



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

ISAAC
BICKERSTAFF

Richard Steele

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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by

RICHARD STEELE



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INTRODUCTION

BY HENRY MORLEY

Of the relations between Steele and Addison, and the origin of Steele's "Tatler," which was developed afterwards into the "Spectator," account has already been given in the introduction to a volume of this Library, * containing essays from the "Spectator"—"Sir Roger de Coverley and the Spectator Club." There had been a centre of life in the "Tatler," designed, as Sir Roger and his friends were designed, to carry the human interest of a distinct personality through the whole series of papers. The "Tatler's" personality was Isaac Bickerstaff, Physician and Astrologer; as to years, just over the grand climacteric, sixty-three, mystical multiple of nine and seven; dispensing counsel from his lodgings at Shire Lane, and seeking occasional rest in the vacuity of thought proper to his club at the "Trumpet."

The name of Isaac Bickerstaff Steele borrowed from his friend Swift, who, just before the establishment of the "Tatler," had borrowed it from a shoemaker's shop-board, and used it as the name of an imagined astrologer, who should be an astrologer indeed, and should attack John Partridge, the chief of the astrological almanack makers, with a definite prediction of the day and hour of his death. This he did in a pamphlet that brought up to the war against one stronghold of superstition an effective battery of satire. The pamphlet itself has been given in our volume of "The Battle of the Books, and other short pieces, by Jonathan Swift." * The joke once set rolling was kept up in other playful little pamphlets written to announce the fulfilment of the prophecy, and to explain to Partridge that, whether he knew it or not, he was dead. This joke was running through the town when Steele began his "Tatler" on the 12th of April, 1709. Steele kept it going, and, in doing so, wrote once or twice in the character of Bickerstaff. Then he proceeded to develop

the astrologer into a central character, who should give life and unity to his whole series of essays.

They were published for a penny a number, at the rate of three numbers a week. Steele, for his threepence a week, sought to give wholesome pleasure while good-humouredly helping men to rise above the vices and the follies of their time. Evil ways of the court of Charles the Second still survived in empty tradition. The young man thought it polite to set up for an atheist, said Steele, though it could be proved on him that every night he said his prayers. It was fashionable to speak frivolously of women, and affect contempt of marriage, though the English were, and are, of all men the most domestic. Steele made it a part of his duty to break this evil custom, to uphold the true honour of womanhood, and assert the sacredness of home. The two papers in this collection, called "Happy Marriage" and "A Wife Dead," are beautiful examples of his work in this direction. He attacked the false notions of honour that kept duelling in fashion. Steele could put his heart into the direct telling of a tale of human love or sorrow, and in that respect was unapproached by Addison; but he was surpassed by Addison in a subtle delicacy of touch, in the fine humour with which he played about the whims and weaknesses of men. The tenth paper in this volume, "A Business Meeting," is a good example of what Addison could do in that way.

Of the papers in this volume, the first was sent to Steele by the post, and—Steele wrote in the original Preface to the completed "Tatler"—"written, as I since understand, by Mr. Twisdon, who died at the battle of Mons, and has a monument in Westminster Abbey, suitable to the respect which is due to his wit and valour." The other papers were all written by Steele, with these exceptions:—No. V., "Marriage of Sister Jenny," and No. VII., "The Dream of Fame," were described by Steele, in a list given to Tickell, as written by himself and Addison together. No. XIV., "The Wife Dead," is Steele's, with some passages to which Addison contributed. No. XIII., "Dead Folks,"

was, the first part, by Addison; the second part, beginning "From my own Apartment, November 25," by Steele; Addison wrote No. X., "A Business Meeting," No. XVI., "A very Pretty Poet," and No. XX., "False Doctoring." Addison joined Steele in the record of cases before "Bickerstaff, Censor," No. XVIII. Of the twenty-six sections in this volume, therefore, three are by Addison alone; one is in two parts, written severally by Addison and Steele; four are by Addison and Steele working in friendly fellowship, and without trace of their separate shares in the work; eighteen are by Steele alone.

* Cassell's National Library.

I.

THE STAFFIAN RACE.

From my own Apartment, May, 4, 1709.

Of all the vanities under the sun, I confess that of being proud of one's birth is the greatest. At the same time, since in this unreasonable age, by the force of prevailing custom, things in which men have no hand are imputed to them; and that I am used by some people as if Isaac Bickerstaff, though I write myself Esquire, was nobody: to set the world right in that particular, I shall give you my genealogy, as a kinsman of ours has sent it me from the Heralds' Office. It is certain, and observed by the wisest writers, that there are women who are not nicely chaste, and men not severely honest, in all families; therefore let those who may be apt to raise aspersions upon ours please to give us as impartial an account of their own, and we shall be satisfied. The business of heralds is a matter of so great nicety that, to avoid mistakes, I shall give you my cousin's letter, verbatim, without altering a syllable.

“DEAR COUSIN,

“Since you have been pleased to make yourself so famous of late by your ingenious writings, and some time ago by your learned predictions; since Partridge, of immortal memory, is dead and gone, who, poetical as he was, could not understand his own poetry; and, philomathical as he was, could not read his own destiny; since the Pope, the King of France, and great part of his court, are either literally or metaphorically defunct: since, I say, these things not foretold by any one but yourself

have come to pass after so surprising a manner: it is with no small concern I see the original of the Staffian race so little known in the world as it is at this time; for which reason, as you have employed your studies in astronomy and the occult sciences, so I, my mother being a Welsh woman, dedicated mine to genealogy, particularly that of our family, which, for its antiquity and number, may challenge any in Great Britain. The Staffs are originally of Staffordshire, which took its name from them; the first that I find of the Staffs was one Jacobstaff, a famous and renowned astronomer, who, by Dorothy his wife, had issue seven sons—viz., Bickerstaff, Longstaff, Wagstaff, Quarterstaff, Whitestaff, Falstaff, and Tipstaff. He also had a younger brother, who was twice married, and had five sons—viz., Distaff, Pikestaff, Mopstaff, Broomstaff, and Raggedstaff. As for the branch from whence you spring, I shall say very little of it, only that it is the chief of the Staffs, and called Bickerstaff, quasi Biggerstaff; as much as to say, the Great Staff, or Staff of Staffs; and that it has applied itself to Astronomy with great success, after the example of our aforesaid forefather. The descendants from Longstaff, the second son, were a rakish, disorderly sort of people, and rambled from one place to another, till, in the time of Harry the Second, they settled in Kent, and were called Long-Tails, from the long tails which were sent them as a punishment for the murder of Thomas-a-Becket, as the legends say. They have been always sought after by the ladies, but whether it be to show their aversion to popery, or their love to miracles, I cannot say. The Wagstaffs are a merry, thoughtless sort of people, who have always been opinionated of their own wit; they have turned themselves mostly to poetry. This is the most numerous branch of our family, and the poorest. The Quarterstaffs are most of them prize-fighters or deer-stealers; there have been so many of them hanged lately that there are very few of that branch of our family left. The Whitestaffs are all courtiers, and have had very considerable places. There have been some of them of that strength and dexterity that five hundred of the ablest men in the kingdom have often

tugged in vain to pull a staff out of their hands. The Falstaffs are strangely given to drinking: there are abundance of them in and about London. And one thing is very remarkable of this branch, and that is, there are just as many women as men in it. There was a wicked stick of wood of this name in Harry the Fourth's time, one Sir John Falstaff. As for Tipstaff, the youngest son, he was an honest fellow; but his sons, and his sons' sons, have all of them been the veriest rogues living; it is this unlucky branch has stocked the nation with that swarm of lawyers, attorneys, serjeants, and bailiffs, with which the nation is overrun. Tipstaff, being a seventh son, used to cure the king's evil; but his rascally descendants are so far from having that healing quality that, by a touch upon the shoulder, they give a man such an ill habit of body that he can never come abroad afterwards. This is all I know of the line of Jacobstaff; his younger brother, Isaacstaff, as I told you before, had five sons, and was married twice; his first wife was a Staff, for they did not stand upon false heraldry in those days, by whom he had one son, who, in process of time, being a schoolmaster and well read in the Greek, called himself Distaff or Twicestaff. He was not very rich, so he put his children out to trades, and the Distaffs have ever since been employed in the woollen and linen manufactures, except myself, who am a genealogist. Pikestaff, the eldest son by the second venter, was a man of business, a downright plodding fellow, and withal so plain, that he became a proverb. Most of this family are at present in the army. Raggedstaff was an unlucky boy, and used to tear his clothes in getting birds' nests, and was always playing with a tame bear his father kept. Mopstaff fell in love with one of his father's maids, and used to help her to clean the house. Broomstaff was a chimney-sweeper. The Mopstaffs and Broomstaffs are naturally as civil people as ever went out of doors; but, alas! if they once get into ill hands, they knock down all before them. Pilgrimstaff ran away from his friends, and went strolling about the country; and Pipestaff was a wine-cooper. These two were the unlawful issue of Longstaff.

“N.B.—The Canes, the Clubs, the Cudgels, the Wands, the Devil upon two Sticks, and one Bread, that goes by the name of Staff of Life, are none of our relations. I am, dear Cousin,

“Your humble servant,

“D. DISTAFF.

“From the Heralds’ Office,

“May 1, 1709.”

II.

PACOLET.

From my own Apartment, May 8.

Much hurry and business have to-day perplexed me into a mood too thoughtful for going into company; for which reason, instead of the tavern, I went into Lincoln's Inn walks; and having taken a round or two, I sat down, according to the allowed familiarity of these places, on a bench; at the other end of which sat a venerable gentleman, who, speaking with a very affable air, "Mr. Bickerstaff," said he, "I take it for a very great piece of good fortune that you have found me out." "Sir," said I, "I had never, that I know of, the honour of seeing you before." "That," replied he, "is what I have often lamented; but, I assure you, I have for many years done you good offices, without being observed by you; or else, when you had any little glimpse of my being concerned in an affair, you have fled from me, and shunned me like an enemy; but, however, the part I am to act in the world is such that I am to go on in doing good, though I meet with never so many repulses, even from those I oblige." This, thought I, shows a great good nature, but little judgment, in the persons upon whom he confers his favours. He immediately took notice to me that he observed, by my countenance, I thought him indiscreet in his beneficence, and proceeded to tell me his quality in the following manner: "I know thee, Isaac, to be so well versed in the occult sciences that I need not much preface, or make long preparations, to gain your faith that there are airy beings who are employed in the care and attendance of men, as nurses are to infants,

till they come to an age in which they can act of themselves. These beings are usually called amongst men guardian angels; and, Mr. Bickerstaff, I am to acquaint you that I am to be yours for some time to come; it being our orders to vary our stations, and sometimes to have one patient under our protection, and sometimes another, with a power of assuming what shape we please, to ensnare our wards into their own good. I have of late been upon such hard duty, and know you have so much work for me, that I think fit to appear to you face to face, to desire you will give me as little occasion for vigilance as you can." "Sir," said I, "it will be a great instruction to me in my behaviour if you please to give me some account of your late employments, and what hardships or satisfactions you have had in them, that I may govern myself accordingly." He answered, "To give you an example of the drudgery we go through, I will entertain you only with my three last stations. I was on the first of April last put to mortify a great beauty, with whom I was a week; from her I went to a common swearer, and have been last with a gamester. When I first came to my lady, I found my great work was to guard well her eyes and ears; but her flatterers were so numerous, and the house, after the modern way, so full of looking-glasses, that I seldom had her safe but in her sleep. Whenever we went abroad, we were surrounded by an army of enemies; when a well-made man appeared, he was sure to have a side-glance of observation; if a disagreeable fellow, he had a full face, out of more inclination to conquests; but at the close of the evening, on the sixth of the last month, my ward was sitting on a couch, reading Ovid's epistles; and as she came to this line of Helen to Paris,

‘She half consents who silently denies,’

entered Philander, who is the most skilful of all men in an address to women. He is arrived at the perfection of that art which gains them; which is, ‘to talk like a very miserable man, but look like a very happy

one.' I saw Dictinna blush at his entrance, which gave me the alarm; but he immediately said something so agreeable on her being at study, and the novelty of finding a lady employed in so grave a manner, that he on a sudden became very familiarly a man of no consequence, and in an instant laid all her suspicions of his skill asleep, as he had almost done mine, till I observed him very dangerously turn his discourse upon the elegance of her dress, and her judgment in the choice of that very pretty mourning. Having had women before under my care, I trembled at the apprehension of a man of sense who could talk upon trifles, and resolved to stick to my post with all the circumspection imaginable. In short, I prepossessed her against all he could say to the advantage of her dress and person; but he turned again the discourse, where I found I had no power over her, on the abusing her friends and acquaintance. He allowed, indeed, that Flora had a little beauty, and a great deal of wit; but then she was so ungainly in her behaviour, and such a laughing hoyden! Pastorella had with him the allowance of being blameless; but what was that towards being praiseworthy? To be only innocent is not to be virtuous! He afterwards spoke so much against Mrs. Dipple's forehead, Mrs. Prim's mouth, Mrs. Dentifrice's teeth, and Mrs. Fidget's cheeks that she grew downright in love with him; for it is always to be understood that a lady takes all you detract from the rest of her sex to be a gift to her. In a word, things went so far that I was dismissed. The next, as I said, I went to was a common swearer. Never was a creature so puzzled as myself when I came first to view his brain; half of it was worn out, and filled up with mere expletives that had nothing to do with any other parts of the texture; therefore, when he called for his clothes in a morning, he would cry, 'John!' John does not answer. 'What a plague! nobody there? What the devil, and rot me, John, for a lazy dog as you are!' I knew no way to cure him but by writing down all he said one morning as he was dressing, and laying it before him on the toilet when he came to pick his teeth. The last recital I gave him of what he said for half an hour

before was, 'What, the devil! where is the washball? call the chairmen! d—n them, I warrant they are at the alehouse already! zounds! and confound them!' When he came to the glass he takes up my note—'Ha! this fellow is worse than me: what, does he swear with pen and ink?' But, reading on, he found them to be his own words. The stratagem had so good an effect upon him that he grew immediately a new man, and is learning to speak without an oath; which makes him extremely short in his phrases; for, as I observed before, a common swearer has a brain without any idea on the swearing side; therefore my ward has yet mighty little to say, and is forced to substitute some other vehicle of nonsense to supply the defect of his usual expletives. When I left him, he made use of 'Odsbodikins! Oh me! and Never stir alive!' and so forth; which gave me hopes of his recovery. So I went to the next I told you of, the gamester. When we first take our place about a man, the receptacles of the pericranium are immediately searched. In his I found no one ordinary trace of thinking; but strong passion, violent desires, and a continued series of different changes had torn it to pieces. There appeared no middle condition; the triumph of a prince, or the misery of a beggar, were his alternate states. I was with him no longer than one day, which was yesterday. In the morning at twelve we were worth four thousand pounds; at three, we were arrived at six thousand; half an hour after, we were reduced to one thousand; at four of the clock, we were down to two hundred; at five, to fifty; at six, to five; at seven, to one guinea; the next bet to nothing. This morning he borrowed half a crown of the maid who cleans his shoes, and is now gaming in Lincoln's Inn Fields among the boys for farthings and oranges, till he has made up three pieces, and then he returns to White's into the best company in town."

Thus ended our first discourse; and it is hoped that you will forgive me that I have picked so little out of my companion at our first interview. In the next it is possible he may tell me more pleasing incidents; for though he is a familiar, he is not an evil, spirit.

III.

PACOLET'S STORY.

From my own Apartment, May 12.

I have taken a resolution hereafter, on any want of intelligence, to carry my Familiar abroad with me, who has promised to give me very proper and just notices of persons and things, to make up the history of the passing day. He is wonderfully skilful in the knowledge of men and manners, which has made me more than ordinarily curious to know how he came to that perfection, and I communicated to him that doubt. "Mr. Pacolet," said I, "I am mightily surprised to see you so good a judge of our nature and circumstances, since you are a mere spirit, and have no knowledge of the bodily part of us." He answered, smiling, "You are mistaken; I have been one of you, and lived a month amongst you, which gives me an exact sense of your condition. You are to know that all who enter into human life have a certain date or stamen given to their being which they only who die of age may be said to have arrived at; but it is ordered sometimes by fate, that such as die infants are, after death, to attend mankind to the end of that stamen of being in themselves which was broken off by sickness or any other disaster. These are proper guardians to men, as being sensible of the infirmity of their State. You are philosopher enough to know that the difference of men's understandings proceeds only from the various dispositions of their organs; so that he who dies at a month old is in the next life as knowing, though more innocent, as they who live to fifty; and after death they have as perfect a memory and judgment of all that passed in their lifetime

as I have of all the revolutions in that uneasy, turbulent condition of yours; and you would say I had enough of it in a month were I to tell you all my misfortunes." "A life of a month cannot have, one would think, much variety. But pray," said I, "let us have your story."

Then he proceeds in the following manner:—

"It was one of the most wealthy families in Great Britain into which I was born, and it was a very great happiness to me that it so happened, otherwise I had still, in all probability, been living; but I shall recount to you all the occurrences of my short and miserable existence, just as, by examining into the traces made in my brain, they appeared to me at that time. The first thing that ever struck my senses was a noise over my head of one shrieking; after which, methought, I took a full jump, and found myself in the hands of a sorceress, who seemed as if she had been long waking and employed in some incantation: I was thoroughly frightened, and cried out; but she immediately seemed to go on in some magical operation, and anointed me from head to foot. What they meant I could not imagine; for there gathered a great crowd about me, crying, 'An heir! an heir!' upon which I grew a little still, and believed this was a ceremony to be used only to great persons, and such as made them, what they called Heirs. I lay very quiet; but the witch, for no manner of reason or provocation in the world, takes me, and binds my head as hard as possibly she could; then ties up both my legs, and makes me swallow down a horrid mixture. I thought it a harsh entrance into life, to begin with taking physic; but I was forced to it, or else must have taken down a great instrument in which she gave it me. When I was thus dressed, I was carried to a bedside, where a fine young lady, my mother I wot, had like to have hugged me to death. From her they faced me about, and there was a thing with quite another look from the rest of the room, to whom they talked about my nose. He seemed wonderfully pleased to see me; but I knew since, my nose belonged to another family. That into which I was

born is one of the most numerous amongst you; therefore crowds of relations came every day to congratulate my arrival; among others my cousin Betty, the greatest romp in nature; she whisks me such a height over her head that I cried out for fear of falling. She pinched me, and called me squealing chit, and threw me into a girl's arms that was taken in to tend me. The girl was very proud of the womanly employment of a nurse, and took upon her to strip and dress me a-new, because I made a noise, to see what ailed me; she did so, and stuck a pin in every joint about me. I still cried; upon which she lays me on my face in her lap; and, to quiet me, fell a-nailing in all the pins by clapping me on the back and screaming a lullaby. But my pain made me exalt my voice above hers, which brought up the nurse, the witch I first saw, and my grandmother. The girl is turned downstairs, and I stripped again, as well to find what ailed me as to satisfy my grandam's farther curiosity. This good old woman's visit was the cause of all my troubles. You are to understand that I was hitherto bred by hand, and anybody that stood next gave me pap, if I did but open my lips; insomuch that I was grown so cunning as to pretend myself asleep when I was not, to prevent my being crammed. But my grandmother began a loud lecture upon the idleness of the wives of this age, who, for fear of their shape, forbear suckling their own offspring; and ten nurses were immediately sent for; one was whispered to have a wanton eye, and would soon spoil her milk; another was in a consumption; the third had an ill voice, and would frighten me instead of lulling me to sleep. Such exceptions were made against all but one country milch-wench, to whom I was committed, and put to the breast. This careless jade was eternally romping with the footman and downright starved me; insomuch that I daily pined away, and should never have been relieved had it not been that, on the thirtieth day of my life, a Fellow of the Royal Society, who had writ upon Cold Baths, came to visit me, and solemnly protested I was utterly lost for want of that method; upon which he soused me

head and ears into a pail of water, where I had the good fortune to be drowned; and so escaped being lashed into a linguist till sixteen, and being married to an ill-natured wife till sixty, which had certainly been my fate had not the enchantment between body and soul been broken by this philosopher. Thus, till the age I should have otherwise lived, I am obliged to watch the steps of men; and, if you please, shall accompany you in your present walk, and get you intelligence from the aerial lackey, who is in waiting, what are the thoughts and purposes of any whom you inquire for.”

I accepted his kind offer, and immediately took him with me in a hack to White’s.

White’s Chocolate-house, May 13.

We got in hither, and my companion threw a powder round us, that made me as invisible as himself; so that we could see and hear all others, ourselves unseen and unheard.

The first thing we took notice of was a nobleman of a goodly and frank aspect, with his generous birth and temper visible in it, playing at cards with a creature of a black and horrid countenance, wherein were plainly delineated the arts of his mind, cozenage, and falsehood. They were marking their game with counters, on which we could see inscriptions, imperceptible to any but us. My Lord had scored with pieces of ivory, on which were writ, “Good Fame, Glory, Riches, Honour, and Posterity!” The spectre over-against him had on his counters the inscriptions of “Dishonour, Impudence, Poverty, Ignorance, and Want of Shame.” “Bless me!”, said I; “sure, my Lord does not see what he plays for?” “As well as I do,” says Pacolet. “He despises that fellow he plays with, and scorns himself for making him his companion.” At the very instant he was speaking, I saw the fellow who played with my Lord hide two cards in the roll of his stocking. Pacolet immediately stole them from thence; upon

which the nobleman soon after won the game. The little triumph he appeared in, when he got such a trifling stock of ready money, though he had ventured so great sums with indifference, increased my admiration. But Pacolet began to talk to me. "Mr. Isaac, this to you looks wonderful, but not at all to us higher beings: that nobleman has as many good qualities as any man of his order, and seems to have no faults but what, as I may say, are excrescences from virtues. He is generous to a prodigality, more affable than is consistent with his quality, and courageous to a rashness. Yet, after all this, the source of his whole conduct is, though he would hate himself if he knew it, mere avarice. The ready cash laid before the gamester's counters makes him venture, as you see, and lay distinction against infamy, abundance against want; in a word, all that is desirable against all that is to be avoided."

"However," said I, "be sure you disappoint the sharpers to-night, and steal from them all the cards they hide." Pacolet obeyed me, and my Lord went home with their whole bank in his pocket.

IV.

RECOLLECTIONS.

It is remarkable that I was bred by hand, and ate nothing but milk till I was a twelvemonth old; from which time, to the eighth year of my age, I was observed to delight in pudding and potatoes; and, indeed, I retain a benevolence for that sort of food to this day. I do not remember that I distinguished myself in anything at those years but by my great skill at taw, for which I was so barbarously used that it has ever since given me an aversion to gaming. In my twelfth year, I suffered very much for two or three false concords. At fifteen I was sent to the university, and stayed there for some time; but a drum passing by, being a lover of music, I listed myself for a soldier. As years came on, I began to examine things, and grew discontented at the times. This made me quit the sword, and take to the study of the occult sciences, in which I was so wrapped up that Oliver Cromwell had been buried, and taken up again, five years before I heard he was dead. This gave me first the reputation of a conjurer, which has been of great disadvantage to me ever since, and kept me out of all public employments. The greater part of my later years has been divided between Dick's coffee-house, the Trumpet in Sheer Lane, and my own lodgings.

From my own Apartment, June 5.

There are those among mankind who can enjoy no relish of their being except the world is made acquainted with all that relates to

them, and think everything lost that passes unobserved; but others find a solid delight in stealing by the crowd, and modelling their life after such a manner as is as much above the approbation as the practice of the vulgar. Life being too short to give instances great enough of true friendship or good-will, some sages have thought it pious to preserve a certain reverence for the Manes of their deceased friends; and have withdrawn themselves from the rest of the world at certain seasons, to commemorate in their own thoughts such of their acquaintance who have gone before them out of this life. And indeed, when we are advanced in years, there is not a more pleasing entertainment than to recollect in a gloomy moment the many we have parted with that have been dear and agreeable to us, and to cast a melancholy thought or two after those with whom, perhaps, we have indulged ourselves in whole nights of mirth and jollity. With such inclinations in my heart I went to my closet yesterday in the evening, and resolved to be sorrowful; upon which occasion I could not but look with disdain upon myself, that though all the reasons which I had to lament the loss of many of my friends are now as forcible as at the moment of their departure, yet did not my heart swell with the same sorrow which I felt at that time; but I could, without tears, reflect upon many pleasing adventures I have had with some, who have long been blended with common earth. Though it is by the benefit of nature that length of time thus blots out the violence of afflictions; yet with tempers too much given to pleasure, it is almost necessary to revive the old places of grief in our memory; and ponder step by step on past life, to lead the mind into that sobriety of thought which poises the heart, and makes it beat with due time, without being quickened with desire, or retarded with despair, from its proper and equal motion. When we wind up a clock that is out of order, to make it go well for the future, we do not immediately set the hand to the present instant, but we make it strike the round of all its hours, before it can recover the regularity