

# **THE TRUE PATRIOT**

Henry Fielding



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TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 1746.

Qui non recte instituunt atque erudiunt liberos, non solum liberis sed et reipublicae faciunt injuriam.—CICERO.

MR ADAMS having favoured me with a second letter, I shall give it the public without any apology. If anything in it should at first a little shock those readers who know the world better, I hope they will make allowances for the ignorance and simplicity of the writer.

TO THE TRUE PATRIOT.

MY WORTHY FRIEND,—I am concerned to find, by all our public accounts, that the rebels still continue in the land. In my last I evidently proved that their successes were owing to a judgment denounced against our sins, and concluded with some exhortations for averting the Divine anger by the only methods which suggested themselves to my mind. These exhortations, by the event, I perceive have not had that regard paid to them I had reason to expect. Indeed, I am the more confirmed in this conjecture, by a lad whom I lately met at a neighbouring baronet's, where I sojourned the two last days of the year, with my good friend Mr Wilson.

This lad, whom I imagined to have been come from school to visit his friends for the holidays (for though he is perhaps of sufficient age, I found, on examination, he was not yet qualified for the university), is, it seems, a man *sui juris*; and is, as I gather from the young damsels, Sir John's daughters, a member of the society of *bowes*. I know not whether I spell the word right; for I am not ashamed to say I neither understand its etymology nor true import, as it hath never once occurred in any lexicon or dictionary which I have yet perused.

Whatever this society may be, either the lad with whom I communed is an unworthy member, or it would become the government to put it down by authority; for he uttered many things during our discourse for which I would have well scourged any of the youth under my care.

He had not long entered the chamber before he acquainted the damsels that he and his companions had carried the opera, in opposition to the puts; by which I afterwards learnt he meant all sober and discreet persons. “And fags!” says he (I am afraid, though, he made use of a worse word), “we expected the bishops would have interfered; but if they had we should have silenced them.” I then thought to myself, Stripling, if I had you well horsed on the back of another lad, I would teach you more reverence to their lordships.

This opera, I am informed, is a diversion in which a prodigious sum of money, more than is to be collected out of twenty parishes, is lavished away on foreign eunuchs and papists, very scandalous to be suffered at any time, especially at a season when both war and famine hang over our heads.

[Illustration: “He acquainted the damsels that he and his companions had carried the opera.”]

During the whole time of our repast at dinner the young gentleman entertained us with an account of several drums and routs at which he had been present. These are, it seems, large congregations of men and women, who, instead of assembling together to hear something that is good, nay, or to divert themselves with gambols, which might be allowed now and then in holiday times, meet for no other purpose but that of gaming, for a whole guinea and much more at a stake. At this married women sit up all night, nay, sometimes till one or two in the morning, neglect their families, lose their money, and some, Mr Wilson says, have been suspected of doing even worse than that. Yet this is suffered in a Christian kingdom; nay (*quod prorsus incredibile est*), the holy sabbath is, it seems, prostituted to these wicked revellings; and card-playing goes on as publickly then as on any other day; nor is this only among the young lads and damsels, who might be supposed to know no better, but men advanced in years,

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and grave matrons, are not ashamed of being caught at the same pastime. *O tempora! O mores!*

When grace was said after meat, and the damsels departed, the lad began to grow more wicked. Sir John, who is an honest Englishman, hath no other wine but that of Portugal. This our *bowe* could not drink; and when Sir John very nobly declared he scorned to indulge his palate with rarities, for which he must furnish the foe with money to carry on a war with the nation, the stripling replied, "Rat the nation!" (God forgive me for repeating such words) "I had rather live under French government than be debarred from French wine." Oho, my youth! if I had you horsed, thinks I again.—But, indeed, Sir John well scourged him with his tongue for that expression, and I should have hoped he had made him ashamed, had not his subsequent behaviour shewn him totally void of grace. For when Sir John asked him for a toast, which you know is another word for drinking the health of one's friend or wife, or some person of public eminence, he named the health of a married woman, filled out a bumper of wine, swore he would drink her health in vinegar, and at last openly profest he would commit adultery with her if he could. *Proh pudor!* Nay, and if such a sin might admit of any aggravation, she is it seems a lady of very high degree, *et quidem*, the wife of a lord.

*Et dies et charta deficerent si omnia vellem percurrere, multa quidem impura et impudica quae memorare nefas, recitavit.* Nor is this youth, it seems, a monster or prodigy in the age he lives; on the contrary, I am told he is an exemplar only of all the rest.

But I now proceed to what must surprize you. After he had spent an hour in rehearsing all the vices to which youth have been ever too much addicted, and shewn us that he was possessed of them all—*Ut qui impudicus, adulter, ganeo, alea, manu, ventre, pene, bona patria laceraverat*, he began to enter upon politics:

O proceres censore opus an haruspice nobis!

This stripling, this *bowe*, this rake, discovered likewise all the wickedness peculiar to age, and that he had not, with those vices which proceed from the warmth of youth, one of the virtues which we should naturally expect from the same sanguine disposition. He shewed us that grey hairs could add nothing but hypocrisy to him; for he avowed public prostitution, laughed at all honour, public spirit, and patriotism; and gave convincing proofs that the most phlegmatic old miser upon earth could not be sooner tempted with gold to perpetrate the most horrid iniquities than himself.

Whether this youth be (*quod vix credo*) concerned himself in the public weal, or whether he have his information from others, I hope he greatly exceeded the truth in what he delivered on this subject; for was he to be believed, the conclusion we must draw would be, that the only concern of our great men, even at this time, was for places and pensions; that, instead of applying themselves to renovate and restore our sick and drooping commonweal, they were struggling to get closest to her heart, and, like leeches, to suck her last drop of vital blood.

I hope, however, better things, and that this lad deserves a good rod as well for lying as for all his other iniquity; and if his parents do not take care to have it well laid on, I can assure them they have much to answer for.

Mr Wilson now found me grow very uneasy, as, indeed, I had been from the beginning, nor could anything but respect to the company have prevented me from correcting the boy long before; he therefore endeavoured to turn the discourse, and asked our spark when he left London? To which he answered, the Wednesday before. "How, sir?" said I; "travel on Christmas Day?" "Was it so?" says he; "fags! that's more than I knew; but why not travel on Christmas Day as well as any other?" "Why not?" said I, lifting my voice, for I had lost all patience; "was you not brought up in the Christian religion? Did you never learn your catechism?" He then burst out into an unmannerly laugh, and so provoked me, that I should certainly have smote him, had I not laid my crabstick down in the window, and had not Mr Wilson been fortunately placed between us. "Odso! Mr Parson," says he, "are you there? I wonder I had not smoked you before." "Smoke me!" answered I, and at the same time leaped from my chair, my wrath being highly kindled. At which instant a jackanapes, who sat on my left hand, whipped my peruke from my head, which I no sooner perceived than I porrected him a remembrance over the face, which laid him sprawling on the floor. I was afterwards concerned at the blow, though the consequence was only a bloody nose, and the lad, who was a companion of the other's, and had uttered many wicked things, which I pretermitted in my narrative, very well deserved correction.

A bustle now arose, not worth recounting, which ended in my departure with Mr Wilson, though we had purposed to tarry there that night.

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In our way home we both lamented the peculiar hardiness of this country, which seems bent on its own destruction, nor will take warning by any visitation, till the utmost wrath of Divine vengeance overtakes it.

In discoursing upon this subject, we imputed much of the present profligacy to the notorious want of care in parents in the education of youth, who, as my friend informs me, with very little school-learning, and not at all instructed (*ne minime quidem imbuti*) in any principles of religion, virtue, and morality, are brought to the great city, or sent to travel to other great cities abroad, before they are twenty years of age, where they become their own masters, and enervate both their bodies and minds with all sorts of diseases and vices before they are adult.

I shall conclude with a passage in Aristotle's Politics, lib. viii. cap. I. “[Greek text]” Which, for the sake of women, and those few gentlemen who do not understand Greek, I have rendered somewhat paraphrastically in the vernacular:—“No man can doubt but that the education of youth ought to be the principal care of every legislator; by the neglect of which, great mischief accrues to the civil polity in every city.”

I am, while you write like an honest man and a good Christian, your hearty friend and well-wisher,  
ABRAHAM ADAMS.