

SAMUEL JOHNSON

THE WORKS OF SAMUEL
JOHNSON, LL.D. IN NINE
VOLUMES, VOLUME 03

Samuel Johnson
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LL.D. in Nine Volumes, Volume 03

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*The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. in Nine Volumes, Volume 03 / The
Rambler, Volume II:*

Содержание

THE RAMBLER	5
No. 106. SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1751	5
No. 107. TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 1751	12
No. 108. SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 1751	19
No. 109. TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 1751	25
No. 110. SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 1751	33
No. 111. TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 1751	40
No. 112. SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1751	46
No. 113. TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 1751	53
No. 114. SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1751	60
No. 115. TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 1751	67
No. 116. SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 1751	74
No. 117. TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 1751	82
No. 118. SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1751	91
No. 119. TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1751	98
No. 120. SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1751	105
No. 121. TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1751	112
No. 122. SATURDAY, MAY 18, 1751	119
No. 123. TUESDAY, MAY 21, 1751	125
No. 124. SATURDAY, MAY 25, 1751	131
No. 125. TUESDAY, MAY 28, 1751	137
No. 126. SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 1751	145
No. 127. TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 1751	152

No. 128. SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1751	158
No. 129. TUESDAY, JUNE 11. 1751	164
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	166

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The Rambler, Volume II

THE RAMBLER

No. 106. SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1751

Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia
Confirmat.
CICERO, vi. Att. 1.

Time obliterates the fictions of opinion, and confirms
the decisions of nature.

It is necessary to the success of flattery, that it be accommodated to particular circumstances or characters, and enter the heart on that side where the passions stand ready to receive it. A lady seldom listens with attention to any praise

but that of her beauty; a merchant always expects to hear of his influence at the bank, his importance on the exchange, the height of his credit, and the extent of his traffick: and the author will scarcely be pleased without lamentations of the neglect of learning, the conspiracies against genius, and the slow progress of merit, or some praises of the magnanimity of those who encounter poverty and contempt in the cause of knowledge, and trust for the reward of their labours to the judgment and gratitude of posterity.

An assurance of unfading laurels, and immortal reputation, is the settled reciprocation of civility between amicable writers. To raise *monuments more durable than brass, and more conspicuous than pyramids*, has been long the common boast of literature; but, among the innumerable architects that erect columns to themselves, far the greater part, either for want of durable materials, or of art to dispose them, see their edifices perish as they are towering to completion, and those few that for a while attract the eye of mankind, are generally weak in the foundation, and soon sink by the saps of time.

No place affords a more striking conviction of the vanity of human hopes, than a publick library; for who can see the wall crowded on every side by mighty volumes, the works of laborious meditation, and accurate inquiry, now scarcely known but by the catalogue, and preserved only to increase the pomp of learning, without considering how many hours have been wasted in vain endeavours, how often imagination has anticipated the

praises of futurity, how many statues have risen to the eye of vanity, how many ideal converts have elevated zeal, how often wit has exulted in the eternal infamy of his antagonists, and dogmatism has delighted in the gradual advances of his authority, the immutability of his decrees, and the perpetuity of his power?

—*Non unquam dedit
Documenta fors majora, quam fragili loco
Starent superbi.*

Insulting chance ne'er call'd with louder voice,
On swelling mortals to be proud no more.

Of the innumerable authors whose performances are thus treasured up in magnificent obscurity, most are forgotten, because they never deserved to be remembered, and owed the honours which they once obtained, not to judgment or to genius, to labour or to art, but to the prejudice of faction, the stratagem of intrigue, or the servility of adulation.

Nothing is more common than to find men whose works are now totally neglected, mentioned with praises by their contemporaries, as the oracles of their age, and the legislators of science. Curiosity is naturally excited, their volumes after long inquiry are found, but seldom reward the labour of the search. Every period of time has produced these bubbles of artificial fame, which are kept up a while by the breath of fashion, and then break at once, and are annihilated. The learned

often bewail the loss of ancient writers whose characters have survived their works; but, perhaps, if we could now retrieve them, we should find them only the Granvilles, Montagues, Stepneys, and Sheffields of their time, and wonder by what infatuation or caprice they could be raised to notice.

It cannot, however, be denied, that many have sunk into oblivion, whom it were unjust to number with this despicable class. Various kinds of literary fame seem destined to various measures of duration. Some spread into exuberance with a very speedy growth, but soon wither and decay; some rise more slowly, but last long. Parnassus has its flowers of transient fragrance, as well as its oaks of towering height, and its laurels of eternal verdure.

Among those whose reputation is exhausted in a short time by its own luxuriance, are the writers who take advantage of present incidents or characters which strongly interest the passions, and engage universal attention. It is not difficult to obtain readers, when we discuss a question which every one is desirous to understand, which is debated in every assembly, and has divided the nation into parties; or when we display the faults or virtues of him whose publick conduct has made almost every man his enemy or his friend. To the quick circulation of such productions all the motives of interest and vanity concur; the disputant enlarges his knowledge, the zealot animates his passion, and every man is desirous to inform himself concerning affairs so vehemently agitated and variously represented.

It is scarcely to be imagined, through how many subordinations of interest the ardour of party is diffused; and what multitudes fancy themselves affected by every satire or panegyrick on a man of eminence. Whoever has, at any time, taken occasion to mention him with praise or blame, whoever happens to love or hate any of his adherents, as he wishes to confirm his opinion, and to strengthen his party, will diligently peruse every paper from which he can hope for sentiments like his own. An object, however small in itself, if placed near to the eye, will engross all the rays of light; and a transaction, however trivial, swells into importance when it presses immediately on our attention. He that shall peruse the political pamphlets of any past reign, will wonder why they were so eagerly read, or so loudly praised. Many of the performances which had power to inflame factions, and fill a kingdom with confusion, have now very little effect upon a frigid critick; and the time is coming, when the compositions of later hirelings shall lie equally despised. In proportion as those who write on temporary subjects, are exalted above their merit at first, they are afterwards depressed below it; nor can the brightest elegance of diction, or most artful subtilty of reasoning, hope for so much esteem from those whose regard is no longer quickened by curiosity or pride.

It is, indeed, the fate of controvertists, even when they contend for philosophical or theological truth, to be soon laid aside and slighted. Either the question is decided, and there is no more place for doubt and opposition; or mankind despair

of understanding it, and grow weary of disturbance, content themselves with quiet ignorance, and refuse to be harassed with labours which they have no hopes of recompensing with knowledge.

The authors of new discoveries may surely expect to be reckoned among those whose writings are secure of veneration: yet it often happens that the general reception of a doctrine obscures the books in which it was delivered. When any tenet is generally received and adopted as an incontrovertible principle, we seldom look back to the arguments upon which it was first established, or can bear that tediousness of deduction, and multiplicity of evidence, by which its author was forced to reconcile it to prejudice, and fortify it in the weakness of novelty against obstinacy and envy.

It is well known how much of our philosophy is derived from Boyle's discovery of the qualities of the air; yet of those who now adopt or enlarge his theory, very few have read the detail of his experiments. His name is, indeed, revered; but his works are neglected; we are contented to know, that he conquered his opponents, without inquiring what cavils were produced against him, or by what proofs they were confuted.

Some writers apply themselves to studies boundless and inexhaustible, as experiments in natural philosophy. These are always lost in successive compilations, as new advances are made, and former observations become more familiar. Others spend their lives in remarks on language, or explanations of

antiquities, and only afford materials for lexicographers and commentators, who are themselves overwhelmed by subsequent collectors, that equally destroy the memory of their predecessors by amplification, transposition, or contraction. Every new system of nature gives birth to a swarm of expositors, whose business is to explain and illustrate it, and who can hope to exist no longer than the founder of their sect preserves his reputation.

There are, indeed, few kinds of composition from which an author, however learned or ingenious, can hope a long continuance of fame. He who has carefully studied human nature, and can well describe it, may with most reason flatter his ambition. Bacon, among all his pretensions to the regard of posterity, seems to have pleased himself chiefly with his Essays, *which come home to men's business and bosoms*, and of which, therefore, he declares his expectation, that they *will live as long as books last*. It may, however, satisfy an honest and benevolent mind to have been useful, though less conspicuous; nor will he that extends his hope to higher rewards, be so much anxious to obtain praise, as to discharge the duty which Providence assigns him.

No. 107. TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 1751

*Alternis igitur contendere versibus ambo
Coepere: alternos Musoe meminisse volebant. VIRG.
Ec. vii. 18*

*On themes alternate now the swains recite;
The muses in alternate themes delight.
ELPHINSTON.*

Among the various censures, which the unavoidable comparison of my performances with those of my predecessors has produced, there is none more general than that of uniformity. Many of my readers remark the want of those changes of colours, which formerly fed the attention with unexhausted novelty, and of that intermixture of subjects, or alternation of manner, by which other writers relieved weariness, and awakened expectation.

I have, indeed, hitherto avoided the practice of uniting gay and solemn subjects in the same paper, because it seems absurd for an author to counteract himself, to press at once with equal force upon both parts of the intellectual balance, or give medicines, which, like the double poison of Dryden, destroy the force of one another. I have endeavoured sometimes to divert, and sometimes

to elevate; but have imagined it an useless attempt to disturb merriment by solemnity, or interrupt seriousness by drollery. Yet I shall this day publish two letters of very different tendency, which I hope, like tragi-comedy, may chance to please even when they are not critically approved.

TO THE RAMBLER.

DEAR SIR,

Though, as my mamma tells me, I am too young to talk at the table, I have great pleasure in listening to the conversation of learned men, especially when they discourse of things which I do not understand; and have, therefore, been of late particularly delighted with many disputes about the *alteration of the stile*, which, they say, is to be made by act of parliament.

One day when my mamma was gone out of the room, I asked a very great scholar what the style was. He told me he was afraid I should hardly understand him when he informed me, that it was the stated and established method of computing time. It was not, indeed, likely that I should understand him; for I never yet knew time computed in my life, nor can imagine why we should be at so much trouble to count what we cannot keep. He did not tell me whether we are to count the time past, or the time to come; but I have considered them both by myself, and think it as foolish to count time that is gone, as money that is spent; and as for the time which is to come, it only seems further off by counting; and therefore, when any pleasure is promised me, I always think of the time as little as I can.

I have since listened very attentively to every one that talked upon this subject, of whom the greater part seem not to understand it better than myself; for though they often hint how much the nation has been mistaken, and rejoice that we are at last growing wiser than our ancestors, I have never been able to discover from them, that any body has died sooner, or been married later, for counting time wrong; and, therefore, I began to fancy that there was a great bustle with little consequence.

At last, two friends of my papa, Mr. Cycle, and Mr. Starlight, being, it seems, both of high learning, and able to make an almanack, began to talk about the new style. Sweet Mr. Starlight—I am sure I shall love his name as long as I live; for he told Cycle roundly, with a fierce look, that we should never be right without a *year of confusion*. Dear Mr. Rambler, did you ever hear any thing so charming? a whole year of confusion! When there has been a rout at mamma's, I have thought one night of confusion worth a thousand nights of rest; and if I can but see a year of confusion, a whole year, of cards in one room, and dancings in another, here a feast, and there a masquerade, and plays, and coaches, and hurries, and messages, and milliners, and raps at the door, and visits, and frolicks, and new fashions, I shall not care what they do with the rest of the time, nor whether they count it by the old style or the new; for I am resolved to break loose from the nursery in the tumult, and play my part among the rest; and it will be strange if I cannot get a husband and a chariot in the year of confusion.

Cycle, who is neither so young nor so handsome as Starlight, very gravely maintained, that all the perplexity may be avoided by leaping over eleven days in the reckoning; and, indeed, if it should come only to this, I think the new style is a delightful thing; for my mamma says I shall go to court when I am sixteen, and if they can but contrive often to leap over eleven days together, the months of restraint will soon be at an end. It is strange, that with all the plots that have been laid against time, they could never kill it by act of parliament before. Dear sir, if you have any vote or interest, get them but for once to destroy eleven months, and then I shall be as old as some married ladies. But this is desired only if you think they will not comply with Mr. Starlight's scheme; for nothing surely could please me like a year of confusion, when I shall no longer be fixed this hour to my pen, and the next to my needle, or wait at home for the dancing-master one day, and the next for the musick-master; but run from ball to ball, and from drum to drum; and spend all my time without tasks, and without account, and go out without telling whither, and come home without regard to prescribed hours, or family rules.

I am, sir,

Your humble servant,

PROPERANTIA.

MR. RAMBLER,

I was seized this morning with an unusual pensiveness, and, finding that books only served to heighten it, took a ramble into the fields, in hopes of relief and invigoration from the keenness

of the air and brightness of the sun.

As I wandered wrapped up in thought, my eyes were struck with the hospital for the reception of deserted infants, which I surveyed with pleasure, till, by a natural train of sentiment, I began to reflect on the fate of the mothers. For to what shelter can they fly? Only to the arms of their betrayer, which, perhaps, are now no longer open to receive them; and then how quick must be the transition from deluded virtue to shameless guilt, and from shameless guilt to hopeless wretchedness?

The anguish that I felt, left me no rest till I had, by your means, addressed myself to the publick on behalf of those forlorn creatures, the women of the town; whose misery here might satisfy the most rigorous censor, and whose participation of our common nature might surely induce us to endeavour, at least, their preservation from eternal punishment.

These were all once, if not virtuous, at least innocent; and might still have continued blameless and easy, but for the arts and insinuations of those whose rank, fortune, or education, furnished them with means to corrupt or to delude them. Let the libertine reflect a moment on the situation of that woman, who, being forsaken by her betrayer, is reduced to the necessity of turning prostitute for bread, and judge of the enormity of his guilt by the evils which it produces.

It cannot be doubted but that numbers follow this dreadful course of life, with shame, horror, and regret; but where can they hope for refuge: "*The world is not their friend, nor the*

world's law." Their sighs, and tears, and groans, are criminal in the eye of their tyrants, the bully and the bawd, who fatten on their misery, and threaten them with want or a gaol, if they show the least design of escaping from their bondage.

"To wipe all tears from off all faces," is a task too hard for mortals; but to alleviate misfortunes is often within the most limited power: yet the opportunities which every day affords of relieving the most wretched of human beings are overlooked and neglected, with equal disregard of policy and goodness.

There are places, indeed, set apart, to which these unhappy creatures may resort, when the diseases of incontinence seize upon them; but if they obtain a cure, to what are they reduced? Either to return with the small remains of beauty to their former guilt, or perish in the streets with nakedness and hunger.

How frequently have the gay and thoughtless, in their evening frolicks, seen a band of those miserable females, covered with rags, shivering with cold, and pining with hunger; and, without either pitying their calamities, or reflecting upon the cruelty of those who, perhaps, first seduced them by caresses of fondness, or magnificence of promises, go on to reduce others to the same wretchedness by the same means!

To stop the increase of this deplorable multitude, is undoubtedly the first and most pressing consideration. To prevent evil is the great end of government, the end for which vigilance and severity are properly employed. But surely those whom passion or interest has already depraved, have some

claim to compassion, from beings equally frail and fallible with themselves. Nor will they long groan in their present afflictions, if none were to refuse them relief, but those that owe their exemption from the same distress only to their wisdom and their virtue.

I am, &c.

*AMICUS*¹.

¹ The letter from Amicus was from an unknown correspondent. It breathes a tenderness of spirit worthy of Johnson himself. But he practised the lesson which it inculcates;—a harder task! Sterne could *write* sentiment.

No. 108. SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 1751

—*Sapere aude:*
Incipe. Vivendi recte qui prorogat horam,
Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis; at ille
Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis aevum. HOR.
Lib. i. Ep. ii. 39.

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise;
He who defers this work from day to day,
Does on a river's bank expecting stay,
Till the whole stream, which stopp'd him, should be
gone,
That runs, and as it runs, for ever will run on.
COWLEY.

An ancient poet, unreasonably discontented at the present state of things, which his system of opinions obliged him to represent in its worst form, has observed of the earth, "that its greater part is covered by the uninhabitable ocean; that of the rest some is encumbered with naked mountains, and some lost under barren sands; some scorched with unintermitted heat, and some petrified with perpetual frost; so that only a few regions remain for the production of fruits, the pasture of cattle, and the accommodation of man."

The same observation may be transferred to the time allotted us in our present state. When we have deducted all that is absorbed in sleep, all that is inevitably appropriated to the demands of nature, or irresistibly engrossed by the tyranny of custom; all that passes in regulating the superficial decorations of life, or is given up in the reciprocations of civility to the disposal of others; all that is torn from us by the violence of disease, or stolen imperceptibly away by lassitude and languor; we shall find that part of our duration very small of which we can truly call ourselves masters, or which we can spend wholly at our own choice. Many of our hours are lost in a rotation of petty cares, in a constant recurrence of the same employments; many of our provisions for ease or happiness are always exhausted by the present day; and a great part of our existence serves no other purpose, than that of enabling us to enjoy the rest.

Of the few moments which are left in our disposal, it may reasonably be expected, that we should be so frugal, as to let none of them slip from us without some equivalent; and perhaps it might be found, that as the earth, however straitened by rocks and waters, is capable of producing more than all its inhabitants are able to consume, our lives, though much contracted by incidental distraction, would yet afford us a large space vacant to the exercise of reason and virtue; that we want not time, but diligence, for great performances; and that we squander much of our allowance, even while we think it sparing and insufficient.

This natural and necessary comminution of our lives, perhaps,

often makes us insensible of the negligence with which we suffer them to slide away. We never consider ourselves as possessed at once of time sufficient for any great design, and therefore indulge ourselves, in fortuitous amusements. We think it unnecessary to take an account of a few supernumerary moments, which, however employed, could have produced little advantage, and which were exposed to a thousand chances of disturbance and interruption.

It is observable, that, either by nature or by habit, our faculties are fitted to images of a certain extent, to which we adjust great things by division, and little things by accumulation. Of extensive surfaces we can only take a survey, as the parts succeed one another; and atoms we cannot perceive till they are united into masses. Thus we break the vast periods of time into centuries and years; and thus, if we would know the amount of moments, we must agglomerate them into days and weeks.

The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us, that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together. Of the same kind is the prodigality of life; he that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavour to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground.

It is usual for those who are advised to the attainment of any new qualification, to look upon themselves as required to

change the general course of their conduct, to dismiss business, and exclude pleasure, and to devote their days and nights to a particular attention. But all common degrees of excellence are attainable at a lower price; he that should steadily and resolutely assign to any science or language those interstitial vacancies which intervene in the most crowded variety of diversion or employment, would find every day new irradiations of knowledge, and discover how much more is to be hoped from frequency and perseverance, than from violent efforts and sudden desires; efforts which are soon remitted when they encounter difficulty, and desires, which, if they are indulged too often, will shake off the authority of reason, and range capriciously from one object to another.

The disposition to defer every important design to a time of leisure, and a state of settled uniformity, proceeds generally from a false estimate of the human powers. If we except those gigantic and stupendous intelligences who are said to grasp a system by intuition, and bound forward from one series of conclusions to another, without regular steps through intermediate propositions, the most successful students make their advances in knowledge by short flights, between each of which the mind may lie at rest. For every single act of progression a short time is sufficient; and it is only necessary, that whenever that time is afforded, it be well employed.

Few minds will be long confined to severe and laborious meditation; and when a successful attack on knowledge has

been made, the student recreates himself with the contemplation of his conquest, and forbears another incursion, till the new-acquired truth has become familiar, and his curiosity calls upon him for fresh gratifications. Whether the time of intermission is spent in company, or in solitude, in necessary business, or in voluntary levities, the understanding is equally abstracted from the object of inquiry; but, perhaps, if it be detained by occupations less pleasing, it returns again to study with greater alacrity than when it is glutted with ideal pleasures, and surfeited with intemperance of application. He that will not suffer himself to be discouraged by fancied impossibilities, may sometimes find his abilities invigorated by the necessity of exerting them in short intervals, as the force of a current is increased by the contraction of its channel.

From some cause like this, it has probably proceeded, that, among those who have contributed to the advancement of learning, many have risen to eminence in opposition to all the obstacles which external circumstances could place in their way, amidst the tumult of business, the distresses of poverty, or the dissipations of a wandering and unsettled state. A great part of the life of Erasmus was one continual peregrination; ill supplied with the gifts of fortune, and led from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom, by the hopes of patrons and preferment, hopes which always flattered and always deceived him; he yet found means, by unshaken constancy, and a vigilant improvement of those hours, which, in the midst of the most

restless activity, will remain unengaged, to write more than another in the same condition would have hoped to read. Compelled by want to attendance and solicitation, and so much versed in common life, that he has transmitted to us the most perfect delineation of the manners of his age, he joined to his knowledge of the world such application to books, that he will stand for ever in the first rank of literary heroes. How this proficiency was obtained he sufficiently discovers, by informing us, that the "Praise of Folly," one of his most celebrated performances, was composed by him on the road to Italy; *ne totum illud tempus quo equo fuit insidendum, illiteratis fabulis terreretur*: "lest the hours which he was obliged to spend on horseback should be tattled away without regard to literature."

An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto, that *time was his estate*; an estate, indeed, which will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly repay the labours of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be over-run with noxious plants, or laid out for shew, rather than for use.

No. 109. TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 1751

*Gratum est, quod patriæ civem populoque dedisti,
Si facis, ut patriæ sit idoneus, utilis agris,
Utilis et bellorum et pacis rebus agendis.
Plurimum enim intererit, quibus artibus, et quibus
hunc tu
Moribus instituas Juv. SAT, xiv. 70.*

*Grateful the gift! a member to the state,
If you that member useful shall create;
Train'd both to war, and, when the war shall cease,
As fond, as fit t'improve the arts of peace.
For much it boots which way you train your boy,
The hopeful object of your future joy. ELPHINSTON.*

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR,

Though you seem to have taken a view sufficiently extensive of the miseries of life, and have employed much of your speculation on mournful subjects, you have not yet exhausted the whole stock of human infelicity. There is still a species of wretchedness which escapes your observation, though it might supply you with many sage remarks, and salutary cautions.

I cannot but imagine the start of attention awakened by this

welcome hint; and at this instant see the Rambler snuffing his candle, rubbing his spectacles, stirring his fire, locking out interruption, and settling himself in his easy chair, that he may enjoy a new calamity without disturbance. For, whether it be that continued sickness or misfortune has acquainted you only with the bitterness of being; or that you imagine none but yourself able to discover what I suppose has been seen and felt by all the inhabitants of the world; whether you intend your writings as antidotal to the levity and merriment with which your rivals endeavour to attract the favour of the publick; or fancy that you have some particular powers of dolorous declamation, and *warble out your groans* with uncommon elegance or energy; it is certain, that whatever be your subject, melancholy for the most part bursts in upon your speculation, your gaiety is quickly overcast, and though your readers may be flattered with hopes of pleasantry, they are seldom dismissed but with heavy hearts.

That I may therefore gratify you with an imitation of your own syllables of sadness, I will inform you that I was condemned by some disastrous influence to be an only son, born to the apparent prospect of a large fortune, and allotted to my parents at that time of life when satiety of common diversions allows the mind to indulge parental affection with greater intenseness. My birth was celebrated by the tenants with feasts, and dances, and bag-pipes: congratulations were sent from every family within ten miles round; and my parents discovered in my first cries such tokens of future virtue and understanding, that they declared themselves

determined to devote the remaining part of life to my happiness and the increase of their estate.

The abilities of my father and mother were not perceptibly unequal, and education had given neither much advantage over the other. They had both kept good company, rattled in chariots, glittered in playhouses, and danced at court, and were both expert in the games that were in their time called in as auxiliaries against the intrusion of thought.

When there is such a parity between two persons associated for life, the dejection which the husband, if he be not completely stupid, must always suffer for want of superiority, sinks him to submissiveness. My mamma therefore governed the family without controul; and except that my father still retained some authority in the stables, and, now and then, after a supernumerary bottle, broke a looking-glass or china dish to prove his sovereignty, the whole course of the year was regulated by her direction, the servants received from her all their orders, and the tenants were continued or dismissed at her discretion.

She, therefore, thought herself entitled to the superintendence of her son's education; and when my father, at the instigation of the parson, faintly proposed that I should be sent to school, very positively told him, that she should not suffer so fine a child to be ruined; that she never knew any boys at a grammar-school that could come into a room without blushing, or sit at table without some awkward uneasiness; that they were always putting themselves into danger by boisterous plays, or vitiating

their behaviour with mean company, and that, for her part, she would rather follow me to the grave, than see me tear my clothes, and hang down my head, and sneak about with dirty shoes, and blotted fingers, my hair unpowdered, and my hat uncocked.

My father, who had no other end in his proposal than to appear wise and manly, soon acquiesced, since I was not to live by my learning; for, indeed, he had known very few students that had not some stiffness in their manner. They, therefore, agreed, that a domestick tutor should be procured, and hired an honest gentleman of mean conversation and narrow sentiments, but whom, having passed the common forms of literary education, they implicitly concluded qualified to teach all that was to be learned from a scholar. He thought himself sufficiently exalted by being placed at the same table with his pupil, and had no other view than to perpetuate his felicity by the utmost flexibility of submission to all my mother's opinions and caprices. He frequently took away my book, lest I should mope with too much application, charged me never to write without turning up my ruffles, and generally brushed my coat before he dismissed me into the parlour. He had no occasion to complain of too burdensome an employment: for my mother very judiciously considered, that I was not likely to grow politer in his company, and suffered me not to pass any more time in his apartment than my lesson required. When I was summoned to my task, she enjoined me not to get any of my tutor's ways, who was seldom mentioned before me but for practices to be avoided. I was every

moment admonished not to lean on my chair, cross my legs, or swing my hands like my tutor; and once my mother very seriously deliberated upon his total dismissal, because I began, she said, to learn his manner of sticking on my hat, and had his bend in my shoulders, and his totter in my gait.

Such, however, was her care, that I escaped all these depravities; and when I was only twelve years old, had rid myself of every appearance of childish diffidence. I was celebrated round the country for the petulance of my remarks, and the quickness of my replies; and many a scholar, five years older than myself, have I dashed into confusion by the steadiness of my countenance, silenced by my readiness of repartee, and tortured with envy by the address with which I picked up a fan, presented a snuff-box, or received an empty tea-cup.

At fourteen I was completely skilled in all the niceties of dress, and I could not only enumerate all the variety of silks, and distinguish the product of a French loom, but dart my eye through a numerous company, and observe every deviation from the reigning mode. I was universally skilful in all the changes of expensive finery; but as every one, they say, has something to which he is particularly born, was eminently knowing in Brussels' lace.

The next year saw me advanced to the trust and power of adjusting the ceremonial of an assembly. All received their partners from my hand, and to me every stranger applied for introduction. My heart now disdained the instructions of a tutor,

who was rewarded with a small annuity for life, and left me qualified, in my own opinion, to govern myself.

In a short time I came to London, and as my father was well known among the higher classes of life, soon obtained admission to the most splendid assemblies and most crowded card-tables. Here I found myself universally caressed and applauded; the ladies praised the fancy of my clothes, the beauty of my form, and the softness of my voice; endeavoured in every place to force themselves to my notice; and invited, by a thousand oblique solicitations, my attendance to the playhouse, and my salutations in the park. I was now happy to the utmost extent of my conception; I passed every morning in dress, every afternoon in visits, and every night in some select assemblies, where neither care nor knowledge were suffered to molest us.

After a few years, however, these delights became familiar, and I had leisure to look round me with more attention. I then found that my flatterers had very little power to relieve the languor of satiety, or recreate weariness, by varied amusement; and therefore endeavoured to enlarge the sphere of my pleasures, and to try what satisfaction might be found in the society of men. I will not deny the mortification with which I perceived, that every man whose name I had heard mentioned with respect, received me with a kind of tenderness, nearly bordering on compassion; and that those whose reputation was not well established, thought it necessary to justify their understandings, by treating me with contempt. One of these witlings elevated his

crest, by asking me in a full coffee-house the price of patches; and another whispered that he wondered why Miss Frisk did not keep me that afternoon to watch her squirrel.

When I found myself thus hunted from all masculine conversation by those who were themselves barely admitted, I returned to the ladies, and resolved to dedicate my life to their service and their pleasure. But I find that I have now lost my charms. Of those with whom I entered the gay world, some are married, some have retired, and some have so much changed their opinion, that they scarcely pay any regard to my civilities, if there is any other man in the place. The new flight of beauties to whom I have made my addresses, suffer me to pay the treat, and then titter with boys. So that I now find myself welcome only to a few grave ladies, who, unacquainted with all that gives either use or dignity to life, are content to pass their hours between their bed and their cards, without esteem from the old, or reverence from the young.

I cannot but think, Mr. Rambler, that I have reason to complain; for surely the females ought to pay some regard to the age of him whose youth was passed in endeavours to please them. They that encourage folly in the boy, have no right to punish it in the man. Yet I find that, though they lavish their first fondness upon pertness and gaiety, they soon transfer their regard to other qualities, and ungratefully abandon their adorers to dream out their last years in stupidity and contempt.

I am, &c.

FLORENTULUS.

No. 110. SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 1751

*At nobis vitæ dominum quærentibus unum
Lux iter est, et clara dies, et gratia simplex.
Spem sequimur, gradimurque fide, fruimurque
futuris,
Ad quæ non veniunt præsentis gaudia vitæ,
Nec currunt pariter capta, et capienda voluptus.
PRUDENTIUS, Cont. Sym. ii. 904.*

*We through this maze of life one Lord obey;
Whose light and grace unerring lead the way.
By hope and faith secure of future bliss,
Gladly the joys of present life we miss:
For baffled mortals still attempt in vain,
Present and future bliss at once to gain. F. LEWIS.*

That to please the Lord and Father of the universe, is the supreme interest of created and dependent beings, as it is easily proved, has been universally confessed; and since all rational agents are conscious of having neglected or violated the duties prescribed to them, the fear of being rejected, or punished by God, has always burdened the human mind. The expiation of crimes, and renovation of the forfeited hopes of divine favour, therefore constitute a large part of every religion.

The various methods of propitiation and atonement which

fear and folly have dictated, or artifice and interest tolerated in the different parts of the world, however they may sometimes reproach or degrade humanity, at least shew the general consent of all ages and nations in their opinion of the placability of the divine nature. That God will forgive, may, indeed, be established as the first and fundamental truth of religion; for, though the knowledge of his existence is the origin of philosophy, yet, without the belief of his mercy, it would have little influence upon our moral conduct. There could be no prospect of enjoying the protection or regard of him, whom the least deviation from rectitude made inexorable for ever; and every man would naturally withdraw his thoughts from the contemplation of a Creator, whom he must consider as a governor too pure to be pleased, and too severe to be pacified; as an enemy infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful, whom he could neither deceive, escape, nor resist.

Where there is no hope, there can be no endeavour. A constant and unfailing obedience is above the reach of terrestrial diligence; and therefore the progress of life could only have been the natural descent of negligent despair from crime to crime, had not the universal persuasion of forgiveness, to be obtained by proper means of reconciliation, recalled those to the paths of virtue, whom their passions had solicited aside; and animated to new attempts, and firmer perseverance, those whom difficulty had discouraged, or negligence surprised.

In times and regions so disjoined from each other, that there

can scarcely be imagined any communication of sentiments either by commerce or tradition, has prevailed a general and uniform expectation of propitiating God by corporal austerities, of anticipating his vengeance by voluntary inflictions, and appeasing his justice by a speedy and cheerful submission to a less penalty, when a greater is incurred.

Incorporated minds will always feel some inclination towards exterior acts and ritual observances. Ideas not represented by sensible objects are fleeting, variable, and evanescent. We are not able to judge of the degree of conviction which operated at any particular time upon our own thoughts, but as it is recorded by some certain and definite effect. He that reviews his life in order to determine the probability of his acceptance with God, if he could once establish the necessary proportion between crimes and sufferings, might securely rest upon his performance of the expiation; but while safety remains the reward only of mental purity, he is always afraid lest he should decide too soon in his own favour; lest he should not have felt the pangs of true contrition; lest he should mistake satiety for detestation, or imagine that his passions are subdued when they are only sleeping.

From this natural and reasonable diffidence arose, in humble and timorous piety, a disposition to confound penance with repentance, to repose on human determinations, and to receive from some judicial sentence the stated and regular assignment of reconciliatory pain. We are never willing to be without resource:

we seek in the knowledge of others a succour for our own ignorance, and are ready to trust any that will undertake to direct us when we have no confidence in ourselves.

This desire to ascertain by some outward marks the state of the soul, and this willingness to calm the conscience by some settled method, have produced, as they are diversified in their effects by various tempers and principles, most of the disquisitions and rules, the doubts and solutions, that have embarrassed the doctrine of repentance, and perplexed tender and flexible minds with innumerable scruples concerning the necessary measures of sorrow, and adequate degrees of self-aborrence; and these rules, corrupted by fraud, or debased by credulity, have, by the common resiliency of the mind from one extreme to another, incited others to an open contempt of all subsidiary ordinances, all prudential caution, and the whole discipline of regulated piety.

Repentance, however difficult to be practised, is, if it be explained without superstition, easily understood. *Repentance is the relinquishment of any practice, from the conviction that it has offended God.* Sorrow, and fear, and anxiety, are properly not parts, but adjuncts of repentance; yet they are too closely connected with it to be easily separated; for they not only mark its sincerity, but promote its efficacy.

No man commits any act of negligence or obstinacy, by which his safety or happiness in this world is endangered, without feeling the pungency of remorse. He who is fully convinced,

that he suffers by his own failure, can never forbear to trace back his miscarriage to its first cause, to image to himself a contrary behaviour, and to form involuntary resolutions against the like fault, even when he knows that he shall never again have the power of committing it. Danger, considered as imminent, naturally produces such trepidations of impatience as leave all human means of safety behind them; he that has once caught an alarm of terrour, is every moment seized with useless anxieties, adding one security to another, trembling with sudden doubts, and distracted by the perpetual occurrence of new expedients. If, therefore, he whose crimes have deprived him of the favour of God, can reflect upon his conduct without disturbance, or can at will banish the reflection; if he who considers himself as suspended over the abyss of eternal perdition only by the thread of life, which must soon part by its own weakness, and which the wing of every minute may divide, can cast his eyes round him without shuddering with horror, or panting with security; what can he judge of himself, but that he is not yet awakened to sufficient conviction, since every loss is more lamented than the loss of the divine favour, and every danger more dreadful than the danger of final condemnation?

Retirement from the cares and pleasures of the world has been often recommended as useful to repentance. This at least is evident, that every one retires, whenever ratiocination and recollection are required on other occasions; and surely the retrospect of life, the disentanglement of actions complicated

with innumerable circumstances, and diffused in various relations, the discovery of the primary movements of the heart, and the extirpation of lusts and appetites deeply rooted and widely spread, may be allowed to demand some secession from sport and noise, business and folly. Some suspension of common affairs, some pause of temporal pain and pleasure, is doubtless necessary to him that deliberates for eternity, who is forming the only plan in which miscarriage cannot be repaired, and examining the only question in which mistake cannot be rectified.

Austerities and mortifications are means by which the mind is invigorated and roused, by which the attractions of pleasure are interrupted, and the chains of sensuality are broken. It is observed by one of the fathers, that *he who restrains himself in the use of things lawful, will never encroach upon things forbidden*. Abstinence, if nothing more, is, at least, a cautious retreat from the utmost verge of permission, and confers that security which cannot be reasonably hoped by him that dares always to hover over the precipice of destruction, or delights to approach the pleasures which he knows it fatal to partake. Austerity is the proper antidote to indulgence; the diseases of mind as well as body are cured by contraries, and to contraries we should readily have recourse, if we dreaded guilt as we dread pain.

The completion and sum of repentance is a change of life. That sorrow which dictates no caution, that fear which does not quicken our escape, that austerity which fails to rectify our

affections, are vain and unavailing. But sorrow and terrour must naturally precede reformation; for what other cause can produce it? He, therefore, that feels himself alarmed by his conscience, anxious for the attainment of a better state, and afflicted by the memory of his past faults, may justly conclude, that the great work of repentance is begun, and hope by retirement and prayer, the natural and religious means of strengthening his conviction, to impress upon his mind such a sense of the divine presence, as may overpower the blandishments of secular delights, and enable him to advance from one degree of holiness to another, till death shall set him free from doubt and contest, misery and temptation².

What better can we do than prostrate fall
Before him reverent; and there confess
Humbly our faults, and pardon beg; with tears
Wat'ring the ground, and with our sighs the air
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
Of sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek? Par. Lost. B.
x. 1087.

² The perusal of these profound remarks on penance and repentance had so powerful an effect on one of the English Benedictine monks (The Rev. James Compton) at Paris, as to lead him from the errors of Popery! For an account of Dr. Johnson's true benevolence through the whole of this interesting occasion, see Malone's note to Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. iv. p. 210—edit. 1822.

No. 111. TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 1751

[Greek: *phronein gar hoi tacheis, ouk asphaleis.*]
SOPHOC.

Disaster always waits on early wit.

It has been observed, by long experience, that late springs produce the greatest plenty. The delay of blooms and fragrance, of verdure and breezes, is for the most part liberally recompensed by the exuberance and fecundity of the ensuing seasons; the blossoms which lie concealed till the year is advanced, and the sun is high, escape those chilling blasts, and nocturnal frosts, which are often fatal to early luxuriance, prey upon the first smiles of vernal beauty, destroy the feeble principles of vegetable life, intercept the fruit in the gem, and beat down the flowers unopened to the ground.

I am afraid there is little hope of persuading the young and sprightly part of my readers, upon whom the spring naturally forces my attention, to learn, from the great process of nature, the difference between diligence and hurry, between speed and precipitation; to prosecute their designs with calmness, to watch the concurrence of opportunity, and endeavour to find the lucky moment which they cannot make. Youth is the time of enterprize and hope: having yet no occasion of comparing our force with

any opposing power, we naturally form presumptions in our own favour, and imagine that obstruction and impediment will give way before us. The first repulses rather inflame vehemence than teach prudence; a brave and generous mind is long before it suspects its own weakness, or submits to sap the difficulties which it expected to subdue by storm. Before disappointments have enforced the dictates of philosophy, we believe it in our power to shorten the interval between the first cause and the last effect; we laugh at the timorous delays of plodding industry, and fancy that, by increasing the fire, we can at pleasure accelerate the projection.

At our entrance into the world, when health and vigour give us fair promises of time sufficient for the regular maturation of our schemes, and a long enjoyment of our acquisitions, we are eager to seize the present moment; we pluck every gratification within our reach, without suffering it to ripen into perfection, and crowd all the varieties of delight into a narrow compass; but age seldom fails to change our conduct; we grow negligent of time in proportion as we have less remaining, and suffer the last part of life to steal from us in languid preparations for future undertakings, or slow approaches to remote advantages, in weak hopes of some fortuitous occurrence, or drowsy equilibrations of undetermined counsel: whether it be that the aged, having tasted the pleasures of man's condition, and found them delusive, become less anxious for their attainment; or that frequent miscarriages have depressed them to despair, and frozen them to

inactivity; or that death shocks them more as it advances upon them, and they are afraid to remind themselves of their decay, or to discover to their own hearts that the time of trifling is past. A perpetual conflict with natural desires seems to be the lot of our present state. In youth we require something of the tardiness and frigidity of age; and in age we must labour to recal the fire and impetuosity of youth; in youth we must learn to expect, and in age to enjoy.

The torment of expectation is, indeed, not easily to be borne at a time when every idea of gratification fires the blood, and flashes on the fancy; when the heart is vacant to every fresh form of delight, and has no rival engagements to withdraw it from the importunities of a new desire. Yet, since the fear of missing what we seek must always be proportionable to the happiness expected from possessing it, the passions, even in this tempestuous state, might be somewhat moderated by frequent inculcation of the mischief of temerity, and the hazard of losing that which we endeavour to seize before our time.

He that too early aspires to honours, must resolve to encounter not only the opposition of interest, but the malignity of envy. He that is too eager to be rich, generally endangers his fortune in wild adventures, and uncertain projects; and he that hastens too speedily to reputation, often raises his character by artifices and fallacies, decks himself in colours which quickly fade, or in plumes which accident may shake off, or competition pluck away.

The danger of early eminence has been extended by some, even to the gifts of nature; and an opinion has been long conceived, that quickness of invention, accuracy of judgment, or extent of knowledge, appearing before the usual time, presage a short life. Even those who are less inclined to form general conclusions, from instances which by their own nature must be rare, have yet been inclined to prognosticate no suitable progress from the first sallies of rapid wits; but have observed, that after a short effort they either loiter or faint, and suffer themselves to be surpassed by the even and regular perseverance of slower understandings.

It frequently happens, that applause abates diligence. Whoever finds himself to have performed more than was demanded, will be contented to spare the labour of unnecessary performances, and sit down to enjoy at ease his superfluities of honour. He whom success has made confident of his abilities, quickly claims the privilege of negligence, and looks contemptuously on the gradual advances of a rival, whom he imagines himself able to leave behind whenever he shall again summon his force to the contest. But long intervals of pleasure dissipate attention, and weaken constancy; nor is it easy for him that has sunk from diligence into sloth, to rouse out of his lethargy, to recollect his notions, rekindle his curiosity, and engage with his former ardour in the toils of study.

Even that friendship which intends the reward of genius, too often tends to obstruct it. The pleasure of being caressed,

distinguished, and admired, easily seduces the student from literary solitude. He is ready to follow the call which summons him to hear his own praise, and which, perhaps, at once flatters his appetite with certainty of pleasures, and his ambition with hopes of patronage; pleasures which he conceives inexhaustible, and hopes which he has not yet learned to distrust.

These evils, indeed, are by no means to be imputed to nature, or considered as inseparable from an early display of uncommon abilities. They may be certainly escaped by prudence and resolution, and must therefore be recounted rather as consolations to those who are less liberally endowed, than as discouragements to such as are born with uncommon qualities. Beauty is well known to draw after it the persecutions of impertinence, to incite the artifices of envy, and to raise the flames of unlawful love; yet, among the ladies whom prudence or modesty have made most eminent, who has ever complained of the inconveniences of an amiable form? or would have purchased safety by the loss of charms?

Neither grace of person, nor vigour of understanding, are to be regarded otherwise than as blessings, as means of happiness indulged by the Supreme Benefactor; but the advantages of either may be lost by too much eagerness to obtain them. A thousand beauties in their first blossom, by an imprudent exposure to the open world, have suddenly withered at the blast of infamy; and men who might have subjected new regions to the empire of learning, have been lured by the praise of their

first productions from academical retirement, and wasted their days in vice and dependance. The virgin who too soon aspires to celebrity and conquest, perishes by childish vanity, ignorant credulity, or guiltless indiscretion. The genius who catches at laurels and preferment before his time, mocks the hopes that he had excited, and loses those years which might have been most usefully employed, the years of youth, of spirit, and vivacity.

It is one of the innumerable absurdities of pride, that we are never more impatient of direction, than in that part of life when we need it most; we are in haste to meet enemies whom we have not strength to overcome, and to undertake tasks which we cannot perform: and as he that once miscarries does not easily persuade mankind to favour another attempt, an ineffectual struggle for fame is often followed by perpetual obscurity.

No. 112. SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1751

*In mea vesanas habui dispendia vires,
Et valui pœnam fortis in ipse meain. OVID, Am.
Lib. i. vii. 25.*

*Of strength pernicious to myself I boast;
The pow'rs I have were given me to my cost. F.
LEWIS.*

We are taught by Celsus, that health is best preserved by avoiding settled habits of life, and deviating sometimes into slight aberrations from the laws of medicine; by varying the proportions of food and exercise, interrupting the successions of rest and labour, and mingling hardships with indulgence. The body, long accustomed to stated quantities and uniform periods, is disordered by the smallest irregularity; and since we cannot adjust every day by the balance or barometer, it is fit sometimes to depart from rigid accuracy, that we may be able to comply with necessary affairs, or strong inclinations. He that too long observes nice punctualities, condemns himself to voluntary imbecility, and will not long escape the miseries of disease.

The same laxity of regimen is equally necessary to intellectual health, and to a perpetual susceptibility of occasional pleasure.

Long confinement to the same company which perhaps similitude of taste brought first together, quickly contracts the faculties, and makes a thousand things offensive that are in themselves indifferent; a man accustomed to hear only the echo of his own sentiments, soon bars all the common avenues of delight, and has no part in the general gratifications of mankind.

In things which are not immediately subject to religious or moral consideration, it is dangerous to be too rigidly in the right. Sensibility may, by an incessant attention to elegance and propriety, be quickened to a tenderness inconsistent with the condition of humanity, irritable by the smallest asperity, and vulnerable by the gentlest touch. He that pleases himself too much with minute exactness, and submits to endure nothing in accommodations, attendance, or address, below the point of perfection, will, whenever he enters the crowd of life, be harassed with innumerable distresses, from which those who have not in the same manner increased their sensations find no disturbance. His exotick softness will shrink at the coarseness of vulgar felicity, like a plant transplanted to northern nurseries, from the dews and sunshine of the tropical regions.

There will always be a wide interval between practical and ideal excellence; and, therefore, if we allow not ourselves to be satisfied while we can perceive any error or defect, we must refer our hopes of ease to some other period of existence. It is well known, that, exposed to a microscope, the smoothest polish of the most solid bodies discovers cavities and prominences;

and that the softest bloom of roseate virginity repels the eye with excrescences and discolorations. The perceptions as well as the senses may be improved to our own disquiet, and we may, by diligent cultivation of the powers of dislike, raise in time an artificial fastidiousness, which shall fill the imagination with phantoms of turpitude, shew us the naked skeleton of every delight, and present us only with the pains of pleasure, and the deformities of beauty.

Peevishness, indeed, would perhaps very little disturb the peace of mankind, were it always the consequence of superfluous delicacy; for it is the privilege only of deep reflection, or lively fancy, to destroy happiness by art and refinement. But by continual indulgence of a particular humour, or by long enjoyment of undisputed superiority, the dull and thoughtless may likewise acquire the power of tormenting themselves and others, and become sufficiently ridiculous or hateful to those who are within sight of their conduct, or reach of their influence.

They that have grown old in a single state are generally found to be morose, fretful, and captious; tenacious of their own practices and maxims; soon offended by contradiction or negligence; and impatient of any association, but with those that will watch their nod, and submit themselves to unlimited authority. Such is the effect of having lived without the necessity of consulting any inclination but their own.

The irascibility of this class of tyrants is generally exerted upon petty provocations, such as are incident to understandings

not far extended beyond the instincts of animal life; but, unhappily, he that fixes his attention on things always before him, will never have long cessations of anger. There are many veterans of luxury upon whom every noon brings a paroxysm of violence, fury, and execration; they never sit down to their dinner without finding the meat so injudiciously bought, or so unskilfully dressed, such blunders in the seasoning, or such improprieties in the sauce, as can scarcely be expiated without blood; and, in the transports of resentment, make very little distinction between guilt and innocence, but let fly their menaces, or growl out their discontent, upon all whom fortune exposes to the storm.

It is not easy to imagine a more unhappy condition than that of dependance on a peevish man. In every other state of inferiority the certainty of pleasing is perpetually increased by a fuller knowledge of our duty; and kindness and confidence are strengthened by every new act of trust, and proof of fidelity. But peevishness sacrifices to a momentary offence the obsequiousness or usefulness of half a life, and, as more is performed, increases her exactions.

Chrysalus gained a fortune by trade, and retired into the country; and, having a brother burthened by the number of his children, adopted one of his sons. The boy was dismissed with many prudent admonitions; informed of his father's inability to maintain him in his native rank; cautioned against all opposition to the opinions or precepts of his uncle; and animated to

perseverance by the hopes of supporting the honour of the family, and overtopping his elder brother. He had a natural ductility of mind, without much warmth of affection, or elevation of sentiment; and therefore readily complied with every variety of caprice; patiently endured contradictory reproofs; heard false accusations without pain, and opprobrious reproaches without reply; laughed obstreperously at the ninetieth repetition of a joke; asked questions about the universal decay of trade; admired the strength of those heads by which the price of stocks is changed and adjusted; and behaved with such prudence and circumspection, that after six years the will was made, and Juvenclus was declared heir. But unhappily, a month afterwards, retiring at night from his uncle's chamber, he left the door open behind him: the old man tore his will, and being then perceptibly declining, for want of time to deliberate, left his money to a trading company.

When female minds are embittered by age or solitude, their malignity is generally exerted in a rigorous and spiteful superintendence of domestic trifles. Eriphile has employed her eloquence for twenty years upon the degeneracy of servants, the nastiness of her house, the ruin of her furniture, the difficulty of preserving tapestry from the moths, and the carelessness of the sluts whom she employs in brushing it. It is her business every morning to visit all the rooms, in hopes of finding a chair without its cover, a window shut or open contrary to her orders, a spot on the hearth, or a feather on the floor, that the rest of the day

may be justifiably spent in taunts of contempt, and vociferations of anger. She lives for no other purpose but to preserve the neatness of a house and gardens, and feels neither inclination to pleasure, nor aspiration after virtue, while she is engrossed by the great employment of keeping gravel from grass, and wainscot from dust. Of three amiable nieces she has declared herself an irreconcilable enemy; to one, because she broke off a tulip with her hoop; to another, because she spilt her coffee on a Turkey carpet; and to the third, because she let a wet dog run into the parlour. She has broken off her intercourse of visits, because company makes a house dirty; and resolves to confine herself more to her own affairs, and to live no longer in mire by foolish lenity.

Peevishness is generally the vice of narrow minds, and, except when it is the effect of anguish and disease, by which the resolution is broken, and the mind made too feeble to bear the lightest addition to its miseries, proceeds from an unreasonable persuasion of the importance of trifles. The proper remedy against it is, to consider the dignity of human nature, and the folly of suffering perturbation and uneasiness from causes unworthy of our notice.

He that resigns his peace to little casualties, and suffers the course of his life to be interrupted by fortuitous inadvertencies, or offences, delivers up himself to the direction of the wind, and loses all that constancy and equanimity which constitute the chief praise of a wise man.

The province of prudence lies between the greatest things and the least; some surpass our power by their magnitude, and some escape our notice by their number and their frequency. But the indispensable business of life will afford sufficient exercise to every understanding; and such is the limitation of the human powers, that by attention to trifles we must let things of importance pass unobserved: when we examine a mite with a glass, we see nothing but a mite.

That it is every man's interest to be pleased, will need little proof: that it is his interest to please others, experience will inform him. It is therefore not less necessary to happiness than to virtue, that he rid his mind of passions which make him uneasy to himself, and hateful to the world, which enchain his intellects, and obstruct his improvement.

No. 113. TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 1751

—*Uxorem, Postume, ducis?*
Die, qua Tisiphone, quibus exagitare colubris? JUV.
Sat. vi. 28.

A sober man like thee to change his life!
What fury would possess thee with a wife? DRYDEN.

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR,

I know not whether it is always a proof of innocence to treat censure with contempt. We owe so much reverence to the wisdom of mankind, as justly to wish, that our own opinion of our merit may be ratified by the concurrence of other suffrages; and since guilt and infamy must have the same effect upon intelligences unable to pierce beyond external appearance, and influenced often rather by example than precept, we are obliged to refute a false charge, lest we should countenance the crime which we have never committed. To turn away from an accusation with supercilious silence, is equally in the power of him that is hardened by villany, and inspirited by innocence. The wall of brass which Horace erects upon a clear conscience,

may be sometimes raised by impudence or power; and we should always wish to preserve the dignity of virtue by adorning her with graces which wickedness cannot assume.

For this reason I have determined no longer to endure, with either patient or sullen resignation, a reproach, which is, at least in my opinion, unjust; but will lay my case honestly before you, that you or your readers may at length decide it.

Whether you will be able to preserve your boasted impartiality, when you hear that I am considered as an adversary by half the female world, you may surely pardon me for doubting, notwithstanding the veneration to which you may imagine yourself entitled by your age, your learning, your abstraction, or your virtue. Beauty, Mr. Rambler, has often overpowered the resolutions of the firm, and the reasonings of the wise, roused the old to sensibility, and subdued the rigorous to softness.

I am one of those unhappy beings, who have been marked out as husbands for many different women, and deliberated a hundred times on the brink of matrimony. I have discussed all the nuptial preliminaries so often, that I can repeat the forms in which jointures are settled, pin-money secured, and provisions for younger children ascertained; but am at last doomed by general consent to everlasting solitude, and excluded by an irreversible decree from all hopes of connubial felicity. I am pointed out by every mother, as a man whose visits cannot be admitted without reproach; who raises hopes only to embitter disappointment, and makes offers only to seduce girls into a

waste of that part of life, in which they might gain advantageous matches, and become mistresses and mothers.

I hope you will think, that some part of this penal severity may justly be remitted, when I inform you, that I never yet professed love to a woman without sincere intentions of marriage; that I have never continued an appearance of intimacy from the hour that my inclination changed, but to preserve her whom I was leaving from the shock of abruptness, or the ignominy of contempt; that I always endeavoured to give the ladies an opportunity of seeming to discard me; and that I never forsook a mistress for larger fortune, or brighter beauty, but because I discovered some irregularity in her conduct, or some depravity in her mind; not because I was charmed by another, but because I was offended by herself.

I was very early tired of that succession of amusements by which the thoughts of most young men are dissipated, and had not long glittered in the splendour of an ample patrimony [Transcriber's note: sic] before I wished for the calm of domestick happiness. Youth is naturally delighted with sprightliness and ardour, and therefore I breathed out the sighs of my first affection at the feet of the gay, the sparkling, the vivacious Ferocula. I fancied to myself a perpetual source of happiness in wit never exhausted, and spirit never depressed; looked with veneration on her readiness of expedients, contempt of difficulty, assurance of address, and promptitude of reply; considered her as exempt by some prerogative of nature from

the weakness and timidity of female minds; and congratulated myself upon a companion superior to all common troubles and embarrassments. I was, indeed, somewhat disturbed by the unshaken perseverance with which she enforced her demands of an unreasonable settlement; yet I should have consented to pass my life in union with her, had not my curiosity led me to a crowd gathered in the street, where I found Ferocula, in the presence of hundreds, disputing for six-pence with a chairman. I saw her in so little need of assistance, that it was no breach of the laws of chivalry to forbear interposition, and I spared myself the shame of owning her acquaintance. I forgot some point of ceremony at our next interview, and soon provoked her to forbid me her presence.

My next attempt was upon a lady of great eminence for learning and philosophy. I had frequently observed the barrenness and uniformity of connubial conversation, and therefore thought highly of my own prudence and discernment, when I selected from a multitude of wealthy beauties, the deep-read Misothea, who declared herself the inexorable enemy of ignorant pertness, and puerile levity; and scarcely condescended to make tea, but for the linguist, the geometrician, the astronomer, or the poet. The queen of the Amazons was only to be gained by the hero who could conquer her in single combat; and Misothea's heart was only to bless the scholar who could overpower her by disputation. Amidst the fondest transports of courtship she could call for a definition of terms, and treated

every argument with contempt that could not be reduced to regular syllogism. You may easily imagine, that I wished this courtship at an end; but when I desired her to shorten my torments, and fix the day of my felicity, we were led into a long conversation, in which Misothea endeavoured to demonstrate the folly of attributing choice and self-direction to any human being. It was not difficult to discover the danger of committing myself for ever to the arms of one who might at any time mistake the dictates of passion, or the calls of appetite, for the decree of fate; or consider cuckoldom as necessary to the general system, as a link in the everlasting chain of successive causes. I therefore told her, that destiny had ordained us to part, and that nothing should have torn me from her but the talons of necessity.

I then solicited the regard of the calm, the prudent, the economical Sophronia, a lady who considered wit as dangerous, and learning as superfluous, and thought that the woman who kept her house clean, and her accounts exact, took receipts for every payment, and could find them at a sudden call, inquired nicely after the condition of the tenants, read the price of stocks once a-week, and purchased every thing at the best market, could want no accomplishments necessary to the happiness of a wise man. She discoursed with great solemnity on the care and vigilance which the superintendence of a family demands; observed how many were ruined by confidence in servants; and told me, that she never expected honesty but from a strong chest, and that the best storekeeper was the mistress's eye. Many

such oracles of generosity she uttered, and made every day new improvements in her schemes for the regulations of her servants, and the distribution of her time. I was convinced that, whatever I might suffer from Sophronia, I should escape poverty; and we therefore proceeded to adjust the settlements according to her own rule, fair and softly. But one morning her maid came to me in tears to intreat my interest for a reconciliation with her mistress, who had turned her out at night for breaking six teeth in a tortoise-shell comb; she had attended her lady from a distant province, and having not lived long enough to save much money, was destitute among strangers, and, though of a good family, in danger of perishing in the streets, or of being compelled by hunger to prostitution. I made no scruple of promising to restore her; but upon my first application to Sophronia, was answered with an air which called for approbation, that if she neglected her own affairs, I might suspect her of neglecting mine; that the comb stood her in three half crowns; that no servant should wrong her twice; and that indeed she took the first opportunity of parting with Phillida, because, though she was honest, her constitution was bad, and she thought her very likely to fall sick. Of our conference I need not tell you the effect; it surely may be forgiven me, if on this occasion I forgot the decency of common forms.

From two more ladies I was disengaged by finding, that they entertained my rivals at the same time, and determined their choice by the liberality of our settlements. Another, I thought

myself justified in forsaking, because she gave my attorney a bribe to favour her in the bargain; another because I could never soften her to tenderness, till she heard that most of my family had died young; and another, because, to increase her fortune by expectations, she represented her sister as languishing and consumptive.

I shall in another letter give the remaining part of my history of courtship. I presume that I should hitherto have injured the majesty of female virtue, had I not hoped to transfer my affection to higher merit.

I am, &c.

HYMENAEUS.

No. 114. SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1751

—*Audi,*
Nulla umquam de morte hominis cunctatio longa est.
JUV. Sat. vi. 220.

—*When man's life is in debate,*
The judge can ne'er too long deliberate. DRYDEN.

Power and superiority are so flattering and delightful, that, fraught with temptation, and exposed to danger, as they are, scarcely any virtue is so cautious, or any prudence so timorous, as to decline them. Even those that have most reverence for the laws of right, are pleased with shewing that not fear, but choice, regulates their behaviour; and would be thought to comply, rather than obey. We love to overlook the boundaries which we do not wish to pass; and, as the Roman satirist remarks, he that has no design to take the life of another, is yet glad to have it in his hands.

From the same principle, tending yet more to degeneracy and corruption, proceeds the desire of investing lawful authority with terror, and governing by force rather than persuasion. Pride is unwilling to believe the necessity of assigning any other reason than her own will; and would rather maintain the most equitable

claims by violence and penalties, than descend from the dignity of command to dispute and expostulation.

It may, I think, be suspected, that this political arrogance has sometimes found its way into legislative assemblies, and mingled with deliberations upon property and life. A slight perusal of the laws by which the measures of vindictive and coercive justice are established, will discover so many disproportions between crimes and punishments, such capricious distinctions of guilt, and such confusion of remissness and severity, as can scarcely be believed to have been produced by publick wisdom, sincerely and calmly studious of publick happiness.

The learned, the judicious, the pious Boerhaave relates, that he never saw a criminal dragged to execution without asking himself, "Who knows whether this man is not less culpable than me?" On the days when the prisons of this city are emptied into the grave, let every spectator of the dreadful procession put the same question to his own heart. Few among those that crowd in thousands to the legal massacre, and look with carelessness, perhaps with triumph, on the utmost exacerbations of human misery, would then be able to return without horror and dejection. For, who can congratulate himself upon a life passed without some act more mischievous to the peace or prosperity of others, than the theft of a piece of money?

It has been always the practice, when any particular species of robbery becomes prevalent and common, to endeavour its suppression by capital denunciations. Thus one generation of

malefactors is commonly cut off, and their successors are frightened into new expedients; the art of thievery is augmented with greater variety of fraud, and subtilized to higher degrees of dexterity, and more occult methods of conveyance. The law then renews the pursuit in the heat of anger, and overtakes the offender again with death. By this practice capital inflictions are multiplied, and crimes, very different in their degrees of enormity, are equally subjected to the severest punishment that man has the power of exercising upon man.

The lawgiver is undoubtedly allowed to estimate the malignity of an offence, not merely by the loss or pain which single acts may produce, but by the general alarm and anxiety arising from the fear of mischief, and insecurity of possession: he therefore exercises the right which societies are supposed to have over the lives of those that compose them, not simply to punish a transgression, but to maintain order, and preserve quiet; he enforces those laws with severity, that are most in danger of violation, as the commander of a garrison doubles the guard on that side which is threatened by the enemy.

This method has been long tried, but tried with so little success, that rapine and violence are hourly increasing, yet few seem willing to despair of its efficacy; and of those who employ their speculations upon the present corruption of the people, some propose the introduction of more horrid, lingering, and terrifick punishments; some are inclined to accelerate the executions; some to discourage pardons; and all seem to think

that lenity has given confidence to wickedness, and that we can only be rescued from the talons of robbery by inflexible rigour, and sanguinary justice.

Yet, since the right of setting an uncertain and arbitrary value upon life has been disputed, and since experience of past times gives us little reason to hope that any reformation will be effected by a periodical havock of our fellow-beings, perhaps it will not be useless to consider what consequences might arise from relaxations of the law, and a more rational and equitable adaptation of penalties to offences.

Death is, as one of the ancients observes, [Greek: to ton phoberon phoberotaton], *of dreadful things the most dreadful*: an evil, beyond which nothing can be threatened by sublunary power, or feared from human enmity or vengeance. This terrour should, therefore, be reserved as the last resort of authority, as the strongest and most operative of prohibitory sanctions, and placed before the treasure of life, to guard from invasion what cannot be restored. To equal robbery with murder is to reduce murder to robbery; to confound in common minds the gradations of iniquity, and incite the commission of a greater crime to prevent the detection of a less. If only murder were punished with death, very few robbers would stain their hands in blood; but when, by the last act of cruelty, no new danger is incurred, and greater security may be obtained, upon what principle shall we bid them forbear?

It may be urged, that the sentence is often mitigated to

simple robbery; but surely this is to confess that our laws are unreasonable in our own opinion; and, indeed, it may be observed, that all but murderers have, at their last hour, the common sensations of mankind pleading in their favour.

From this conviction of the inequality of the punishment to the offence, proceeds the frequent solicitation of pardons. They who would rejoice at the correction of a thief, are yet shocked at the thought of destroying him. His crime shrinks to nothing, compared with his misery; and severity defeats itself by exciting pity.

The gibbet, indeed, certainly disables those who die upon it from infesting the community; but their death seems not to contribute more to the reformation of their associates, than any other method of separation. A thief seldom passes much of his time in recollection or anticipation, but from robbery hastens to riot, and from riot to robbery; nor, when the grave closes on his companion, has any other care than to find another.

The frequency of capital punishments, therefore, rarely hinders the commission of a crime, but naturally and commonly prevents its detection, and is, if we proceed only upon prudential principles, chiefly for that reason to be avoided. Whatever may be urged by casuists or politicians, the greater part of mankind, as they can never think that to pick the pocket and to pierce the heart is equally criminal, will scarcely believe that two malefactors so different in guilt can be justly doomed to the same punishment: nor is the necessity of submitting the conscience to human laws

so plainly evinced, so clearly stated, or so generally allowed, but that the pious, the tender, and the just, will always scruple to concur with the community in an act which their private judgment cannot approve.

He who knows not how often rigorous laws produce total impunity, and how many crimes are concealed and forgotten for fear of hurrying the offender to that state in which there is no repentance, has conversed very little with mankind. And whatever epithets of reproach or contempt this compassion may incur from those who confound cruelty with firmness, I know not whether any wise man would wish it less powerful, or less extensive.

If those whom the wisdom of our laws has condemned to die, had been detected in their rudiments of robbery, they might, by proper discipline and useful labour, have been disentangled from their habits, they might have escaped all the temptation to subsequent crimes, and passed their days in reparation and penitence; and detected they might all have been, had the prosecutors been certain that their lives would have been spared. I believe, every thief will confess, that he has been more than once seized and dismissed; and that he has sometimes ventured upon capital crimes, because he knew, that those whom he injured would rather connive at his escape, than cloud their minds with the horrors of his death.

All laws against wickedness are ineffectual, unless some will inform, and some will prosecute; but till we mitigate the penalties

for mere violations of property, information will always be hated, and prosecution dreaded. The heart of a good man cannot but recoil at the thought of punishing a slight injury with death; especially when he remembers that the thief might have procured safety by another crime, from which he was restrained only by his remaining virtue.

The obligations to assist the exercise of publick justice are indeed strong; but they will certainly be overpowered by tenderness for life. What is punished with severity contrary to our ideas of adequate retribution, will be seldom discovered; and multitudes will be suffered to advance from crime to crime, till they deserve death, because, if they had been sooner prosecuted, they would have suffered death before they deserved it.

This scheme of invigorating the laws by relaxation, and extirpating wickedness by lenity, is so remote from common practice, that I might reasonably fear to expose it to the publick, could it be supported only by my own observations: I shall, therefore, by ascribing it to its author, Sir Thomas More, endeavour to procure it that attention, which I wish always paid to prudence, to justice, and to mercy.³

³ The arguments of the revered Sir Samuel Romilly on Criminal Law, have almost been anticipated in this luminous paper, which would have gained praise even for a legislator. On the correction of our English Criminal Code, see Mr. Buxton's speech in the House of Commons, 1820. It is a fund of practical information, and, apart from its own merits, will repay perusal by the valuable collection of opinions which it contains on this momentous and interesting subject. ED.

No. 115. TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 1751

Quaedam parvu quidem; sed non toleranda maritis.
JUV. Sat vi. 184.

Some faults, though small, intolerable grow.
DRYDEN.

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR,

I sit down, in pursuance of my late engagement, to recount the remaining part of the adventures that befel me in my long quest of conjugal felicity, which, though I have not yet been so happy as to obtain it, I have at least endeavoured to deserve by unwearied diligence, without suffering from repeated disappointments any abatement of my hope, or repression of my activity.

You must have observed in the world a species of mortals who employ themselves in promoting matrimony, and without any visible motive of interest or vanity, without any discoverable impulse of malice or benevolence, without any reason, but that they want objects of attention and topicks of conversation, are incessantly busy in procuring wives and husbands. They fill the ears of every single man and woman with some convenient match; and when they are informed of your age and fortune, offer a partner for life with the same readiness, and the same indifference, as a salesman, when he has taken measure by his

eye, fits his customer with a coat.

It might be expected that they should soon be discouraged from this officious interposition by resentment or contempt; and that every man should determine the choice on which so much of his happiness must depend, by his own judgment and observation: yet it happens, that as these proposals are generally made with a shew of kindness, they seldom provoke anger, but are at worst heard with patience, and forgotten. They influence weak minds to approbation; for many are sure to find in a new acquaintance, whatever qualities report has taught them to expect; and in more powerful and active understandings they excite curiosity, and sometimes, by a lucky chance, bring persons of similar tempers within the attraction of each other.

I was known to possess a fortune, and to want a wife; and therefore was frequently attended by these hymeneal solicitors, with whose importunity I was sometimes diverted, and sometimes perplexed; for they contended for me as vultures for a carcase; each employing all his eloquence, and all his artifices, to enforce and promote his own scheme, from the success of which he was to receive no other advantage than the pleasure of defeating others equally eager, and equally industrious.

An invitation to sup with one of those busy friends, made me, by a concerted chance, acquainted with Camilla, by whom it was expected that I should be suddenly and irresistibly enslaved. The lady, whom the same kindness had brought without her own concurrence into the lists of love, seemed to think me at

least worthy of the honour of captivity; and exerted the power, both of her eyes and wit, with so much art and spirit, that though I had been too often deceived by appearances to devote myself irrevocably at the first interview, yet I could not suppress some raptures of admiration, and flutters of desire. I was easily persuaded to make nearer approaches; but soon discovered, that an union with Camilla was not much to be wished. Camilla professed a boundless contempt for the folly, levity, ignorance, and impertinence of her own sex; and very frequently expressed her wonder that men of learning or experience could submit to trifle away life with beings incapable of solid thought. In mixed companies, she always associated with the men, and declared her satisfaction when the ladies retired. If any short excursion into the country was proposed, she commonly insisted upon the exclusion of women from the party; because, where they were admitted, the time was wasted in frothy compliments, weak indulgences, and idle ceremonies. To shew the greatness of her mind, she avoided all compliance with the fashion; and to boast the profundity of her knowledge, mistook the various textures of silk, confounded tabbies with damasks, and sent for ribands by wrong names. She despised the commerce of stated visits, a farce of empty form without instruction; and congratulated herself, that she never learned to write message cards. She often applauded the noble sentiment of Plato, who rejoiced that he was born a man rather than a woman; proclaimed her approbation of Swift's opinion, that women are only a higher species of

monkeys; and confessed, that when she considered the behaviour, or heard the conversation, of her sex, she could not but forgive the Turks for suspecting them to want souls.

It was the joy and pride of Camilla to have provoked, by this insolence, all the rage of hatred, and all the persecutions of calumny; nor was she ever more elevated with her own superiority, than when she talked of female anger, and female cunning. Well, says she, has nature provided that such virulence should be disabled by folly, and such cruelty be restrained by impotence.

Camilla doubtless expected, that what she lost on one side, she should gain on the other; and imagined that every male heart would be open to a lady, who made such generous advances to the borders of virility. But man, ungrateful man, instead of springing forward to meet her, shrunk back at her approach. She was persecuted by the ladies as a deserter, and at best received by the men only as a fugitive. I, for my part, amused myself awhile with her fopperies, but novelty soon gave way to detestation, for nothing out of the common order of nature can be long borne. I had no inclination to a wife who had the ruggedness of a man without his force, and the ignorance of a woman without her softness; nor could I think my quiet and honour to be entrusted to such audacious virtue as was hourly courting danger, and soliciting assault.

My next mistress was Nitella, a lady of gentle mien, and soft voice, always speaking to approve, and ready to receive

direction from those with whom chance had brought her into company. In Nitella I promised myself an easy friend, with whom I might loiter away the day without disturbance or altercation. I therefore soon resolved to address her, but was discouraged from prosecuting my courtship, by observing, that her apartments were superstitiously regular; and that, unless she had notice of my visit, she was never to be seen. There is a kind of anxious cleanliness which I have always noted as the characteristick of a slattern; it is the superfluous scrupulosity of guilt, dreading discovery, and shunning suspicion: it is the violence of an effort against habit, which, being impelled by external motives, cannot stop at the middle point.

Nitella was always tricked out rather with nicety than elegance; and seldom could forbear to discover, by her uneasiness and constraint, that her attention was burdened, and her imagination engrossed: I therefore concluded, that being only occasionally and ambitiously dressed, she was not familiarized to her own ornaments. There are so many competitors for the fame of cleanliness, that it is not hard to gain information of those that fail, from those that desire to excel: I quickly found that Nitella passed her time between finery and dirt; and was always in a wrapper, night-cap, and slippers, when she was not decorated for immediate show.

I was then led by my evil destiny to Charybdis, who never neglected an opportunity of seizing a new prey when it came within her reach. I thought myself quickly made happy by

permission to attend her to publick places; and pleased my own vanity with imagining the envy which I should raise in a thousand hearts, by appearing as the acknowledged favourite of Charybdis. She soon after hinted her intention to take a ramble for a fortnight, into a part of the kingdom which she had never seen. I solicited the happiness of accompanying her, which, after a short reluctance, was indulged me. She had no other curiosity on her journey, than after all possible means of expense; and was every moment taking occasion to mention some delicacy, which I knew it my duty upon such notices to procure.

After our return, being now more familiar, she told me, whenever we met, of some new diversion; at night she had notice of a charming company that would breakfast in the gardens; and in the morning had been informed of some new song in the opera, some new dress at the playhouse, or some performer at a concert whom she longed to hear. Her intelligence was such, that there never was a show, to which she did not summon me on the second day; and as she hated a crowd, and could not go alone, I was obliged to attend at some intermediate hour, and pay the price of a whole company. When we passed the streets, she was often charmed with some trinket in the toy-shops; and from moderate desires of seals and snuff-boxes, rose, by degrees, to gold and diamonds. I now began to find the smile of Charybdis too costly for a private purse, and added one more to six and forty lovers, whose fortune and patience her rapacity had exhausted.

Imperia then took possession of my affections; but kept them

only for a short time. She had newly inherited a large fortune, and having spent the early part of her life in the perusal of romances, brought with her into the gay world all the pride of Cleopatra; expected nothing less than vows, altars, and sacrifices; and thought her charms dishonoured, and her power infringed, by the softest opposition to her sentiments, or the smallest transgression of her commands. Time might indeed cure this species of pride in a mind not naturally undiscerning, and vitiated only by false representations; but the operations of time are slow; and I therefore left her to grow wise at leisure, or to continue in error at her own expense.

Thus I have hitherto, in spite of myself, passed my life in frozen celibacy. My friends, indeed, often tell me, that I flatter my imagination with higher hopes than human nature can gratify; that I dress up an ideal charmer in all the radiance of perfection, and then enter the world to look for the same excellence in corporeal beauty. But surely, Mr. Rambler, it is not madness to hope for some terrestrial lady unstained by the spots which I have been describing; at least I am resolved to pursue my search; for I am so far from thinking meanly of marriage, that I believe it able to afford the highest happiness decreed to our present state; and if, after all these miscarriages, I find a woman that fills up my expectation, you shall hear once more from,

Yours, &c.

HYMENAEUS.

No. 116. SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 1751

*Optat ephippia bos piger: optat arare caballus.
HOR. Lib. i. Ep. xiv. 43.*

*Thus the slow ox would gaudy trappings claim;
The sprightly horse would plough.—FRANCIS.*

TO THE RAMBLER. SIR,

I was the second son of a country gentleman by the daughter of a wealthy citizen of London. My father having by his marriage freed the estate from a heavy mortgage, and paid his sisters their portions, thought himself discharged from all obligation to further thought, and entitled to spend the rest of his life in rural pleasures. He therefore spared nothing that might contribute to the completion of his felicity; he procured the best guns and horses that the kingdom could supply, paid large salaries to his groom and huntsman, and became the envy of the country for the discipline of his hounds. But, above all his other attainments, he was eminent for a breed of pointers and setting-dogs, which by long and vigilant cultivation he had so much improved, that not a partridge or heathcock could rest in security, and game of

whatever species that dared to light upon his manor, was beaten down by his shot, or covered with his nets.

My elder brother was very early initiated in the chace, and, at an age when other boys are *creeping like snails unwillingly to school*, he could wind the horn, beat the bushes, bound over hedges, and swim rivers. When the huntsman one day broke his leg, he supplied his place with equal abilities, and came home with the scut in his hat, amidst the acclamations of the whole village. I being either delicate or timorous, less desirous of honour, or less capable of sylvan heroism, was always the favourite of my mother; because I kept my coat clean, and my complexion free from freckles, and did not come home, like my brother, mired and tanned, nor carry corn in my hat to the horse, nor bring dirty curs into the parlour.

My mother had not been taught to amuse herself with books, and being much inclined to despise the ignorance and barbarity of the country ladies, disdained to learn their sentiments or conversation, and had made no addition to the notions which she had brought from the precincts of Cornhill. She was, therefore, always recounting the glories of the city; enumerating the succession of mayors; celebrating the magnificence of the banquets at Guildhall; and relating the civilities paid her at the companies' feasts by men of whom some are now made aldermen, some have fined for sheriffs, and none are worth less than forty thousand pounds. She frequently displayed her father's greatness; told of the large bills which he had paid at sight; of

the sums for which his word would pass upon the Exchange; the heaps of gold which he used on Saturday night to toss about with a shovel; the extent of his warehouse, and the strength of his doors; and when she relaxed her imagination with lower subjects, described the furniture of their country-house, or repeated the wit of the clerks and porters.

By these narratives I was fired with the splendour and dignity of London, and of trade. I therefore devoted myself to a shop, and warmed my imagination from year to year with inquiries about the privileges of a freeman, the power of the common council, the dignity of a wholesale dealer, and the grandeur of mayoralty, to which my mother assured me that many had arrived who began the world with less than myself.

I was very impatient to enter into a path, which led to such honour and felicity; but was forced for a time to endure some repression of my eagerness, for it was my grandfather's maxim, that a *young man seldom makes much money, who is out of his time before two-and-twenty*. They thought it necessary, therefore, to keep me at home till the proper age, without any other employment than that of learning merchants' accounts, and the art of regulating books; but at length the tedious days elapsed, I was transplanted to town, and, with great satisfaction to myself, bound to a haberdasher.

My master, who had no conception of any virtue, merit, or dignity, but that of being rich, had all the good qualities which naturally arise from a close and unwearied attention to the main

chance; his desire to gain wealth was so well tempered by the vanity of shewing it, that without any other principle of action, he lived in the esteem of the whole commercial world; and was always treated with respect by the only men whose good opinion he valued or solicited, those who were universally allowed to be richer than himself.

By his instructions I learned in a few weeks to handle a yard with great dexterity, to wind tape neatly upon the ends of my fingers, and to make up parcels with exact frugality of paper and packthread; and soon caught from my fellow-apprentices the true grace of a counter-bow, the careless air with which a small pair of scales is to be held between the fingers, and the vigour and sprightliness with which the box, after the riband has been cut, is returned into its place. Having no desire of any higher employment, and therefore applying all my powers to the knowledge of my trade, I was quickly master of all that could be known, became a critick in small wares, contrived new variations of figures, and new mixtures of colours, and was sometimes consulted by the weavers when they projected fashions for the ensuing spring.

With all these accomplishments, in the fourth year of my apprenticeship, I paid a visit to my friends in the country, where I expected to be received as a new ornament of the family, and consulted by the neighbouring gentlemen as a master of pecuniary knowledge, and by the ladies as an oracle of the mode. But, unhappily, at the first publick table to which I was invited,

appeared a student of the Temple, and an officer of the guards, who looked upon me with a smile of contempt, which destroyed at once all my hopes of distinction, so that I durst hardly raise my eyes for fear of encountering their superiority of mien. Nor was my courage revived by any opportunities of displaying my knowledge; for the templar entertained the company for part of the day with historical narratives and political observations; and the colonel afterwards detailed the adventures of a birth-night, told the claims and expectations of the courtiers, and gave an account of assemblies, gardens, and diversions. I, indeed, essayed to fill up a pause in a parliamentary debate with a faint mention of trade and Spaniards; and once attempted, with some warmth, to correct a gross mistake about a silver breast-knot; but neither of my antagonists seemed to think a reply necessary; they resumed their discourse without emotion, and again engrossed the attention of the company; nor did one of the ladies appear desirous to know my opinion of her dress, or to hear how long the carnation shot with white, that was then new amongst them, had been antiquated in town.

As I knew that neither of these gentlemen had more money than myself, I could not discover what had depressed me in their presence; nor why they were considered by others as more worthy of attention and respect; and therefore resolved, when we met again, to rouse my spirit, and force myself into notice. I went very early to the next weekly meeting, and was entertaining a small circle very successfully with a minute representation of

my lord mayor's show, when the colonel entered careless and gay, sat down with a kind of unceremonious civility, and without appearing to intend any interruption, drew my audience away to the other part of the room, to which I had not the courage to follow them. Soon after came in the lawyer, not indeed with the same attraction of mien, but with greater powers of language: and by one or other the company was so happily amused, that I was neither heard nor seen, nor was able to give any other proof of my existence than that I put round the glass, and was in my turn permitted to name the toast.

My mother, indeed, endeavoured to comfort me in my vexation, by telling me, that perhaps these showy talkers were hardly able to pay every one his own; that he who has money in his pocket need not care what any man says of him; that, if I minded my trade, the time will come when lawyers and soldiers would be glad to borrow out of my purse; and that it is fine, when a man can set his hands to his sides, and say he is worth forty thousand pounds every day of the year. These and many more such consolations and encouragements, I received from my good mother, which, however, did not much allay my uneasiness; for having by some accident heard, that the country ladies despised her as a cit, I had therefore no longer much reverence for her opinions, but considered her as one whose ignorance and prejudice had hurried me, though without ill intentions, into a state of meanness and ignominy, from which I could not find any possibility of rising to the rank which my ancestors had always

held.

I returned, however, to my master, and busied myself among thread, and silks, and laces, but without my former cheerfulness and alacrity. I had now no longer any felicity in contemplating the exact disposition of my powdered curls, the equal plaits of my ruffles, or the glossy blackness of my shoes; nor heard with my former elevation those compliments which ladies sometimes condescended to pay me upon my readiness in twisting a paper, or counting out the change. The term of Young Man, with which I was sometimes honoured, as I carried a parcel to the door of a coach, tortured my imagination; I grew negligent of my person, and sullen in my temper; often mistook the demands of the customers, treated their caprices and objections with contempt, and received and dismissed them with surly silence.

My master was afraid lest the shop should suffer by this change of my behaviour; and, therefore, after some expostulations, posted me in the warehouse, and preserved me from the danger and reproach of desertion, to which my discontent would certainly have urged me, had I continued any longer behind the counter.

In the sixth year of my servitude my brother died of drunken joy, for having run down a fox that had baffled all the packs in the province. I was now heir, and with the hearty consent of my master commenced gentleman. The adventures in which my new character engaged me shall be communicated in another letter, by, Sir,

Yours, &c.

MISOCAPELUS.

No. 117. TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 1751

*[Greek: Hossan ep Oulumpo memasan Themen
autar ep Ossae*

Paelion einosiphullon, in ouranos ambatos eiae.]
HOMER, *Od.*

[Greek: L] 314.

*The gods they challenge, and affect the skies:
Heav'd on Olympus tot'ring Ossa stood;
On Ossa, Pelion nods with all his wood. POPE.*

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR,

Nothing has more retarded the advancement of learning than the disposition of vulgar minds to ridicule and vilify what they cannot comprehend. All industry must be excited by hope; and as the student often proposes no other reward to himself than praise, he is easily discouraged by contempt and insult. He who brings with him into a clamorous multitude the timidity of recluse speculation, and has never hardened his front in publick life, or accustomed his passions to the vicissitudes and accidents, the triumphs and defeats of mixed conversation, will blush at the stare of petulant incredulity, and suffer himself to be driven by

a burst of laughter, from the fortresses of demonstration. The mechanist will be afraid to assert before hardy contradiction, the possibility of tearing down bulwarks with a silk-worm's thread; and the astronomer of relating the rapidity of light, the distance of the fixed stars, and the height of the lunar mountains.

If I could by any efforts have shaken off this cowardice, I had not sheltered myself under a borrowed name, nor applied to you for the means of communicating to the publick the theory of a garret; a subject which, except some slight and transient strictures, has been hitherto neglected by those who were best qualified to adorn it, either for want of leisure to prosecute the various researches in which a nice discussion must engage them, or because it requires such diversity of knowledge, and such extent of curiosity, as is scarcely to be found in any single intellect: or perhaps others foresaw the tumults which would be raised against them, and confined their knowledge to their own breasts, and abandoned prejudice and folly to the direction of chance.

That the professors of literature generally reside in the highest stories, has been immemorially observed. The wisdom of the ancients was well acquainted with the intellectual advantages of an elevated situation: why else were the Muses stationed on Olympus or Parnassus, by those who could with equal right have raised them bowers in the vale of Tempe, or erected their altars among the flexures of Meander? Why was Jove himself nursed upon a mountain? or why did the goddesses,

when the prize of beauty was contested, try the cause upon the top of Ida? Such were the fictions by which the great masters of the earlier ages endeavoured to inculcate to posterity the importance of a garret, which, though they had been long obscured by the negligence and ignorance of succeeding times, were well enforced by the celebrated symbol of Pythagoras, [Greek: anemon pneonton taen aecho proskunei]; "when the wind blows, worship its echo." This could not but be understood by his disciples as an inviolable injunction to live in a garret, which I have found frequently visited by the echo and the wind. Nor was the tradition wholly obliterated in the age of Augustus, for Tibullus evidently congratulates himself upon his garret, not without some allusion to the Pythagorean precept:

*Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem—
Aut, gelidas hibernus aquas quum fuderit Auster,
Securum somnos imbre juvante sequi!* Lib. i. El. i. 45.

How sweet in sleep to pass the careless hours,
Lull'd by the beating winds and dashing show'rs!

And it is impossible not to discover the fondness of Lucretius, an earlier writer, for a garret, in his description of the lofty towers of serene learning, and of the pleasure with which a wise man looks down upon the confused and erratick state of the world moving below him:

*Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrina Sapientum templa serena;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palanteis quaerere vitae.* Lib. ii. 7.

—'Tis sweet thy lab'ring steps to guide
To virtue's heights, with wisdom well supplied,
And all the magazines of learning fortified:
From thence to look below on human kind,
Bewilder'd in the maze of life, and blind. DRYDEN.

The institution has, indeed, continued to our own time; the garret is still the usual receptacle of the philosopher and poet; but this, like many ancient customs, is perpetuated only by an accidental imitation, without knowledge of the original reason for which it was established.

Causa latet; res est notissima.

The cause is secret, but th' effect is known. ADDISON.

Conjectures have, indeed, been advanced concerning these habitations of literature, but without much satisfaction to the judicious inquirer. Some have imagined, that the garret is generally chosen by the wits as most easily rented; and concluded that no man rejoices in his aerial abode, but on the days of payment. Others suspect, that a garret is chiefly convenient, as it is remoter than any other part of the house from the

outer door, which is often observed to be infested by visitants, who talk incessantly of beer, or linen, or a coat, and repeat the same sounds every morning, and sometimes again in the afternoon, without any variation, except that they grow daily more importunate and clamorous, and raise their voices in time from mournful murmurs to raging vociferations. This eternal monotony is always detestable to a man whose chief pleasure is to enlarge his knowledge, and vary his ideas. Others talk of freedom from noise, and abstraction from common business or amusements; and some, yet more visionary, tell us, that the faculties are enlarged by open prospects, and that the fancy is at more liberty, when the eye ranges without confinement.

These conveniences may perhaps all be found in a well-chosen garret; but surely they cannot be supposed sufficiently important to have operated unvariably upon different climates, distant ages, and separate nations. Of an universal practice, there must still be presumed an universal cause, which, however recondite and abstruse, may be perhaps reserved to make me illustrious by its discovery, and you by its promulgation.

It is universally known that the faculties of the mind are invigorated or weakened by the state of the body, and that the body is in a great measure regulated by the various compressions of the ambient element. The effects of the air in the production or cure of corporeal maladies have been acknowledged from the time of Hippocrates; but no man has yet sufficiently considered how far it may influence the operations of the genius, though

every day affords instances of local understanding, of wits and reasoners, whose faculties are adapted to some single spot, and who, when they are removed to any other place, sink at once into silence and stupidity. I have discovered, by a long series of observations, that invention and elocution suffer great impediments from dense and impure vapours, and that the tenuity of a defecated air at a proper distance from the surface of the earth, accelerates the fancy, and sets at liberty those intellectual powers which were before shackled by too strong attraction, and unable to expand themselves under the pressure of a gross atmosphere. I have found dulness to quicken into sentiment in a thin ether, as water, though not very hot, boils in a receiver partly exhausted; and heads, in appearance empty, have teemed with notions upon rising ground, as the flaccid sides of a football would have swelled out into stiffness and extension.

For this reason I never think myself qualified to judge decisively of any man's faculties, whom I have only known in one degree of elevation; but take some opportunity of attending him from the cellar to the garret, and try upon him all the various degrees of rarefaction and condensation, tension and laxity. If he is neither vivacious aloft, nor serious below, I then consider him as hopeless; but as it seldom happens, that I do not find the temper to which the texture of his brain is fitted, I accommodate him in time with a tube of mercury, first marking the points most favourable to his intellects, according to rules which I have long studied, and which I may, perhaps, reveal to mankind in a

complete treatise of barometrical pneumatology.

Another cause of the gaiety and sprightliness of the dwellers in garrets is probably the increase of that vertiginous motion, with which we are carried round by the diurnal revolution of the earth. The power of agitation upon the spirits is well known; every man has felt his heart lightened in a rapid vehicle, or on a galloping horse; and nothing is plainer, than that he who towers to the fifth story, is whirled through more space by every circumrotation, than another that grovels upon the ground-floor. The nations between the topicks are known to be fiery, inconstant, inventive, and fanciful; because, living at the utmost length of the earth's diameter, they are carried about with more swiftness than those whom nature has placed nearer to the poles; and therefore, as it becomes a wise man to struggle with the inconveniencies of his country, whenever celerity and acuteness are requisite, we must actuate our languor by taking a few turns round the centre in a garret.

If you imagine that I ascribe to air and motion effects which they cannot produce, I desire you to consult your own memory, and consider whether you have never known a man acquire reputation in his garret, which, when fortune or a patron had placed him upon the first floor, he was unable to maintain; and who never recovered his former vigour of understanding, till he was restored to his original situation. That a garret will make every man a wit, I am very far from supposing; I know there are some who would continue blockheads even on the summit

of the Andes, or on the peak of Teneriffe. But let not any man be considered as unimprovable till this potent remedy has been tried; for perhaps he was formed to be great only in a garret, as the joiner of Aretaeus was rational in no other place but his own shop.

I think a frequent removal to various distances from the centre, so necessary to a just estimate of intellectual abilities, and consequently of so great use in education, that if I hoped that the publick could be persuaded to so expensive an experiment, I would propose, that there should be a cavern dug, and a tower erected, like those which Bacon describes in Solomon's house, for the expansion and concentration of understanding, according to the exigence of different employments, or constitutions. Perhaps some that fume away in meditations upon time and space in the tower, might compose tables of interest at a certain depth; and he that upon level ground stagnates in silence, or creeps in narrative, might at the height of half a mile, ferment into merriment, sparkle with repartee, and froth with declamation.

Addison observes, that we may find the heat of Virgil's climate, in some lines of his Georgick: so, when I read a composition, I immediately determine the height of the author's habitation. As an elaborate performance is commonly said to smell of the lamp, my commendation of a noble thought, a sprightly sally, or a bold figure, is to pronounce it fresh from the garret; an expression which would break from me upon the perusal of most of your papers, did I not believe, that you

sometimes quit the garret, and ascend into the cock-loft.

HYPERTATUS.

No. 118. SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1751

—*Omnes illacrymabiles*
Urgentur, ignotique longâ

Nocte. Hon. Lib. iv. Ode ix. 26.

In endless night they sleep, unwept, unknown.
FRANCIS.

Cicero has, with his usual elegance and magnificence of language, attempted, in his relation of the dream of Scipio, to deprecate those honours for which he himself appears to have panted with restless solicitude, by shewing within what narrow limits all that fame and celebrity which man can hope for from men is circumscribed.

"You see," says Africanus, pointing at the earth, from the celestial regions, "that the globe assigned to the residence and habitation of human beings is of small dimensions: how then can you obtain from the praise of men, any glory worthy of a wish? Of this little world the inhabited parts are neither numerous nor wide; even the spots where men are to be found are broken by intervening deserts, and the nations are so separated as that nothing can be transmitted from one to another. With the people of the south, by whom the opposite part of the earth is possessed, you have no intercourse; and by how small a tract do

you communicate with the countries of the north? The territory which you inhabit is no more than a scanty island, inclosed by a small body of water, to which you give the name of the great sea and the Atlantick ocean. And even in this known and frequented continent, what hope can you entertain, that your renown will pass the stream of Ganges, or the cliffs of Caucasus? or by whom will your name be uttered in the extremities of the north or south, towards the rising or the setting sun? So narrow is the space to which your fame can be propagated; and even there how long will it remain?"

He then proceeds to assign natural causes why fame is not only narrow in its extent, but short in its duration; he observes the difference between the computation of time in earth and heaven, and declares, that according to the celestial chronology, no human honours can last a single year.

Such are the objections by which Tully has made a shew of discouraging the pursuit of fame; objections which sufficiently discover his tenderness and regard for his darling phantom. Homer, when the plan of his poem made the death of Patroclus necessary, resolved, at least, that he should die with honour; and therefore brought down against him the patron god of Troy, and left to Hector only the mean task of giving the last blow to an enemy whom a divine hand had disabled from resistance. Thus Tully ennobles fame, which he professes to degrade, by opposing it to celestial happiness; he confines not its extent but by the boundaries of nature, nor contracts its duration but by

representing it small in the estimation of superior beings. He still admits it the highest and noblest of terrestrial objects, and alleges little more against it, than that it is neither without end, nor without limits.

What might be the effect of these observations conveyed in Ciceronian eloquence to Roman understandings, cannot be determined; but few of those who shall in the present age read my humble version will find themselves much depressed in their hopes, or retarded in their designs; for I am not inclined to believe, that they who among us pass their lives in the cultivation of knowledge, or acquisition of power, have very anxiously inquired what opinions prevail on the further banks of the Ganges, or invigorated any effort by the desire of spreading their renown among the clans of Caucasus. The hopes and fears of modern minds are content to range in a narrower compass; a single nation, and a few years, have generally sufficient amplitude to fill our imaginations.

A little consideration will indeed teach us, that fame has other limits than mountains and oceans; and that he who places happiness in the frequent repetition of his name, may spend his life in propagating it, without any danger of weeping for new worlds, or necessity of passing the Atlantick sea.

The numbers to whom any real and perceptible good or evil can be derived by the greatest power, or most active diligence, are inconsiderable; and where neither benefit nor mischief operate, the only motive to the mention or remembrance of others is

curiosity; a passion, which, though in some degree universally associated to reason, is easily confined, overborne, or diverted from any particular object.

Among the lower classes of mankind, there will be found very little desire of any other knowledge, than what may contribute immediately to the relief of some pressing uneasiness, or the attainment of some near advantage. The Turks are said to hear with wonder a proposal to walk out, only that they may walk back; and inquire why any man should labour for nothing: so those whose condition has always restrained them to the contemplation of their own necessities, and who have been accustomed to look forward only to a small distance, will scarcely understand, why nights and days should be spent in studies, which end in new studies, and which, according to Malherbe's observation, do not tend to lessen the price of bread; nor will the trader or manufacturer easily be persuaded, that much pleasure can arise from the mere knowledge of actions, performed in remote regions, or in distant times; or that any thing can deserve their inquiry, of which, [Greek: *kleos oion akouomen, oide ti idmen*], we can only hear the report, but which cannot influence our lives by any consequences.

The truth is, that very few have leisure from indispensable business, to employ their thoughts upon narrative or characters; and among those to whom fortune has given the liberty of living more by their own choice, many create to themselves engagements, by the indulgence of some petty ambition, the

admission of some insatiable desire, or the toleration of some predominant passion. The man whose whole wish is to accumulate money, has no other care than to collect interest, to estimate securities, and to engage for mortgages: the lover disdains to turn his ear to any other name than that of Corinna, and the courtier thinks the hour lost which is not spent in promoting his interest, and facilitating his advancement. The adventures of valour, and the discoveries of science, will find a cold reception, when they are obtruded upon an attention thus busy with its favourite amusement, and impatient of interruption or disturbance.

But not only such employments as seduce attention by appearances of dignity, or promises of happiness, may restrain the mind from excursion and inquiry; curiosity may be equally destroyed by less formidable enemies; it may be dissipated in trifles, or congealed by indolence. The sportsman and the man of dress have their heads filled with a fox or a horse-race, a feather or a ball; and live in ignorance of every thing beside, with as much content as he that heaps up gold, or solicits preferment, digs the field, or beats the anvil; and some yet lower in the ranks of intellect, dream out their days without pleasure or business, without joy or sorrow, nor ever rouse from their lethargy to hear or think.

Even of those who have dedicated themselves to knowledge, the far greater part have confined their curiosity to a few objects, and have very little inclination to promote any fame,

but that which their own studies entitle them to partake. The naturalist has no desire to know the opinions or conjectures of the philologer: the botanist looks upon the astronomer as a being unworthy of his regard: the lawyer scarcely hears the name of a physician without contempt; and he that is growing great and happy by electrifying a bottle, wonders how the world can be engaged by trifling prattle about war or peace.

If, therefore, he that imagines the world filled with his actions and praises, shall subduct from the number of his encomiasts, all those who are placed below the flight of fame, and who hear in the valleys of life no voice but that of necessity; all those who imagine themselves too important to regard him, and consider the mention of his name as an usurpation of their time; all who are too much or too little pleased with themselves, to attend to any thing external; all who are attracted by pleasure, or chained down by pain, to unvaried ideas; all who are withheld from attending his triumph by different pursuits; and all who slumber in universal negligence; he will find his renown straitened by nearer bounds than the rocks of Caucasus, and perceive that no man can be venerable or formidable, but to a small part of his fellow-creatures.

That we may not languish in our endeavours after excellence, it is necessary, that, as Africanus counsels his descendant, "we raise our eyes to higher prospects, and contemplate our future and eternal state, without giving up our hearts to the praise of crowds, or fixing our hopes on such rewards as human power can

bestow."

No. 119. TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1751

*Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra. HOR. Lib. i. Ep.
ii, 16.*

*Faults lay on either side the Trojan tow'rs.
ELPHINSTON.*

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR,

As, notwithstanding all that wit, or malice, or pride, or prudence will be able to suggest, men and women must at last pass their lives together, I have never therefore thought those writers friends to human happiness, who endeavour to excite in either sex a general contempt or suspicion of the other. To persuade them who are entering the world, and looking abroad for a suitable associate, that all are equally vicious, or equally ridiculous; that they who trust are certainly betrayed, and they who esteem are always disappointed; is not to awaken judgment, but to inflame temerity. Without hope there can be no caution. Those who are convinced, that no reason for preference can be found, will never harass their thoughts with doubt and deliberation; they will resolve, since they are doomed to misery, that no needless anxiety shall disturb their quiet; they will plunge at hazard into the crowd, and snatch the first hand that shall be held toward them.

That the world is over-run with vice, cannot be denied; but vice, however predominant, has not yet gained an unlimited dominion. Simple and unmingled good is not in our power, but we may generally escape a greater evil by suffering a less; and therefore, those who undertake to initiate the young and ignorant in the knowledge of life, should be careful to inculcate the possibility of virtue and happiness, and to encourage endeavours by prospects of success.

You, perhaps, do not suspect, that these are the sentiments of one who has been subject for many years to all the hardships of antiquated virginity; has been long accustomed to the coldness of neglect, and the petulance of insult; has been mortified in full assemblies by inquiries after forgotten fashions, games long disused, and wits and beauties of ancient renown; has been invited, with malicious importunity, to the second wedding of many acquaintances; has been ridiculed by two generations of coquets in whispers intended to be heard; and been long considered by the airy and gay, as too venerable for familiarity, and too wise for pleasure. It is indeed natural for injury to provoke anger, and by continual repetition to produce an habitual asperity; yet I have hitherto struggled with so much vigilance against my pride and my resentment, that I have preserved my temper uncorrupted. I have not yet made it any part of my employment to collect sentences against marriage; nor am inclined to lessen the number of the few friends whom time has left me, by obstructing that happiness which I cannot partake,

and venting my vexation in censures of the forwardness and indiscretion of girls, or the inconstancy, tastelessness, and perfidy of men.

It is, indeed, not very difficult to bear that condition to which we are not condemned by necessity, but induced by observation and choice; and therefore I, perhaps, have never yet felt all the malignity with which a reproach, edged with the appellation of old maid, swells some of those hearts in which it is infixed. I was not condemned in my youth to solitude, either by indigence or deformity, nor passed the earlier part of life without the flattery of courtship, and the joys of triumph. I have danced the round of gaiety amidst the murmurs of envy, and gratulations of applause; been attended from pleasure to pleasure by the great, the sprightly, and the vain; and seen my regard solicited by the obsequiousness of gallantry, the gaiety of wit, and the timidity of love. If, therefore, I am yet a stranger to nuptial happiness, I suffer only the consequences of my own resolves, and can look back upon the succession of lovers, whose addresses I have rejected, without grief, and without malice.

When my name first began to be inscribed upon glasses, I was honoured with the amorous professions of the gay Venustulus, a gentleman, who, being the only son of a wealthy family, had been educated in all the wantonness of expense, and softness of effeminacy. He was beautiful in his person, and easy in his address, and, therefore, soon gained upon my eye at an age when the sight is very little over-ruled by the understanding. He

had not any power in himself of gladdening or amusing; but supplied his want of conversation by treats and diversions; and his chief art of courtship was to fill the mind of his mistress with parties, rambles, musick, and shows. We were often engaged in short excursions to gardens and seats, and I was for a while pleased with the care which Venustulus discovered in securing me from any appearance of danger, or possibility of mischance. He never failed to recommend caution to his coachman, or to promise the waterman a reward if he landed us safe; and always contrived to return by daylight, for fear of robbers. This extraordinary solicitude was represented for a time as the effect of his tenderness for me; but fear is too strong for continued hypocrisy. I soon discovered that Venustulus had the cowardice as well as elegance of a female. His imagination was perpetually clouded with terrors, and he could scarcely refrain from screams and outcries at any accidental surprise. He durst not enter a room if a rat was heard behind the wainscot, nor cross a field where the cattle were frisking in the sunshine; the least breeze that waved upon the river was a storm, and every clamour in the street was a cry of fire. I have seen him lose his colour when my squirrel had broke his chain; and was forced to throw water in his face on the sudden entrance of a black cat. Compassion once obliged me to drive away with my fan, a beetle that kept him in distress, and chide off a dog that yelped at his heels, to which he would gladly have given up me to facilitate his own escape. Women naturally expect defence and protection from a lover or a husband, and,

therefore, you will not think me culpable in refusing a wretch, who would have burdened life with unnecessary fears, and flown to me for that succour which it was his duty to have given.

My next lover was Fungoso, the son of a stockjobber, whose visits my friends, by the importunity of persuasion, prevailed upon me to allow. Fungoso was no very suitable companion; for having been bred in a counting-house, he spoke a language unintelligible in any other place. He had no desire of any reputation but that of an acute prognosticator of the changes in the funds; nor had any means of raising merriment, but by telling how somebody was overreached in a bargain by his father. He was, however, a youth of great sobriety and prudence, and frequently informed us how carefully he would improve my fortune. I was not in haste to conclude the match, but was so much awed by my parents, that I durst not dismiss him, and might, perhaps, have been doomed for ever to the grossness of pedlary, and the jargon of usury, had not a fraud been discovered in the settlement, which set me free from the persecution of grovelling pride, and pecuniary impudence. I was afterwards six months without any particular notice but at last became the idol of the glittering Flosculus, who prescribed the mode of embroidery to all the fops of his time, and varied at pleasure the cock of every hat, and the sleeve of every coat that appeared in fashionable assemblies. Flosculus made some impression upon my heart by a compliment which few ladies can hear without emotion; he commended my skill in dress, my judgment in

suiting colours, and my art in disposing ornaments. But Flosculus was too much engaged by his own elegance, to be sufficiently attentive to the duties of a lover, or to please with varied praise an ear made delicate by riot of adulation. He expected to be repaid part of his tribute, and staid away three days, because I neglected to take notice of a new coat. I quickly found, that Flosculus was rather a rival than an admirer; and that we should probably live in a perpetual struggle of emulous finery, and spend our lives in stratagems to be first in the fashion.

I had soon after the honour at a feast of attracting the eyes of Dentatus, one of those human beings whose only happiness is to dine. Dentatus regaled me with foreign varieties, told me of measures that he had laid for procuring the best cook in France, and entertained me with bills of fare, prescribed the arrangement of dishes, and taught me two sauces invented by himself. At length, such is the uncertainty of human happiness, I declared my opinion too hastily upon a pie made under his own direction; after which he grew so cold and negligent, that he was easily dismissed.

Many other lovers, or pretended lovers, I have had the honour to lead awhile in triumph. But two of them I drove from me, by discovering that they had no taste or knowledge in musick; three I dismissed, because they were drunkards; two, because they paid their addresses at the same time to other ladies; and six, because they attempted to influence my choice by bribing my maid. Two more I discarded at the second visit for obscene

allusions; and five for drollery on religion. In the latter part of my reign, I sentenced two to perpetual exile, for offering me settlements, by which the children of a former marriage would have been injured; four, for representing falsely the value of their estates; three for concealing their debts; and one, for raising the rent of a decrepit tenant.

I have now sent you a narrative, which the ladies may oppose, to the tale of Hymenaeus. I mean not to depreciate the sex which has produced poets and philosophers, heroes and martyrs; but will not suffer the rising generation of beauties to be dejected by partial satire; or to imagine that those who censured them have not likewise their follies, and their vices. I do not yet believe happiness unattainable in marriage, though I have never yet been able to find a man, with whom I could prudently venture an inseparable union. It is necessary to expose faults, that their deformity may be seen; but the reproach ought not to be extended beyond the crime, nor either sex to be contemned, because some women, or men, are indelicate or dishonest.

I am, &c.

TRANQUILLA.

No. 120. SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1751

*Redditum Cyri solio Phraaten.
Dissidens plebi, numero beatorum
Eiimit virtus, populumque falsis
Dedocet uti
Vocibus.—HOR. Lib. ii. Od. ii. 17.*

*True virtue can the crowd unteach
Their false mistaken forms of speech;
Virtue, to crowds a foe profess,
Disdains to number with the blest
Phraates, by his slaves ador'd,
And to the Parthian crown restor'd. FRANCIS.*

In the reign of Jenghiz Can, conqueror of the east, in the city of Samarcand, lived Nouradin the merchant, renowned throughout all the regions of India, for the extent of his commerce, and the integrity of his dealings. His warehouses were filled with all the commodities of the remotest nations; every rarity of nature, every curiosity of art, whatever was valuable, whatever was useful, hasted to his hand. The streets were crowded with his carriages; the sea was covered with his ships; the streams of Oxus were wearied with conveyance, and every breeze of the sky wafted wealth to Nouradin.

At length Nouradin felt himself seized with a slow malady, which he first endeavoured to divert by application, and afterwards to relieve by luxury and indulgence; but finding his strength every day less, he was at last terrified, and called for help upon the sages of physick; they filled his apartments with alexipharmicks, restoratives, and essential virtues; the pearls of the ocean were dissolved, the spices of Arabia were distilled, and all the powers of nature were employed to give new spirits to his nerves, and new balsam to his blood. Nouradin was for some time amused with promises, invigorated with cordials, or soothed with anodynes; but the disease preyed upon his vitals, and he soon discovered with indignation, that health was not to be bought. He was confined to his chamber, deserted by his physicians, and rarely visited by his friends; but his unwillingness to die flattered him long with hopes of life.

At length, having passed the night in tedious languor, he called to him Almamoulin, his only son, and dismissing his attendants, "My son," says he, "behold here the weakness and fragility of man; look backward a few days, thy father was great and happy, fresh as the vernal rose, and strong as the cedar of the mountain; the nations of Asia drank his dews, and art and commerce delighted in his shade. Malevolence beheld me, and sighed: 'His root,' she cried, 'is fixed in the depths; it is watered by the fountains of Oxus; it sends out branches afar, and bids defiance to the blast; prudence reclines against his trunk, and prosperity dances on his top.' Now, Almamoulin, look upon me withering

and prostrate; look upon me, and attend. I have trafficked, I have prospered, I have rioted in gain; my house is splendid, my servants are numerous; yet I displayed only a small part of my riches; the rest, which I was hindered from enjoying by the fear of raising envy, or tempting rapacity, I have piled in towers, I have buried in caverns, I have hidden in secret repositories, which this scroll will discover. My purpose was, after ten months more spent in commerce, to have withdrawn my wealth to a safer country; to have given seven years to delight and festivity, and the remaining part of my days to solitude and repentance; but the hand of death is upon me; a frigid torpor encroaches upon my veins; I am now leaving the produce of my toil, which it must be thy business to enjoy with wisdom." The thought of leaving his wealth filled Nouradin with such grief, that he fell into convulsions, became delirious, and expired.

Almamoulin, who loved his father, was touched a while with honest sorrow, and sat two hours in profound meditation, without perusing the paper which he held in his hand. He then retired to his own chamber, as overborne with affliction, and there read the inventory of his new possessions, which swelled his heart with such transports, that he no longer lamented his father's death. He was now sufficiently composed to order a funeral of modest magnificence, suitable at once to the rank of Nouradin's profession, and the reputation of his wealth. The two next nights he spent in visiting the tower and the caverns, and found the treasures greater to his eye than to his imagination.

Almamoulin had been bred to the practice of exact frugality, and had often looked with envy on the finery and expenses of other young men: he therefore believed, that happiness was now in his power, since he could obtain all of which he had hitherto been accustomed to regret the want. He resolved to give a loose to his desires, to revel in enjoyment, and feel pain or uneasiness no more.

He immediately procured a splendid equipage, dressed his servants in rich embroidery, and covered his horses with golden caparisons. He showered down silver on the populace, and suffered their acclamations to swell him with insolence. The nobles saw him with anger, the wise men of the state combined against him, the leaders of armies threatened his destruction. Almamoulin was informed of his danger: he put on the robe of mourning in the presence of his enemies, and appeased them with gold, and gems, and supplication.

He then sought to strengthen himself by an alliance with the princes of Tartary, and offered the price of kingdoms for a wife of noble birth. His suit was generally rejected, and his presents refused; but the princess of Astracan once condescended to admit him to her presence. She received him, sitting on a throne, attired in the robe of royalty, and shining with the jewels of Golconda; command sparkled in her eyes, and dignity towered on her forehead. Almamoulin approached and trembled. She saw his confusion and disdained him: "How," says she, "dares the wretch hope my obedience, who thus shrinks at my glance?"

Retire, and enjoy thy riches in sordid ostentation; thou wast born to be wealthy, but never canst be great."

He then contracted his desires to more private and domestick pleasures. He built palaces, he laid out gardens⁴, he changed the face of the land, he transplanted forests, he levelled mountains, opened prospects into distant regions, poured fountains from the tops of turrets, and rolled rivers through new channels.

These amusements pleased him for a time; but languor and weariness soon invaded him. His bowers lost their fragrance, and the waters murmured without notice. He purchased large tracts of land in distant provinces, adorned them with houses of pleasure, and diversified them with accommodations for different seasons. Change of place at first relieved his satiety, but all the novelties of situation were soon exhausted; he found his heart vacant, and his desires, for want of external objects, ravaging himself.

He therefore returned to Samarcand, and set open his doors to those whom idleness sends out in search of pleasure. His tables were always covered with delicacies; wines of every vintage sparkled in his bowls, and his lamps scattered perfumes. The sound of the lute, and the voice of the singer, chased away sadness; every hour was crowded with pleasure; and the day ended and began with feasts and dances, and revelry and merriment. Almamoulin cried out, "I have at last found the use of riches; I am surrounded by companions, who view my greatness

⁴ See Vathek.

without envy; and I enjoy at once the raptures of popularity, and the safety of an obscure station. What trouble can he feel, whom all are studious to please, that they may be repaid with pleasure? What danger can he dread, to whom every man is a friend?"

Such were the thoughts of Almamoulin, as he looked down from a gallery upon the gay assembly regaling at his expense; but, in the midst of this soliloquy, an officer of justice entered the house, and in the form of legal citation, summoned Almamoulin to appear before the emperor. The guests stood awhile aghast, then stole imperceptibly away, and he was led off without a single voice to witness his integrity. He now found one of his most frequent visitants accusing him of treason, in hopes of sharing his confiscation; yet, unpatronized and unsupported, he cleared himself by the openness of innocence, and the consistence of truth; he was dismissed with honour, and his accuser perished in prison.

Almamoulin now perceived with how little reason he had hoped for justice or fidelity from those who live only to gratify their senses; and, being now weary with vain experiments upon life and fruitless researches after felicity, he had recourse to a sage, who, after spending his youth in travel and observation, had retired from all human cares, to a small habitation on the banks of Oxus, where he conversed only with such as solicited his counsel. "Brother," said the philosopher, "thou hast suffered thy reason to be deluded by idle hopes, and fallacious appearances. Having long looked with desire upon riches, thou hadst taught thyself

to think them more valuable than nature designed them, and to expect from them, what experience has now taught thee, that they cannot give. That they do not confer wisdom, thou mayest be convinced, by considering at how dear a price they tempted thee, upon thy first entrance into the world, to purchase the empty sound of vulgar acclamation. That they cannot bestow fortitude or magnanimity, that man may be certain, who stood trembling at Astracan, before a being not naturally superior to himself. That they will not supply unexhausted pleasure, the recollection of forsaken palaces, and neglected gardens, will easily inform thee. That they rarely purchase friends, thou didst soon discover, when thou wert left to stand thy trial uncountenanced and alone. Yet think not riches useless; there are purposes to which a wise man may be delighted to apply them; they may, by a rational distribution to those who want them, ease the pains of helpless disease, still the throbs of restless anxiety, relieve innocence from oppression, and raise imbecility to cheerfulness and vigour. This they will enable thee to perform, and this will afford the only happiness ordained for our present state, the confidence of Divine favour, and the hope of future rewards."

No. 121. TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1751

O imitatores, servum pecus! Hor. Lib. i. Ep. xix. 19.

Away, ye imitators, servile herd! ELPHINSTON.

I have been informed by a letter from one of the universities, that among the youth from whom the next swarm of reasoners is to learn philosophy, and the next flight of beauties to hear elegies and sonnets, there are many, who, instead of endeavouring by books and meditation to form their own opinions, content themselves with the secondary knowledge, which a convenient bench in a coffee-house can supply; and without any examination or distinction, adopt the criticisms and remarks, which happen to drop from those who have risen, by merit or fortune, to reputation and authority.

These humble retailers of knowledge my correspondent stigmatises with the name of Echoes; and seems desirous that they should be made ashamed of lazy submission, and animated to attempts after new discoveries and original sentiments.

It is very natural for young men to be vehement, acrimonious, and severe. For, as they seldom comprehend at once all the consequences of a position, or perceive the difficulties by which cooler and more experienced reasoners are restrained from confidence, they form their conclusions with great precipitance.

Seeing nothing that can darken or embarrass the question, they expect to find their own opinion universally prevalent, and are inclined to impute uncertainty and hesitation to want of honesty, rather than of knowledge. I may, perhaps, therefore, be reproached by my lively correspondent, when it shall be found, that I have no inclination to persecute these collectors of fortuitous knowledge with the severity required; yet, as I am now too old to be much pained by hasty censure, I shall not be afraid of taking into protection those whom I think condemned without a sufficient knowledge of their cause.

He that adopts the sentiments of another, whom he has reason to believe wiser than himself, is only to be blamed when he claims the honours which are not due but to the author, and endeavours to deceive the world into praise and veneration; for, to learn, is the proper business of youth; and whether we increase our knowledge by books or by conversation, we are equally indebted to foreign assistance.

The greater part of students are not born with abilities to construct systems, or advance knowledge; nor can have any hope beyond that of becoming intelligent hearers in the schools of art, of being able to comprehend what others discover, and to remember what others teach. Even those to whom Providence hath allotted greater strength of understanding, can expect only to improve a single science. In every other part of learning, they must be content to follow opinions, which they are not able to examine; and, even in that which they claim as peculiarly

their own, can seldom add more than some small particle of knowledge, to the hereditary stock devolved to them from ancient times, the collective labour of a thousand intellects.

In science, which, being fixed and limited, admits of no other variety than such as arises from new methods of distribution, or new arts of illustration, the necessity of following the traces of our predecessors is indisputably evident; but there appears no reason, why imagination should be subject to the same restraint. It might be conceived, that of those who profess to forsake the narrow paths of truth, every one may deviate towards a different point, since, though rectitude is uniform and fixed, obliquity may be infinitely diversified. The roads of science are narrow, so that they who travel them, must either follow or meet one another; but in the boundless regions of possibility, which fiction claims for her dominion, there are surely a thousand recesses unexplored, a thousand flowers unplucked, a thousand fountains unexhausted, combinations of imagery yet unobserved, and races of ideal inhabitants not hitherto described.

Yet, whatever hope may persuade, or reason evince, experience can boast of very few additions to ancient fable. The wars of Troy, and the travels of Ulysses, have furnished almost all succeeding poets with incidents, characters, and sentiments. The Romans are confessed to have attempted little more than to display in their own tongue the inventions of the Greeks. There is, in all their writings, such a perpetual recurrence of allusions to the tales of the fabulous age, that they must be confessed often

to want that power of giving pleasure which novelty supplies; nor can we wonder that they excelled so much in the graces of diction, when we consider how rarely they were employed in search of new thoughts.

The warmest admirers of the great Mantuan poet can extol him for little more than the skill with which he has, by making his hero both a traveller and a warrior, united the beauties of the Iliad and the Odyssey in one composition: yet his judgment was perhaps sometimes overborne by his avarice of the Homeric treasures; and, for fear of suffering a sparkling ornament to be lost, he has inserted it where it cannot shine with its original splendour.

When Ulysses visited the infernal regions, he found among the heroes that perished at Troy, his competitor, Ajax, who, when the arms of Achilles were adjudged to Ulysses, died by his own hand in the madness of disappointment. He still appeared to resent, as on earth, his loss and disgrace, Ulysses endeavoured to pacify him with praises and submission; but Ajax walked away without reply. This passage has always been considered as eminently beautiful; because Ajax, the haughty chief, the unlettered soldier, of unshaken courage, of immovable constancy, but without the power of recommending his own virtues by eloquence, or enforcing his assertions by any other argument than the sword, had no way of making his anger known, but by gloomy sullenness and dumb ferocity. His hatred of a man whom he conceived to have defeated him only by volubility of tongue, was therefore

naturally shewn by silence more contemptuous and piercing than any words that so rude an orator could have found, and by which he gave his enemy no opportunity of exerting the only power in which he was superior.

When Æneas is sent by Virgil to the shades, he meets Dido the queen of Carthage, whom his perfidy had hurried to the grave; he accosts her with tenderness and excuses; but the lady turns away like Ajax in mute disdain. She turns away like Ajax; but she resembles him in none of those qualities which give either dignity or propriety to silence. She might, without any departure from the tenour of her conduct, have burst out like other injured women into clamour, reproach, and denunciation; but Virgil had his imagination full of Ajax, and therefore could not prevail on himself to teach Dido any other mode of resentment.

If Virgil could be thus seduced by imitation, there will be little hope, that common wits should escape; and accordingly we find, that besides the universal and acknowledged practice of copying the ancients, there has prevailed in every age a particular species of fiction. At one time all truth was conveyed in allegory; at another, nothing was seen but in a vision; at one period all the poets followed sheep, and every event produced a pastoral; at another they busied themselves wholly in giving directions to a painter.

It is indeed easy to conceive why any fashion should become popular, by which idleness is favoured, and imbecility assisted; but surely no man of genius can much applaud himself for

repeating a tale with which the audience is already tired, and which could bring no honour to any but its inventor.

There are, I think, two schemes of writing, on which the laborious wits of the present time employ their faculties. One is the adaptation of sense to all the rhymes which our language can supply to some word, that makes the burden of the stanza; but this, as it has been only used in a kind of amorous burlesque, can scarcely be censured with much acrimony. The other is the imitation of Spenser, which, by the influence of some men of learning and genius, seems likely to gain upon the age, and therefore deserves to be more attentively considered.

To imitate the fictions and sentiments of Spenser can incur no reproach, for allegory is perhaps one of the most pleasing vehicles of instruction. But I am very far from extending the same respect to his diction or his stanza. His style was in his own time allowed to be vicious, so darkened with old words and peculiarities of phrase, and so remote from common use, that Jonson boldly pronounces him *to have written no language*. His stanza is at once difficult and unpleasing; tiresome to the ear by its uniformity, and to the attention by its length. It was at first formed in imitation of the Italian poets, without due regard to the genius of our language. The Italians have little variety of termination, and were forced to contrive such a stanza as might admit the greatest number of similar rhymes; but our words end with so much diversity, that it is seldom convenient for us to bring more than two of the same sound together. If it be justly observed

by Milton, that rhyme obliges poets to express their thoughts in improper terms, these improprieties must always be multiplied, as the difficulty of rhyme is increased by long concatenations.

The imitators of Spenser are indeed not very rigid censors of themselves, for they seem to conclude, that when they have disfigured their lines with a few obsolete syllables, they have accomplished their design, without considering that they ought not only to admit old words, but to avoid new. The laws of imitation are broken by every word introduced since the time of Spenser, as the character of Hector is violated by quoting Aristotle in the play. It would, indeed, be difficult to exclude from a long poem all modern phrases, though it is easy to sprinkle it with gleanings of antiquity. Perhaps, however, the style of Spenser might by long labour be justly copied; but life is surely given us for higher purposes than to gather what our ancestors have wisely thrown away, and to learn what is of no value, but because it has been forgotten.

No. 122. SATURDAY, MAY 18, 1751

*Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine captos
Ducit. OVID, Ex Pon. Lib. i. Ep. iii. 35.*

By secret charms our native land attracts.

Nothing is more subject to mistake and disappointment than anticipated judgment concerning the easiness or difficulty of any undertaking, whether we form our opinion from the performances of others, or from abstracted contemplation of the thing to be attempted.

Whatever is done skilfully appears to be done with ease; and art, when it is once matured to habit, vanishes from observation. We are therefore more powerfully excited to emulation, by those who have attained the highest degree of excellence, and whom we can therefore with least reason hope to equal.

In adjusting the probability of success by a previous consideration of the undertaking, we are equally in danger of deceiving ourselves. It is never easy, nor often possible, to comprise the series of any process with all its circumstances, incidents, and variations, in a speculative scheme. Experience soon shows us the tortuosities of imaginary rectitude, the complications of simplicity, and the asperities of smoothness. Sudden difficulties often start up from the ambushes of art, stop the career of activity, repress the gaiety of confidence, and when

we imagine ourselves almost at the end of our labours, drive us back to new plans and different measures.

There are many things which we every day see others unable to perform, and perhaps have even ourselves miscarried in attempting; and yet can hardly allow to be difficult; nor can we forbear to wonder afresh at every new failure, or to promise certainty of success to our next essay; but when we try, the same hindrances recur, the same inability is perceived, and the vexation of disappointment must again be suffered.

Of the various kinds of speaking or writing, which serve necessity, or promote pleasure, none appears so artless or easy as simple narration; for what should make him that knows the whole order and progress of an affair unable to relate it? Yet we hourly find such as endeavour to entertain or instruct us by recitals, clouding the facts which they intend to illustrate, and losing themselves and their auditors in wilds and mazes, in digression and confusion. When we have congratulated ourselves upon a new opportunity of inquiry, and new means of information, it often happens, that without designing either deceit or concealment, without ignorance of the fact, or unwillingness to disclose it, the relator fills the ear with empty sounds, harasses the attention with fruitless impatience, and disturbs the imagination by a tumult of events, without order of time, or train of consequence.

It is natural to believe, upon the same principle, that no writer has a more easy task than the historian. The philosopher has the

works of omniscience to examine; and is therefore engaged in disquisitions, to which finite intellects are utterly unequal. The poet trusts to his invention, and is not only in danger of those inconsistencies, to which every one is exposed by departure from truth; but may be censured as well for deficiencies of matter, as for irregularity of disposition, or impropriety of ornament. But the happy historian has no other labour than of gathering what tradition pours down before him, or records treasure for his use. He has only the actions and designs of men like himself to conceive and to relate; he is not to form, but copy characters, and therefore is not blamed for the inconsistency of statesmen, the injustice of tyrants, or the cowardice of commanders. The difficulty of making variety consistent, or uniting probability with surprise, needs not to disturb him; the manners and actions of his personages are already fixed; his materials are provided and put into his hands, and he is at leisure to employ all his powers in arranging and displaying them.

Yet, even with these advantages, very few in any age have been able to raise themselves to reputation by writing histories; and among the innumerable authors, who fill every nation with accounts of their ancestors, or undertake to transmit to futurity the events of their own time, the greater part, when fashion and novelty have ceased to recommend them, are of no other use than chronological memorials, which necessity may sometimes require to be consulted, but which fright away curiosity, and disgust delicacy.

It is observed, that our nation, which has produced so many authors eminent for almost every other species of literary excellence, has been hitherto remarkably barren of historical genius; and so far has this defect raised prejudices against us, that some have doubted whether an Englishman can stop at that mediocrity of style, or confine his mind to that even tenour of imagination, which narrative requires.

They who can believe that nature has so capriciously distributed understanding, have surely no claim to the honour of serious confutation. The inhabitants of the same country have opposite characters in different ages; the prevalence or neglect of any particular study can proceed only from the accidental influence of some temporary cause; and if we have failed in history, we can have failed only because history has not hitherto been diligently cultivated.

But how is it evident, that we have not historians among us, whom we may venture to place in comparison with any that the neighbouring nations can produce? The attempt of Raleigh is deservedly celebrated for the labour of his researches, and the elegance of his style; but he has endeavoured to exert his judgment more than his genius, to select facts, rather than adorn them; and has produced an historical dissertation, but seldom risen to the majesty of history.

The works of Clarendon deserve more regard. His diction is indeed neither exact in itself, nor suited to the purpose of history. It is the effusion of a mind crowded with ideas, and desirous

of imparting them; and therefore always accumulating words, and involving one clause and sentence in another. But there is in his negligence a rude inartificial majesty, which, without the nicety of laboured elegance, swells the mind by its plenitude and diffusion. His narration is not perhaps sufficiently rapid, being stopped too frequently by particularities, which, though they might strike the author who was present at the transactions, will not equally detain the attention of posterity. But his ignorance or carelessness of the art of writing is amply compensated by his knowledge of nature and of policy; the wisdom of his maxims, the justness of his reasonings, and the variety, distinctness, and strength of his characters.

But none of our writers can, in my opinion, justly contest the superiority of Knolles, who, in his history of the Turks, has displayed all the excellencies that narration can admit. His style, though somewhat obscured by time, and sometimes vitiated by false wit, is pure, nervous, elevated, and clear. A wonderful multiplicity of events is so artfully arranged, and so distinctly explained, that each facilitates the knowledge of the next. Whenever a new personage is introduced, the reader is prepared by his character for his actions; when a nation is first attacked, or city besieged, he is made acquainted with its history, or situation; so that a great part of the world is brought into view. The descriptions of this author are without minuteness, and the digressions without ostentation. Collateral events are so artfully woven into the contexture of his principal story, that they cannot

be disjoined without leaving it lacerated and broken. There is nothing turgid in his dignity, nor superfluous in his copiousness. His orations only, which he feigns, like the ancient historians, to have been pronounced on remarkable occasions, are tedious and languid; and since they are merely the voluntary sports of imagination, prove how much the most judicious and skilful may be mistaken in the estimate of their own powers.

Nothing could have sunk this author in obscurity, but the remoteness and barbarity of the people, whose story he relates. It seldom happens, that all circumstances concur to happiness or fame. The nation which produced this great historian, has the grief of seeing his genius employed upon a foreign and uninteresting subject; and that writer who might have secured perpetuity to his name, by a history of his own country, has exposed himself to the danger of oblivion, by recounting enterprises and revolutions, of which none desire to be informed.

No. 123. TUESDAY, MAY 21, 1751

*Quo semet est imbuta recens, servabit odorem Testa
din.—HOR. Lib. i. Ep. ii. 69.*

*What season'd first the vessel, keeps the taste.
CREECH.*

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR,

Though I have so long found myself deluded by projects of honour and distinction, that I often resolve to admit them no more into my heart; yet how determinately soever excluded, they always recover their dominion by force or stratagem; and whenever, after the shortest relaxation of vigilance, reason and caution return to their charge, they find hope again in possession, with all her train of pleasures dancing about her.

Even while I am preparing to write a history of disappointed expectations, I cannot forbear to flatter myself, that you and your readers are impatient for my performance; and that the sons of learning have laid down several of your late papers with discontent, when they found that Misocapelus had delayed to continue his narrative.

But the desire of gratifying the expectations that I have raised, is not the only motive of this relation, which, having once promised it, I think myself no longer at liberty to forbear.

For, however I may have wished to clear myself from every other adhesion of trade, I hope I shall be always wise enough to retain my punctuality, and amidst all my new arts of politeness, continue to despise negligence, and detest falsehood.

When the death of my brother had dismissed me from the duties of a shop, I considered myself as restored to the rights of my birth, and entitled to the rank and reception which my ancestors obtained. I was, however, embarrassed with many difficulties at my first re-entrance into the world; for my haste to be a gentleman inclined me to precipitate measures; and every accident that forced me back towards my old station, was considered by me as an obstruction of my happiness.

It was with no common grief and indignation, that I found my former companions still daring to claim my notice, and the journeymen and apprentices sometimes pulling me by the sleeve as I was walking in the street, and without any terror of my new sword, which was, notwithstanding, of an uncommon size, inviting me to partake of a bottle at the old house, and entertaining me with histories of the girls in the neighbourhood. I had always, in my officinal state, been kept in awe by lace and embroidery; and imagined that, to fright away these unwelcome familiarities, nothing was necessary, but that I should, by splendour of dress, proclaim my re-union with a higher rank. I, therefore, sent for my tailor; ordered a suit with twice the usual quantity of lace; and that I might not let my persecutors increase their confidence, by the habit of accosting me, staid at home till

it was made.

This week of confinement I passed in practising a forbidding frown, a smile of condescension, a slight salutation, and an abrupt departure; and in four mornings was able to turn upon my heel, with so much levity and sprightliness, that I made no doubt of discouraging all publick attempts upon my dignity. I therefore issued forth in my new coat, with a resolution of dazzling intimacy to a fitter distance; and pleased myself with the timidity and reverence, which I should impress upon all who had hitherto presumed to harass me with their freedoms. But, whatever was the cause, I did not find myself received with any new degree of respect; those whom I intended to drive from me, ventured to advance with their usual phrases of benevolence; and those whose acquaintance I solicited, grew more supercilious and reserved. I began soon to repent the expense, by which I had procured no advantage, and to suspect that a shining dress, like a weighty weapon, has no force in itself, but owes all its efficacy to him that wears it.

Many were the mortifications and calamities which I was condemned to suffer in my initiation to politeness. I was so much tortured by the incessant civilities of my companions, that I never passed through that region of the city but in a chair with the curtains drawn; and at last left my lodgings, and fixed myself in the verge of the court. Here I endeavoured to be thought a gentleman just returned from his travels, and was pleased to have my landlord believe that I was in some danger from

importunate creditors; but this scheme was quickly defeated by a formal deputation sent to offer me, though I had now retired from business, the freedom of my company.

I was now detected in trade, and therefore resolved to stay no longer. I hired another apartment, and changed my servants. Here I lived very happily for three months, and, with secret satisfaction, often overheard the family celebrating the greatness and felicity of the esquire; though the conversation seldom ended without some complaint of my covetousness, or some remark upon my language, or my gait. I now began to venture in the publick walks, and to know the faces of nobles and beauties; but could not observe, without wonder, as I passed by them, how frequently they were talking of a tailor. I longed, however, to be admitted to conversation, and was somewhat weary of walking in crowds without a companion, yet continued to come and go with the rest, till a lady whom I endeavoured to protect in a crowded passage, as she was about to step into her chariot, thanked me for my civility, and told me, that, as she had often distinguished me for my modest and respectful behaviour, whenever I set up for myself, I might expect to see her among my first customers.

Here was an end of all my ambulatory projects. I indeed sometimes entered the walks again, but was always blasted by this destructive lady, whose mischievous generosity recommended me to her acquaintance. Being therefore forced to practise my adscititious character upon another stage, I betook myself to a coffee-house frequented by wits, among whom I learned in a

short time the cant of criticism, and talked so loudly and volubly of nature, and manners, and sentiment, and diction, and similies, and contrasts, and action, and pronunciation, that I was often desired to lead the hiss and clap, and was feared and hated by the players and the poets. Many a sentence have I hissed, which I did not understand, and many a groan have I uttered, when the ladies were weeping in the boxes. At last a malignant author, whose performance I had persecuted through the nine nights, wrote an epigram upon Tape the critick, which drove me from the pit for ever.

My desire to be a fine gentleman still continued: I therefore, after a short suspense, chose a new set of friends at the gaming-table, and was for some time pleased with the civility and openness with which I found myself treated. I was indeed obliged to play; but being naturally timorous and vigilant, was never surprised into large sums. What might have been the consequence of long familiarity with these plunderers, I had not an opportunity of knowing; for one night the constables entered and seized us, and I was once more compelled to sink into my former condition, by sending for my old master to attest my character.

When I was deliberating to what new qualifications I should aspire, I was summoned into the country, by an account of my father's death. Here I had hopes of being able to distinguish myself, and to support the honour of my family. I therefore bought guns and horses, and, contrary to the expectation of the

tenants, increased the salary of the huntsman. But when I entered the field, it was soon discovered, that I was not destined to the glories of the chase. I was afraid of thorns in the thicket, and of dirt in the marsh; I shivered on the brink of a river while the sportsmen crossed it, and trembled at the sight of a five-bar gate. When the sport and danger were over, I was still equally disconcerted; for I was effeminate, though not delicate, and could only join a feeble whispering voice in the clamours of their triumph.

A fall, by which my ribs were broken, soon recalled me to domestick pleasures, and I exerted all my art to obtain the favour of the neighbouring ladies; but wherever I came, there was always some unlucky conversation upon ribands, fillets, pins, or thread, which drove all my stock of compliments out of my memory, and overwhelmed me with shame and dejection.

Thus I passed the ten first years after the death of my brother, in which I have learned at last to repress that ambition, which I could never gratify; and, instead of wasting more of my life in vain endeavours after accomplishments, which, if not early acquired, no endeavours can obtain, I shall confine my care to those higher excellencies which are in every man's power, and though I cannot enchant affection by elegance and ease, hope to secure esteem by honesty and truth.

I am, &c.

MISOCAPELUS.

No. 124. SATURDAY, MAY 25, 1751

—*Taciturn sylvas inter reptare salubres,
Curantem quicquid dignim sapiente bonoque est?*
HOR. Lib. i. Ep. iv. 4.

*To range in silence through each healthful wood,
And muse what's worthy of the wise and good.*
ELPHINSTON.

The season of the year is now come, in which the theatres are shut, and the card-tables forsaken; the regions of luxury are for a while unpeopled, and pleasure leads out her votaries to groves and gardens, to still scenes and errattick gratifications. Those who have passed many months in a continual tumult of diversion; who have never opened their eyes in the morning, but upon some new appointment; nor slept at night without a dream of dances, musick, and good hands, or of soft sighs and humble supplications; must now retire to distant provinces, where the syrens of flattery are scarcely to be heard, where beauty sparkles without praise or envy, and wit is repeated only by the echo.

As I think it one of the most important duties of social benevolence to give warning of the approach of calamity, when by timely prevention it may be turned aside, or by preparatory

measures be more easily endured, I cannot feel the increasing warmth, or observe the lengthening days, without considering the condition of my fair readers, who are now preparing to leave all that has so long filled up their hours, all from which they have been accustomed to hope for delight; and who, till fashion proclaims the liberty of returning to the seats of mirth and elegance, must endure the rugged 'squire, the sober housewife, the loud huntsman, or the formal parson, the roar of obstreperous jollity, or the dulness of prudential instruction; without any retreat, but to the gloom of solitude, where they will yet find greater inconveniencies, and must learn, however unwillingly, to endure themselves.

In winter, the life of the polite and gay may be said to roll on with a strong and rapid current; they float along from pleasure to pleasure, without the trouble of regulating their own motions, and pursue the course of the stream in all the felicity of inattention; content that they find themselves in progression, and careless whither they are going. But the months of summer are a kind of sleeping stagnation without wind or tide, where they are left to force themselves forward by their own labour, and to direct their passage by their own skill; and where, if they have not some internal principle of activity, they must be stranded upon shallows, or lie torpid in a perpetual calm.

There are, indeed, some to whom this universal dissolution of gay societies affords a welcome opportunity of quitting, without disgrace, the post which they have found themselves unable to

maintain; and of seeming to retreat only at the call of nature, from assemblies where, after a short triumph of uncontested superiority, they are overpowered by some new intruder of softer elegance or sprightlier vivacity. By these, hopeless of victory, and yet ashamed to confess a conquest, the summer is regarded as a release from the fatiguing service of celebrity, a dismissal to more certain joys and a safer empire. They now solace themselves with the influence which they shall obtain, where they have no rival to fear; and with the lustre which they shall effuse, when nothing can be seen of brighter splendour. They imagine, while they are preparing for their journey, the admiration with which the rusticks will crowd about them; plan the laws of a new assembly; or contrive to delude provincial ignorance with a fictitious mode. A thousand pleasing expectations swarm in the fancy; and all the approaching weeks are filled with distinctions, honours, and authority.

But others, who have lately entered the world, or have yet had no proofs of its inconstancy and desertion, are cut off, by this cruel interruption, from the enjoyment of their prerogatives, and doomed to lose four months in inactive obscurity. Many complaints do vexation and desire extort from those exiled tyrants of the town, against the inexorable sun, who pursues his course without any regard to love or beauty; and visits either tropick at the stated time, whether shunned or courted, deprecated or implored.

To them who leave the places of publick resort in the full

bloom of reputation, and withdraw from admiration, courtship, submission, and applause, a rural triumph can give nothing equivalent. The praise of ignorance, and the subjection of weakness, are little regarded by beauties who have been accustomed to more important conquests, and more valuable panegyrics. Nor indeed should the powers which have made havock in the theatres, or borne down rivalry in courts, be degraded to a mean attack upon the untravelled heir, or ignoble contest with the ruddy milkmaid.

How then must four long months be worn away? Four months, in which there will be no routes, no shows, no *ridottos*; in which visits must be regulated by the weather, and assemblies will depend upon the moon! The Platonists imagine, that the future punishment of those who have in this life debased their reason by subjection to their senses, and have preferred the gross gratifications of lewdness and luxury, to the pure and sublime felicity of virtue and contemplation, will arise from the predominance and solicitations of the same appetites, in a state which can furnish no means of appeasing them. I cannot but suspect that this month, bright with sunshine, and fragrant with perfumes; this month, which covers the meadow with verdure, and decks the gardens with all the mixtures of colorifick radiance; this month, from which the man of fancy expects new infusions of imagery, and the naturalist new scenes of observation; this month will chain down multitudes to the Platonick penance of desire without enjoyment, and hurry them

from the highest satisfactions, which they have yet learned to conceive, into a state of hopeless wishes and pining recollection, where the eye of vanity will look round for admiration to no purpose, and the hand of avarice shuffle cards in a bower with ineffectual dexterity.

From the tediousness of this melancholy suspension of life, I would willingly preserve those who are exposed to it, only by inexperience; who want not inclination to wisdom or virtue, though they have been dissipated by negligence, or misled by example; and who would gladly find the way to rational happiness, though it should be necessary to struggle with habit, and abandon fashion. To these many arts of spending time might be recommended, which would neither sadden the present hour with weariness, nor the future with repentance.

It would seem impossible to a solitary speculatist, that a human being can want employment. To be born in ignorance with a capacity of knowledge, and to be placed in the midst of a world filled with variety, perpetually pressing upon the senses and irritating curiosity, is surely a sufficient security against the languishment of inattention. Novelty is indeed necessary to preserve eagerness and alacrity; but art and nature have stores inexhaustible by human intellects; and every moment produces something new to him, who has quickened his faculties by diligent observation.

Some studies, for which the country and the summer afford peculiar opportunities, I shall perhaps endeavour to recommend

in a future essay; but if there be any apprehension not apt to admit unaccustomed ideas, or any attention so stubborn and inflexible, as not easily to comply with new directions, even these obstructions cannot exclude the pleasure of application; for there is a higher and nobler employment, to which all faculties are adapted by Him who gave them. The duties of religion, sincerely and regularly performed, will always be sufficient to exalt the meanest, and to exercise the highest understanding. That mind will never be vacant, which is frequently recalled by stated duties to meditations on eternal interests; nor can any hour be long, which is spent in obtaining some new qualification for celestial happiness.

No. 125. TUESDAY, MAY 28, 1751

*Descriptas servare vices, operumque colores,
Cur ego, si nequeo ignoroque, poëta salutor? HOR.
De Ar. Poet. 86.*

*But if, through weakness, or my want of art,
I can't to every different style impart
The proper strokes and colours it may claim,
Why am I honour'd with a poet's name? FRANCIS.*

It is one of the maxims of the civil law, that *definitions are hazardous*. Things modified by human understandings, subject to varieties of complication, and changeable as experience advances knowledge, or accident influences caprice, are scarcely to be included in any standing form of expression, because they are always suffering some alteration of their state. Definition is, indeed, not the province of man; every thing is set above or below our faculties. The works and operations of nature are too great in their extent, or too much diffused in their relations, and the performances of art too inconstant and uncertain, to be reduced to any determinate idea. It is impossible to impress upon our minds an adequate and just representation of an object so great that we can never take it into our view, or so mutable that it is

always changing under our eye, and has already lost its form while we are labouring to conceive it.

Definitions have been no less difficult or uncertain in criticisms than in law. Imagination, a licentious and vagrant faculty, unsusceptible of limitations, and impatient of restraint, has always endeavoured to baffle the logician, to perplex the confines of distinction, and burst the inclosures of regularity. There is therefore scarcely any species of writing, of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents; every new genius produces some innovation, which, when invented and approved, subverts the rules which the practice of foregoing authors had established.

Comedy has been particularly unpropitious to definers; for though perhaps they might properly have contented themselves, with declaring it to be *such a dramattick representation of human life, as may excite mirth*, they have embarrassed their definition with the means by which the comick writers attain their end, without considering that the various methods of exhilarating their audience, not being limited by nature, cannot be comprised in precept. Thus, some make comedy a representation of mean and others of bad men; some think that its essence consists in the unimportance, others in the fictitiousness of the transaction. But any man's reflections will inform him, that every dramattick composition which raises mirth, is comick; and that, to raise mirth, it is by no means universally necessary, that the personages should be either mean or corrupt, nor always requisite, that the

action should be trivial, nor ever, that it should be fictitious.

If the two kinds of dramattick poetry had been defined only by their effects upon the mind, some absurdities might have been prevented, with which the compositions of our greatest poets are disgraced, who, for want of some settled ideas and accurate distinctions, have unhappily confounded tragick with comick sentiments. They seem to have thought, that as the meanest of personages constituted comedy, their greatness was sufficient to form a tragedy; and that nothing was necessary but that they should crowd the scene with monarchs, and generals, and guards; and make them talk, at certain intervals, of the downfall of kingdoms, and the rout of armies. They have not considered, that thoughts or incidents, in themselves ridiculous, grow still more grotesque by the solemnity of such characters; that reason and nature are uniform and inflexible: and that what is despicable and absurd, will not, by any association with splendid titles, become rational or great; that the most important affairs, by an intermixture of an unseasonable levity, may be made contemptible; and that the robes of royalty can give no dignity to nonsense or to folly.

"Comedy," says Horace, "sometimes raises her voice;" and Tragedy may likewise on proper occasions abate her dignity; but as the comick personages can only depart from their familiarity of style, when the more violent passions are put in motion, the heroes and queens of tragedy should never descend to trifle, but in the hours of ease, and intermissions of danger. Yet in the

tragedy of Don Sebastian, when the king of Portugal is in the hands of his enemy, and having just drawn the lot, by which he is condemned to die, breaks out into a wild boast that his dust shall take possession of Africk, the dialogue proceeds thus between the captive and his conqueror:

Muley Moluch. What shall I do to conquer thee?

Seb. Impossible! Souls know no conquerors.

M. Mol. I'll shew thee for a monster thro' my Afric.

Seb. No, thou canst only shew me for a man: Afric is stored with monsters; man's a prodigy Thy subjects have not seen.

M. Mol. Thou talk'st as if
Still at the head of battle.

Seb. Thou mistak'st,
For there I would not talk.

Benducar, the Minister. Sure he would sleep. This conversation, with the sly remark of the minister, can only be found not to be comick, because it wants the probability necessary to representations of common life, and degenerates too much towards buffoonery and farce.

The same play affords a smart return of the general to to the emperor, who, enforcing his orders for the death of Sebastian, vents his impatience in this abrupt threat:

—No more replies,
But see thou dost it: Or—

To which Dorax answers, Choak in that threat: I can say Or
as loud.

A thousand instances of such impropriety might be produced,
were not one scene in Aureng-Zebe sufficient to exemplify it.
Indamora, a captive queen, having Aureng-Zebe for her lover,
employs Arimant, to whose charge she had been entrusted, and
whom she had made sensible of her charms, to carry her message
to his rival.

ARIMANT, *with a letter in his hand*: INDAMORA.

Arim. And I the messenger to him from you?
Your empire you to tyranny pursue:
You lay commands both cruel and unjust,
To serve my rival, and betray my trust.

Ind. You first betray'd your trust in loving me:
And should not I my own advantage see?
Serving my love, you may my friendship gain;
You know the rest of your pretences vain.
You must, my Arimant, you must be kind:
'Tis in your nature, and your noble mind.

Arim. I'll to the king, and straight my trust resign.

Ind. His trust you may, but you shall never mine.
Heaven made you love me for no other end,
But to become my confidant and friend:
As such, I keep no secret from your sight,
And therefore make you judge how ill I write:
Read it, and tell me freely then your mind,
If 'tis indited, as I meant it, kind.

Arim. *I ask not heaven my freedom to restore—*[Reading.
But only for your sake—I'll read no more.
And yet I must—
Less for my own, than for your sorrow sad—[Reading.
Another line like this, would make me mad—
Heav'n! she goes on—yet more—and yet more kind!
[—As reading.

Each sentence is a dagger to my mind.
See me this night—[Reading.
Thank fortune who did such a friend provide;
For faithful Arimant shall be your guide.
Not only to be made an instrument,
But pre-engaged without my own consent!

Ind. Unknown to engage you still augments my score,
And gives you scope of meriting the more.

Arim. The best of men
Some int'rest in their actions must confess;
None merit, but in hope they may possess:
The fatal paper rather let me tear,

Than, like Bellerophon, my own sentence hear.

Ind. You may; but 'twill not be your best advice:
'Twill only give me pains of writing twice.
You know you must obey me, soon or late:
Why should you vainly struggle with your fate?

Arim. I thank thee, heav'n! thou hast been wondrous kind!
Why am I thus to slavery design'd,
And yet am cheated with a free-born mind!
Or make thy orders with my reason suit,
Or let me live by sense, a glorious brute—[*She frowns.*
You frown, and I obey with speed, before
That dreadful sentence comes, *See me no more.*

In this scene, every circumstance concurs to turn tragedy to farce. The wild absurdity of the expedient; the contemptible subjection of the lover; the folly of obliging him to read the letter, only because it ought to have been concealed from him; the frequent interruptions of amorous impatience; the faint expostulations of a voluntary slave; the imperious haughtiness of a tyrant without power; the deep reflection of the yielding rebel upon fate and free-will; and his wise wish to lose his reason as soon as he finds himself about to do what he cannot persuade his reason to approve, are sufficient to awaken the most torpid risibility.

There is scarce a tragedy of the last century which has not debased its most important incidents, and polluted its

most serious interlocutions, with buffoonery and meanness; but though, perhaps, it cannot be pretended that the present age has added much to the force and efficacy of the drama, it has at least been able to escape many faults, which either ignorance had overlooked, or indulgence had licensed. The later tragedies, indeed, have faults of another kind, perhaps more destructive to delight, though less open to censure. That perpetual tumour of phrase with which every thought is now expressed by every personage, the paucity of adventures which regularity admits, and the unvaried equality of flowing dialogue, has taken away from our present writers almost all that dominion over the passions which was the boast of their predecessors. Yet they may at least claim this commendation, that they avoid gross faults, and that if they cannot often move terrour or pity, they are always careful not to provoke laughter.

No. 126. SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 1751

—*Nihil est aliud magnum quam multa minuta.* VET.
AUCT.

Sands form the mountain, moments make the year.
YOUNG.

TO THE RAMBLER.

SIR,

Among other topicks of conversation which your papers supply, I was lately engaged in a discussion of the character given by Tranquilla of her lover Venustulus, whom, notwithstanding the severity of his mistress, the greater number seemed inclined to acquit of unmanly or culpable timidity.

One of the company remarked that prudence ought to be distinguished from fear; and that if Venustulus was afraid of nocturnal adventures, no man who considered how much every avenue of the town was infested with robbers could think him blameable; for why should life be hazarded without prospect of honour or advantage? Another was of opinion, that a brave man might be afraid of crossing the river in the calmest weather, and declared, that, for his part, while there were coaches and a bridge, he would never be seen tottering in a wooden case, out of which he might be thrown by any irregular agitation, or which might be overset by accident, or negligence, or by the force of a sudden

gust, or the rush of a larger vessel. It was his custom, he said, to keep the security of daylight, and dry ground; for it was a maxim with him, that no wise man ever perished by water, or was lost in the dark.

The next was humbly of opinion, that if Tranquilla had seen, like him, the cattle run roaring about the meadows in the hot months, she would not have thought meanly of her lover for not venturing his safety among them. His neighbour then told us, that for his part he was not ashamed to confess, that he could not see a rat, though it was dead, without palpitation; that he had been driven six times out of his lodgings either by rats or mice; and that he always had a bed in the closet for his servant, whom he called up whenever the enemy was in motion. Another wondered that any man should think himself disgraced by a precipitate retreat from a dog; for there was always a possibility that a dog might be mad; and that surely, though there was no danger but of being bit by a fierce animal, there was more wisdom in flight than contest. By all these declarations another was encouraged to confess, that if he had been admitted to the honour of paying his addresses to Tranquilla, he should have been likely to incur the same censure; for, among all the animals upon which nature has impressed deformity and horror, there is none whom he durst not encounter rather than a beetle.

Thus, Sir, though cowardice is universally defined too close and anxious an attention to personal safety, there will be found scarcely any fear, however excessive in its degree, or

unreasonable in its object, which will be allowed to characterise a coward. Fear is a passion which every man feels so frequently predominant in his own breast, that he is unwilling to hear it censured with great asperity; and, perhaps, if we confess the truth, the same restraint which would hinder a man from declaiming against the frauds of any employment among those who profess it, should withhold him from treating fear with contempt among human beings.

Yet, since fortitude is one of those virtues which the condition of our nature makes hourly necessary, I think you cannot better direct your admonitions than against superfluous and panick terrors. Fear is implanted in us as a preservative from evil; but its duty, like that of other passions, is not to overbear reason, but to assist it; nor should it be suffered to tyrannize in the imagination, to raise phantoms of horror, or beset life with supernumerary distresses.

To be always afraid of losing life is, indeed, scarcely to enjoy a life that can deserve the care of preservation. He that once indulges idle fears will never be at rest. Our present state admits only of a kind of negative security; we must conclude ourselves safe when we see no danger, or none inadequate to our powers of opposition. Death, indeed, continually hovers about us, but hovers commonly unseen, unless we sharpen our sight by useless curiosity.

There is always a point at which caution, however solicitous, must limit its preservatives, because one terror

often counteracts another. I once knew one of the speculatists of cowardice, whose reigning disturbance was the dread of housebreakers. His inquiries were for nine years employed upon the best method of barring a window, or a door; and many an hour has he spent in establishing the preference of a bolt to a lock. He had at last, by the daily superaddition of new expedients, contrived a door which could never be forced; for one bar was secured by another with such intricacy of subordination, that he was himself not always able to disengage them in the proper method. He was happy in this fortification, till being asked how he would escape if he was threatened by fire, he discovered, that with all his care and expense, he had only been assisting his own destruction. He then immediately tore off his bolts, and now leaves at night his outer door half-locked, that he may not by his own folly perish in the flames.

There is one species of terrour which those who are unwilling to suffer the reproach of cowardice have wisely dignified with the name of *antipathy*. A man who talks with intrepidity of the monsters of the wilderness while they are out of sight, will readily confess his antipathy to a mole, a weasel, or a frog. He has indeed no dread of harm from an insect or a worm, but his antipathy turns him pale whenever they approach him. He believes that a boat will transport him with as much safety as his neighbours, but he cannot conquer his antipathy to the water. Thus he goes on without any reproach from his own reflections, and every day multiplies antipathies, till he becomes contemptible to others,

and burdensome to himself. It is indeed certain, that impressions of dread may sometimes be unluckily made by objects not in themselves justly formidable; but when fear is discovered to be groundless, it is to be eradicated like other false opinions, and antipathies are generally superable by a single effort. He that has been taught to shudder at a mouse, if he can persuade himself to risk one encounter, will find his own superiority, and exchange his terrors for the pride of conquest.

I am, Sir, &c.

THRASO.

SIR, As you profess to extend your regard to the minuteness of decency, as well as to the dignity of science, I cannot forbear to lay before you a mode of persecution by which I have been exiled to taverns and coffee-houses, and deterred from entering the doors of my friends. Among the ladies who please themselves with splendid furniture, or elegant entertainment, it is a practice very common, to ask every guest how he likes the carved work of the cornice, or the figures of the tapestry; the china at the table, or the plate on the side-board: and on all occasions to inquire his opinion of their judgment and their choice. Melania has laid her new watch in the window nineteen times, that she may desire me to look upon it. Calista has an art of dropping her snuff-box by drawing out her handkerchief, that when I pick it up I may admire it; and Fulgentia has conducted me, by mistake, into the wrong room, at every visit I have paid since her picture was put into a new frame.

I hope, Mr. Rambler, you will inform them, that no man should be denied the privilege of silence, or tortured to false declarations; and that though ladies may justly claim to be exempt from rudeness, they have no right to force unwilling civilities. To please is a laudable and elegant ambition, and is properly rewarded with honest praise; but to seize applause by violence, and call out for commendation, without knowing, or caring to know, whether it be given from conviction, is a species of tyranny by which modesty is oppressed, and sincerity corrupted. The tribute of admiration, thus exacted by impudence and importunity, differs from the respect paid to silent merit, as the plunder of a pirate from the merchant's profit.

I am, &c.

MISOCOLAX

SIR,

Your great predecessor, the Spectator, endeavoured to diffuse among his female readers a desire of knowledge; nor can I charge you, though you do not seem equally attentive to the ladies, with endeavouring to discourage them from any laudable pursuit. But however either he or you may excite our curiosity, you have not yet informed us how it may be gratified. The world seems to have formed an universal conspiracy against our understandings; our questions are supposed not to expect answers, our arguments are confuted with a jest, and we are treated like beings who transgress the limits of our nature whenever we aspire to seriousness or improvement.

I inquired yesterday of a gentleman eminent for astronomical skill, what made the day long in summer, and short in winter; and was told that nature protracted the days in summer, lest ladies should want time to walk in the park; and the nights in winter, lest they should not have hours sufficient to spend at the card-table.

I hope you do not doubt but I heard such information with just contempt, and I desire you to discover to this great master of ridicule, that I was far from wanting any intelligence which he could have given me. I asked the question with no other intention than to set him free from the necessity of silence, and give him an opportunity of mingling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from which, however uneasy, he could not then escape, by a kind introduction of the only subject on which I believed him able to speak with propriety.

I am, &c.

GENEROSA.

No. 127. TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 1751

*Capisti meliust, quam desinis. Ultima primis
Cedunt: dissimiles hic vir et ille puer. Ovid. Ep. ix. 24.*

*Succeeding years thy early fame destroy;
Thou, who began'st a man, wilt end a boy.*

Politian, a name eminent among the restorers of polite literature, when he published a collection of epigrams, prefixed to many of them the year of his age at which they were composed. He might design, by this information, either to boast the early maturity of his genius, or to conciliate indulgence to the puerility of his performances. But whatever was his intent, it is remarked by Scaliger, that he very little promoted his own reputation, because he fell below the promise which his first productions had given, and, in the latter part of his life, seldom equalled the sallies of his youth.

It is not uncommon for those who, at their first entrance into the world, were distinguished for attainments or abilities, to disappoint the hopes which they had raised, and to end in neglect and obscurity that life which they began in celebrity and honour. To the long catalogue of the inconveniencies of old age, which

moral and satirical writers have so copiously displayed, may be often added the loss of fame.

The advance of the human mind towards any object of laudable pursuit, may be compared to the progress of a body driven by a blow. It moves, for a time, with great velocity and vigour, but the force of the first impulse is perpetually decreasing, and though it should encounter no obstacle capable of quelling it by a sudden stop, the resistance of the medium through which it passes, and the latent inequalities of the smoothest surface, will, in a short time, by continued retardation, wholly overpower it. Some hindrances will be found in every road of life, but he that fixes his eyes upon any thing at a distance, necessarily loses sight of all that fills up the intermediate space, and therefore sets forward with alacrity and confidence, nor suspects a thousand obstacles, by which he afterwards finds his passage embarrassed and obstructed. Some are indeed stopt at once in their career by a sudden shock of calamity, or diverted to a different direction by the cross impulse of some violent passion; but far the greater part languish by slow degrees, deviate at first into slight obliquities, and themselves scarcely perceive at what time their ardour forsook them, or when they lost sight of their original design.

Weariness and negligence are perpetually prevailing by silent encroachments, assisted by different causes, and not observed till they cannot, without great difficulty, be opposed. Labour necessarily requires pauses of ease and relaxation, and the

deliciousness of ease commonly makes us unwilling to return to labour. We, perhaps, prevail upon ourselves to renew our attempts, but eagerly listen to every argument for frequent interpositions of amusement; for, when indolence has once entered upon the mind, it can scarcely be dispossessed but by such efforts as very few are willing to exert.

It is the fate of industry to be equally endangered by miscarriage and success, by confidence and despondency. He that engages in a great undertaking, with a false opinion of its facility, or too high conceptions of his own strength, is easily discouraged by the first hindrance of his advances, because he had promised himself an equal and perpetual progression without impediment or disturbance; when unexpected interruptions break in upon him, he is in the state of a man surprised by a tempest, where he purposed only to bask in the calm, or sport in the shallows.

It is not only common to find the difficulty of an enterprize greater, but the profit less, than hope had pictured it. Youth enters the world with very happy prejudices in her own favour. She imagines herself not only certain of accomplishing every adventure, but of obtaining those rewards which the accomplishment may deserve. She is not easily persuaded to believe that the force of merit can be resisted by obstinacy and avarice, or its lustre darkened by envy and malignity. She has not yet learned that the most evident claims to praise or preferment may be rejected by malice against conviction, or

by indolence without examination; that they may be sometimes defeated by artifices, and sometimes overborne by clamour; that, in the mingled numbers of mankind, many need no other provocation to enmity than that they find themselves excelled; that others have ceased their curiosity, and consider every man who fills the mouth of report with a new name, as an intruder upon their retreat, and disturber of their repose; that some are engaged in complications of interest which they imagine endangered by every innovation; that many yield themselves up implicitly to every report which hatred disseminates or folly scatters; and that whoever aspires to the notice of the publick, has in almost every man an enemy and a rival; and must struggle with the opposition of the daring, and elude the stratagems of the timorous, must quicken the frigid and soften the obdurate, must reclaim perverseness and inform stupidity.

It is no wonder that when the prospect of reward has vanished, the zeal of enterprize should cease; for who would persevere to cultivate the soil which he has, after long labour, discovered to be barren? He who hath pleased himself with anticipated praises, and expected that he should meet in every place with patronage or friendship, will soon remit his vigour, when he finds that, from those who desire to be considered as his admirers, nothing can be hoped but cold civility, and that many refuse to own his excellence, lest they should be too justly expected to reward it.

A man, thus cut off from the prospect of that port to which his address and fortitude had been employed to steer him, often

abandons himself to chance and to the wind, and glides careless and idle down the current of life, without resolution to make another effort, till he is swallowed up by the gulph of mortality.

Others are betrayed to the same desertion of themselves by a contrary fallacy. It was said of Hannibal, that he wanted nothing to the completion of his martial virtues, but that when he had gained a victory he should know how to use it. The folly of desisting too soon from successful labours, and the haste of enjoying advantages before they are secured, are often fatal to men of impetuous desire, to men whose consciousness of uncommon powers fills them with presumption, and who, having borne opposition down before them, and left emulation panting behind, are early persuaded to imagine that they have reached the heights of perfection, and that now, being no longer in danger from competitors, they may pass the rest of their days in the enjoyment of their acquisitions, in contemplation of their own superiority, and in attention to their own praises, and look unconcerned from their eminence upon the toils and contentions of meaner beings.

It is not sufficiently considered in the hour of exultation, that all human excellence is comparative; that no man performs much but in proportion to what others accomplish, or to the time and opportunities which have been allowed him; and that he who stops at any point of excellence is every day sinking in estimation, because his improvement grows continually more incommensurate to his life. Yet, as no man willingly quits

opinions favourable to himself, they who have once been justly celebrated, imagine that they still have the same pretensions to regard, and seldom perceive the diminution of their character while there is time to recover it. Nothing then remains but murmurs and remorse; for if the spendthrift's poverty be embittered by the reflection that he once was rich, how must the idler's obscurity be clouded by remembering that he once had lustre!

These errors all arise from an original mistake of the true motives of action. He that never extends his view beyond the praises or rewards of men will be dejected by neglect and envy, or infatuated by honours and applause. But the consideration that life is only deposited in his hands to be employed in obedience to a Master who will regard his endeavours, not his success, would have preserved him from trivial elations and discouragements, and enabled him to proceed with constancy and cheerfulness, neither enervated by commendation, nor intimidated by censure.

No. 128. SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1751

[Greek:

*Aion d asphalaes
Ouk egent, out Aiakida para Paelei,
Oute par antitheo
Kadmo legontai man broton
Olbon hupertaton hoi
Schein.] PIND. Py. iii. 153.*

*For not the brave, or wise, or great,
E'er yet had happiness complete:
Nor Peleus, grandson of the sky,
Nor Cadmus, scap'd the shafts of pain,
Though favour'd by the Pow'rs on high,
With every bliss that man can gain.*

The writers who have undertaken the task of reconciling mankind to their present state, and relieving the discontent produced by the various distribution of terrestrial advantages, frequently remind us that we judge too hastily of good and evil, that we view only the superficies of life, and determine of the whole by a very small part; and that in the condition of men it frequently happens, that grief and anxiety lie hid under the golden robes of prosperity, and the gloom of calamity is cheered by secret radiations of hope and comfort; as in the works of

nature the bog is sometimes covered with flowers, and the mine concealed in the barren crags.

None but those who have learned the art of subjecting their senses as well as reason to hypothetical systems, can be persuaded by the most specious rhetorician that the lots of life are equal; yet it cannot be denied that every one has his peculiar pleasures and vexations, that external accidents operate variously upon different minds, and that no man can exactly judge from his own sensations, what another would feel in the same circumstances.

If the general disposition of things be estimated by the representation which every one makes of his own estate, the world must be considered as the abode of sorrow and misery; for how few can forbear to relate their troubles and distresses? If we judge by the account which may be obtained of every man's fortune from others, it may be concluded, that we all are placed in an elysian region, overspread with the luxuriance of plenty, and fanned by the breezes of felicity; since scarcely any complaint is uttered without censure from those that hear it, and almost all are allowed to have obtained a provision at least adequate to their virtue or their understanding, to possess either more than they deserve, or more than they enjoy.

We are either born with such dissimilitude of temper and inclination, or receive so many of our ideas and opinions from the state of life in which we are engaged, that the griefs and cares of one part of mankind seem to the other hypocrisy, folly, and

affectation. Every class of society has its cant of lamentation, which is understood or regarded by none but themselves; and every part of life has its uneasiness, which those who do not feel them will not commiserate. An event which spreads distraction over half the commercial world, assembles the trading companies in councils and committees, and shakes the nerves of a thousand stockjobbers, is read by the landlord and the farmer with frigid indifference. An affair of love, which fills the young breast with incessant alternations of hope and fear, and steals away the night and day from every other pleasure or employment, is regarded by them whose passions time has extinguished, as an amusement, which can properly raise neither joy nor sorrow, and, though it may be suffered to fill the vacuity of an idle moment, should always give way to prudence or interest.

He that never had any other desire than to fill a chest with money, or to add another manor to his estate, who never grieved but at a bad mortgage, or entered a company but to make a bargain, would be astonished to hear of beings known among the polite and gay by the denomination of wits. How would he gape with curiosity, or grin with contempt, at the mention of beings who have no wish but to speak what was never spoken before; who, if they happen to inherit wealth, often exhaust their patrimonies in treating those who will hear them talk; and if they are poor, neglect opportunities of improving their fortunes, for the pleasure of making others laugh? How slowly would he believe that there are men who would rather lose a legacy than

the reputation of a distich; who think it less disgrace to want money than repartee; whom the vexation of having been foiled in a contest of raillery is sometimes sufficient to deprive of sleep; and who would esteem it a lighter evil to miss a profitable bargain by some accidental delay, than not to have thought of a smart reply till the time of producing it was past? How little would he suspect that this child of idleness and frolick enters every assembly with a beating bosom, like a litigant on the day of decision, and revolves the probability of applause with the anxiety of a conspirator, whose fate depends upon the next night; that at the hour of retirement he carries home, under a show of airy negligence, a heart lacerated with envy, or depressed with disappointment; and immures himself in his closet, that he may disencumber his memory at leisure, review the progress of the day, state with accuracy his loss or gain of reputation, and examine the causes of his failure or success?

Yet more remote from common conceptions are the numerous and restless anxieties, by which female happiness is particularly disturbed. A solitary philosopher would imagine ladies born with an exemption from care and sorrow, lulled in perpetual quiet, and feasted with unmingled pleasure; for what can interrupt the content of those, upon whom one age has laboured after another to confer honours, and accumulate immunities; those to whom rudeness is infamy, and insult is cowardice; whose eye commands the brave, and whose smiles soften the severe; whom the sailor travels to adorn, the soldier bleeds to defend, and the poet wears

out life to celebrate; who claim tribute from every art and science, and for whom all who approach them endeavour to multiply delights, without requiring from them any returns but willingness to be pleased?

Surely, among these favourites of nature, thus unacquainted with toil and danger, felicity must have fixed her residence; they must know only the changes of more vivid or more gentle joys: their life must always move either to the slow or sprightly melody of the lyre of gladness; they can never assemble but to pleasure, or retire but to peace.

Such would be the thoughts of every man who should hover at a distance round the world, and know it only by conjecture and speculation. But experience will soon discover how easily those are disgusted who have been made nice by plenty and tender by indulgence. He will soon see to how many dangers power is exposed which has no other guard than youth and beauty, and how easily that tranquillity is molested which can only be soothed with the songs of flattery. It is impossible to supply wants as fast as an idle imagination may be able to form them, or to remove all inconveniencies by which elegance refined into impatience may be offended. None are so hard to please, as those whom satiety of pleasure makes weary of themselves; nor any so readily provoked as those who have been always courted with an emulation of civility.

There are, indeed, some strokes which the envy of fate aims immediately at the fair. The mistress of Catullus wept for her

sparrow many centuries ago, and lapdogs will be sometimes sick in the present age. The most fashionable brocade is subject to stains; a pinner, the pride of Brussels, may be torn by a careless washer; a picture may drop from a wall; or the triumph of a new suit may be interrupted on the first day of its enjoyment, and all distinctions of dress unexpectedly obliterated by a general mourning.

Such is the state of every age, every sex, and every condition: all have their cares, either from nature or from folly: and whoever therefore finds himself inclined to envy another, should remember that he knows not the real condition which he desires to obtain, but is certain that by indulging a vicious passion, he must lessen that happiness which he thinks already too sparingly bestowed.

No. 129. TUESDAY, JUNE 11. 1751

—*Nunc, O nunc, Daedale, dixit,
Materiam, qua sis ingeniosus, habes.
Possidet en terras, et possidet aequara, Minos:
Nec tellus nostrae, nec patet undo fugae.
Restat iter coelo: tentabimus ire.
Da veniam caepto, Jupiter alte, meo. OVID. Ar.
Am. Lib. ii. 33.*

*Now, Daedalus, behold, by fate assign'd,
A task proportion'd to thy mighty mind!
Unconquer'd bars on earth and sea withstand;
Thine, Minos, is the main, and thine the land.
The skies are open—let us try the skies:
Forgive, great Jove, the daring enterprize.*

Moralists, like other writers, instead of casting their eyes abroad in the living world, and endeavouring to form maxims of practice and new hints of theory, content their curiosity with that secondary knowledge which books afford, and think themselves entitled to reverence by a new arrangement of an ancient system, or new illustration of established principles⁵. The sage precepts

⁵ Johnson gained *his* knowledge from actual experience. He told Boswell that before he wrote the Rambler he had been running about the world more than almost any body. Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. i. p. 196.; and vol. iii. pp. 20, 21.

of the first instructors of the world are transmitted from age to age with little variation, and echoed from one author to another, not perhaps without some loss of their original force at every repercussion.

I know not whether any other reason than this idleness of imitation can be assigned for that uniform and constant partiality, by which some vices have hitherto escaped censure, and some virtues wanted recommendation; nor can I discover why else we have been warned only against part of our enemies, while the rest have been suffered to steal upon us without notice; why the heart has on one side been doubly fortified, and laid open on the other to the incursions of error, and the ravages of vice.

Among the favourite topics of moral declamation, may be numbered the miscarriages of imprudent boldness, and the folly of attempts beyond our power. Every page of every philosopher is crowded with examples of temerity that sunk under burdens which she laid upon herself, and called out enemies to battle by whom she was destroyed.

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