

Zachary Stilgoe's vexations 1764

In its issue on 8 September 1764, *Jackson's Oxford Journal* carried a lengthy letter from Zachary Stilgoe, a member of a prominent Deddington family, giving his account of a dispute over a property transaction. Apparently Stilgoe had been pressurised by an unidentified party to purchase some land. Ultimately Stilgoe agreed, making a down-payment of £100, and going to London to call in money earning 5% p.a. to pay the balance of the purchase price. A schoolmaster in Deddington, Mr. French, was instructed to prepare the conveyances.

On Stilgoe's return from London, he found the "insidious" counterparty had declared he had no intention of selling, and called upon him to return the down-payment. It seems that Stilgoe and "this tender-confcienced Mendicant" subsequently traded insults, leading to Stilgoe's derogatory letter.

On 29 September 1764 a letter was published from "Thy Friend and Well-wifher, Mercator", Banbury, remonstrating at length with 'Friend Zachary' for his bombast nonsense etc. In a P.S., Mercator added: "I am told by the People who attend our Market, thou haft quarrelled with every Neighbour in the Parifh; I wifh, Friend, thy quarrelfome Temper don't prove thy Ruin."

8 September 1764

Letter to the Printer from Zachary Stilgoe, Deddington, rebutting misrepresentations concerning an abortive property transaction by the insidious counterparty. Mr. French, a schoolmaster in Deddington, had been instructed to prepare the conveyances.

To the PRINTER, &c.

SIR,

YOUR Woodftock Correfpondent has unluckily confulted the wrong Author for the Exordium of his fpurious Epiftle: Yet had his Arguments been as much a Corroboration as they are a Contradiction of his Cafe, he might have been excufed; but the Impropriety of them admits of no Vindication.

This tender-confcienced Mendicant pretended to lay before the Public the whole Cafe, but like his other Proceedings, he has not revealed a Word of the Facts: Therefore I will take the Trouble upon me to difclofe what he has fo facinoroufly *fecreted*.

This Gentleman applied to me at Deddington, intreating me to become Purchafer of his Land; when after being wearied by his frequent Vifits, and to facilitate him, I agreed for it, upon which Agreement he then received £100 as Part of the Purchafe Money; and at the fame Time gave Orders to Mr. French, a Schoolmafter in Deddington, to prepare the

Conveyances; which manifestly shews on whom the Conditions rested, and by whom they were to be performed. In the mean while I was at great Expence in a Journey to London, to call in Money then out at five per Cent. to pay him his Refiduum, and discharge the Mortgage: But upon my Return I was informed, this infidious Gentleman had been at Deddington, and made public Declarations that he had not sold his Land to me, nor had any Intentions of so doing; notwithstanding which I could not give Credit to an Information of this Sort, to the Prejudice of a Man, who, previous to such Contract, had made so many Protestations in Defence of Honour, until this truly honourable Gentleman in Person informed me of it. I thereupon told him, that as I was not to have the Land, I would arrest him if he did not pay me my Money.

The Assertion of my representing him as a Bankrupt is wholly false, and no more than an Imputation of his own. And as to the £100 I can without any Subornation or Venality, give an incontrovertible Proof it was not tendered, as well as a Confutation of this meek Gentleman's Charge of Absurdity; therefore shall say no more on this Head, but wait the Event.

With the Words (I cannot admit them Epithets) of *Coxcomb*, &c. I used no greater Freedom than a merited Application; and the nominal Description he has given me of a *Mushroom* is curious indeed! When he has so lately experienced that I have been the Deliverer of one poor Mifcreant, I wonder he should so expose his Principles as to censure their Worth!

Captivity too, seems to pinch this Gentleman much; I was in Hope Custom had made it easy; but since it has not, I must allow him to be a very good Judge of its Frightfulness; and the pretended Inception on me would have been much to his Honour had it been omitted, when he knew it applicable only to himself; as neither he, nor any one else, ever knew me misrepresent the Character of any Person whatsoever.

To save my own Time, and the Patience of your Readers, I shall avoid an Expansion of this Gentleman's Character for the present, and only add, that I am, Yours, &c. &c.

Deddington

ZACHARY STILGOE.

6th Sept.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000073/17640908/005/0002>

29 September 1764

Letter from Mercator, Banbury, to the Printer's Deddington Correspondent, remonstrating at length with 'Friend Zachary' for his bombast nonsense &c. Signed 'Thy Friend and Well-wifher'. "P.S. I am told by the People who attend our Market, thou haft quarrelled with every Neighbour in the Parifh; I wifh, Friend, thy quarrelfome Temper don't prove thy Ruin."

To the Printer's Deddington Correfpondent,

FRIEND ZACHARY,

I Can't help looking upon thee and thy Antagonift as two Simpletons, and have entered you both under that Denomination in a little Book which I keep for that Purpofe. That Series of bombaft Nonfenfe in thy two Advertifements, proclaims thee fuch; and Carter is not much better, in condefcending to give thee a formal Anfwer. Thou art certainly impofed upon by fome School Boy, or Attorney's Clerk in his firft Year's Apprenticefhip, who either wants Ideas, or has not Senfe to exprefs them: Or elfe thy Scribe is fome arch Rogue, that has a Mind to expofe thee by his Abfurdities, to the Ridicule of Mankind. As to the Merits of the Caufe, I neither know, nor care on which Side the Ballance lies; but as I am a Perfon in Trade, and confequently carry on my Bufinefs by Credit, as well as Cafh, I can by no Means be reconciled to that licentious Freedom thou haft taken with a Brother Tradefman's Character. We have a Proverb, which fays, *he that injures one, threatens a Hundred*. - Every Dealer, who has the leaft Regard to his Credit, muft look upon himfelf as wounded thro' Carter's Side: Thou haft fhoot thy Bolt only at one, but upon the leaft Provocation, we muft all expect the fame Ufage; that is, have our Circumftances publifhed in a News-Paper, and in fuch a Light as Malice dictates, and a wanton Pen can defcribe them. *Infolvent Mendicant, impending Fate*; what can thefe plain Words mean, but that the Perfon to whom they are applied, is juft upon breaking, or has already fhut up his Shop: In fhort, they are fufficient to ruin one Half of the trading People throughout the Nation. As to myfelf, I drive on a good Share of Bufinefs, and maintain my Family in a decent Way, but am by no Means fafe from the Power of a bufy, malicious Tongue: Should a fpiteful Neighbour take the wicked Liberty of pofting me in a News-Paper, and cry me down in every Publick Houfe he enters, tho' I can exchange a Hundred Pound Bill To-day, I might be in *Captivity* To-morrow. All trading People, I hope, who read this Letter, will unite in a proper Repentment of fuch iniquitous Proceedings: And as to thee, *Friend Zachary*, I fhall take my Leave of thee with a fhort Fable I read the other Day - "Some wanton Boys, having

"nothing else to do, employed themselves in pelting Stones at
"the Frogs in a Pond; many they wounded, some they killed, at
length one of the Frogs defied them to defile, with this
"famous Observation, *Confider, Children, though this*
"Employment be a Diversion to you who throw the Stones, it is
"Death to us who feel them."

Thy Friend and Well-wisher,

Banbury, September
28th, 1764.

MERCATOR.

P.S. I am told by the People who attend our Market, thou
hast quarrelled with every Neighbour in the Parish; I wish,
Friend, thy quarrelsome Temper don't prove thy Ruin.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000073/17640929/005/0001>