; so that if you do not give him his price you shall not have it.

Some people, indeed, are so fond of mysteries they run down everything that is plain and intelligible; they love darkness, whispers, and freemasonry, despising whatever comes in the shape of a pamphlet, be it never so useful or commendable. But in spite of prejudice, truth is the standard by which I hope all honest and impartial men will judge me.

Though I must confess I am not a little piqued to be jockeyed out of my labours, yet not to be behindhand with my gentleman in the clouds, who would have the parliament buy his pig in a poke, and build up his fortune at my expense, I have so amply enlarged and amended my scheme, that it is now scarce like the same. I have taken in everything possible of comprehension or practice; nor have I left him room to edge in one single hint. I have debated the objections of divers wise and learned men, and corrected my project accordingly; so that, on comparison, my first thoughts will appear but as a rude and imperfect sketch, only valuable in that it gave the idea of this more laboured and finished performance, on which I pledge my whole reputation, being ready to stand or fall by its success.

In order to which, I have presented copies of this book to the king and queen's most excellent majesties, to several of the lords spiritual, and divers honourable and worthy members of both houses, and time must show whose scheme shall have the precedence.

In the mean time I stand prepared for the sneers of those who despise everything and everybody but their own dear selves, as also the objections of the puzzle causes, who will turry-lugg a thing out of all sense and meaning, and by the cloudiness of their explanations darken what is most plain and obvious. My business is to go straight forward, and let the end crown the work. If men of sense approve me, I need not value the laughter of fools, whose very approbation is scandal; for if a thinking man is to be laughed out of every good intention or invention, nothing will ever be done for the public good.

## SECOND THOUGHTS, &c

The principal encouragement and opportunity given to our street robbers is, that our streets are so poorly watched; the watchmen, for the most part, being decrepit, superannuated wretches, with one foot in the grave and the other ready to follow; so feeble that a puff of breath can blow them down. Poor crazy mortals! much fitter for an almshouse than a watchhouse. A city watched and guarded by such animals is wretchedly watched indeed.

Nay, so little terror do they carry with them, that hardy thieves make a mere jest of them, and oftentimes oblige even the very watchman who should apprehend, to light them in their roguery. And what can a poor creature do, in terror of his life, surrounded by a pack of ruffians, and no assistance near?

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