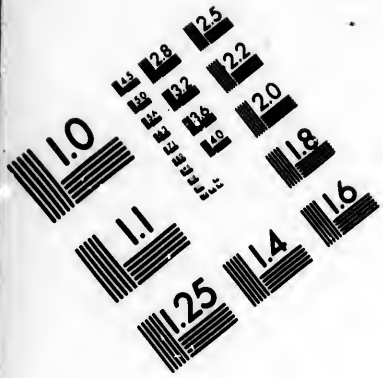

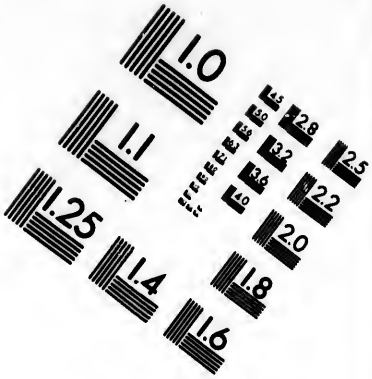

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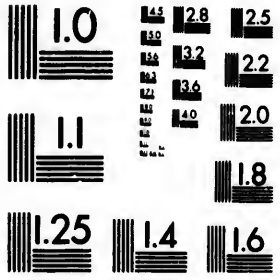

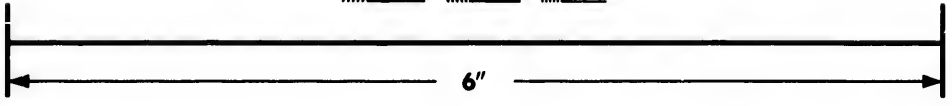

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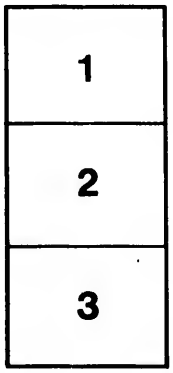

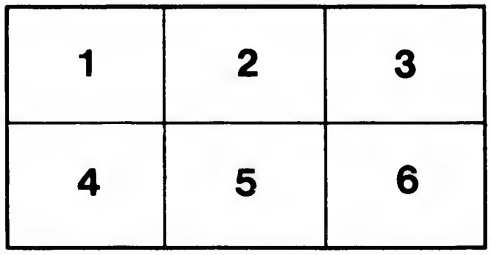

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THE IDLER

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1810.

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CONTENTS.

THE

IDLER.

N° 53. SATURDAY, APRIL 21, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'I HAVE a wife that keeps good company. You know that the word *good* varies its meaning according to the value set upon different qualities in different places. To be a good man in a college, is to be learned; in a camp, to be brave; and in the city, to be rich. By good company in the place which I have the misfortune to inhabit, we understand not only those from whom any good can be learned, whether wisdom or virtue; or by whom any good can be conferred, whether profit or reputation. Good company is the company of those whose birth is high, and whose riches are great; or of those whom the rich and noble admit to familiarity.

'I am a gentleman of a fortune by no means exuberant, but more than equal to the wants of my family, and for some years equal to our desires. My

wife, who had never been accustomed to splendour, joined her endeavours to mine in the superintendance of our economy; we lived in decent plenty, and were not excluded from moderate pleasures.

'But slight causes produce great effects. All my happiness has been destroyed by change of place; virtue is too often merely local; in some situations the air diseases the body, and in others poisons the mind. Being obliged to remove my habitation, I was led by my evil genius to a convenient house in a street where many of the nobility reside. We had scarcely ranged our furniture, and aired our rooms, when my wife began to grow discontented, and to wonder what the neighbours would think when they saw so few chairs and chariots at her door.

'Her acquaintance, who came to see her from the quarter that we had left, mortified her, without design, by continual inquiries about the ladies whose houses they viewed from our windows. She was ashamed to confess that she had no intercourse with them, and sheltered her distress under general answers, which always tended to raise suspicion that she knew more than she would tell; but she was often reduced to difficulties, when the course of talk introduced questions about the furniture or ornaments of their houses, which, when she could get no intelligence, she was forced to pass slightly over, as things which she saw so often that she never minded them.

'To all these vexations she was resolved to put an end, and redoubled her visits to those few of her friends who visited those who kept good company; and, if ever she met a lady of quality, forced herself into notice by respect and assiduity. Her advances were generally rejected; and she heard them, as they

went down stairs, talk how some creatures put themselves forward.

'She was not discouraged, but crept forward from one to another; and, as perseverance will do great things, sapped her way unperceived, till, unexpectedly, she appeared at the card-table of Lady Biddy Porpoise, a lethargic virgin of seventy-six, whom all the families in the next square visited very punctually when she was not at home.

'This was the first step of that elevation to which my wife has since ascended. For five months she had no name in her mouth but that of Lady Biddy, who, let the world say what it would, had a fine understanding, and such a command of her temper, that whether she won or lost, she slept over her cards.

'At Lady Biddy's she met with Lady Tawdry, whose favour she gained by estimating her ear-rings, which were counterfeit, at twice the value of real diamonds. When she had once entered two houses of distinction, she was easily admitted into more, and in ten weeks had all her time anticipated by parties and engagements. Every morning she is bespoke, in the summer, for the gardens; in the winter, for a sale; every afternoon she has visits to pay, and every night brings an inviolable appointment, or an assembly in which the best company in the town were to appear.

'You will easily imagine that much of my domestic comfort is withdrawn. I never see my wife but in the hurry of preparation, or the languor of weariness. To dress and to undress is almost her whole business in private, and the servants take advantage of her negligence to increase expense. But I can supply her omissions by my own diligence, and should

not much regret this new course of life, if it did nothing more than transfer to me the care of our accounts. The changes which it has made are more vexatious. My wife has no longer the use of her understanding. She has no rule of action but the fashion. She has no opinion but that of the people of quality. She has no language but the dialect of her own set of company. She hates and admires in humble imitation; and echoes the words *charming* and *detestable* without consulting her own perceptions.

'If for a few minutes we sit down together, she entertains me with the repartees of Lady Cackle, or the conversation of Lord Whiffler and Miss Quick, and wonders to find me receiving with indifference sayings which put all the company into laughter.

'By her old friends she is no longer very willing to be seen, but she must not rid herself of them all at once; and is sometimes surprised by her best visitants in company which she would not show, and cannot hide; but from the moment that a countess enters, she takes care neither to hear nor see them: they soon find themselves neglected, and retire; and she tells her ladyship that they are somehow related at a great distance, and that as they are good sort of people she cannot be rude to them.

'As by this ambitious union with those that are above her, she is always forced upon disadvantageous comparisons of her condition with theirs, she has a constant source of misery within; and never returns from glittering assemblies and magnificent apartments, but she growls out her discontent, and wonders why she was doomed to so indigent a state. When she attends the duchess to a sale, she always sees something that she cannot buy; and, that she may

not seem wholly insignificant, she will sometimes venture to bid, and often make acquisitions which she did not want at prices which she cannot afford.

'What adds to all this uneasiness is, that this expense is without use, and this vanity without honour; she forsakes houses where she might be courted, for those where she is only suffered; her equals are daily made her enemies, and her superiors will never be her friends.

'I am, SIR,

'Yours, &c.'

N° 54. SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'You have lately entertained your admirers with the case of an unfortunate husband, and thereby given a demonstrative proof you are not averse even to hear appeals and terminate differences between man and wife; I therefore take the liberty to present you with the case of an injured lady, which, as it chiefly relates to what I think the lawyers call a point of law, I shall do in as juridical a manner as I am capable, and submit it to the consideration of the learned gentlemen of that profession.

'*Imprimis.* In the style of my marriage articles, a marriage was *had and solemnized*, about six month

ago, between me and Mr. Savecharges, a gentleman possessed of a plentiful fortune of his own, and one who, I was persuaded, would improve, and not spend, mine.

'Before our marriage, Mr. Savecharges had all along preferred the salutary exercise of walking on foot to the distempered ease, as he terms it, of lolling in a chariot; but, notwithstanding his fine panegyrics on walking, the great advantages the infantry were in the sole possession of, and the many dreadful dangers they escaped, he found I had very different notions of an equipage, and was not easily to be converted, or gained over to his party.

'An equipage I was determined to have, whenever I married. I too well knew the disposition of my intended consort to leave the providing one entirely to his honour, and flatter myself Mr. Savecharges has, in the articles made previous to our marriage, *agreed to keep me a coach;* but lest I should be mistaken, or the attorneys should not have done me justice in methodizing or legalizing these half dozen words, I will set about and transcribe that part of the agreement, which will explain the matter to you much better than can be done by one who is so deeply interested in the event; and show on what foundation I build my hopes of being soon under the transporting, delightful denomination of a fashionable lady, who enjoys the exalted and much-envied felicity of bowling about in her own coach.

"And further the said Solomon Savecharges, for divers good causes and considerations him hereunto moving, hath agreed, and doth hereby agree, that the said Solomon Savecharges shall and will, so soon as conveniently may be after the solemnization of the said intended marriage, at his own proper cost and

charges, find and provide a *certain vehicle or four-wheel carriage, commonly called or known by the name of a coach;* which said vehicle or wheel-carriage, so called or known by the name of a coach, shall be *used and enjoyed* by the said Sukey Modish, his intended wife," [pray mind that, Mr. Idler,] "at such times and in such manner as she the said Sukey Modish shall think fit and convenient."

'Such, Mr. Idler, is the agreement my *passionate admirer* entered into; and what the *dear frugal husband* calls a performance of it remains to be described. Soon after the ceremony of signing and sealing was over, our wedding-clothes being sent home, and, in short, every thing in readiness except the coach, my own shadow was scarcely more constant than my passionate lover in his attendance on me: wearied by his perpetual importunities for what he called a completion of his bliss, I consented to make him happy; in a few days I gave him my hand, and, attended by Hymen in his saffron robes, retired to a country-seat of my husband's, where the honey-moon flew over our heads ere we had time to recollect ourselves, or think of our engagements in town. Well, to town we came, and you may be sure, sir, I expected to step into my coach on my arrival here; but what was my surprise and disappointment, when, instead of this, he began to sound in my ears, "That the interest of money was low, very low; and what a terrible thing it was to be incumbered with a little regiment of servants in these hard times!" I could easily perceive what all this tended to, but would not seem to understand him; which made it highly necessary for Mr. Savecharges to explain himself more intelligibly; to harp upon and protest he dreaded the expense of keeping a coach. And truly, for his

part, he could not conceive how the pleasure resulting from such a convenience could be any way adequate to the heavy expense attending it. I now thought it high time to speak with equal plainness, and told him, as the fortune I brought fairly entitled me to ride in my own coach, and as I was sensible his circumstances would very well afford it, he must pardon me if I insisted on a performance of his agreement.

'I appeal to you, Mr. Idler, whether any thing could be more civil, more complaisant, than this? And, would you believe it? the creature in return, a few days after, accosted me, in an offended tone, with, "Madam, I can now tell you your coach is ready; and since you are so passionately fond of one, I intend *you* the honour of keeping a pair of horses.—You insisted upon having an article of pin-money, and horses are no part of my agreement." Base, designing wretch!—I beg your pardon, Mr. Idler, the very recital of such mean, ungentleman-like behaviour fires my blood, and lights up a flame within me. But hence, thou worst of monsters, ill-timed Rage, and let me not spoil my cause for want of temper.

'Now, though I am convinced I might make a worse use of part of the pin-money, than by extending my bounty towards the support of so useful a part of the brute creation; yet, like a true-born Englishwoman, I am so tenacious of my rights and privileges, and moreover so good a friend to the gentlemen of the law, that I protest, Mr. Idler, sooner than tamely give up the point, and be quibbled out of my right, I will receive my pin-money, as it were, with one hand, and pay it to them with the other; provided they will give me, or, which is the

same thing, my trustees, encouragement to commence a suit against this dear, frugal husband of mine.

'And of this I can't have the least shadow of doubt, inasmuch as I have been told by very good authority, it is some way or other laid down as a rule, "*That whenever* the law doth give any thing to one, it giveth impliedly whatever is necessary for the taking and enjoying the same[1]." Now, I would gladly know what enjoyment I, or any lady in the kingdom, can have of a coach without horses? The answer is obvious—None at all! For as Serjeant Catlyne very wisely observes, "Though a coach has wheels, to the end it may thereby and by virtue thereof be enabled to move; yet in point of utility it may as well have none, if they are not put in motion by means of its vital parts, that is, the horses."

'And therefore, sir, I humbly hope you and the learned in the law will be of opinion, that two certain animals, or quadruped creatures, commonly called or known by the name of horses, ought to be annexed to, and go along with, the coach.

'SUKEY SAVECHARGES.'

[1] Coke on Littleton.

N° 55. SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1759.

' TO THE IDLER.

' MR. IDLER,

' I HAVE taken the liberty of laying before you my complaint, and of desiring advice or consolation with the greater confidence, because I believe many other writers have suffered the same indignities with myself, and hope my quarrel will be regarded by you and your readers as the common cause of literature.

' Having been long a student, I thought myself qualified in time to become an author. My inquiries have been much diversified and far extended; and not finding my genius directing me by irresistible impulse to any particular subject, I deliberated three years which part of knowledge to illustrate by my labours. Choice is more often determined by accident than by reason: I walked abroad one morning with a curious lady, and by her inquiries and observations was incited to write the natural history of the county in which I reside.

' Natural history is no work for one that loves his chair or his bed. Speculation may be pursued on a soft couch, but nature must be observed in the open air. I have collected materials with indefatigable pertinacity. I have gathered glow-worms in the evening, and snails in the morning; I have seen the

daisy close and open; I have heard the owl shriek at midnight, and hunted insects in the heat of noon.

'Seven years I was employed in collecting animals and vegetables, and then found that my design was yet imperfect. The subterranean treasures of the place had been passed unobserved, and another year was to be spent in mines and coal-pits. What I had already done supplied a sufficient motive to do more. I acquainted myself with the black inhabitants of metallic caverns, and, in defiance of damps and floods, wandered through the gloomy labyrinths, and gathered fossils from every fissure.

'At last I began to write, and as I finished any section of my book, read it to such of my friends as were most skilful in the matter which it treated. None of them were satisfied; one disliked the disposition of the parts, another the colours of the style; one advised me to enlarge, another to abridge. I resolved to read no more, but to take my own way and write on, for by consultation I only perplexed my thoughts and retarded my work.

'The book was at last finished, and I did not doubt but my labour would be repaid by profit, and my ambition satisfied with honours. I considered that natural history is neither temporary nor local, and that though I limited my inquiries to my own country, yet every part of the earth has productions common to all the rest. Civil history may be partially studied, the revolutions of one nation may be neglected by another; but after that in which all have an interest, all must be inquisitive. No man can have sunk so far into stupidity as not to consider the properties of the ground on which he walks, of the plants on which he feeds, or the animals that delight his ear, or amuse his eye; and therefore I

computed that universal curiosity would call for many editions of my book, and that in five years I should gain fifteen thousand pounds by the sale of thirty thousand copies.

'When I began to write, I insured the house; and suffered the utmost solicitude when I entrusted my book to the carrier, though I had secured it against mischances by lodging two transcripts in different places. At my arrival, I expected that the patrons of learning would contend for the honour of a dedication, and resolved to maintain the dignity of letters by a haughty contempt of pecuniary solicitations.

'I took lodgings near the house of the Royal Society, and expected every morning a visit from the president. I walked in the Park, and wondered that I overheard no mention of the great naturalist. At last I visited a noble earl, and told him of my work: he answered, that he was under an engagement never to subscribe. I was angry to have that refused which I did not mean to ask, and concealed my design of making him immortal. I went next day to another, and, in resentment of my late affront, offered to prefix his name to my new book. He said, coldly, that *he did not understand those things;* another thought *there were too many books;* and another would *talk with me when the races were over.*

'Being amazed to find a man of learning so indecently slighted, I resolved to indulge the philosophical pride of retirement and independence. I then sent to some of the principal booksellers the plan of my book, and bespoke a large room in the next tavern, that I might more commodiously see them together, and enjoy the contest, while they were outbidding one another. I drank my coffee, and yet

nobody was come; at last I received a note from one, to tell me that he was going out of town; and from another, that natural history was out of his way. At last there came a grave man, who desired to see the work, and, without opening it, told me, that a book of that size *would never do.*

'I then condescended to step into shops, and mention my work to the masters. Some never dealt with authors; others had their hands full: some never had known such a dead time; others had lost by all that they had published for the last twelvemonth. One offered to print my work, if I could procure subscriptions for five hundred, and would allow me two hundred copies for my property. I lost my patience, and gave him a kick; for which he has indicted me.

'I can easily perceive that there is a combination among them to defeat my expectations; and I find it so general, that I am sure it must have been long concerted. I suppose some of my friends, to whom I read the first part, gave notice of my design, and, perhaps, sold the treacherous intelligence at a higher price than the fraudulence of trade will now allow me for my book.

'Inform me, Mr. Idler, what I must do; where must knowledge and industry find their recompence, thus neglected by the high, and cheated by the low! I sometimes resolve to print my book at my own expense, and, like the Sibyl, double the price; and sometimes am tempted, in emulation of Raleigh, to throw it into the fire, and leave this sordid generation to the curses of posterity. Tell me, dear Idler, what I shall do.

'I am, SIR, &c.'

N° 56. SATURDAY, MAY 12, 1759.

THERE is such difference between the pursuits of men, that one part of the inhabitants of a great city lives to little other purpose than to wonder at the rest. Some have hopes and fears, wishes and aversions, which never enter into the thoughts of others, and inquiry is laboriously exerted to gain that, which those who possess it are ready to throw away.

To those who are accustomed to value every thing by its use, and have no such superfluity of time or money as may prompt them to unnatural wants or capricious emulations, nothing appears more improbable or extravagant than the love of curiosities, or that desire of accumulating trifles, which distinguishes many by whom no other distinction could have ever been obtained.

He that has lived without knowing to what height desire may be raised by vanity, with what rapture baubles are snatched out of the hands of rival collectors, how the eagerness of one raises eagerness in another, and one worthless purchase makes a second necessary, may, by passing a few hours at an auction, learn more than can be shown by many volumes of maxims or essays.

'The advertisement of a sale is a signal which at once puts a thousand hearts in motion, and brings contenders from every part to the scene of distribution. He that had resolved to buy no more, feels

his constancy subdued; there is now something in the catalogue which completes his cabinet, and which he was never before able to find. He whose sober reflections inform him, that of adding collection to collection there is no end, and that it is wise to leave early that which must be left imperfect at last, yet cannot withhold himself from coming to see what it is that brings so many together, and when he comes is soon overpowered by his habitual passion; he is attracted by rarity, seduced by example, and inflamed by competition.

While the stores of pride and happiness are surveyed, one looks with longing eyes and gloomy countenance on that which he despairs to gain from a richer bidder; another keeps his eye with care from settling too long on that which he most earnestly desires; and another, with more art than virtue, depreciates that which he values most, in hopes to have it at an easy rate.

The novice is often surprised to see what minute and unimportant discriminations increase or diminish value. An irregular contortion of a turbinated shell, which common eyes pass unregarded, will ten times treble its price in the imagination of philosophers. Beauty is far from operating upon collectors as upon low and vulgar minds, even where beauty might be thought the only quality that could deserve notice. Among the shells that please by their variety of colours, if one can be found accidentally deformed by a cloudy spot, it is boasted as the pride of the collection. China is sometimes purchased for little less than its weight in gold, only because it is old, though neither less brittle, nor better painted, than the modern; and brown china is caught up with extasy, though no reason can be imagined for which it

should be preferred to common vessels of common clay.

The fate of prints and coins is equally inexplicable. Some prints are treasured up as inestimably valuable, because the impression was made before the plate was finished. Of coins the price rises not from the purity of the metal, the excellence of the workmanship, the elegance of the legend, or the chronological use. A piece, of which neither the inscription can be read, nor the face distinguished, if there remain of it but enough to show that it is rare, will be sought by contending nations, and dignify the treasury in which it shall be shown.

Whether this curiosity, so barren of immediate advantage, and so liable to depravation, does more harm or good, is not easily decided. Its harm is apparent at first view. It fills the mind with trifling ambition; fixes the attention upon things which have seldom any tendency towards virtue or wisdom; employs in idle inquiries the time that is given for better purposes; and often ends in mean and dishonest practices, when desire increases, by indulgence, beyond the power of honest gratification.

These are the effects of curiosity in excess; but what passion in excess will not become vicious? All indifferent qualities and practices are bad if they are compared with those which are good, and good if they are opposed to those that are bad. The pride or the pleasure of making collections, if it be restrained by prudence and morality, produces a pleasing remission after more laborious studies; furnishes an amusement not wholly unprofitable for that part of life, the greater part of many lives, which would otherwise be lost in idleness or vice; it produces an useful traffic between the industry of indigence and

the curiosity of wealth; it brings many things to notice that would be neglected, and, by fixing the thoughts upon intellectual pleasures, resists the natural encroachments of sensuality, and maintains the mind in her lawful superiority.

N° 57. SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1759.

PRUDENCE is of more frequent use than any other intellectual quality; it is exerted on slight occasions, and called into act by the cursory business of common life.

Whatever is universally necessary, has been granted to mankind on easy terms. Prudence, as it is always wanted, is without great difficulty obtained. It requires neither extensive view nor profound search, but forces itself, by spontaneous impulse, upon a mind neither great nor busy, neither engrossed by vast designs, nor distracted by multiplicity of attention.

Prudence operates on life in the same manner as rules on composition: it produces vigilance rather than elevation, rather prevents loss than procures advantage; and often escapes miscarriages, but seldom reaches either power or honour. It quenches that ardour of enterprize, by which every thing is done that can claim praise or admiration; and represses that generous temerity which often fails and often succeeds. Rules may obviate faults, but can never confer beauties; and prudence keeps life safe, but

does not often make it happy. The world is not amazed with prodigies of excellence, but when wit tramples upon rules, and magnanimity breaks the chains of prudence.

One of the most prudent of all that have fallen within my observation, is my old companion Sophron, who has passed through the world in quiet, by perpetual adherence to a few plain maxims, and wonders how contention and distress can so often happen.

The first principle of Sophron is to *run no hazards.* Though he loves money, he is of opinion, that frugality is a more certain source of riches than industry. It is to no purpose that any prospect of large profit is set before him; he believes little about futurity, and does not love to trust his money out of his sight, for nobody knows what may happen. He has a small estate, which he lets at the old rent, because *it is better to have a little than nothing;* but he rigorously demands payment on the stated day, for *he that cannot pay one quarter cannot pay two.* If he is told of any improvements in agriculture, he likes the old way, has observed that changes very seldom answer expectation, is of opinion that our forefathers knew how to till the ground as well as we; and concludes with an argument that nothing can overpower, that the expense of planting and fencing is immediate, and the advantage distant, and that *he is no wise man who will quit a certainty for an uncertainty.*

Another of Sophron's rules is, *to mind no business but his own.* In the state he is of no party; but hears and speaks of public affairs with the same coldness as of the administration of some ancient republic. If any flagrant act of fraud or oppression is mentioned, he hopes that *all is not true that is told:* if misconduct or corruption puts the nation in a flame, he hopes

that *every man means well.* At elections he leaves his dependants to their own choice, and declines to vote himself, for every candidate is a good man, whom he is unwilling to oppose or offend.

If disputes happen among his neighbours, he observes an invariable and cold neutrality. His punctuality has gained him the reputation of honesty, and his caution that of wisdom; and few would refuse to refer their claims to his award. He might have prevented many expensive law-suits, and quenched many a feud in its first smoke; but always refuses the office of arbitration, because he must decide against one or the other.

With the affairs of other families he is always unacquainted. He sees estates bought and sold, squandered and increased, without praising the economist, or censuring the spendthrift. He never courts the rising, lest they should fall; nor insults the fallen, lest they should rise again. His caution has the appearance of virtue, and all who do not want his help praise his benevolence; but, if any man solicits his assistance, he has just sent away all his money; and, when the petitioner is gone, declares to his family that he is sorry for his misfortunes, has always looked upon him with particular kindness, and therefore could not lend him money, lest he should destroy their friendship by the necessity of enforcing payment.

Of domestic misfortunes he has never heard. When he is told the hundredth time of a gentleman's daughter who has married the coachman, he lifts up his hands with astonishment, for he always thought her a very sober girl. When nuptial quarrels, after having filled the country with talk and laughter, at last end in separation, he never can conceive how

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it happened, for he looked upon them as a happy couple.

If his advice is asked, he never gives any particular direction, because events are uncertain, and he will bring no blame upon himself; but he takes the consulter tenderly by the hand, tells him he makes his case his own, and advises him not to act rashly, but to weigh the reasons on both sides; observes, that a man may be as easily too hasty as too slow, and that as many fail by doing too much as too little; that *a wise man has two ears and one tongue;* and that *little said is soon amended;* that he could tell him this and that, but that, after all, every man is the best judge of his own affairs.

With this some are satisfied, and go home with great reverence of Sophron's wisdom; and none are offended, because every one is left in full possession of his own opinion.

Sophron gives no characters. It is equally vain to tell him of vice and virtue; for he has remarked, that no man likes to be censured, and that very few are delighted with the praises of another. He has a few terms which he uses to all alike. With respect to fortune, he believes every family to be in good circumstances; he never exalts any understanding by lavish praise, yet he meets with none but very sensible people. Every man is honest and hearty; and every woman is a good creature.

Thus Sophron creeps along, neither loved nor hated, neither favoured nor opposed: he has never attempted to grow rich, for fear of growing poor; and has raised no friends, for fear of making enemies.

No 58. SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1759.

Pleasure is very seldom found where it is sought. Our brightest blazes of gladness are commonly kindled by unexpected sparks. The flowers which scatter their odours from time to time in the paths of life, grow up without culture from seeds scattered by chance.

Nothing is more hopeless than a scheme of merriment. Wits and humourists are brought together from distant quarters by preconcerted invitations; they come attended by their admirers prepared to laugh and to applaud; they gaze awhile on each other, ashamed to be silent, and afraid to speak; every man is discontented with himself, grows angry with those that give him pain, and resolves that he will contribute nothing to the merriment of such worthless company. Wine inflames the general malignity, and changes sullenness to petulance, till at last none can bear any longer the presence of the rest. They retire to vent their indignation in safer places, where they are heard with attention; their importance is restored, they recover their good-humour, and gladden the night with wit and jocularity.

Merriment is always the effect of a sudden impression. The jest which is expected is already destroyed. The most active imagination will be sometimes torpid under the frigid influence of melancholy, and sometimes occasions will be wanting to tempt the mind, however volatile, to sallies and excursions.

Nothing was ever said with uncommon felicity, but by the co-operation of chance; and, therefore, wit as well as valour must be content to share its honours with fortune.

All other pleasures are equally uncertain; the general remedy of uneasiness is change of place; almost every one has some journey of pleasure in his mind, with which he flatters his expectation. He that travels in theory has no inconvenience; he has shade and sunshine at his disposal, and wherever he alights finds tables of plenty and looks of gaiety. These ideas are indulged till the day of departure arrives, the chaise is called, and the progress of happiness begins.

A few miles teach him the fallacies of imagination. The road is dusty, the air is sultry, the horses are sluggish, and the postillion brutal. He longs for the time of dinner, that he may eat and rest. The inn is crowded, his orders are neglected, and nothing remains but that he devour in haste what the cook has spoiled, and drive on in quest of better entertainment. He finds at night a more commodious house, but the best is always worse than he expected.

He at last enters his native province, and resolves to feast his mind with the conversation of his old friends, and the recollection of juvenile frolics. He stops at the house of his friend, whom he designs to overpower with pleasure by the unexpected interview. He is not known till he tells his name, and revives the memory of himself by a gradual explanation. He is then coldly received and ceremoniously feasted. He hastes away to another, whom his affairs have called to a distant place, and, having seen the empty house, goes away disgusted, by a disappointment which could not be intended because it could

not be foreseen. At the next house he finds every face clouded with misfortune, and is regarded with malevolence as an unreasonable intruder, who comes not to visit but to insult them.

It is seldom that we find either men or places such as we expect them. He that has pictured a prospect upon his fancy, will receive little pleasure from his eyes; he that has anticipated the conversation of a wit, will wonder to what prejudice he owes his reputation. Yet it is necessary to hope, though hope should always be deluded; for hope itself is happiness, and its frustrations, however frequent, are yet less dreadful than its extinction.

N° 59. SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1759.

In the common enjoyments of life, we cannot very liberally indulge the present hour, but by anticipating part of the pleasure which might have relieved the tediousness of another day; and any uncommon exertion of strength, or perseverance in labour, is succeeded by a long interval of languor and weariness. Whatever advantage we snatch beyond the certain portion allotted us by nature, is like money spent before it is due, which at the time of regular payment will be missed and regretted.

Fame, like all other things which are supposed to give or to increase happiness, is dispensed with the same equality of distribution. He that is loudly praised will be clamorously censured; he that rises

hastily into fame will be in danger of sinking suddenly into oblivion.

Of many writers who filled their age with wonder, and whose names we find celebrated in the books of their contemporaries, the works are now no longer to be seen, or are seen only amidst the lumber of libraries which are seldom visited, where they lie only to show the deceitfulness of hope, and the uncertainty of honour.

Of the decline of reputation many causes may be assigned. It is commonly lost because it never was deserved; and was conferred at first, not by the suffrage of criticism, but by the fondness of friendship, or servility of flattery. The great and popular are very freely applauded; but all soon grow weary of echoing to each other a name, which has no other claim to notice, but that many mouths are pronouncing it at once.

But many have lost the final reward of their labours, because they were too hasty to enjoy it. They have laid hold on recent occurrences, and eminent names, and delighted their readers with allusions and remarks, in which all were interested, and to which all therefore were attentive. But the effect ceased with its cause; the time quickly came when new events drove the former from memory, when the vicissitudes of the world brought new hopes and fears, transferred the love and hatred of the public to other agents, and the writer, whose works were no longer assisted by gratitude or resentment, was left to the cold regard of idle curiosity.

He that writes upon general principles, or delivers universal truths, may hope to be often read, because his work will be equally useful at all times and in every country; but he cannot expect it to be received

with eagerness, or to spread with rapidity, because desire can have no particular stimulation: that which is to be loved long, must be loved with reason rather than with passion. He that lays out his labours upon temporary subjects, easily finds readers, and quickly loses them; for what should make the book valued when its subject is no more?

These observations will show the reason why the poem of Hudibras is almost forgotten, however embellished with sentiments and diversified with allusions, however bright with wit, and however solid with truth. The hypocrisy which it detected, and the folly which it ridiculed, have long vanished from public notice. Those who had felt the mischief of discord, and the tyranny of usurpation, read it with rapture, for every line brought back to memory something known, and gratified resentment by the just censure of something hated. But the book which was once quoted by princes, and which supplied conversation to all the assemblies of the gay and witty, is now seldom mentioned, and even by those that affect to mention it, is seldom read. So vainly is wit lavished upon fugitive topics, so little can architecture secure duration when the ground is false.

N° 60. SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 1759.

CRITICISM is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may by mere labour be obtained is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a Critic.

I hope it will give comfort to great numbers who are passing through the world in obscurity, when I inform them how easily distinction may be obtained. All the other powers of literature are coy and haughty, they must be long courted, and at last are not always gained; but Criticism is a goddess easy of access and forward of advance, who will meet the slow, and encourage the timorous; the want of meaning she supplies with words, and the want of spirit she recompenses with malignity.

This profession has one recommendation peculiar to itself, that it gives vent to malignity without real mischief. No genius was ever blasted by the breath of critics. The poison which, if confined, would have burst the heart, fumes away in empty hisses, and malice is set at ease with very little danger to merit. The critic is the only man whose triumph is without another's pain, and whose greatness does not rise upon another's ruin.

To a study at once so easy and so reputable, so malicious and so harmless, it cannot be necessary to invite my readers by a long or laboured exhortation; it is sufficient, since all would be critics if they could, to show by one eminent example that all can be critics if they will.

Dick Minim, after the common course of puerile studies, in which he was no great proficient, was put an apprentice to a brewer, with whom he had lived two years, when his uncle died in the city, and left him a large fortune in the stocks. Dick had for six months before used the company of the lower players, of whom he had learned to scorn a trade, and, being now at liberty to follow his genius, he resolved to be a man of wit and humour. That he might be properly initiated in his new character, he frequented the coffee-houses near the theatres, where he listened very diligently, day after day, to those who talked of language and sentiments, and unities and catastrophes, till by slow degrees he began to think that he understood something of the stage, and hoped in time to talk himself.

But he did not trust so much to natural sagacity as wholly to neglect the help of books. When the theatres were shut, he retired to Richmond with a few select writers, whose opinions he impressed upon his memory by unwearied diligence; and, when he returned with other wits to the town, was able to tell, in very proper phrases, that the chief business of art is to copy nature; that a perfect writer is not to be expected, because genius decays as judgment increases; that the great art is the art of blotting; and that, according to the rule of Horace, every piece should be kept nine years.

Of the great authors he now began to display the characters, laying down as an universal position, that all had beauties and defects. His opinion was, that Shakspeare, committing himself wholly to the impulse of nature, wanted that correctness which learning would have given him; and that Jonson, trusting to learning, did not sufficiently cast his eye on nature. He blamed the *stanza* of Spenser, and could not bear the *hexameters* of Sidney. Denham and Waller he held the first reformers of English numbers; and thought that if Waller could have obtained the strength of Denham, or Denham the sweetness of Waller, there had been nothing wanting to complete a poet. He often expressed his commiseration of Dryden's poverty, and his indignation at the age which suffered him to write for bread; he repeated with rapture the first lines of All for Love, but wondered at the corruption of taste which could bear any thing so unnatural as rhyming tragedies. In Otway he found uncommon powers of moving the passions, but was disgusted by his general negligence, and blamed him for making a conspirator his hero; and never concluded his disquisition, without remarking how happily the sound of the clock is made to alarm the audience. Southern would have been his favourite, but that he mixes comic with tragic scenes, intercepts the natural course of the passions, and fills the mind with a wild confusion of mirth and melancholy. The versification of Rowe he thought too melodious for the stage, and too little varied in different passions. He made it the great fault of Congreve, that all his persons were wits, and that he always wrote with more art than nature. He considered Cato rather as a poem than a play, and allowed

Addison to be the complete master of allegory and grave humour, but paid no great deference to him as a critic. He thought the chief merit of Prior was in his easy tales and lighter poems, though he allowed that his Solomon had many noble sentiments elegantly expressed. In Swift he discovered an inimitable vein of irony, and an easiness which all would hope and few would attain. Pope he was inclined to degrade from a poet to a versifier, and thought his numbers rather luscious than sweet. He often lamented the neglect of Phædra and Hippolitus, and wished to see the stage under better regulations.

These assertions passed commonly uncontradicted; and if now and then an opponent started up, he was quickly repressed by the suffrages of the company, and Minim went away from every dispute with elation of heart and increase of confidence.

He now grew conscious of his abilities, and began to talk of the present state of dramatic poetry; wondered what was become of the comic genius which supplied our ancestors with wit and pleasantry, and why no writer could be found that durst now venture beyond a farce. He saw no reason for thinking that the vein of humour was exhausted, since we live in a country where liberty suffers every character to spread itself to its utmost bulk, and which therefore produces more originals than all the rest of the world together. Of tragedy he concluded business to be the soul, and yet often hinted that love predominates too much upon the modern stage.

He was now an acknowledged critic, and had his own seat in a coffee-house, and headed a party in the pit. Minim has more vanity than ill-nature, and seldom desires to do much mischief; he will perhaps

murmur a little in the ear of him that sits next him, but endeavours to influence the audience to favour, by clapping when an actor exclaims, *Ye gods!* or laments the misery of his country.

By degrees he was admitted to rehearsals; and many of his friends are of opinion, that our present poets are indebted to him for their happiest thoughts; by his contrivance the bell was rung twice in Barbarossa, and by his persuasion the author of Cleone concluded his play without a couplet; 'for what can be more absurd,' said Minim, 'than that part of a play should be rhymed, and part written in blank verse? and by what acquisition of faculties is the speaker, who never could find rhymes before, enabled to rhyme at the conclusion of an act?

He is the great investigator of hidden beauties, and is particularly delighted when he finds *the sound an echo to the sense.* He has read all our poets with particular attention to this delicacy of versification, and wonders at the supineness with which their works have been hitherto perused, so that no man has found the sound of a drum in this distich:

> 'When pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
> Was beat with fist instead of a stick;'

and that the wonderful lines upon honour and a bubble have hitherto passed without notice:

> 'Honour is like the glassy bubble,
> Which cost philosophers such trouble;
> Where, one part crack'd, the whole does fly,
> And wits are crack'd to find out why.'

'In these verses,' says Minim, 'we have two striking accommodations of the sound to the sense. It is impossible to utter the two lines emphatically with-

out an act like that which they describe; *bubble* and *trouble* causing a momentary inflation of the cheeks by the retention of the breath, which is afterwards forcibly emitted, as in the practice of *blowing bubbles*. But the greatest excellence is in the third line, which is *crack'd* in the middle to express a crack, and then shivers into monosyllables.' Yet has this diamond lain neglected with common stones, and among the innumerable admirers of Hudibras the observation of this superlative passage has been reserved for the sagacity of Minim.

N° 61. SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 1759.

Mr. Minim had now advanced himself to the zenith of critical reputation; when he was in the pit, every eye in the boxes was fixed upon him; when he entered his coffee-house, he was surrounded by circles of candidates, who passed their noviciate of literature under his tuition: his opinion was asked by all who had no opinion of their own, and yet loved to debate and decide; and no composition was supposed to pass in safety to posterity, till it had been secured by Minim's approbation.

Minim professes great admiration of the wisdom and munificence by which the academies of the continent were raised; and often wishes for some standard of taste, for some tribunal, to which merit may appeal from caprice, prejudice, and malignity. He has formed a plan for an academy of criticism,

where every work of imagination may be read before it is printed, and which shall authoritatively direct the theatres what pieces to receive or reject, to exclude or to revive.

Such an institution would, in Dick's opinion, spread the fame of English literature over Europe, and make London the metropolis of elegance and politeness, the place to which the learned and ingenious of all countries would repair for instruction and improvement, and where nothing would any longer be applauded or endured that was not conformed to the nicest rules, and finished with the highest elegance.

Till some happy conjunction of the planets shall dispose our princes or ministers to make themselves immortal by such an academy, Minim contents himself to preside four nights in a week in a critical society selected by himself, where he is heard without contradiction, and whence his judgment is disseminated through the great vulgar and the small.

When he is placed in the chair of criticism, he declares loudly for the noble simplicity of our ancestors, in opposition to the petty refinements, and ornamental luxuriance. Sometimes he is sunk in despair, and perceives false delicacy daily gaining ground, and sometimes brightens his countenance with a gleam of hope, and predicts the revival of the true sublime. He then fulminates his loudest censures against the monkish barbarity of rhyme; wonders how beings that pretend to reason can be pleased with one line always ending like another; tells how unjustly and unnaturally sense is sacrificed to sound; how often the best thoughts are mangled by the necessity of confining or extending them to the dimensions of a couplet; and rejoices that genius has, in our days, shaken off the shackles which had en-

cumbered it so long. Yet he allows that rhyme may sometimes be borne, if the lines be often broken, and the pauses judiciously diversified.

From blank verse he makes an easy transition to Milton, whom he produces as an example of the slow advance of lasting reputation. Milton is the only writer in whose books Minim can read for ever without weariness. What cause it is that exempts this pleasure from satiety he has long and diligently inquired, and believes it to consist in the perpetual variation of the numbers, by which the ear is gratified and the attention awakened. The lines that are commonly thought rugged and unmusical, he conceives to have been written to temper the melodious luxury of the rest, or to express things by a proper cadence: for he scarcely finds a verse that has not this favourite beauty; he declares that he could shiver in a hot-house when he reads that

ground
Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect or fire;'

and that, when Milton bewails his blindness, the verse,

'So thick a drop serene has quench'd these orbs,'

has, he knows not how, something that strikes him with an obscure sensation like that which he fancies would be felt from the sound of darkness.

Minim is not so confident of his rules of judgment as not very eagerly to catch new light from the name of the author. He is commonly so prudent as to spare those whom he cannot resist, unless, as will sometimes happen, he finds the public combined against them. But a fresh pretender to fame he is

strongly inclined to censure, till his own honour requires that he commend him. Till he knows the success of a composition, he intrenches himself in general terms; there are some new thoughts and beautiful passages, but there is likewise much which he would have advised the author to expunge. He has several favourite epithets, of which he has never settled the meaning, but which are very commodiously applied to books which he has not read, or cannot understand. One is *manly*, another is *dry*, another *stiff*, and another *flimsy*; sometimes he discovers delicacy of style, and sometimes meets with *strange expressions*.

He is never so great, or so happy, as when a youth of promising parts is brought to receive his directions for the prosecution of his studies. He then puts on a very serious air; he advises the pupil to read none but the best authors, and, when he finds one congenial to his own mind, to study his beauties, but avoid his faults, and, when he sits down to write, to consider how his favourite author would think at the present time on the present occasion. He exhorts him to catch those moments when he finds his thoughts expanded and his genius exalted, but to take care lest imagination hurry him beyond the bounds of nature. He holds diligence the mother of success; yet enjoins him, with great earnestness, not to read more than he can digest, and not to confuse his mind by pursuing studies of contrary tendencies. He tells him, that every man has his genius, and that Cicero could never be a poet. The boy retires illuminated, resolves to follow his genius, and to think how Milton would have thought: and Minim feasts upon his own beneficence till another day brings another pupil.

№ 62. SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'AN opinion prevails almost universally in the world, that he who has money has every thing. This is not a modern paradox, or the tenet of a small and obscure sect, but a persuasion which appears to have operated upon most minds in all ages, and which is supported by authorities so numerous and so cogent, that nothing but long experience could have given me confidence to question its truth.

'But experience is the test by which all the philosophers of the present age agree, that speculation must be tried; and I may be therefore allowed to doubt the power of money, since I have been a long time rich, and have not yet found that riches can make me happy.

'My father was a farmer, neither wealthy nor indigent, who gave me a better education than was suitable to my birth, because my uncle in the city declared me for his heir, and desired that I might be bred a gentleman. My uncle's wealth was the perpetual subject of conversation in the house; and when any little misfortune befel us, or any mortification dejected us, my father always exhorted me to hold up my head, for my uncle would never marry.

'My uncle, indeed, kept his promise. Having

his mind completely busied between his warehouse and the 'Change, he felt no tediousness of life, nor any want of domestic amusements. When my father died, he received me kindly; but, after a few months, finding no great pleasure in the conversation of each other, we parted; and he remitted me a small annuity, on which I lived a quiet and studious life, without any wish to grow great by the death of my benefactor.

'But though I never suffered any malignant impatience to take hold on my mind, I could not forbear sometimes to imagine to myself the pleasure of being rich: and, when I read of diversions and magnificence, [illegible]ved to try, when time should put the trial in my [illegible]wer, what pleasure they could afford.

'My uncle, in the latter spring of his life, when his ruddy cheek and his firm nerves promised him a long and healthy age, died of an apoplexy. His death gave me neither joy nor sorrow. He did me good, and I regarded him with gratitude; but I could not please him, and therefore could not love him.

'He had the policy of little minds, who love to surprise; and, having always represented his fortune as less than it was, had, I suppose, often gratified himself with thinking, how I should be delighted to find myself twice as rich as I expected. My wealth was such as exceeded all the schemes of expense which I had formed; and I soon began to expand my thoughts, and look round for some purchase of felicity.

'The most striking effect of riches is the splendour of dress, which every man has observed to enforce respect, and facilitate reception; and my first desire was to be fine. I sent for a tailor who was employed

by the nobility, and ordered such a suit of clothes as I had often looked on with involuntary submission, and am ashamed to remember with what flutters of expectation I waited for the hour when I should issue forth in all the splendour of embroidery. The clothes were brought, and for three days I observed many eyes turned towards me as I passed: but I felt myself obstructed in the common intercourse of civility, by an uneasy consciousness of my new appearance; as I thought myself more observed, I was more anxious about my mien and behaviour; and the mien which is formed by care is commonly ridiculous. A short time accustomed me to myself, and my dress was without pain and without pleasure.

'For a little while I tried to be a rake, but I began too late; and having by nature no turn for a frolic, was in great danger of ending in a drunkard. A fever, in which not one of my companions paid me a visit, gave me time for reflection. I found that there was no great pleasure in breaking windows and lying in the round-house; and resolved to associate no longer with those whom, though I had treated and bailed them, I could not make friends.

'I then changed my measures, kept running horses, and had the comfort of seeing my name very often in the news. I had a chesnut horse, the grandson of Childers, who won four plates, and ten by-matches; and a bay filly, who carried off the five years old plate, and was expected to perform much greater exploits, when my groom broke her wind, because I happened to catch him selling oats for beer. This happiness was soon at an end; there was no pleasure when I lost, and when I won I could not much exalt myself by the virtues of my horse. I grew ashamed

of the company of jockey lords, and resolved to spend no more of my time in the stable.

'It was now known that I had money and would spend it, and I passed four months in the company of architects, whose whole business was to persuade me to build a house. I told them that I had more room than I wanted, but could not get rid of their importunities. A new plan was brought me every morning; till at last my constancy was overpowered, and I began to build. The happiness of building lasted but a little while; for though I love to spend, I hate to be cheated; and I soon found, that to build is to be robbed.

'How I proceed in the pursuit of happiness, you shall hear when I find myself disposed to write.

'I am, SIR, &c.

'TIM. RANGER.'

N° 63. SATURDAY, JUNE 30, 1759.

THE natural progress of the works of men is from rudeness to convenience, from convenience to elegance, and from elegance to nicety.

The first labour is enforced by necessity. The savage finds himself incommoded by heat and cold, by rain and wind; he shelters himself in the hollow of a rock, and learns to dig a cave where there was none before. He finds the sun and the wind excluded by the thicket, and when the accidents of the chase, or the convenience of pasturage, leads him into more open places, he forms a thicket for himself, by planting stakes at proper distances, and laying branches from one to another.

The next gradation of skill and industry produces a house closed with doors, and divided by partitions; and apartments are multiplied and disposed according to the various degrees of power or invention; improvement succeeds improvement, as he that is freed from a greater evil grows impatient of a less, till ease in time is advanced to pleasure.

The mind, set free from the importunities of natural want, gains leisure to go in search of superfluous gratifications, and adds to the uses of habitation the delights of prospect. Then begins the reign of symmetry; orders of architecture are invented, and one part of the edifice is conformed to another, without any other reason, than that the eye may not be offended.

The passage is very short from elegance to luxury Ionic and Corinthian columns are soon succeeded by gilt cornices, inlaid floors, and petty ornaments, which show rather the wealth than the taste of the possessor.

Language proceeds, like every thing else, through improvement to degeneracy. The rovers who first take possession of a country, having not many ideas, and those not nicely modified or discriminated, were contented, if by general terms and abrupt sentences they could make their thoughts known to one another; as life begins to be more regulated, and property to become limited, disputes must be decided, and claims adjusted; the differences of things are noted, and distinctness and propriety of expression become necessary. In time, happiness and plenty give rise to curiosity, and the sciences are cultivated for ease and pleasure; to the arts, which are now to be taught, emulation soon adds the art of teaching; and the studious and ambitious contend not only who shall think best, but who shall tell their thoughts in the most pleasing manner.

Then begin the arts of rhetoric and poetry, the regulation of figures, the selection of words, the modulation of periods, the graces of transition, the complication of clauses, and all the delicacies of style and subtilties of composition, useful while they advance perspicuity, and laudable while they increase pleasure; but easy to be refined by needless scrupulosity, till they shall more embarrass the writer than assist the reader or delight him.

The first state is commonly antecedent to the practice of writing; the ignorant essays of imperfect diction pass away with the savage generation that uttered them. No nation can trace their language be-

yond the second period, and even of that it does not often happen that many monuments remain.

The fate of the English tongue is like that of others. We know nothing of the scanty jargon of our barbarous ancestors; but we have specimens of our language when it began to be adapted to civil and religious purposes, and find it such as might naturally be expected, artless and simple, unconnected and concise. The writers seem to have desired little more than to be understood, and perhaps seldom aspired to the praise of pleasing. Their verses were considered chiefly as memorial, and therefore did not differ from prose but by the measure or the rhyme.

In this state, varied a little according to the different purposes or abilities of writers, our language may be said to have continued to the time of Gower, whom Chaucer calls his master, and who, however obscured by his scholar's popularity, seems justly to claim the honour which has been hitherto denied him, of showing his countrymen that something more was to be desired, and that English verse might be exalted into poetry.

From the time of Gower and Chaucer, the English writers have studied elegance, and advanced their language, by successive improvements, to as much harmony as it can easily receive, and as much copiousness as human knowledge has hitherto required. These advances have not been made at all times with the same diligence or the same success. Negligence has suspended the course of improvement, or affectation turned it aside; time has elapsed with little change, or change has been made without amendment. But elegance has been long kept in view with attention as near to constancy as life permits, till

every man now endeavours to excel others in accuracy, or outshine them in splendour of style, and the danger is, lest care should too soon pass to affectation.

N° 64. SATURDAY, JULY 7, 1759.

TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'As nature has made every man desirous of happiness, I flatter myself, that you and your readers cannot but feel some curiosity to know the sequel of my story; for though, by trying the different schemes of pleasure, I have yet found nothing in which I could finally acquiesce; yet the narrative of my attempts will not be wholly without use, since we always approach nearer to truth as we detect more and more varieties of error.

'When I had sold my racers, and put the orders of architecture out of my head, my next resolution was to be a *fine gentleman*. I frequented the polite coffee-houses, grew acquainted with all the men of humour, and gained the right of bowing familiarly to half the nobility. In this new scene of life my great labour was to learn to laugh. I had been used to consider laughter as the effect of merriment; but I soon learned that it is one of the arts of adulation, and, from laughing only to show that I was pleased,

I now began to laugh when I wished to please. This was at first very difficult. I sometimes heard the story with dull indifference, and, not exalting myself to merriment by due gradations, burst out suddenly into an awkward noise, which was not always favourably interpreted. Sometimes I was behind the rest of the company, and lost the grace of laughing by delay, and sometimes when I began at the right time was deficient in loudness or in length. But, by diligent imitation of the best models, I attained at last such flexibility of muscles, that I was always a welcome auditor of a story, and got the reputation of a good-natured fellow.

'This was something; but much more was to be done, that I might be universally allowed to be a fine gentleman. I appeared at court on all public days; betted at gaming tables; and played at all the routs of eminence. I went every night to the opera, took a fiddler of disputed merit under my protection, became the head of a musical faction, and had sometimes concerts at my own house. I once thought to have attained the highest rank of elegance, by taking a foreign singer into keeping. But my favourite fiddler contrived to be arrested on the night of a concert, for a finer suit of clothes than I had ever presumed to wear, and I lost all the fame of patronage by refusing to bail him.

'My next ambition was to sit for my picture. I spent a whole winter in going from painter to painter, to bespeak a whole length of one, and a half length of another; I talked of nothing but attitudes, draperies, and proper lights; took my friends to see the pictures after every sitting; heard every day of a wonderful performer in crayons and miniature, and sent my pictures to be copied; was told by the judges

that they were not like, and was recommended to other artists. At length, being not able to please my friends, I grew less pleased myself, and at last resolved to think no more about it.

'It was impossible to live in total idleness: and wandering about in search of something to do, I was invited to a weekly meeting of virtuosos, and felt myself instantaneously seized with an unextinguishable ardour for all natural curiosities. I ran from auction to auction, became a critic in shells and fossils, bought a *Hortus siccus* of inestimable value, and purchased a secret art of preserving insects, which made my collection the envy of the other philosophers. I found this pleasure mingled with much vexation. All the faults of my life were for nine months circulated through the town with the most active malignity, because I happened to catch a moth of peculiar variegation; and because I once outbid all the lovers of shells and carried off a nautilus, it was hinted that the validity of my uncle's will ought to be disputed. I will not deny that I was very proud both of the moth and of the shell, and gratified myself with the envy of my companions, perhaps more than became a benevolent being. But in time I grew weary of being hated for that which produced no advantage, gave my shells to children that wanted play-things, and suppressed the art of drying butterflies, because I would not tempt idleness and cruelty to kill them.

'I now began to feel life tedious, and wished to store myself with friends, with whom I might grow old in the interchange of benevolence. I had observed that popularity was most easily gained by an open table, and therefore hired a French cook, furnished my sideboard with great magnificence, filled my cellar

with wines of pompous appellations, bought every thing that was dear before it was good, and invited all those who were most famous for judging of a dinner. In three weeks my cook gave me warning, and, upon inquiry, told me that Lord Queasy, who dined with me the day before, had sent him an offer of double wages. My pride prevailed; I raised his wages, and invited his lordship to another feast. I love plain meat, and was therefore soon weary of spreading a table of which I could not partake. I found that my guests, when they went away, criticised their entertainment, and censured my profusion; my cook thought himself necessary, and took upon him the direction of the house; and I could not rid myself of flatterers, or break from slavery, but by shutting up my house, and declaring my resolution to live in lodgings.

'After all this, tell me, dear Idler, what I must do next; I have health, I have money, and I hope that I have understanding; yet, with all these, I have never been able to pass a single day which I did not wish at an end before sun-set. Tell me, dear Idler, what I shall do. I am

'Your humble servant,

'TIM. RANGER.'

N° 65. SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1759.

The sequel of Clarendon's history, at last happily published, is an accession to English literature equally agreeable to the admirers of elegance and the lovers of truth; many doubtful facts may now be ascertained, and many questions, after long debate, may be determined by decisive authority. He that records transactions in which himself was engaged, has not only an opportunity of knowing innumerable particulars which escape spectators, but has his natural powers exalted by that ardour which always rises at the remembrance of our own importance, and by which every man is enabled to relate his own actions better than another's.

The difficulties through which this work has struggled into light, and the delays with which our hopes have been long mocked, naturally lead the mind to the consideration of the common fate of posthumous compositions.

He who sees himself surrounded by admirers, and whose vanity is hourly feasted with all the luxuries of studied praise, is easily persuaded that his influence will be extended beyond his life; that they who cringe in his presence will reverence his memory, and that those who are proud to be numbered among his friends, will endeavour to vindicate his choice by zeal for his reputation.

With hopes like these, to the executors of Swift was committed the history of the last years of Queen Anne; and to those of Pope, the works which remained unprinted in his closet. The performances of Pope were burnt by those whom he had perhaps selected from all mankind as most likely to publish them; and the history had likewise perished, had not a straggling transcript fallen into busy hands.

The papers left in the closet of Pieresc supplied his heirs with a whole winter's fuel; and many of the labours of the learned Bishop Lloyd were consumed in the kitchen of his descendants.

Some works, indeed, have escaped total destruction, but yet have had reason to lament the fate of orphans exposed to the frauds of unfaithful guardians. How Hale would have borne the mutilations which his Pleas of the Crown have suffered from the editor, they who know his character will easily conceive.

The original copy of Burnet's history, though promised to some public library[1], has been never given; and who then can prove the fidelity of the publication, when the authenticity of Clarendon's history, though printed with the sanction of one of the first universities of the world, had not an unexpected manuscript been happily discovered, would, with the help of factious credulity, have been brought into question by the two lowest of all human beings, a scribbler for a party, and a commissioner of excise?

[1] It would be proper to reposite, in some public place, the manuscript of Clarendon, which has not escaped all suspicion of unfaithful publication.

Vanity is often no less mischievous than negligence or dishonesty. He that possesses a valuable manuscript, hopes to raise its esteem by concealment, and delights in the distinction which he imagines himself to obtain by keeping the key of a treasure which he neither uses nor imparts. From him it falls to some other owner, less vain but more negligent, who considers it as useless lumber, and rids himself of the encumbrance.

Yet there are some works which the authors must consign unpublished to posterity, however uncertain be the event, however hopeless be the trust. He that writes the history of his own times, if he adheres steadily to truth, will write that which his own times will not easily endure. He must be content to repposite his book till all private passions shall cease, and love and hatred give way to curiosity.

But many leave the labours of half their life to their executors and to chance, because they will not send them abroad unfinished, and are unable to finish them, having prescribed to themselves such a degree of exactness as human diligence can scarcely attain. *Lloyd*, says Burnet, *did not lay out his learning with the same diligence as he laid it in.* He was always hesitating and inquiring, raising objections and removing them, and waiting for clearer light and fuller discovery. Baker, after many years passed in biography, left his manuscripts to be buried in a library, because that was imperfect which could never be perfected.

Of these learned men, let those who aspire to the same praise imitate the diligence, and avoid the scrupulosity. Let it be always remembered that life is short, that knowledge is endless, and that many doubts deserve not to be cleared. Let those whom

nature and study have qualified to teach mankind, tell us what they have learned while they are yet able to tell it, and trust their reputation only to themselves.

N° 66. SATURDAY, JULY 21, 1759.

No complaint is more frequently repeated among the learned, than that of the waste made by time among the labours of antiquity. Of those who once filled the civilized world with their renown, nothing is now left but their names, which are left only to raise desires that never can be satisfied, and sorrow which never can be comforted.

Had all the writings of the ancients been faithfully delivered down from age to age, had the Alexandrian library been spared, and the Palatine repositories remained unimpaired, how much might we have known of which we are now doomed to be ignorant! how many laborious inquiries, and dark conjectures, how many collations of broken hints and mutilated passages, might have been spared! We should have known the successions of princes, the revolutions of empire, the actions of the great, and opinions of the wise, the laws and constitutions of every state, and the arts by which public grandeur and happiness are acquired and preserved; we should have traced the progress of life, seen colonies from distant regions

take possession of European deserts, and troops of savages settled into communities by the desire of keeping what they had acquired; we should have traced the gradations of civility, and travelled upward to the original of things by the light of history, till in remoter times it had glimmered in fable, and at last sunk into darkness.

If the works of imagination had been less diminished, it is likely that all future times might have been supplied with inexhaustible amusement by the fictions of antiquity. The tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides would have shown all the stronger passions in all their diversities; and the comedies of Menander would have furnished all the maxims of domestic life. Nothing would have been necessary to moral wisdom but to have studied these great masters, whose knowledge would have guided doubt, and whose authority would have silenced cavils.

Such are the thoughts that rise in every student, when his curiosity is eluded, and his searches are frustrated; yet it may perhaps be doubted, whether our complaints are not sometimes inconsiderate, and whether we do not imagine more evil than we feel. Of the ancients, enough remains to excite our emulation and direct our endeavours. Many of the works which time has left us, we know to have been those that were most esteemed, and which antiquity itself considered as models; so that, having the originals, we may without much regret lose the imitations. The obscurity which the want of contemporary writers often produces, only darkens single passages, and those commonly of slight importance. The general tendency of every piece may be known; and though that diligence deserves praise which leaves nothing unexamined, yet its miscarriages are not

much to be lamented; for the most useful truths are always universal, and unconnected with accidents and customs.

Such is the general conspiracy of human nature against contemporary merit, that, if we had inherited from antiquity enough to afford employment for the laborious, and amusement for the idle, I know not what room would have been left for modern genius or modern industry; almost every subject would have been pre-occupied, and every style would have been fixed by a precedent from which few would have ventured to depart. Every writer would have had a rival, whose superiority was already acknowledged, and to whose fame his work would, even before it was seen, be marked out for a sacrifice.

We see how little the united experience of mankind hath been able to add to the heroic characters displayed by Homer, and how few incidents the fertile imagination of modern Italy has yet produced, which may not be found in the Iliad and Odyssey. It is likely, that if all the works of the Athenian philosophers had been extant, Malbranche and Locke would have been condemned to be silent readers of the ancient metaphysicians; and it is apparent, that, if the old writers had all remained, the Idler could not have written a disquisition on the loss.

N° 67. SATURDAY, JULY 28, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'IN the observations which you have made on the various opinions and pursuits of mankind, you must often, in literary conversations, have met with men who consider dissipation as the great enemy of the intellect; and maintain, that, in proportion as the student keeps himself within the bounds of a settled plan, he will more certainly advance in science.

'This opinion is, perhaps, generally true; yet when we contemplate the inquisitive nature of the human mind, and its perpetual impatience of all restraint, it may be doubted whether the faculties may not be contracted by confining the attention; and whether it may not sometimes be proper to risk the certainty of little for the chance of much. Acquisitions of knowledge, like blazes of genius, are often fortuitous. Those who had proposed to themselves a methodical course of reading, light by accident on a new book, which seizes their thoughts and kindles their curiosity, and opens an unexpected prospect, to which the way which they had prescribed to themselves would never have conducted them.

'To enforce and illustrate my meaning, I have sent you a journal of three days' employment, found among the papers of a late intimate acquaintance; who, as will plainly appear, was a man of vast designs, and of vast performances, though he sometimes

designed one thing, and performed another. I allow that the Spectator's inimitable productions of this kind may well discourage all subsequent journalists; but, as the subject of this is different from that of any which the Spectator has given us, I leave it to you to publish or suppress it.

"*Mem.* The following three days I propose to give up to reading; and intend, after all the delays which have intruded themselves upon me, to finish my Essay on the Extent of the Mental Powers; to revise my Treatise on Logic; to begin the Epic which I have long projected; to proceed in my perusal of the Scriptures with Grotius's Comment; and at my leisure to regale myself with the works of classics, ancient and modern, and to finish my Ode to Astronomy.

"Monday.] Designed to rise at six, but, by my servant's laziness, my fire was not lighted before eight, when I dropped into a slumber that lasted till nine; at which time I arose, and, after breakfast, at ten sat down to study, proposing to begin upon my Essay; but, finding occasion to consult a passage in Plato, was absorbed in the perusal of the Republic till twelve. I had neglected to forbid company, and now enters Tom Careless, who, after half an hour's chat, insisted upon my going with him to enjoy an absurd character, that he had appointed, by an advertisement, to meet him at a particular coffee-house. After we had for some time entertained ourselves with him, we sallied out, designing each to repair to his home; but, as it fell out, coming up in the street to a man whose steel by his side declared him a butcher, we overheard him opening an address to a

genteelish sort of young lady, whom he walked with: 'Miss, though your father is master of a coal-lighter, and you will be a great fortune, 'tis true; yet I wish I may be cut into quarters if it is not only love, and not lucre of gain, that is my motive for offering terms of marriage.' As this lover proceeded in his speech, he misled us the length of three streets, in admiration at the unlimited power of the tender passion, that could soften even the heart of a butcher. We then adjourned to a tavern, and from thence to one of the public gardens, where I was regaled with a most amusing variety of men possessing great talents, so discoloured by affectation, that they only made them eminently ridiculous; shallow things, who, by continual dissipation, had annihilated the few ideas nature had given them, and yet were celebrated for wonderful pretty gentlemen; young ladies extolled for their wit, because they were handsome; illiterate empty women as well as men, in high life, admired for their knowledge, from their being resolutely positive; and women of real understanding so far from pleasing the polite million, that they frightened them away, and were left solitary. When we quitted this entertaining scene, Tom pressed me irresistibly to sup with him. I reached home at twelve, and then reflected, that though indeed I had, by remarking various characters, improved my insight into human nature, yet still I had neglected the studies proposed, and accordingly took up my Treatise on Logic, to give it the intended revisal, but found my spirits too much agitated, and could not forbear a few satirical lines, under the title of the Evening's Walk.

"Tuesday.] At breakfast, seeing my Ode to Astronomy lying on my desk, I was struck with a train of

ideas, that I thought might contribute to its improvement. I immediately rang my bell to forbid all visitants, when my servant opened the door, with, 'Sir, Mr. Jeffery Gape.' My cup dropped out of one hand, and my poem out of the other. I could scarcely ask him to sit; he told me he was going to walk, but, as there was a likelihood of rain, he would sit with me: he said, he intended at first to have called at Mr. Vacant's, but, as he had not seen me a great while, he did not mind coming out of his way to wait on me; I made him a bow, but thanks for the favour stuck in my throat. I asked him if he had been to the coffee-house; he replied, two hours.

"Under the oppression of this dull interruption, I sat looking wishfully at the clock; for which, to increase my satisfaction, I had chosen the inscription, 'Art is long, and life is short;' exchanging questions and answers at long intervals, and not without some hints that the weather-glass promised fair weather. At half an hour after three he told me he would trespass on me for a dinner, and desired me to send to his house for a bundle of papers, about inclosing a common upon his estate, which he would read to me in the evening. I declared myself busy, and Mr. Gape went away.

"Having dined, to compose my chagrin I took up Virgil, and several other classics, but could not calm my mind, or proceed in my scheme. At about five I laid my hand on a Bible that lay on my table, at first with coldness and insensibility; but was imperceptibly engaged in a close attention to its sublime morality, and felt my heart expanded by warm philanthropy, and exalted to dignity of sentiment. I then censured my too great solicitude, and my dis-

gust conceived at my acquaintance, who had been so far from designing to offend, that he only meant to show kindness and respect. In this strain of mind I wrote an Essay on Benevolence, and an Elegy on Sublunary Disappointments. When I had finished these, at eleven, I supped, and recollected how little I had adhered to my plan, and almost questioned the possibility of pursuing any settled and uniform design; however, I was not so far persuaded of the truth of these suggestions, but that I resolved to try once more at my scheme. As I observed the moon shining through my window, from a calm and bright sky spangled with innumerable stars, I indulged a pleasing meditation on the splendid scene, and finished my Ode to Astronomy.

"Wednesday.] Rose at seven, and employed three hours in perusal of the Scriptures with Grotius's Comment; and after breakfast fell into meditation concerning my projected Epic; and being in some doubt as to the particular lives of some heroes, whom I proposed to celebrate, I consulted Bayle and Moreri, and was engaged two hours in examining various lives and characters, but then resolved to go to my employment. When I was seated at my desk, and began to feel the glowing succession of poetical ideas, my servant brought me a letter from a lawyer, requiring my instant attendance at Gray's Inn for half an hour. I went full of vexation, and was involved in business till eight at night; and then, being too much fatigued to study, supped, and went to bed."

'Here my friend's journal concludes, which perhaps is pretty much a picture of the manner in which

many prosecute their studies. I therefore resolved to send it you, imagining that, if you think it worthy of appearing in your paper, some of your readers may receive entertainment by recognising a resemblance between my friend's conduct and their own. It must be left to the Idler accurately to ascertain the proper methods of advancing in literature; but this one position, deducible from what has been said above, may, I think, be reasonably asserted, that he who finds himself strongly attracted to any particular study, though it may happen to be out of his proposed scheme, if it is not trifling or vicious, had better continue his application to it, since it is likely that he will, with much more ease and expedition, attain that which a warm inclination stimulates him to pursue, than that at which a prescribed law compels him to toil.

'I am, &c.'

No 68. SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1759.

AMONG the studies which have exercised the ingenious and the learned for more than three centuries, none has been more diligently or more successfully cultivated than the art of translation; by which the impediments which bar the way to science are, in some measure, removed, and the multiplicity of languages become less incommodious.

Of every other kind of writing the ancients have left us models which all succeeding ages have laboured to imitate; but translation may justly be claimed by the moderns as their own. In the first ages of the world instruction was commonly oral, and learning traditional, and what was not written could not be translated. When alphabetical writing made the conveyance of opinions and the transmission of events more easy and certain, literature did not flourish in more than one country at once, or distant nations had little commerce with each other; and those few whom curiosity sent abroad in quest of improvement, delivered their acquisitions in their own manner, desirous perhaps to be considered as the inventors of that which they had learned from others.

The Greeks for a time travelled into Egypt, but they translated no books from the Egyptian language; and when the Macedonians had overthrown the empire of Persia, the countries that became subject to Grecian dominion studied only the Grecian literature. The books of the conquered nations, if they had any

among them, sunk into oblivion; Greece considered herself as the mistress, if not as the parent of arts, her language contained all that was supposed to be known, and, except the sacred writings of the Old Testament, I know not that the library of Alexandria adopted any thing from a foreign tongue.

The Romans confessed themselves the scholars of the Greeks, and do not appear to have expected, what has since happened, that the ignorance of succeeding ages would prefer them to their teachers. Every man, who in Rome aspired to the praise of literature, thought it necessary to learn Greek, and had no need of versions when they could study the originals. Translation, however, was not wholly neglected. Dramatic poems could be understood by the people in no language but their own, and the Romans were sometimes entertained with the tragedies of Euripides and the comedies of Menander. Other works were sometimes attempted; in an old scholiast there is mention of a Latin Iliad; and we have not wholly lost Tully's version of the poem of Aratus; but it does not appear that any man grew eminent by interpreting another, and perhaps it was more frequent to translate for exercise or amusement, than for fame.

The Arabs were the first nation who felt the ardour of translation: when they had subdued the eastern provinces of the Greek empire, they found their captives wiser than themselves, and made haste to relieve their wants by imparted knowledge. They discovered that many might grow wise by the labour of a few, and that improvements might be made with speed, when they had the knowledge of former ages in their own language. They therefore made haste to lay hold on medicine and philosophy, and

turned their chief authors into Arabic. Whether they attempted the poets is not known; their literary zeal was vehement, but it was short, and probably expired before they had time to add the arts of elegance to those of necessity.

The study of ancient literature was interrupted in Europe by the irruption of the Northern nations, who subverted the Roman empire, and erected new kingdoms with new languages. It is not strange, that such confusion should suspend literary attention; those who lost, and those who gained dominion, had immediate difficulties to encounter, and immediate miseries to redress, and had little leisure, amidst the violence of war, the trepidation of flight, the distresses of forced migration, or the tumults of unsettled conquest, to inquire after speculative truth, to enjoy the amusement of imaginary adventures, to know the history of former ages, or study the events of any other lives. But no sooner had this chaos of dominion sunk into order, than learning began again to flourish in the calm of peace. When life and possessions were secure, convenience and enjoyment were soon sought, learning was found the highest gratification of the mind, and translation became one of the means by which it was imparted.

At last, by a concurrence of many causes, the European world was rouzed from its lethargy; those arts which had been long obscurely studied in the gloom of monasteries became the general favourites of mankind; every nation vied with its neighbour for the prize of learning; the epidemical emulation spread from south to north, and curiosity and translation found their way to Britain.

N° 69. SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1759.

He that reviews the progress of English literature, will find that translation was very early cultivated among us; but that some principles, either wholly erroneous or too far extended, hindered our success from being always equal to our diligence.

Chaucer, who is generally considered as the father of our poetry, has left a version of Boetius on the Comforts of Philosophy, the book which seems to have been the favourite of the middle ages, which had been translated into Saxon by King Alfred, and illustrated with a copious comment ascribed to Aquinas. It may be supposed that Chaucer would apply more than common attention to an author of so much celebrity, yet he has attempted nothing higher than a version strictly literal, and has degraded the poetical parts to prose, that the constraint of versification might not obstruct his zeal for fidelity.

Caxton taught us typography about the year 1474. The first book printed in English was a translation. Caxton was both the translator and printer of the Destruction of Troye, a book which, in that infancy of learning, was considered as the best account of the fabulous ages, and which, though now driven out of notice by authors of no greater use or value, still continued to be read in Caxton's English to the beginning of the present century.

Caxton proceeded as he began, and, except the

poems of Gower and Chaucer, printed nothing but translations from the French, in which the original is so scrupulously followed, that they afford us little knowledge of our own language; though the words are English, the phrase is foreign.

As learning advanced, new works were adopted into our language, but I think with little improvement of the art of translation, though foreign nations and other languages offered us models of a better method; till in the age of Elizabeth we began to find that greater liberty was necessary to elegance, and that elegance was necessary to general reception; some essays were then made upon the Italian poets, which deserve the praise and gratitude of posterity.

But the old practice was not suddenly forsaken; Holland filled the nation with literal translation; and, what is yet more strange, the same exactness was obstinately practised in the versions of the poets. This absurd labour of construing into rhyme was countenanced by Jonson in his version of Horace; and whether it be that more men have learning than genius, or that the endeavours of that time were more directed towards knowledge than delight, the accuracy of Jonson found more imitators than the elegance of Fairfax; and May, Sandys, and Holiday, confined themselves to the toil of rendering line for line, not indeed with equal felicity, for May and Sandys were poets, and Holiday only a scholar and a critic.

Feltham appears to consider it as the established law of poetical translation, that the lines should be neither more nor fewer than those of the original; and so long had this prejudice prevailed, that Denham praises Fanshaw's version of Guarini as the example of a *new and noble way*, as the first attempt to

break the boundaries of custom, and assert the natural freedom of the Muse.

In the general emulation of wit and genius which the festivity of the Restoration produced, the poets shook off their constraint, and considered translation as no longer confined to servile closeness. But reformation is seldom the work of pure virtue or unassisted reason. Translation was improved more by accident than conviction. The writers of the foregoing age had at least learning equal to their genius; and being often more able to explain the sentiments or illustrate the allusions of the ancients, than to exhibit their graces and transfuse their spirit, were perhaps willing sometimes to conceal their want of poetry by profusion of literature, and therefore translated literally, that their fidelity might shelter their insipidity or harshness. The wits of Charles's time had seldom more than slight and superficial views; and their care was to hide their want of learning behind the colours of a gay imagination; they therefore translated always with freedom, sometimes with licentiousness, and perhaps expected that their readers should accept sprightliness for knowledge, and consider ignorance and mistake as the impatience and negligence of a mind too rapid to stop at difficulties, and too elevated to descend to minuteness.

Thus was translation made more easy to the writer, and more delightful to the reader; and there is no wonder if ease and pleasure have found their advocates. The paraphrastic liberties have been almost universally admitted: and Sherbourn, whose learning was eminent, and who had no need of any excuse to pass slightly over obscurities, is the only writer who in later times has attempted to justify or revive the ancient severity.

There is undoubtedly a mean to be observed. Dryden saw very early that closeness best preserved an author's sense, and that freedom best exhibited his spirit; he therefore will deserve the highest praise, who can give a representation at once faithful and pleasing, who can convey the same thoughts with the same graces, and who, when he translates, changes nothing but the language.

N° 70. SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 1759.

Few faults of style, whether real or imaginary, excite the malignity of a more numerous class of readers, than the use of hard words.

If an author be supposed to involve his thoughts in voluntary obscurity, and to obstruct, by unnecessary difficulties, a mind eager in pursuit of truth; if he writes not to make others learned, but to boast the learning which he possesses himself, and wishes to be admired rather than understood, he counteracts the first end of writing, and justly suffers the utmost severity of censure, or the more afflictive severity of neglect.

But words are only hard to those who do not understand them; and the critic ought always to inquire, whether he is incommoded by the fault of the writer, or by his own.

Every author does not write for every reader; many questions are such as the illiterate part of man-

kind can have neither interest nor pleasure in discussing, and which therefore would be an useless endeavour to level with common minds, by tiresome circumlocutions or laborious explanations; and many subjects of general use may be treated in a different manner, as the book is intended for the learned or the ignorant. Diffusion and explication are necessary to the instruction of those who, being neither able nor accustomed to think for themselves, can learn only what is expressly taught; but they who can form parallels, discover consequences, and multiply conclusions, are best pleased with involution of argument and compression of thought; they desire only to receive the seeds of knowledge which they may branch out by their own power, to have the way to truth pointed out which they can then follow without a guide.

The Guardian directs one of his pupils *to think with the wise, but speak with the vulgar.* This is a precept specious enough, but not always practicable. Difference of thoughts will produce difference of language. He that thinks with more extent than another will want words of larger meaning; he that thinks with more subtilty will seek for terms of more nice discrimination; and where is the wonder, since words are but the images of things, that he who never knew the original should not know the copies?

Yet vanity inclines us to find fault any where rather than in ourselves. He that reads and grows no wiser, seldom suspects his own deficiency; but complains of hard words and obscure sentences, and asks why books are written which cannot be understood?

Among the hard words which are no longer to be used, it has been long the custom to number terms

of art. *Every man* (says Swift) *is more able to explain the subject of an art than its professors; a farmer will tell you, in two words, that he has broken his leg; but a surgeon, after a long discourse, shall leave you as ignorant as you were before.* This could only have been said by such an exact observer of life, in gratification of malignity, or in ostentation of acuteness. Every hour produces instances of the necessity of terms of art. Mankind could never conspire in uniform affectation; it is not but by necessity that every science and every trade has its peculiar language. They that content themselves with general ideas may rest in general terms; but those whose studies or employments force them upon closer inspection, must have names for particular parts, and words by which they may express various modes of combination, such as none but themselves have occasion to consider.

Artists are indeed sometimes ready to suppose that none can be strangers to words to which themselves are familiar, talk to an incidental inquirer as they talk to one another, and make their knowledge ridiculous by injudicious obtrusion. An art cannot be taught but by its proper terms, but it is not always necessary to teach the art.

That the vulgar express their thoughts clearly is far from true; and what perspicuity can be found among them proceeds not from the easiness of their language, but the shallowness of their thoughts. He that sees a building as a common spectator, contents himself with relating that it is great or little, mean or splendid, lofty or low; all these words are intelligible and common, but they convey no distinct or limited ideas; if he attempts, without the terms of architecture, to delineate the parts, or enumerate the

ornaments, his narration at once becomes unintelligible. The terms, indeed, generally displease, because they are understood by few; but they are little understood only because few, that look upon an edifice, examine its parts, or analyse its columns into their members.

The state of every other art is the same; as it is cursorily surveyed or accurately examined, different forms of expression become proper. In morality it is one thing to discuss the niceties of the casuist, and another to direct the practice of common life. In agriculture, he that instructs the farmer to plough and sow, may convey his notions without the words which he would find necessary in explaining to philosophers the process of vegetation; and if he, who has nothing to do but to be honest by the shortest way, will perplex his mind with subtile speculations; or if he, whose task is to reap and thresh, will not be contented without examining the evolution of the seed and circulation of the sap; the writers whom either shall consult are very little to be blamed, though it should sometimes happen that they are read in vain.

N° 71. SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 1759.

DICK SHIFTER was born in Cheapside, and, having passed reputably through all the classes of St. Paul's school, has been for some years a student in the Temple. He is of opinion, that intense application dulls the faculties, and thinks it necessary to temper the severity of the law by books that engage the mind, but do not fatigue it. He has therefore made a copious collection of plays, poems, and romances, to which he has recourse when he fancies himself tired with statutes and reports; and he seldom inquires very nicely whether he is weary or idle.

Dick has received from his favourite authors very strong impressions of a country life; and though his furthest excursions have been to Greenwich on one side, and Chelsea on the other, he has talked for several years, with great pomp of language and elevation of sentiments, about a state too high for contempt, and too low for envy, about homely, quiet, and blameless simplicity, pastoral delights, and rural innocence.

His friends who had estates in the country often invited him to pass the summer among them, but something or other had always hindered him; and he considered, that to reside in the house of another man was to incur a kind of dependence inconsistent with that laxity of life which he had imaged as the chief good.

This summer he resolved to be happy, and procured a lodging to be taken for him at a solitary

house, situated about thirty miles from London, on the banks of a small river, with corn-fields before it, and a hill on each side covered with wood. He concealed the place of his retirement, that none might violate his obscurity, and promised himself many a happy day when he should hide himself among the trees, and contemplate the tumults and vexations of the town.

He stepped into the post-chaise with his heart beating and his eyes sparkling, was conveyed through many varieties of delightful prospects, saw hills and meadows, corn-fields and pasture, succeed each other, and for four hours charged none of his poets with fiction or exaggeration. He was now within six miles of happiness, when, having never felt so much agitation before, he began to wish his journey at an end, and the last hour was passed in changing his posture, and quarrelling with his driver.

An hour may be tedious, but cannot be long. He at length alighted at his new dwelling, and was received as he expected; he looked round upon the hills and rivulets, but his joints were stiff and his muscles sore, and his first request was to see his bed-chamber.

He rested well, and ascribed the soundness of his sleep to the stillness of the country. He expected from that time nothing but nights of quiet and days of rapture, and, as soon as he had risen, wrote an account of his new state to one of his friends in the Temple.

'DEAR FRANK,

'*I never pitied thee before. I am now, as I could wish every man of wisdom and virtue to be, in the regions of calm content and placid meditation; with all the*

beauties of nature soliciting my notice, and all the diversities of pleasure courting my acceptance; the birds are chirping in the hedges, and the flowers blooming in the mead; the breeze is whistling in the wood, and the sun dancing on the water. I can now say, with truth, that a man, capable of enjoying the purity of happiness, is never more busy than in his hours of leisure, nor ever less solitary than in a place of solitude.

'*I am, dear* FRANK, *&c.*

When he had sent away his letter, he walked into the wood, with some incovenience from the furze that pricked his legs, and the briars that scratched his face. He at last sat down under a tree, and heard with great delight a shower, by which he was not wet, rattling among the branches: this, said he, is the true image of obscurity; we hear of troubles and commotions, but never feel them.

His amusement did not overpower the calls of nature, and he therefore went back to order his dinner. He knew that the country produces whatever is eaten or drunk, and, imagining that he was now at the source of luxury, resolved to indulge himself with dainties which he supposed might be procured at a price next to nothing, if any price at all was expected; and intended to amaze the rustics with his generosity, by paying more than they would ask. Of twenty dishes which he named, he was amazed to find that scarcely one was to be had; and heard, with astonishment and indignation, that all the fruits of the earth were sold at a higher price than in the streets of London.

His meal was short and sullen, and he retired again to his tree, to inquire how dearness could be consistent with abundance, or how fraud should be

practised by simplicity. He was not satisfied with his own speculations, and, returning home early in the evening, went a while from window to window, and found that he wanted something to do.

He inquired for a newspaper, and was told that farmers never minded news, but that they could send for it from the ale-house. A messenger was dispatched, who ran away at full speed, but loitered an hour behind the hedges, and at last coming back with his feet purposely bemired, instead of expressing the gratitude which Mr. Shifter expected for the bounty of a shilling, said, that the night was wet, and the way dirty, and he hoped that his worship would not think it much to give him half a crown.

Dick now went to bed with some abatement of his expectations; but sleep, I know not how, revives our hopes, and rekindles our desires. He rose early in the morning, surveyed the landscape, and was pleased. He walked out, and passed from field to field, without observing any beaten path, and wondered that he had not seen the shepherdesses dancing, nor heard the swains piping to their flocks.

At last he saw some reapers and harvest-women at dinner. Here, said he, are the true Arcadians, and advanced courteously towards them, as afraid of confusing them by the dignity of his presence. They acknowledged his superiority by no other token than that of asking him for something to drink. He imagined that he had now purchased the privilege of discourse, and began to descend to familiar questions, endeavouring to accommodate his discourse to the grossness of rustic understandings. The clowns soon found that he did not know wheat from rye, and began to despise him; one of the boys, by pretending

to show him a bird's nest, decoyed him into a ditch; and one of the wenches sold him a bargain.

This walk had given him no great pleasure; but he hoped to find other rustics less coarse of manners, and less mischievous of disposition. Next morning he was accosted by an attorney, who told him, that, unless he made farmer Dobson satisfaction for trampling his grass, he had orders to indict him. Shifter was offended, but not terrified; and, telling the attorney that he was himself a lawyer, talked so volubly of pettifoggers and barraters, that he drove him away.

Finding his walks thus interrupted, he was inclined to ride, and being pleased with the appearance of a horse that was grazing in a neighbouring meadow, inquired the owner, who warranted him sound, and would not sell him, but that he was too fine for a plain man. Dick paid down the price, and, riding out to enjoy the evening, fell with his new horse into a ditch; they got out with difficulty, and, as he was going to mount again, a countryman looked at the horse, and perceived him to be blind. Dick went to the seller, and demanded back his money; but was told, that a man who rented his ground must do the best for himself, that his landlord had his rent though the year was barren, and that, whether horses had eyes or no, he should sell them to the highest bidder.

Shifter now began to be tired with rustic simplicity, and on the fifth day took possession again of his chambers, and bade farewell to the regions of calm content and placid meditation.

N° 72. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1759.

MEN complain of nothing more frequently than of deficient memory; and, indeed, every one finds that many of the ideas which he desired to retain have slipped irretrievably away; that the acquisitions of the mind are sometimes equally fugitive with the gifts of fortune; and that a short intermission of attention more certainly lessens knowledge than impairs an estate.

To assist this weakness of our nature, many methods have been proposed, all of which may be justly suspected of being ineffectual; for no art of memory, however its effects have been boasted or admired, has been ever adopted into general use, nor have those who possessed it appeared to excel others in readiness of recollection or multiplicity of attainments.

There is another art of which all have felt the want, though Themistocles only confessed it. We suffer equal pain from the pertinacious adhesion of unwelcome images, as from the evanescence of those which are pleasing and useful; and it may be doubted whether we should be more benefited by the art of memory or the art of forgetfulness.

Forgetfulness is necessary to remembrance. Ideas are retained by renovation of that impression which time is always wearing away, and which new images are striving to obliterate. If useless thoughts could

be expelled from the mind, all the valuable parts of our knowledge would more frequently recur, and every recurrence would reinstate them in their former place.

It is impossible to consider, without some regret, how much might have been learned, or how much might have been invented, by a rational and vigorous application of time, uselessly or painfully passed in the revocation of events which have left neither good nor evil behind them, in grief for misfortunes either repaired or irreparable, in resentment of injuries known only to ourselves, of which death has put the authors beyond our power.

Philosophy has accumulated precept upon precept, to warn us against the anticipation of future calamities. All useless misery is certainly folly, and he that feels evils before they come may be deservedly censured; yet surely to dread the future is more reasonable than to lament the past. The business of life is to go forwards: he who sees evil in prospect meets it in his way; but he who catches it by retrospection turns back to find it. That which is feared may sometimes be avoided, but that which is regretted to-day may be regretted again to-morrow.

Regret is indeed useful and virtuous, and not only allowable but necessary, when it tends to the amendment of life, or to admonition of error which we may be again in danger of committing. But a very small part of the moments spent in meditation on the past, produce any reasonable caution or salutary sorrow. Most of the mortifications that we have suffered, arose from the concurrence of local and temporary circumstances, which can never meet again; and most of our disappointments have succeeded those expecta-

tions, which life allows not to be formed a second time.

It would add much to human happiness, if an art could be taught of forgetting all of which the remembrance is at once useless and afflictive, if that pain which never can end in pleasure could be driven totally away, that the mind might perform its functions without incumbrance, and the past might no longer encroach upon the present.

Little can be done well to which the whole mind is not applied; the business of every day calls for the day to which it is assigned; and he will have no leisure to regret yesterday's vexations who resolves not to have a new subject of regret to-morrow.

But to forget or to remember at pleasure, are equally beyond the power of man. Yet as memory may be assisted by method, and the decays of knowledge repaired by stated times of recollection, so the power of forgetting is capable of improvement. Reason will, by a resolute contest, prevail over imagination, and the power may be obtained of transferring the attention as judgment shall direct.

The incursions of troublesome thoughts are often violent and importunate; and it is not easy to a mind accustomed to their inroads to expel them immediately by putting better images into motion; but this enemy of quiet is above all others weakened by every defeat; the reflection which has been once overpowered and ejected, seldom returns with any formidable vehemence.

Employment is the great instrument of intellectual dominion. The mind cannot retire from its enemy into total vacancy, or turn aside from one object but by passing to another. The gloomy and the resentful

are always found among those who have nothing to do, or who do nothing. We must be busy about good or evil, and he to whom the present offers nothing will often be looking backward on the past.

N° 73. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1759.

THAT every man would be rich if a wish could obtain riches, is a position which I believe few will contest, at least in a nation like ours, in which commerce has kindled an universal emulation of wealth, and in which money receives all the honours which are the proper right of knowledge and of virtue.

Yet though we are all labouring for gold as for the chief good, and, by the natural effort of unwearied diligence, have found many expeditious methods of obtaining it, we have not been able to improve the art of using it, or to make it produce more happiness than it afforded in former times, when every declaimer expatiated on its mischiefs, and every philosopher taught his followers to despise it.

Many of the dangers imputed of old to exorbitant wealth are now at an end. The rich are neither waylaid by robbers, nor watched by informers; there is nothing to be dreaded from proscriptions or seizures. The necessity of concealing treasure has long ceased; no man now needs counterfeit mediocrity, and condemn his plate and jewels to caverns and darkness,

or feast his mind with the consciousness of clouded splendour, of finery which is useless till it is shown, and which he dares not show.

In our time the poor are strongly tempted to assume the appearance of wealth, but the wealthy very rarely desire to be thought poor; for we are all at full liberty to display riches by every mode of ostentation. We fill our houses with useless ornaments, only to show that we can buy them; we cover our coaches with gold, and employ artists in the discovery of new fashions of expense; and yet it cannot be found that riches produce happiness.

Of riches, as of every thing else, the hope is more than the enjoyment; while we consider them as the means to be used, at some future time, for the attainment of felicity, we press on our pursuit ardently and vigorously, and that ardour secures us from weariness of ourselves; but no sooner do we sit down to enjoy our acquisitions, than we find them insufficient to fill up the vacuities of life.

One cause which is not always observed of the insufficiency of riches is, that they very seldom make their owner rich. To be rich, is to have more than is desired, and more than is wanted; to have something which may be spent without reluctance, and scattered without care, with which the sudden demands of desire may be gratified, the casual freaks of fancy indulged, or the unexpected opportunities of benevolence improved.

Avarice is always poor, but poor by her own fault. There is another poverty to which the rich are exposed with less guilt by the officiousness of others. Every man, eminent for exuberance of fortune, is surrounded from morning to evening, and from evening to midnight, by flatterers, whose art of adulation

consists in exciting artificial wants, and in forming new schemes of profusion.

Tom Tranquil, when he came to age, found himself in possession of a fortune, of which the twentieth part might perhaps have made him rich. His temper is easy, and his affections soft; he receives every man with kindness, and hears him with credulity. His friends took care to settle him by giving him a wife, whom, having no particular inclination, he rather accepted than chose, because he was told that she was proper for him.

He was now to live with dignity proportionate to his fortune. What his fortune requires or admits Tom does not know, for he has little skill in computation, and none of his friends think it their interest to improve it. If he was suffered to live by his own choice, he would leave every thing as he finds it, and pass through the world distinguished only by inoffensive gentleness. But the ministers of luxury have marked him out as one at whose expense they may exercise their arts. A companion, who had just learned the names of the Italian masters, runs from sale to sale, and buys pictures, for which Mr. Tranquil pays, without inquiring where they shall be hung. Another fills his garden with statues, which Tranquil wishes away, but dares not remove. One of his friends is learning architecture by building him a house, which he passed by, and inquired to whom it belonged; another has been for three years digging canals and raising mounts, cutting trees down in one place, and planting them in another, on which Tranquil looks with a serene indifference, without asking what will be the cost. Another projector tells him that a waterwork, like that of Versailles, will complete the beauties of his seat, and lays his draughts

before him; Tranquil turns his eyes upon them, and the artist begins his explanations; Tranquil raises no objections, but orders him to begin the work, that he may escape from talk which he does not understand.

Thus a thousand hands are busy at his expense, without adding to his pleasures. He pays and receives visits, and has loitered in public or in solitude, talking in summer of the town, and in winter of the country, without knowing that his fortune is impaired, till his steward told him this morning, that he could pay the workmen no longer but by mortgaging a manor.

N° 74. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1759.

In the mythological pedigree of Learning, Memory is made the mother of the Muses; by which the masters of ancient wisdom, perhaps, meant to show the necessity of storing the mind copiously with true notions, before the imagination should be suffered to form fictions or collect embellishments; for the works of an ignorant poet can afford nothing higher than pleasing sound, and fiction is of no other use than to display the treasures of memory.

The necessity of memory to the acquisition of knowledge is inevitably felt and universally allowed, so that scarcely any other of the mental faculties are commonly considered as necessary to a student: he that admires the proficiency of another, always at-

tributes it to the happiness of his memory; and he that laments his own defects, concludes with a wish that his memory was better.

It is evident, that when the power of retention is weak, all the attempts at eminence of knowledge must be vain; and as few are willing to be doomed to perpetual ignorance, I may, perhaps, afford consolation to some that have fallen too easily into despondence, by observing that such weakness is, in my opinion, very rare, and that few have reason to complain of nature as unkindly sparing of the gifts of memory.

In the common business of life, we find the memory of one like that of another, and honestly impute omissions not to involuntary forgetfulness, but culpable inattention; but in literary inquiries, failure is imputed rather to want of memory than of diligence.

We consider ourselves as defective in memory, either because we remember less than we desire, or less than we suppose others to remember.

Memory is like all other human powers, with which no man can be satisfied who measures them by what he can conceive, or by what he can desire. He whose mind is most capacious, finds it much too narrow for his wishes; he that remembers most, remembers little compared with what he forgets. He therefore that, after the perusal of a book, finds few ideas remaining in his mind, is not to consider the disappointment as peculiar to himself, or to resign all hopes of improvement, because he does not retain what even the author has perhaps forgotten.

He who compares his memory with that of others, is often too hasty to lament the inequality. Nature has sometimes, indeed, afforded examples of enor-

mous, wonderful, and gigantic memory. Scaliger reports of himself, that, in his youth, he could repeat above an hundred verses, having once read them; and Barthicus declares, that he wrote his Comment upon Claudian without consulting the text. But not to have such degrees of memory is no more to be lamented, than not to have the strength of Hercules, or the swiftness of Achilles. He that, in the distribution of good, has an equal share with common men, may justly be contented. Where there is no striking disparity, it is difficult to know of two which remembers most, and still more difficult to discover which reads with greater attention, which has renewed the first impression by more frequent repetitions, or by what accidental combination of ideas either mind might have united any particular narrative or argument to its former stock.

But memory, however impartially distributed, so often deceives our trust, that almost every man attempts, by some artifice or other, to secure its fidelity.

It is the practice of many readers to note, in the margin of their books, the most important passages, the strongest arguments, or the brightest sentiments. Thus they load their minds with superfluous attention, repress the vehemence of curiosity by useless deliberation, and by frequent interruption break the current of narration or the chain of reason, and at last close the volume, and forget the passages and marks together.

Others I have found unalterably persuaded, that nothing is certainly remembered but what is transcribed; and they have therefore passed weeks and months in transferring large quotations to a commonplace book. Yet, why any part of a book, which

can be consulted at pleasure, should be copied, I was never able to discover. The hand has no closer correspondence with the memory than the eye. The act of writing itself distracts the thoughts, and what is read twice is commonly better remembered than what is transcribed. This method therefore consumes time without assisting memory.

The true art of memory is the art of attention. No man will read with much advantage, who is not able, at pleasure, to evacuate his mind, or who brings not to his author an intellect defecated and pure, neither turbid with care, nor agitated by pleasure. If the repositories of thought are already full, what can they receive? If the mind is employed on the past or future, the book will be held before the eyes in vain. What is read with delight is commonly retained, because pleasure always secures attention: but the books which are consulted by occasional necessity, and perused with impatience, seldom leave any traces on the mind.

N° 75. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1759.

In the time when Bassora was considered as the school of Asia, and flourished by the reputation of its professors and the confluence of its students, among the pupils that listened round the chair of Albumazar was Gelaleddin, a native of Tauris, in Persia, a young man amiable in his manners and beautiful in his form, of boundless curiosity, incessant diligence, and irresistible genius, of quick apprehension and tenacious memory, accurate without narrowness, and eager for novelty without inconstancy.

No sooner did Gelaleddin appear at Bassora, than his virtues and abilities raised him to distinction. He passed from class to class rather admired than envied by those whom the rapidity of his progress left behind; he was consulted by his fellow-students as an oraculous guide, and admitted as a competent auditor to the conferences of the sages.

After a few years, having passed through all the exercises of probation, Gelaleddin was invited to a professor's seat, and intreated to increase the splendour of Bassora. Gelaleddin affected to deliberate on the proposal, with which, before he considered it, he resolved to comply; and next morning retired to a garden planted for the recreation of the students, and entering a solitary walk, began to meditate upon his future life.

'If I am thus eminent,' said he, 'in the regions of literature, I shall be yet more conspicuous in any other place; if I should now devote myself to study and retirement, I must pass my life in silence, unacquainted with the delights of wealth, the influence of power, the pomp of greatness, and the charms of elegance, with all that man envies and desires, with all that keeps the world in motion, by the hope of gaining or the fear of losing it. I will therefore depart to Tauris, where the Persian monarch resides in all the splendour of absolute dominion: my reputation will fly before me, my arrival will be congratulated by my kinsmen and my friends; I shall see the eyes of those who predict my greatness, sparkling with exultation, and the faces of those that once despised me clouded with envy, or counterfeiting kindness by artificial smiles. I will show my wisdom by my discourse, and my moderation by my silence; I will instruct the modest with easy gentleness, and repress the ostentatious by seasonable superciliousness. My apartments will be crowded by the inquisitive and the vain, by those that honour and those that rival me; my name will soon reach the court; I shall stand before the throne of the emperor; the judges of the law will confess my wisdom, and the nobles will contend to heap gifts upon me. If I shall find that my merit, like that of others, excites malignity, or feel myself tottering on the seat of elevation, I may at last retire to academical obscurity, and become, in my lowest state, a professor of Bassora.'

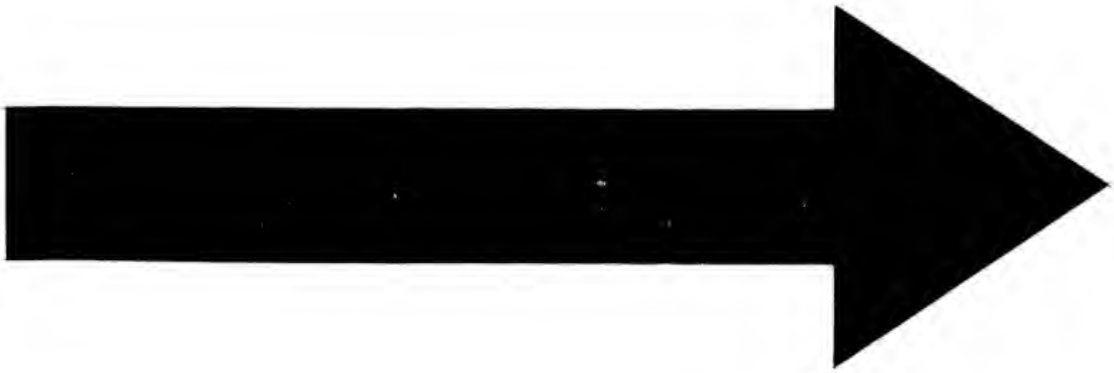
Having thus settled his determination, he declared to his friends his design of visiting Tauris, and saw, with more pleasure than he ventured to express, the regret with which he was dismissed. He could not

bear to delay the honours to which he was destined, and therefore hastened away, and in a short time entered the capital of Persia. He was immediately immersed in the crowd, and passed unobserved to his father's house. He entered, and was received, though not unkindly, yet without any excess of fondness or exclamations of rapture. His father had, in his absence, suffered many losses, and Gelaleddin was considered as an additional burden to a falling family.

When he recovered from his surprise, he began to display his acquisitions, and practised all the arts of narration and disquisition: but the poor have no leisure to be pleased with eloquence; they heard his arguments without reflection, and his pleasantries without a smile. He then applied himself singly to his brothers and sisters; but found them all chained down by invariable attention to their own fortunes, and insensible of any other excellence than that which could bring some remedy for indigence.

It was now known in the neighbourhood that Gelaleddin was returned, and he sate for some days in expectation that the learned would visit him for consultation, or the great for entertainment. But who will be pleased or instructed in the mansions of poverty? He then frequented places of public resort, and endeavoured to attract notice by the copiousness of his talk. The sprightly were silenced, and went away to censure in some other place his arrogance and his pedantry; and the dull listened quietly for a while, and then wondered why any man should take pains to obtain so much knowledge which would never do him good.

He next solicited the viziers for employment, not doubting but his service would be eagerly accepted.



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He was told by one, that there was no vacancy in his office; by another, that his merit was above any patronage but that of the emperor; by a third, that he would not forget him; and by the chief vizier, that he did not think literature of any great use in public business. He was sometimes admitted to their tables, where he exerted his wit and diffused his knowledge; but he observed, that where, by endeavour or accident, he had remarkably excelled, he was seldom invited a second time.

He now returned to Bassora, wearied and disgusted, but confident of resuming his former rank, and revelling again in satiety of praise. But he who had been neglected at Tauris, was not much regarded at Bassora; he was considered as a fugitive, who returned only because he could live in no other place; his companions found that they had formerly overrated his abilities, and he lived long without notice or esteem.

N° 76. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'I WAS much pleased with your ridicule of those shallow critics, whose judgment, though often right as far as it goes, yet reaches only to inferior beauties, and who, unable to comprehend the whole, judge only by parts, and from thence determine the merit of extensive works. But there is another kind of critic still worse, who judges by narrow rules, and those too often false, and which, though they should be true, and founded on nature, will lead him but a very little way toward the just estimation of the sublime beauties in works of genius; for whatever part of an art can be executed or criticised by rules, that part is no longer the work of genius, which implies excellence out of the reach of rules. For my own part I profess myself an Idler, and love to give my judgment, such as it is, from my immediate perceptions, without much fatigue of thinking; and I am of opinion, that if a man has not those perceptions right, it will be vain for him to endeavour to supply their place by rules, which may enable him to talk more learnedly, but not to distinguish more acutely. Another reason which has lessened my affection for the study of criticism is, that critics, so far as I have observed, debar themselves from receiving any pleasure from the polite arts, at the same

time that they profess to love and admire them: for these rules, being always uppermost, give them such a propensity to criticise, that, instead of giving up the reins of their imagination into their author's hands, their frigid minds are employed in examining whether the performance be according to the rules of art.

'To those who are resolved to be critics in spite of nature, and at the same time have no great disposition to much reading and study, I would recommend to them to assume the character of connoisseur, which may be purchased at a much cheaper rate than that of a critic in poetry. The remembrance of a few names of painters, with their general characters, with a few rules of the academy, which they may pick up among the painters, will go a great way towards making a very notable connoisseur.

'With a gentleman of this cast, I visited last week the *Cartoons* at Hampton-court; he was just returned from Italy, a connoisseur of course, and of course his mouth full of nothing but the grace of Raffaelle, the purity of Domenichino, the learning of Poussin, the air of Guido, the greatness of taste of the Charaches, and the sublimity and grand contorno of Michael Angelo; with all the rest of the cant of criticism, which he emitted with that volubility which generally those orators have who annex no ideas to their words.

'As we were passing through the rooms, in our way to the gallery, I made him observe a whole length of Charles the First by Vandyke, as a perfect representation of the character as well as the figure of the man. He agreed it was very fine, but it wanted spirit and contrast, and had not the flowing line, without which a figure could not possibly be graceful. When we entered the gallery, I thought I

could perceive him recollecting his rules by which he was to criticise Raffaelle. I shall pass over his observation of the boats being too little, and other criticisms of that kind, till we arrived at St. Paul *preaching*. "This," says he, "is esteemed the most excellent of all the *Cartoons*; what nobleness, what dignity, there is in that figure of St. Paul! and yet what an addition to that nobleness could Raffaelle have given, had the art of contrast been known in his time! but, above all, the flowing line, which constitutes grace and beauty! You would not have then seen an upright figure standing equally on both legs, and both hands stretched forth in the same direction, and his drapery, to all appearance, without the least art of disposition. The following picture is the *Charge to Peter*. "Here," says he, "are twelve upright figures; what a pity it is that Raffaelle was not acquainted with the pyramidal principle! He would then have contrived the figures in the middle to have been on higher ground, or the figures at the extremities stooping or lying; which would not only have formed the group into the shape of a pyramid, but likewise contrasted the standing figures. Indeed," added he, "I have often lamented that so great a genius as Raffaelle had not lived in this enlightened age, since the art has been reduced to principles, and had had his education in one of the modern academies; what glorious works might we then have expected from his divine pencil!"

'I shall trouble you no longer with my friend's observations, which, I suppose, you are now able to continue by yourself. It is curious to observe, that, at the same time that great admiration is pretended for a name of fixed reputation, objections are raised

against those very qualities by which that great name was acquired.

'Those critics are continually lamenting that Raffaelle had not the colouring and harmony of Rubens, or the light and shadow of Rembrant, without considering how much the gay harmony of the former, and affectation of the latter, would take from the dignity of Raffaelle; and yet Rubens had great harmony, and Rembrant understood light and shadow: but what may be an excellence in a lower class of painting, becomes a blemish in a higher; as the quick, sprightly turn, which is the life and beauty of epigrammatic compositions, would but ill suit with the majesty of heroic poetry.

'To conclude; I would not be thought to infer, from any thing that has been said, that rules are absolutely unnecessary; but to censure scrupulosity, a servile attention to minute exactness, which is sometimes inconsistent with higher excellency, and is lost in the blaze of expanded genius.

'I do not know whether you will think painting a general subject. By inserting this letter, perhaps you will incur the censure a man would deserve, whose business being to entertain a whole room, should turn his back to the company, and talk to a particular person.

'I am, SIR, &c.'

N° 77. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1759.

EASY poetry is universally admired; but I know not whether any rule has yet been fixed, by which it may be decided when poetry can be properly called easy. Horace has told us, that it is such as *every reader hopes to equal, but after long labour finds unattainable.* This is a very loose description, in which only the effect is noted; the qualities which produce this effect remain to be investigated.

Easy poetry is that in which natural thoughts are expressed without violence to the language. The discriminating character of ease consists principally in the diction; for all true poetry requires that the sentiments be natural. Language suffers violence by harsh or by daring figures, by transposition, by unusual acceptations of words, and by any license, which would be avoided by a writer of prose. Where any artifice appears in the construction of the verse, that verse is no longer easy. Any epithet which can be rejected without diminution of the sense, any curious iteration of the same word, and all unusual, though not ungrammatical, structure of speech, destroy the grace of easy poetry.

The first lines of Pope's Iliad afford examples of many licences which an easy writer must decline:

> 'Achilles' *wrath*, to Greece the *direful spring*
> Of woes unnumber'd, *heav'nly* goddess sing,
> The wrath which *hurl'd* to Pluto's *gloomy reign*
> The souls of *mighty* chiefs untimely slain.

In the first couplet the language is distorted by inversions, clogged with superfluities, and clouded by a harsh metaphor; and in the second there are two words used in an uncommon sense, and two epithets inserted only to lengthen the line; all these practices may in a long work easily be pardoned, but they always produce some degree of obscurity and ruggedness.

Easy poetry has been so long excluded by ambition of ornament, and luxuriance of imagery, that its nature seems now to be forgotten. Affectation, however opposite to ease, is sometimes mistaken for it: and those who aspire to gentle elegance, collect female phrases and fashionable barbarisms, and imagine that style to be easy which custom has made familiar. Such was the idea of the poet who wrote the following verses to a *Countess cutting paper*:

'Pallas grew *vap'rish once and odd*,
She would not *do the least right thing*
Either for goddess or for god,
Nor work, nor play, nor paint, nor sing.

'Jove frown'd, and "Use," he cry'd, "those eyes
So skilful, and those hands so taper;
Do something exquisite and wise."—
She bow'd, obey'd him, and cut paper.

'This vexing him who gave her birth,
Thought by all heaven a *burning shame*,
What does she next, but bids on earth
Her Burlington do just the same?

'Pallas, you give yourself *strange airs*;
But sure you'll find it hard to spoil
The sense and taste of one that bears
The name of Savile and of Boyle.

'Alas! one had example shown,
How quickly all the sex pursue!
See, madam! see the arts o'erthrown
Between John Overton and *you*.

It is the prerogative of easy poetry to be understood as long as the language lasts; but modes of speech, which owe their prevalence only to modish folly, or to the eminence of those that use them, die away with their inventors, and their meaning, in a few years, is no longer known.

Easy poetry is commonly sought in petty compositions upon minute subjects; but ease, though it excludes pomp, will admit greatness. Many lines in Cato's soliloquy are at once easy and sublime:

'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.'

'——— If there's a Power above us,
And that there is all nature cries aloud
Thro' all her works, he must delight in virtue,
And that which he delights in must be happy.

Nor is ease more contrary to wit than to sublimity; the celebrated stanza of Cowley, on a lady elaborately dressed, loses nothing of its freedom by the spirit of the sentiment:

'Th' adorning thee with so much art
Is but a barb'rous skill,
'Tis like the pois'ning of a dart,
Too apt before to kill.'

Cowley seems to have possessed the power of writing easily beyond any other of our poets; yet his pursuit of remote thought led him often into

harshness of expression. Waller often attempted, but seldom attained it; for he is too frequently driven into transpositions. The poets, from the time of Dryden, have gradually advanced in embellishment, and consequently departed from simplicity and ease.

To require from any author many pieces of easy poetry, would be indeed to oppress him with too hard a task. It is less difficult to write a volume of lines swelled with epithets, brightened by figures, and stiffened by transpositions, than to produce a few couplets graced only by naked elegance and simple purity, which require so much care and skill, that I doubt whether any of our authors have yet been able, for twenty lines together, nicely to observe the true definition of easy poetry.

N° 78. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1759.

I HAVE passed the summer in one of those places to which a mineral spring gives the idle and luxurious an annual reason for resorting, whenever they fancy themselves offended by the heat of London. What is the true motive of this periodical assembly, I have never yet been able to discover. The greater part of the visitants neither feel diseases nor fear them. What pleasure can be expected more than the variety of the journey, I know not; for the numbers are too great for privacy, and too small for diversion. As each is known to be a spy upon the rest, they all live in continual restraint; and having but a narrow range for censure, they gratify its cravings by preying on one another.

But every condition has some advantages. In this confinement, a smaller circle affords opportunities for more exact observation. The glass that magnifies its object contracts the sight to a point; and the mind must be fixed upon a single character to remark its minute peculiarities. The quality or habit which passes unobserved in the tumult of successive multitudes, becomes conspicuous when it is offered to the notice day after day; and perhaps I have, without any distinct notice, seen thousands like my late companions; for when the scene can be varied at pleasure, a slight disgust turns us aside before a deep impression can be made upon the mind.

There was a select set, supposed to be distinguished by superiority of intellects, who always passed the evening together. To be admitted to their conversation was the highest honour of the place; many youths aspired to distinction, by pretending to occasional invitations; and the ladies were often wishing to be men, that they might partake the pleasures of learned society.

I know not whether by merit or destiny, I was, soon after my arrival, admitted to this envied party, which I frequented till I had learned the art by which each endeavoured to support his character.

Tom Steady was a vehement assertor of uncontroverted truth; and by keeping himself out of the reach of contradiction, had acquired all the confidence which the consciousness of irresistible abilities could have given. I was once mentioning a man of eminence, and, after having recounted his virtues, endeavoured to represent him fully, by mentioning his faults. '*Sir*,' said Mr. Steady, '*that he has faults I can easily believe, for who is without them? No man, sir, is now alive, among the innumerable multitudes that swarm upon the earth, however wise, or however good, who has not, in some degree, his failings and his faults. If there be any man faultless, bring him forth into public view, show him openly, and let him be known; but I will venture to affirm, and, till the contrary be plainly shown, shall always maintain, that no such man is to be found. Tell not me, sir, of impeccability and perfection; such talk is for those that are strangers in the world; I have seen several nations, and conversed with all ranks of people; I have known the great and the mean, the learned and the ignorant, the old and the young, the clerical and the lay; but I never have found*

a man without a fault; and I suppose shall die in the opinion, that to be human is to be frail.'

To all this nothing could be opposed. I listened with a hanging head; Mr. Steady looked round on the hearers with triumph, and saw every eye congratulating his victory; he departed, and spent the next morning in following those who retired from the company, and telling them, with injunctions of secresy, how poor Spritely began to take liberties with men wiser than himself; but that he suppressed him by a decisive argument, which put him totally to silence.

Dick Snug is a man of sly remark and pithy sententiousness: he never immerges himself in the stream of conversation, but lies to catch his companions in the eddy: he is often very successful in breaking narratives or confounding eloquence. A gentleman, giving the history of one of his acquaintance, made mention of a lady that had many lovers: *'Then,'* said Dick, *'she was either handsome or rich.'* This observation being well received, Dick watched the progress of the tale; and, hearing of a man lost in a shipwreck, remarked, that *no man was ever drowned upon dry land.*

Will Startle is a man of exquisite sensibility, whose delicacy of frame and quickness of discernment subject him to impressions from the slightest causes; and who therefore passes his life between rapture and horror, in quiverings of delight, or convulsions of disgust. His emotions are too violent for many words; his thoughts are always discovered by exclamations. *Vile, odious, horrid, detestable,* and *sweet, charming, delightful, astonishing,* compose almost his whole vocabulary, which he utters with various con-

tortions and gesticulations, not easily related or described.

Jack Solid is a man of much reading, who utters nothing but quotations; but having been, I suppose, too confident of his memory, he has for some time neglected his books, and his stock grows every day more scanty. Mr. Solid has found an opportunity every night to repeat, from Hudibras,

'Doubtless the pleasure is as great
Of being cheated, as to cheat;'

and from Waller,

'Poets lose half the praise they would have got,
Were it but known that they discreetly blot.'

Dick Misty is a man of deep research, and forcible penetration. Others are content with superficial appearances; but Dick holds, that there is no effect without a cause, and values himself upon his power of explaining the difficult, and displaying the abstruse. Upon a dispute among us, which of two young strangers was more beautiful, 'You,' says Mr. Misty, turning to me, '*like Amaranthia better than Chloris. I do not wonder at the preference, for the cause is evident; there is in man a perception of harmony, and a sensibility of perfection, which touches the finer fibres of the mental texture; and before reason can descend from her throne, to pass her sentence upon the things compared, drives us towards the object proportioned to our faculties, by an impulse gentle, yet irresistible; for the harmonic system of the universe, and the reciprocal magnetism of similar natures, are always operating towards conformity and union; nor can the*

powers of the soul cease from agitation, till they find something on which they can repose.' To this nothing was opposed; and Amaranthia was acknowledged to excel Chloris.

Of the rest you may expect an account from,

SIR, yours,

ROBIN SPRITELY.

N° 79. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'YOUR acceptance of a former letter on painting, gives me encouragement to offer a few more sketches on the same subject.

'Amongst the painters, and the writers on painting, there is one maxim universally admitted and continually inculcated. *Imitate nature* is the invariable rule; but I know none who have explained in what manner this rule is to be understood; the consequence of which is, that every one takes it in the most obvious sense, that objects are represented naturally when they have such relief that they seem real. It may appear strange, perhaps, to hear this sense of the rule disputed; but it must be considered, that, if the excellency of a painter consisted only in this kind of imitation, painting must lose its rank, and be no longer considered as a liberal art, and sister to poetry; this imitation being merely mechanical, in which the slowest intellect is always sure

to succeed best; for the painter of genius cannot stoop to drudgery, in which the understanding has no part; and what pretence has the art to claim kindred with poetry, but by its powers over the imagination? To this power the painter of genius directs him; in this sense he studies nature, and often arrives at his end, even by being unnatural in the confined sense of the word.

'The grand style of painting requires this minute attention to be carefully avoided, and must be kept as separate from it as the style of poetry from that of history. Poetical ornaments destroy that air of truth and plainness which ought to characterise history; but the very being of poetry consists in departing from this plain narration, and adopting every ornament that will warm the imagination. To desire to see the excellences of each style united, to mingle the Dutch with the Italian school, is to join contrarieties which cannot subsist together, and which destroy the efficacy of each other. The Italian attends only to the invariable, the great and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal nature; the Dutch, on the contrary, to literal truth and a minute exactness in the detail, as I may say, of nature modified by accident. The attention to these petty peculiarities is the very cause of this naturalness so much admired in the Dutch pictures, which, if we suppose it to be a beauty, is certainly of a lower order, which ought to give place to a beauty of a superior kind, since one cannot be obtained but by departing from the other.

'If my opinion was asked concerning the works of Michael Angelo, whether they would receive any advantage from possessing this mechanical merit, I should not scruple to say they would not only re-

ceive no advantage, but would lose, in a great measure, the effect which they now have on every mind susceptible of great and noble ideas. His works may be said to be all genius and soul; and why should they be loaded with heavy matter, which can only counteract his purpose by retarding the progress of the imagination?

'If this opinion should be thought one of the wild extravagances of enthusiasm, I shall only say, that those who censure it are not conversant in the works of the great masters. It is very difficult to determine the exact degree of enthusiasm that the arts of painting and poetry may admit. There may perhaps be too great an indulgence, as well as too great a restraint of imagination; and if the one produces incoherent monsters, the other produces what is full as bad, lifeless insipidity. An intimate knowledge of the passions, and good sense, but not common sense, must at last determine its limits. It has been thought, and I believe with reason, that Michael Angelo sometimes transgressed those limits; and I think I have seen figures of his of which it was very difficult to determine whether they were in the highest degree sublime or extremely ridiculous. Such faults may be said to be ebullitions of genius; but at least he had this merit, that he never was insipid; and whatever passion his works may excite, they will always escape contempt.

'What I have had under consideration is the sublimest style, particularly that of Michael Angelo, the Homer of painting. Other kinds may admit of this naturalness, which of the lowest kind is the chief merit; but in painting, as in poetry, the highest style has the least of common nature.

'One may very safely recommend a little more enthusiasm to the modern painters; too much is certainly not the vice of the present age. The Italians seem to have been continually declining in this respect from the time of Michael Angelo to that of Carlo Maratti, and from thence to the very bathos of insipidity to which they are now sunk; so that there is no need of remarking, that where I mentioned the Italian painters in opposition to the Dutch, I mean not the moderns, but the heads of the old Roman and Bolognian schools; nor did I mean to include in my idea of an Italian painter, the Venetian school, which may be said to be the Dutch part of the Italian genius. I have only to add a word of advice to the painters, that, however excellent they may be in painting naturally, they would not flatter themselves very much upon it; and to the connoisseurs, that when they see a cat or fiddle painted so finely, that, as the phrase is, *It looks as if you could take it up*, they would not for that reason immediately compare the painter to Raffaelle and Michael Angelo.

N° 80. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1759.

THAT every day has its pains and sorrows is universally experienced, and almost universally confessed; but let us not attend only to mournful truths; if we look impartially about us, we shall find that every day has likewise its pleasures and its joys.

The time is now come when the town is again beginning to be full, and the rusticated beauty sees an end of her banishment. Those whom the tyranny of fashion had condemned to pass the summer among shades and brooks, are now preparing to return to plays, balls, and assemblies, with health restored by retirement, and spirits kindled by expectation.

Many a mind, which has languished some months without motion or desire, now feels a sudden renovation of its faculties. It was long ago observed by Pythagoras, that Ability and Necessity dwell near each other. She that wandered in the garden without sense of its fragrance, and lay day after day stretched upon a couch behind a green curtain, unwilling to wake, and unable to sleep, now summons her thoughts to consider which of her last year's clothes shall be seen again, and to anticipate the rapture of a new suit; the day and the night are now filled with occupation; the laces, which were too fine to be worn among rustics, are taken from the boxes and reviewed, and the eye is no sooner closed after its labours, than whole shops of silk busy the fancy.

But happiness is nothing if it is not known, and very little if it is not envied. Before the day of departure a week is always appropriated to the payment and reception of ceremonial visits, at which nothing can be mentioned but the delights of London. The lady who is hastening to the scene of action flutters her wings, displays her prospects of felicity, tells how she grudges every moment of delay, and, in the presence of those whom she knows condemned to stay at home, is sure to wonder by what arts life can be made supportable through a winter in the country, and to tell how often, amidst the ecstasies of an opera, she shall pity those friends whom she has left behind. Her hope of giving pain is seldom disappointed; the affected indifference of one, the faint congratulations of another, the wishes of some openly confessed, and the silent dejection of the rest, all exalt her opinion of her own superiority.

But, however we may labour for our own deception, truth, though unwelcome, will sometimes intrude upon the mind. They who have already enjoyed the crowds and noise of the great city, know that their desire to return is little more than the restlessness of a vacant mind, that they are not so much led by hope as driven by disgust, and wish rather to leave the country than to see the town. There is commonly in every coach a passenger enwrapped in silent expectation, whose joy is more sincere and whose hopes are more exalted. The virgin whom the last summer released from her governess, and who is now going between her mother and her aunt to try the fortune of her wit and beauty, suspects no fallacy in the gay representation. She believes herself passing into another world, and images London as an elysian region, where every hour has its proper

pleasure, where nothing is seen but the blaze of wealth, and nothing heard but merriment and flattery; where the morning always rises on a show, and the evening closes on a ball; where the eyes are used only to sparkle, and the feet only to dance.

Her aunt and her mother amuse themselves on the road, with telling her of dangers to be dreaded, and cautions to be observed. She hears them as they heard their predecessors, with incredulity or contempt. She sees that they have ventured and escaped; and one of the pleasures which she promises herself is to detect their falsehoods, and be freed from their admonitions.

We are inclined to believe those whom we do not know, because they have never deceived us. The fair adventurer may perhaps listen to the Idler, whom she cannot suspect of rivalry or malice; yet he scarcely expects to be credited when he tells her, that her expectations will likewise end in disappointment.

The uniform necessities of human nature produce in a great measure uniformity of life, and for part of the day make one place like another; to dress and to undress, to eat and to sleep, are the same in London as in the country. The supernumerary hours have indeed a great variety both of pleasure and of pain. The stranger gazed on by multitudes at her first appearance in the Park, is perhaps on the highest summit of female happiness; but how great is the anguish when the novelty of another face draws her worshippers away! The heart may leap for a time under a fine gown; but the sight of a gown yet finer puts an end to rapture. In the first row at an opera two hours may be happily passed in listening to the music on the stage, and watching the glances of the

company; but how will night end in despondency, when she that imagined herself the sovereign of the place, sees lords contending to lead Iris to her chair! Where is little pleasure in conversation to her whose wit is regarded but in the second place; and who can dance with ease or spirit, that sees Amaryllis led out before her? She that fancied nothing but a succession of pleasures, will find herself engaged without design in numberless competitions, and mortified without provocation with numberless afflictions.

'But I do not mean to extinguish the ardour which I wish to moderate, or to discourage those whom I am endeavouring to restrain. To know the world is necessary, since we were born for the help of one another; and to know it early is convenient, if it be only that we may learn early to despise it. She that brings to London a mind well prepared for improvement, though she misses her hope of uninterrupted happiness, will gain in return an opportunity of adding knowledge to vivacity, and enlarging innocence to virtue.'

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IDLER

VOL. II. N°. 81.

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N° 81. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1759.

As the English army was passing towards Quebec along a soft savanna between a mountain and a lake, one of the petty chiefs of the inland regions stood upon a rock surrounded by his clan, and from behind the shelter of the bushes contemplated the art and regularity of European war. It was evening; the tents were pitched: he observed the security with which the troops rested in the night, and the order with which the march was renewed in the morning. He continued to pursue them with his eye till they could be seen no longer, and then stood for some time silent and pensive.

Then turning to his followers, 'My children,' said he, 'I have often heard from men hoary with long life, that there was a time when our ancestors were absolute lords of the woods, the meadows, and the lakes, wherever the eye can reach or the foot can pass. They fished and hunted, feasted and danced, and when they were weary lay down under the first thicket, without danger and without fear. They changed their habitations as the seasons required, convenience prompted, or curiosity allured them; and sometimes gathered the fruits of the mountain, and sometimes sported in canoes along the coast.

'Many years and ages are supposed to have been thus passed in plenty and security; when, at last, a new race of men entered our country from the great ocean. They inclosed themselves in habitations of

stone, which our ancestors could neither enter by violence, nor destroy by fire. They issued from those fastnesses, sometimes, covered like the armadillo with shells, from whence the lance rebounded on the striker; and sometimes carried by mighty beasts, which had never been seen in our vales or forests, of such strength and swiftness, that flight and opposition were vain alike. Those invaders ranged over the continent, slaughtering in their rage those that resisted; and those that submitted, in their mirth. Of those that remained, some were buried in caverns, and condemned to dig metals for their masters; some were employed in tilling the ground, of which foreign tyrants devour the produce; and, when the sword and the mines have destroyed the natives, they supply their places by human beings of another colour, brought from some distant country to perish here under toil and torture.

'Some there are who boast their humanity, and content themselves to seize our chaces and fisheries, who drive us from every track of ground where fertility and pleasantness invite them to settle, and make no war upon us except when we intrude upon our own lands.

'Others pretend to have purchased a right of residence and tyranny; but surely the insolence of such bargains is more offensive than the avowed and open dominion of force. What reward can induce the possessor of a country to admit a stranger more powerful than himself? Fraud or terror must operate in such contracts; either they promised protection which they never have afforded, or instruction which they never imparted. We hoped to be secured by their favour from some other evil, or to learn the arts of Europe, by which we might be able to secure

ourselves. Their power they never have exerted in our defence, and their arts they have studiously concealed from us. Their treaties are only to deceive, and their traffic only to defraud us. They have a written law among them, of which they boast as derived from Him who made the earth and sea, and by which they profess to beiieve that man will be made happy when life shall forsake him. Why is not this law communicated to us? It is concealed because it is violated. For how can they preach it to an Indian nation, when I am told that one of its first precepts forbids them to do to others what they would not that others should do to them?

'But the time perhaps is now approaching when the pride of usurpation shall be crushed, and the cruelties of invasion shall be revenged. The sons of rapacity have now drawn their swords upon each other, and referred their claims to the decision of war; let us look unconcerned upon the slaughter, and remember that the death of every European delivers the country from a tyrant and a robber; for what is the claim of either nation, but the claim of the vulture to the leveret, of the tiger to the fawn? Let them then continue to dispute their title to regions which they cannot people, to purchase by danger and blood the empty dignity of dominion over mountains which they will never climb, and rivers which they will never pass. Let us endeavour, in the mean time, to learn their discipline, and to forge their weapons; and, when they shall be weakened with mutual slaughter, let us rush down upon them, force their remains to take shelter in their ships, and reign once more in our native country.'

N° 82. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1759.

' TO THE IDLER.

' SIR,

' DISCOURSING in my last letter on the different practice of the Italian and Dutch Painters, I observed, that " the Italian painter attends only to the invariable, the great and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal nature."

' I was led into the subject of this letter by endeavouring to fix the original cause of this conduct of the Italian masters. If it can be proved that by this choice they selected the most beautiful part of the creation, it will show how much their principles are founded on reason, and, at the same time, discover the origin of our ideas of beauty.

' I suppose it will be easily granted, that no man can judge whether any animal be beautiful in its kind, or deformed, who has seen only one of that species; that is as conclusive in regard to the human figure; so that if a man, born blind, was to recover his sight, and the most beautiful woman was brought before him, he could not determine whether she was handsome or not; nor, if the most beautiful and most deformed were produced, could he any better determine to which he should give the preference, having seen only those two. To distinguish beauty, then, implies the having seen many individuals of that species. If it is asked, how is more skill acquired by the observation of greater numbers? I

answer that, in consequence of having seen many, the power is acquired, even without seeking after it, of distinguishing between accidental blemishes and excrescences which are continually varying the surface of nature's works, and the invariable general form which nature most frequently produces, and always seems to intend in her productions.

'Thus amongst the blades of grass or leaves of the same tree, though no two can be found exactly alike, yet the general form is invariable: a naturalist, before he chose one as a sample, would examine many, since, if he took the first that occurred, it might have, by accident or otherwise, such a form as that it would scarcely be known to belong to that species; he selects, as the painter does, the most beautiful, that is, the most general form of nature.

'Every species of the animal as well as the vegetable creation may be said to have a fixed or determinate form, towards which nature is continually inclining, like various lines terminating in the centre; or it may be compared to pendulums vibrating in different directions over one central point; and as they all cross the centre, though only one passes through any other point, so it will be found that perfect beauty is oftener produced by nature than deformity; I do not mean than deformity in general, but than any one kind of deformity. To instance in a particular part of a feature: the line that forms the ridge of the nose is beautiful when it is straight; this then is the central form, which is oftener found than either concave, convex, or any other irregular form that shall be proposed. As we are then more accustomed to beauty than deformity, we may conclude that to be the reason why we approve and admire it, as we approve and admire customs and

fashions of dress for no other reason than that we are used to them; so that though habit and custom cannot be said to be the cause of beauty, it is certainly the cause of our liking it; and I have no doubt but that, if we were more used to deformity than beauty, deformity would then lose the idea now annexed to it, and take that of beauty; as, if the whole world should agree that *yes* and *no* should change their meanings, *yes* would then deny, and *no* would affirm.

'Whoever undertakes to proceed further in this argument, and endeavours to fix a general criterion of beauty respecting different species, or to show why one species is more beautiful than another, it will be required from him first to prove that one species is really more beautiful than another. That we prefer one to the other, and with very good reason, will be readily granted; but it does not follow from thence that we think it a more beautiful form; for we have no criterion of form by which to determine our judgment. He who says a swan is more beautiful than a dove, means little more than that he has more pleasure in seeing a swan than a dove, either from the stateliness of its motions, or its being a more rare bird; and he who gives the preference to the dove, does it from some association of ideas of innocence that he always annexes to the dove; but, if he pretends to defend the preference he gives to one or the other by endeavouring to prove that this more beautiful form proceeds from a particular gradation of magnitude, undulation of a curve, or direction of a line, or whatever other conceit of his imagination he shall fix on as a criterion of form, he will be continually contradicting himself, and find at last that the great mother of nature will not be sub-

jected to such narrow rules. Among the various reasons why we prefer one part of her works to another, the most general, I believe, is habit and custom; custom makes, in a certain sense, white black and black white; it is custom alone determines our preference of the colour of the Europeans to the Æthiopians; and they, for the same reason, prefer their own colour to ours. I suppose nobody will doubt, if one of their painters were to paint a goddess of beauty, but that he would represent her black, with thick lips, flat nose, and woolly hair; and, it seems to me, he would act very unnaturally if he did not; for by what criterion will any one dispute the propriety of his idea? We, indeed, say, that the form and colour of the European is preferable to that of the Æthiopian; but I know of no reason we have for it, but that we are more accustomed to it. It is absurd to say, that beauty is possessed of attractive powers, which irresistibly seize the corresponding mind with love and admiration, since that argument is equally conclusive in favour of the white and the black philosopher.

'The black and white nations must, in respect of beauty, be considered as of different kinds, at least a different species of the same kind; from one of which to the other, as I observed, no inference can be drawn.

'Novelty is said to be one of the causes of beauty: that novelty is a very sufficient reason why we should admire, is not denied; but because it is uncommon, is it therefore beautiful? The beauty that is produced by colour, as when we prefer one bird to another, though of the same form, on account of its colour, has nothing to do with this argument, which reaches only to form. I have here considered the

word *beauty* as being properly applied to form alone. There is a necessity of fixing this confined sense; for there can be no argument, if the sense of the word is extended to every thing that is approved. A rose may as well be said to be beautiful, because it has a fine smell, as a bird because of its colour. When we apply the word *beauty*, we do not mean always by it a more beautiful form, but something valuable on account of its rarity, usefulness, colour, or any other property. A horse is said to be a beautiful animal; but, had a horse as few good qualities as a tortoise, I do not imagine that he would be then esteemed beautiful.

'A fitness to the end proposed, is said to be another cause of beauty; but supposing we were proper judges of what form is the most proper in an animal to constitute strength or swiftness, we always determine concerning its beauty, before we exert our understanding to judge of its fitness.

'From what has been said, it may be inferred, that the works of nature, if we compare one species with another, are all equally beautiful; and that preference is given from custom, or some association of ideas: and that, in creatures of the same species, beauty is the medium or centre of all various forms.

'To conclude, then, by way of corollary: if it has been proved, that the painter, by attending to the invariable and general ideas of nature, produces beauty, he must, by regarding minute particularities and accidental discriminations, deviate from the universal rule, and pollute his canvass with deformity.

No 83. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'I SUPPOSE you have forgotten that many weeks ago I promised to send you an account of my companions at the Wells. You would not deny me a place among the most faithful votaries of idleness, if you knew how often I have recollected my engagement, and contented myself to delay the performance for some reason which I durst not examine because I knew it to be false; how often I have set down to write, and rejoiced at interruption; and how often I have praised the dignity of resolution, determined at night to write in the morning, and deferred it in the morning to the quiet hours of night.

'I have at last begun what I have long wished at an end, and find it more easy than I expected to continue my narration.

'Our assembly could boast no such constellation of intellects as Clarendon's band of associates. We had among us no Selden, Falkland, or Waller; but we had men not less important in their own eyes, though less distinguished by the public; and many a time have we lamented the partiality of mankind, and agreed that men of the deepest inquiry sometimes let their discoveries die away in silence, that the most comprehensive observers have seldom opportunities of imparting their remarks, and that

modest merit passes in the crowd unknown and unheeded.

'One of the greatest men of the society was Sim Scruple, who lives in a continual equipoise of doubt, and is a constant enemy to confidence and dogmatism. Sim's favourite topic of conversation is, the narrowness of the human mind, the fallaciousness of our senses, the prevalence of early prejudice, and the uncertainty of appearances. Sim has many doubts about the nature of death, and is sometimes inclined to believe that sensation may survive motion, and that a dead man may feel though he cannot stir. He has sometimes hinted that man might perhaps have been naturally a quadruped; and thinks it would be very proper, that at the Foundling Hospital some children should be inclosed in an apartment in which the nurses should be obliged to walk half upon four and half upon two, that the younglings, being bred without the prejudice of example, might have no other guide than nature, and might at last come forth into the world as genius should direct, erect or prone, on two legs or on four.

'The next in dignity of mien and fluency of talk was Dick Wormwood, whose sole delight is to find every thing wrong. Dick never enters a room but he shows that the door and the chimney are ill placed. He never walks into the fields but he finds ground ploughed which is fitter for pasture. He is always an enemy to the present fashion. He holds that all the beauty and virtue of women will soon be destroyed by the use of tea. He triumphs when he talks on the present system of education, and tells us with great vehemence, that we are learning words when we should learn things. He is of opi-

nion that we suck-in errors at the nurse's breast, and thinks it extremely ridiculous that children should be taught to use the right hand rather than the left.

'Bob Sturdy considers it as a point of honour to say again what he has once said, and wonders how any man that has been known to alter his opinion, can look his neighbours in the face. Bob is the most formidable disputant of the whole company; for, without troubling himself to search for reasons, he tires his antagonist with repeated affirmations. When Bob has been attacked for an hour with all the powers of eloquence and reason, and his position appears to all but himself utterly untenable, he always closes the debate with his first declaration, introduced by a stout preface of contemptuous civility. "All this is very judicious; you may talk, sir, as you please; but I will still say what I said at first." Bob deals much in universals, which he has now obliged us to let pass without exceptions. He lives on an annuity, and holds that *there are as many thieves as traders;* he is of loyalty unshaken, and always maintains, that *he who sees a Jacobite sees a rascal.*

'Phil Gentle is an enemy to the rudeness of contradiction and the turbulence of debate. Phil has no notions of his own, and therefore willingly catches from the last speaker such as he shall drop. This flexibility of ignorance is easily accommodated to any tenet; his only difficulty is, when the disputants grow zealous, how to be of two contrary opinions at once. If no appeal is made to his judgment, he has the art of distributing his attention and his smiles in such a manner, that each thinks him of his own party; but if he is obliged to speak, he then observes that the question is difficult; that he never received so much pleasure from a debate before; that neither

of the controvertists could have found his match in any other company; that Mr. Wormwood's assertion is very well supported, and yet there is great force in what Mr. Scruple advanced against it. By this indefinite declaration both are commonly satisfied; for he that has prevailed is in good humour, and he that has felt his own weakness is very glad to have escaped so well.

'I am, SIR, yours, &c.

'ROBIN SPRITELY.'

N° 84. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1759.

BIOGRAPHY is, of the various kinds of narrative writing, that which is most eagerly read, and most easily applied to the purposes of life.

In romances, when the wide field of possibility lies open to invention, the incidents may easily be made more numerous, the vicissitudes more sudden, and the events more wonderful; but from the time of life when fancy begins to be over-ruled by reason and corrected by experience, the most artful tale raises little curiosity when it is known to be false; though it may, perhaps, be sometimes read as a model of a neat or elegant style, not for the sake of knowing what it contains, but how it is written; or those that are weary of themselves, may have recourse to it as a pleasing dream, of which, when they awake, they voluntarily dismiss the images from their minds.

The examples and events of history press, indeed, upon the mind with the weight of truth; but when they are reposited in the memory, they are oftener employed for show than use, and rather diversify conversation than regulate life. Few are engaged in such scenes as give them opportunities of growing wiser by the downfall of statesmen or the defeat of generals. The stratagems of war, and the intrigues of courts, are read by far the greater part of mankind with the same indifference as the adventures of fabled heroes, or the revolutions of a fairy region. Between falsehood and useless truth there is little difference. As gold which he cannot spend will make no man rich, so knowledge which he cannot apply will make no man wise.

The mischievous consequences of vice and folly, of irregular desires and predominant passions, are best discovered by those relations which are levelled with the general surface of life, which tell not how any man became great, but how he was made happy; not how he lost the favour of his prince, but how he became discontented with himself.

Those relations are therefore commonly of most value in which the writer tells his own story. He that recounts the life of another, commonly dwells most upon conspicuous events, lessens the familiarity of his tale to increase his dignity, shows his favourite at a distance, decorated and magnified like the ancient actors in their tragic dress, and endeavours to hide the man that he may produce a hero.

But if it be true, which was said by a French prince, *that no man was a hero to the servants of his chamber*, it is equally true, that every man is yet less a hero to himself. He that is most elevated above the crowd by the importance of his employments,

or the reputation of his genius, feels himself affected by fame or business but as they influence his domestic life. The high and low, as they have the same faculties and the same senses, have no less similitude in their pains and pleasures. The sensations are the same in all, though produced by very different occasions. The prince feels the same pain when an invader seizes a province, as the farmer when a thief drives away his cow. Men thus equal in themselves will appear equal in honest and impartial biography; and those whom fortune or nature place at the greatest distance may afford instruction to each other.

The writer of his own life has at least the first qualification of an historian, the knowledge of the truth; and though it may be plausibly objected that his temptations to disguise it are equal to his opportunities of knowing it; yet I cannot but think that impartiality may be expected with equal confidence from him that relates the passages of his own life, as from him that delivers the transactions of another.

Certainty of knowledge not only excludes mistake, but fortifies veracity. What we collect by conjecture, and by conjecture only can one man judge of another's motives or sentiments, is easily modified by fancy or by desire; as objects imperfectly discerned take forms from the hope or fear of the beholder. But that which is fully known cannot be falsified but with reluctance of understanding, and alarm of conscience: of understanding, the lover of truth; of conscience, the sentinel of virtue.

He that writes the life of another is either his friend or his enemy, and wishes either to exalt his praise or aggravate his infamy; many temptations to falsehood will occur in the disguise of passions, too specious to fear much resistance. Love of virtue will

animate panegyric, and hatred of wickedness embitter censure. The zeal of gratitude, the ardour of patriotism, fondness for an opinion, or fidelity to a party; may easily overpower the vigilance of a mind habitually well disposed, and prevail over unassisted and unfriended veracity.

But he that speaks of himself has no motive to falsehood or partiality except self-love, by which all have so often been betrayed, that all are on the watch against its artifices. He that writes an apology for a single action, to confute an accusation, to recommend himself to favour, is indeed always to be suspected of favouring his own cause; but he that sits down calmly and voluntarily to review his life for the admonition of posterity, or to amuse himself, and leaves this account unpublished, may be commonly presumed to tell truth, since falsehood cannot appease his own mind, and fame will not be heard beneath the tomb.

N° 85. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1759.

One of the peculiarities which distinguish the present age is the multiplication of books. Every day brings new advertisements of literary undertakings, and we are flattered with repeated promises of growing wise on easier terms than our progenitors.

How much either happiness or knowledge is advanced by this multitude of authors, it is not very easy to decide.

He that teaches us any thing which we knew not before, is undoubtedly to be reverenced as a master.

He that conveys knowledge by more pleasing ways, may very properly be loved as a benefactor; and he that supplies life with innocent amusement, will be certainly caressed as a pleasing companion.

But few of those who fill the world with books, have any pretensions to the hope either of pleasing or instructing. They have often no other task than to lay two books before them, out of which they compile a third, without any new materials of their own, and with very little application of judgment to those which former authors have supplied.

That all compilations are useless I do not assert. Particles of science are often very widely scattered. Writers of extensive comprehension have incidental remarks upon topics very remote from the principal subject, which are often more valuable than formal treatises, and which yet are not known, because they are not promised in the title. He that collects those

under proper heads is very laudably employed; for though he exerts no great abilities in the work, he facilitates the progress of others, and by making that easy of attainment which is already written, may give some mind, more vigorous or more adventurous than his own, leisure for new thoughts and original designs.

But the collections poured lately from the press have been seldom made at any great expense of time or inquiry, and therefore only serve to distract choice, without supplying any real want.

It is observed, that *a corrupt society has many laws*; I know not whether it is not equally true, that *an ignorant age has many books*. When the treasures of ancient knowledge lie unexamined, and original authors are neglected and forgotten, compilers and plagiaries are encouraged, who give us again what we had before, and grow great by setting before us what our own sloth had hidden from our view.

Yet are not even these writers to be indiscriminately censured and rejected. Truth, like beauty, varies its fashions, and is best recommended by different dresses to different minds; and he that recalls the attention of mankind to any part of learning which time has left behind it, may be truly said to advance the literature of his own age. As the manners of nations vary, new topics of persuasion become necessary, and new combinations of imagery are produced; and he that can accommodate himself to the reigning taste, may always have readers who perhaps would not have looked upon better performances.

To exact of every man who writes that he should say something new, would be to reduce authors to a small number; to oblige the most fertile genius to

say only what is new, would be to contract his volumes to a few pages. Yet, surely, there ought to be some bounds to repetition; libraries ought no more to be heaped for ever with the same thoughts differently expressed, than with the same books differently decorated.

The good or evil which these secondary writers produce is seldom of any long duration. As they owe their existence to change of fashion, they commonly disappear when a new fashion becomes prevalent. The authors that in any nation last from age to age are very few, because there are very few that have any other claim to notice than that they catch hold on present curiosity, and gratify some accidental desire, or produce some temporary convenience.

But however the writers of the day may despair of future fame, they ought at least to forbear any present mischief. Though they cannot arrive at eminent heights of excellence, they might keep themselves harmless. They might take care to inform themselves, before they attempt to inform others, and exert the little influence which they have for honest purposes.

But such is the present state of our literature, that the ancient sage, who thought *a great book a great evil*, would now think the multitude of books a multitude of evils. He would consider a bulky writer who engrossed a year, and a swarm of pamphleteers who stole each an hour, as equal wasters of human life, and would make no other difference between them, than between a beast of prey and a flight of locusts.

N° 80. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1759.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'I AM a young lady newly married to a young gentleman. Our fortune is large, our minds are vacant, our dispositions gay, our acquaintances numerous, and our relations splendid. We considered that marriage, like life, has its youth; that the first year is the year of gaiety and revel, and resolved to see the shows and feel the joys of London before the increase of our family should confine us to domestic cares and domestic pleasures.

'Little time was spent in preparation; the coach was harnessed, and a few days brought us to London, and we alighted at a lodging provided for us by Miss Biddy Trifle, a maiden niece of my husband's father, where we found apartments on a second floor, which my cousin told us would serve us till we could please ourselves with a more commodious and elegant habitation, and which she had taken at a very high price, because it was not worth the while to make a hard bargain for so short a time.

'Here I intended to lie concealed till my new clothes were made, and my new lodging hired; but Miss Trifle had so industriously given notice of our arrival to all her acquaintance, that I had the mortification next day of seeing the door thronged with painted coaches and chairs with coronets, and was

obliged to receive all my husband's relations on a second floor.

'Inconveniences are often balanced by some advantage: the elevation of my apartments furnished a subject for conversation, which, without some such help, we should have been in danger of wanting. Lady Stately told us how many years had passed since she climbed so many steps. Miss Airy ran to the window, and thought it charming to see the walkers so little in the street; and Miss Gentle went to try the same experiment, and screamed to find herself so far above the ground.

'They all knew that we intended to remove, and therefore all gave me advice about a proper choice. One street was recommended for the purity of its air, another for its freedom from noise, another for its nearness to the Park, another because there was but a step from it to all places of diversion, and another because its inhabitants enjoyed at once the town and country.

'I had civility enough to hear every recommendation with a look of curiosity while it was made, and of acquiescence when it was concluded, but in my heart felt no other desire than to be free from the disgrace of a second floor, and cared little where I should fix, if the apartments were spacious and splendid.

'Next day a chariot was hired, and Miss Trifle was dispatched to find a lodging. She returned in the afternoon, with an account of a charming place, to which my husband went in the morning to make the contract. Being young and inexperienced, he took with him his friend Ned Quick, a gentleman of great skill in rooms and furniture, who sees, at a single glance, whatever there is to be commended

or censured. Mr. Quick, at the first view of the house, declared that it could not be inhabited, for the sun in the afternoon shone with full glare on the windows of the dining-room.

'Miss Trifle went out again, and soon discovered another lodging, which Mr. Quick went to survey, and found, that, whenever the wind should blow from the east, all the smoke of the city would be driven upon it.

'A magnificent set of rooms was then found in one of the streets near Westminster-Bridge, which Miss Trifle preferred to any which she had yet seen; but Mr. Quick, having mused upon it for a time, concluded that it would be too much exposed in the morning to the fogs that rise from the river.

'Thus Mr. Quick proceeded to give us every day new testimonies of his taste and circumspection; sometimes the street was too narrow for a double range of coaches; sometimes it was an obscure place, not inhabited by persons of quality. Some places were dirty, and some crowded; in some houses the furniture was ill-suited, and in others the stairs were too narrow. He had such fertility of objections that Miss Trifle was at last tired, and desisted from all attempts for our accommodation.

'In the meantime I have still continued to see my company on a second floor, and am asked twenty times a day when I am to leave those odious lodgings, in which I live tumultuously without pleasure, and expensively without honour. My husband thinks so highly of Mr. Quick, that he cannot be persuaded to remove without his approbation; and Mr. Quick thinks his reputation raised by the multiplication of difficulties.

'In this distress to whom can I have recourse? I

find my temper vitiated by daily disappointment, by the sight of pleasures which I cannot partake, and the possession of riches which I cannot enjoy. Dear Mr. Idler, inform my husband that he is trifling away, in superfluous vexation, the few months which custom has appropriated to delight; that matrimonial quarrels are not easily reconciled between those that have no children; that wherever we settle he must always find some inconvenience; but nothing is so much to be avoided as a perpetual state of inquiry and suspense.

'I am, SIR,

'Your humble servant,

'PEGGY HEARTLESS.'

N° 87. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1759.

OF what we know not, we can only judge by what we know. Every novelty appears more wonderful as it is more remote from any thing with which experience or testimony have hitherto acquainted us; and if it passes further beyond the notions that we have been accustomed to form, it becomes at last incredible.

We seldom consider that human knowledge is very narrow, that national manners are formed by chance, that uncommon conjectures of causes produce rare effects, or that what is impossible at one time or place may yet happen in another. It is always easier to deny than to inquire. To refuse credit

confers for a moment an appearance of superiority, which every little mind is tempted to assume when it may be gained so cheaply as by withdrawing attention from evidence, and declining the fatigue of comparing probabilities. The most pertinacious and vehement demonstrator may be wearied in time by continual negation; and incredulity, which an old poet, in his address to Raleigh, calls *the wit of fools*, obtunds the argument which it cannot answer, as woolsacks deaden arrows though they cannot repel them.

Many relations of travellers have been slighted as fabulous, till more frequent voyages have confirmed their veracity; and it may reasonably be imagined, that many ancient historians are unjustly suspected of falsehood, because our own times afford nothing that resembles what they tell.

Had only the writers of antiquity informed us that there was once a nation in which the wife lay down upon the burning pile only to mix her ashes with those of her husband, we should have thought it a tale to be told with that of Endymion's commerce with the Moon. Had only a single traveller related that many nations of the earth were black, we should have thought the accounts of the Negroes and of the Phœnix equally credible. But of black men the numbers are too great who are now repining under English cruelty, and the custom of voluntary cremation is not yet lost among the ladies of India.

Few narratives will either to men or women appear more incredible than the histories of the Amazons; of female nations of whose constitution it was the essential and fundamental law, to exclude men from all participation either of public affairs or domestic business; where female armies marched un-

der female captains, female farmers gathered the harvest, female partners danced together, and female wits diverted one another.

Yet several ages of antiquity have transmitted accounts of the Amazons of Caucasus; and of the Amazons of America, who have given their name to the greatest river in the world, Condamine lately found such memorials as can be expected among erratic and unlettered nations, where events are recorded only by tradition, and new swarms settling in the country from time to time, confuse and efface all traces of former times.

To die with husbands, or to live without them, are the two extremes which the prudence and moderation of European ladies have, in all ages, equally declined; they have never been allured to death by the kindness or civility of the politest nations, nor has the roughness and brutality of more savage countries ever provoked them to doom their male associates to irrevocable banishment. The Bohemian matrons are said to have made one short struggle for superiority, but instead of banishing the men, they contented themselves with condemning them to servile offices; and their constitution, thus left imperfect, was quickly overthrown.

There is, I think, no class of English women from whom we are in any danger of Amazonian usurpation. The old maids seem nearest to independence, and most likely to be animated by revenge against masculine authority; they often speak of men with acrimonious vehemence, but it is seldom found that they have any settled hatred against them, and it is yet more rarely observed that they have any kindness for each other. They will not easily combine in any plot; and if they should ever agree to retire

and fortify themselves in castles or in mountains, the sentinel will betray the passes in spite, and the garrison will capitulate upon easy terms, if the besiegers have handsome sword-knots, and are well supplied with fringe and lace.

The gamesters, if they were united, would make a formidable body; and since they consider men only as beings that are to lose their money, they might live together without any wish for the officiousness of gallantry, or the delights of diversified conversation. But as nothing would hold them together but the hope of plundering one another, their government would fail from the defect of its principles, the men would need only to neglect them, and they would perish in a few weeks by a civil war.

I do not mean to censure the ladies of England as defective in knowledge or in spirit, when I suppose them unlikely to revive the military honours of their sex. The character of the ancient Amazons was rather terrible than lovely; the hand could not be very delicate that was only employed in drawing the bow and brandishing the battle axe; their power was maintained by cruelty, their courage was deformed by ferocity, and their example only shows that men and women live best together.

N° 88. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1759.

When the philosophers of the last age were first congregated into the Royal Society, great expectations were raised of the sudden progress of useful arts; the time was supposed to be near, when engines should turn by a perpetual motion, and health be secured by the universal medicine; when learning should be facilitated by a real character, and commerce extended by ships which could reach their ports in defiance of the tempest.

But improvement is naturally slow. The Society met and parted without any visible diminution of the miseries of life. The gout and stone were still painful, the ground that was not ploughed brought no harvest, and neither oranges nor grapes would grow upon the hawthorn. At last, those who were disappointed began to be angry; those likewise who hated innovation were glad to gain an opportunity of ridiculing men who had depreciated, perhaps with too much arrogance, the knowledge of antiquity. And it appears from some of their earliest apologies, that the philosophers felt with great sensibility the unwelcome importunities of those who were daily asking, 'What have ye done?'

The truth is, that little had been done compared with what fame had been suffered to promise; and the question could only be answered by general apologies and by new hopes, which, when they were

frustrated, gave a new occasion to the same vexatious inquiry.

This fatal question has disturbed the quiet of many other minds. He that in the latter part of his life too strictly inquires what he has done, can very seldom receive from his own heart such an account as will give him satisfaction.

We do not indeed so often disappoint others as ourselves. We not only think more highly than others of our own abilities, but allow ourselves to form hopes which we never communicate, and please our thoughts with employments which none ever will allot us, and with elevations to which we are never expected to rise; and when our days and years have passed away in common business or common amusements, and we find at last that we have suffered our purposes to sleep till the time of action is past, we are reproached only by our own reflections; neither our friends nor our enemies wonder that we live and die like the rest of mankind; that we live without notice, and die without memorial; they know not what task we had proposed, and therefore cannot discern whether it is finished.

He that compares what he has done with what he has left undone, will feel the effect which must always follow the comparison of imagination with reality; he will look with contempt on his own unimportance, and wonder to what purpose he came into the world; he will repine that he shall leave behind him no evidence of his having been, that he has added nothing to the system of life, but has glided from youth to age among the crowd, without any effort for distinction.

Man is seldom willing to let fall the opinion of his own dignity, or to believe that he does little only be-

cause every individual is a very little being. He is better content to want diligence than power, and sooner confesses the depravity of his will than the imbecility of his nature.

From this mistaken notion of human greatness it proceeds, that many who pretned to have made great advances in wisdom so loudly declare that they despise themselves. If I had ever found any of the self-contemners much irritated or pained by the consciousness of their meanness, I should have given them consolation by observing, that a little more than nothing is as much as can be expected from a being, who with respect to the multitudes about him is himself little more than nothing. Every man is obliged by the Supreme Master of the universe to improve all the opportunities of good which are afforded him, and to keep in continual activity such abilities as are bestowed upon him. But he has no reason to repine, though his abilities are small and his opportunities few. He that has improved the virtue, or advanced the happiness, of one fellow-creature, he that has ascertained a single moral proposition, or added one useful experiment to natural knowledge, may be contented with his own performance, and, with respect to mortals like himself, may demand, like Augustus, to be dismissed at his departure with applause.

Nº 89. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1759.

Ἀνεχου καὶ ἀπεχου.

EPICT.

How evil came into the world; for what reason it is that life is overspread with such boundless varieties of misery; why the only thinking being of this globe is doomed to think merely to be wretched, and to pass his time from youth to age in fearing or in suffering calamities, is a question which philosophers have long asked, and which philosophy could never answer.

Religion informs us that misery and sin were produced together. The depravation of human will was followed by a disorder of the harmony of nature; and by that Providence which often places antidotes in the neighbourhood of poisons, vice was checked by misery, lest it should swell to universal and unlimited dominion.

A state of innocence and happiness is so remote from all that we have ever seen, that though we can easily conceive it possible, and may therefore hope to attain it, yet our speculations upon it must be general and confused. We can discover that where there is universal innocence, there will probably be universal happiness; for why should afflictions be permitted to infest beings who are not in danger of corruption from blessings, and where there is no use

of terror nor cause of punishment? But in a world like ours, where our senses assault us, and our hearts betray us, we should pass on from crime to crime, heedless and remorseless, if misery did not stand in our way, and our own pains admonish us of our folly.

Almost all the moral good which is left among us, is the apparent effect of physical evil.

Goodness is divided by divines into soberness, righteousness, and godliness. Let it be examined how each of these duties would be practised if there were no physical evil to enforce it.

Sobriety, or temperance, is nothing but the forbearance of pleasure; and if pleasure was not followed by pain, who would forbear it? We see every hour those in whom the desire of present indulgence overpowers all sense of past and all foresight of future misery. In a remission of the gout, the drunkard returns to his wine, and the glutton to his feast; and if neither disease nor poverty were felt or dreaded, every one would sink down in idle sensuality, without any care of others, or of himself. To eat and drink, and lie down to sleep, would be the whole business of mankind.

Righteousness, or the system of social duty, may be subdivided into justice and charity. Of justice one of the heathen sages has shown, with great acuteness, that it was impressed upon mankind only by the inconveniences which injustice had produced. 'In the first ages,' says he, 'men acted without any rule but the impulse of desire; they practised injustice upon others, and suffered it from others in their turn; but in time it was discovered, that the pain of suffering wrong was greater than the pleasure of doing it; and mankind, by a general compact, sub-

mitted to the restraint of laws, and resigned the pleasure to escape the pain.'

Of charity it is superfluous to observe, that it could have no place if there were no want; for of a virtue which could not be practised, the omission could not be culpable. Evil is not only the occasional but the efficient cause of charity; we are incited to the relief of misery by the consciousness that we have the same nature with the sufferer, that we are in danger of the same distresses, and may sometime implore the same assistance.

Godliness, or piety, is elevation of the mind towards the Supreme Being, and extension of the thoughts of another life. The other life is future, and the Supreme Being is invisible. None would have recourse to an invisible power, but that all other subjects have eluded their hopes. None would fix their attention upon the future, but that they are discontented with the present. If the senses were feasted with perpetual pleasure, they would always keep the mind in subjection. Reason has no authority over us, but by its power to warn us against evil.

In childhood, while our minds are yet unoccupied, religion is impressed upon them, and the first years of almost all who have been well educated are passed in a regular discharge of the duties of piety. But as we advance forward into the crowds of life, innumerable delights solicit our inclinations, and innumerable cares distract our attention; the time of youth is passed in noisy frolics; manhood is led on from hope to hope, and from project to project; the dissoluteness of pleasure, the inebriation of success, the ardour of expectation, and the vehemence of competition, chain down the mind alike to the present scene, nor is it remembered how soon this mist of

trifles must be scattered, and the bubbles that float upon the rivulet of life be lost for ever in the gulph of eternity. To this consideration scarcely any man is awakened but by some pressing and resistless evil. The death of those from whom he derived his pleasures, or to whom he destined his possessions, some disease which shows him the vanity of all external acquisitions, or the gloom of age, which intercepts his prospects of long enjoyment, forces him to fix his hopes upon another state, and when he has contended with the tempests of life till his strength fails him, he flies at last to the shelter of religion.

That misery does not make all virtuous, experience too certainly informs us; but it is no less certain that of what virtue there is, misery produces far the greater part. Physical evil may be therefore endured with patience, since it is the cause of moral good; and patience itself is one virtue by which we are prepared for that state in which evil shall be no more.

N° 90. SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 1760.

It is a complaint which has been made from time to time, and which seems to have lately become more frequent, that English oratory, however forcible in argument, or elegant in expression, is deficient and inefficacious, because our speakers want the grace and energy of action.

Among the numerous projectors who are desirous to refine our manners, and improve our faculties, some are willing to supply the deficiency of our speakers. We have had more than one exhortation to study the neglected art of moving the passions, and have been encouraged to believe that our tongues, however feeble in themselves, may, by the help of our hands and legs, obtain an uncontrolable dominion over the most stubborn audience, animate the insensible, engage the careless, force tears from the obdurate, and money from the avaricious.

If by slight of hand, or nimbleness of foot, all these wonders can be performed, he that shall neglect to attain the free use of his limbs may be justly censured as criminally lazy. But I am afraid that no specimen of such effects will easily be shown. If I could once find a speaker in 'Change-Alley raising the price of stocks by the power of persuasive gestures, I should very zealously recommend the study of his art; but having never seen any action by which language was much assisted, I have been hitherto in-

clined to doubt whether my countrymen are not blamed too hastily for their calm and motionless utterance.

Foreigners of many nations accompany their speech with action; but why should their example have more influence upon us than ours upon them? Customs are not to be changed but for better. Let those who desire to reform us show the benefits of the change proposed. When the Frenchman waves his hands and writhes his body in recounting the revolutions of a game at cards, or the Neapolitan, who tells the hour of the day, shows upon his fingers the number which he mentions; I do not perceive that their manual exercise is of much use, or that they leave any image more deeply impressed by their bustle and vehemence of communication.

Upon the English stage there is no want of action; but the difficulty of making it at once various and proper, and its perpetual tendency to become ridiculous, notwithstanding all the advantages which art and show, and custom and prejudice, can give it, may prove how little it can be admitted into any other place, where it can have no recommendation but from truth and nature.

The use of English oratory is only at the bar, in the parliament, and in the church. Neither the judges of our laws, nor the representatives of our people, would be much affected by laboured gesticulation, or believe any man the more because he rolled his eyes, or puffed his cheeks, or spread abroad his arms, or stamped the ground, or thumped his breast, or turned his eyes sometimes to the ceiling and sometimes to the floor. Upon men intent only upon truth, the arm of an orator has little power; a credible testimony, or a cogent argument, will over-

come all the art of modulation, and all the violence of contortion.

It is well known, that in the city which may be called the parent of oratory, all the arts of mechanical persuasion were banished from the court of supreme judicature. The judges of the Areopagus considered action and vociferation as a foolish appeal to the external senses, and unworthy to be practised before those who had no desire of idle amusement, and whose only pleasure was to discover right.

Whether action may not be yet of use in churches, where the preacher addresses a mingled audience, may deserve inquiry. It is certain that the senses are more powerful as the reason is weaker; and that he whose ears convey little to his mind, may sometimes listen with his eyes till truth may gradually take possession of his heart. If there be any use of gesticulation, it must be applied to the ignorant and rude, who will be more affected by vehemence than delighted by propriety. In the pulpit little action can be proper, for action can illustrate nothing but that to which it may be referred by nature or by custom. He that imitates by his hand a motion which he describes, explains it by natural similitude; he that lays his hand on his breast, when he expresses pity, enforces his words by a customary illusion. But theology has few topics to which action can be appropriated; that action which is vague and indeterminate will at last settle into habit, and habitual peculiarities are quickly ridiculous.

It is perhaps the character of the English to despise trifles; and that art may surely be accounted a trifle which is at once useless and ostentatious, which can seldom be practised with propriety, and which, as the mind is more cultivated, is less powerful. Yet

as all innocent means are to be used for the propagation of truth, I would not deter those who are employed in preaching to common congregations from any practice which they may find persuasive; for, compared with the conversion of sinners, propriety and elegance are less than nothing.

N° 91. SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 1760.

It is common to overlook what is near, by keeping the eye fixed upon something remote. In the same manner present opportunities are neglected, and attainable good is slighted, by minds busied in extensive ranges, and intent upon future advantages. Life, however short, is made still shorter by waste of time, and its progress towards happiness, though naturally slow, is yet retarded by unnecessary labour.

The difficulty of obtaining knowledge is universally confessed. To fix deeply in the mind the principles of science, to settle their limitations, and deduce the long succession of their consequences; to comprehend the whole compass of complicated systems, with all the arguments, objections, and solutions, and to reposite in the intellectual treasury the numberless facts, experiments, apophthegms, and positions, which must stand single in the memory, and of which none has any perceptible connection with the rest, is a task which, though undertaken with ardour and pursued with diligence, must at last be left unfinished by the frailty of our nature.

To make the way to learning either less short or less smooth, is certainly absurd; yet this is the apparent effect of the prejudice which seems to prevail among us in favour of foreign authors, and of the contempt of our native literature which this excursive curiosity must necessarily produce. Every man is more speedily instructed by his own language, than by any other; before we search the rest of the world for teachers, let us try whether we may not spare our trouble by finding them at home.

The riches of the English language are much greater than they are commonly supposed. Many useful and valuable books lie buried in shops and libraries, unknown and unexamined, unless some lucky compiler opens them by chance, and finds an easy spoil of wit and learning. I am far from intending to insinuate, that other languages are not necessary to him who aspires to eminence, and whose whole life is devoted to study; but to him who reads only for amusement, or whose purpose is not to deck himself with the honours of literature, but to be qualified for domestic usefulness, and sit down content with subordinate reputation, we have authors sufficient to fill up all the vacancies of his time, and gratify most of his wishes for information.

Of our poets I need say little, because they are perhaps the only authors to whom their country has done justice. We consider the whole succession from Spenser to Pope, as superior to any names which the continent can boast; and therefore the poets of other nations, however familiarly they may be sometimes mentioned, are very little read, except by those who design to borrow their beauties.

There is, I think, not one of the liberal arts which may not be competently learned in the English lan-

guage. He that searches after mathematical knowledge may busy himself among his own countrymen, and will find one or other able to instruct him in every part of those abstruse sciences. He that is delighted with experiments, and wishes to know the nature of bodies from certain and visible effects, is happily placed where the mechanical philosophy was first established by a public institution, and from which it was spread to all other countries.

The more airy and elegant studies of philology and criticism have little need of any foreign help. Though our language, not being very analogical, gives few opportunities for grammatical researches, yet we have not wanted authors who have considered the principles of speech; and with critical writings we abound sufficiently to enable pedantry to impose rules which can seldom be observed, and vanity to talk of books which are seldom read.

But our own language has, from the Reformation to the present time, been chiefly dignified and adorned by the works of our divines, who, considered as commentators, controvertists, or preachers, have undoubtedly left all other nations far behind them. No vulgar language can boast such treasures of theological knowledge, or such multitudes of authors at once learned, elegant, and pious. Other countries and other communions have authors perhaps equal in abilities and diligence to ours; but if we unite number with excellence, there is certainly no nation which must not allow us to be superior. Of morality little is necessary to be said, because it is comprehended in practical divinity, and is perhaps better taught in English sermons than in any other books ancient or modern. Nor shall I dwell on our excellence in metaphysical speculations, because he

that reads the works of our divines will easily discover how far human subtilty has been able to penetrate.

Political knowledge is forced upon us by the form of our constitution; and all the mysteries of government are discovered in the attack or defence of every minister. The original law of society, the rights of subjects, and the prerogatives of kings, have been considered with the utmost nicety, sometimes profoundly investigated, and sometimes familiarly explained.

Thus copiously instructive is the English language; and thus needless is all recourse to foreign writers. Let us not therefore make our neighbours proud by soliciting help which we do not want, nor discourage our own industry by difficulties which we need not suffer.

N° 92. SATURDAY, JANUARY 19, 1760.

WHATEVER is useful or honourable will be desired by many who never can obtain it; and that which cannot be obtained when it is desired, artifice or folly will be diligent to counterfeit. Those to whom fortune has denied gold and diamonds decorate themselves with stones and metals, which have something of the show, but little of the value; and every moral excellence or intellectual faculty has some vice or folly which imitates its appearance.

Every man wishes to be wise, and they who cannot be wise are almost always cunning. The less is the real discernment of those whom business or conversation brings together, the more illusions are practised, nor is caution ever so necessary as with associates or opponents of feeble minds.

Cunning differs from wisdom as twilight from open day. He that walks in the sunshine goes boldly forward by the nearest way; he sees that where the path is straight and even he may proceed in security, and where it is rough and crooked he easily complies with the turns, and avoids the obstructions. But the traveller in the dusk fears more as he sees less; he knows there may be danger, and therefore suspects that he is never safe, tries every step before he fixes his foot, and shrinks at every noise lest violence should approach him. Wisdom comprehends at once the end and the means, estimates easiness or difficulty, and is cautious or confident in due propor-

tion. Cunning discovers little at a time, and has no other means of certainty than multiplication of stratagems and superfluity of suspicion. The man of cunning always considers that he can never be too safe, and therefore always keeps himself enveloped in a mist, impenetrable, as he hopes, to the eye of rivalry or curiosity.

Upon this principle, Tom Double has formed a habit of eluding the most harmless question. What he has no inclination to answer, he pretends sometimes not to hear, and endeavours to divert the inquirer's attention by some other subject; but if he be pressed hard by repeated interrogation, he always evades a direct reply. Ask him whom he likes best on the stage; he is ready to tell that there are several excellent performers. Inquire when he was last at the coffee-house; he replies, that the weather has been bad lately. Desire him to tell the age of any of his acquaintance; he immediately mentions another who is older or younger.

Will Puzzle values himself upon a long reach. He foresees every thing before it will happen, though he never relates his prognostications till the event is past. Nothing has come to pass for these twenty years of which Mr. Puzzle had not given broad hints, and told at least that it was not proper to tell. Of those predictions, which every conclusion will equally verify, he always claims the credit, and wonders that his friends did not understand them. He supposes very truly that much may be known which he knows not, and therefore pretends to know much of which he and all mankind are equally ignorant. I desired his opinion yesterday of the German war, and was told, that if the Prussians were well supported, something great may be expected; but that they have

very powerful enemies to encounter; that the Austrian general has long experience, and the Russians are hardy and resolute; but that no human power is invincible. I then drew the conversation to our own affairs, and invited him to balance the probabilities of war and peace. He told me that war requires courage, and negociation judgment, and that the time will come when it will be seen whether our skill in treaty is equal to our bravery in battle. To this general prattle he will appeal hereafter, and will demand to have his foresight applauded, whoever shall at last be conquered or victorious.

With Ned Smuggle all is a secret. He believes himself watched by observation and malignity on every side, and rejoices in the dexterity by which he has escaped snares that never were laid. Ned holds that a man is never deceived if he never trusts, and therefore will not tell the name of his tailor or his hatter. He rides out every morning for the air, and pleases himself with thinking that nobody knows where he has been. When he dines with a friend, he never goes to his house the nearest way, but walks up a bye-street to perplex the scent. When he has a coach called, he never tells him at the door the true place to which he is going, but stops him in the way that he may give him directions where nobody can hear him. The price of what he buys or sells is always concealed. He often takes lodgings in the country by a wrong name, and thinks that the world is wondering where he can be hid. All these transactions he registers in a book, which, he says, will some time or other amaze posterity.

It is remarked by Bacon, that many men try to procure reputation only by objections, of which, if they are once admitted, the nullity never appears,

because the design is laid aside. *This false feint of wisdom,* says he, *is the ruin of business.* The whole power of cunning is privative; to say nothing, and to do nothing, is the utmost of its reach. Yet men thus narrow by nature, and mean by art, are sometimes able to rise by the miscarriages of bravery and the openness of integrity; and by watching failures and snatching opportunities, obtain advantages which belong properly to higher characters.

N° 93. SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1760.

Sam Softly was bred a sugar-baker; but succeeding to a considerable estate on the death of his elder brother, he retired early from business, married a fortune, and settled in a country-house near Kentish-town. Sam, who formerly was a sportsman, and in his apprenticeship used to frequent Barnet races, keeps a high chaise, with a brace of seasoned geldings. During the summer months, the principal passion and employment of Sam's life is to visit, in this vehicle, the most eminent seats of the nobility and gentry in different parts of the kingdom, with his wife and some select friends. By these periodical excursions Sam gratifies many important purposes. He assists the several pregnancies of his wife; he shows his chaise to the best advantage; he indulges his insatiable curiosity for finery, which, since he has turned gentleman, has grown upon him to an extraordinary degree; he discovers taste and spirit; and,

what is above all, he finds frequent opportunities of displaying to the party, at every house he sees, his knowledge of family connections. At first, Sam was contented with driving a friend between London and his villa. Here he prided himself in pointing out the boxes of the citizens on each side of the road, with an accurate detail of their respective failures or successes in trade; and harangued on the several equipages that were accidentally passing. Here, too, the seats interspersed on the surrounding hills, afforded ample matter for Sam's curious discoveries. For one, he told his companion, a rich Jew had offered money; and that a retired widow was courted at another, by an eminent dry-salter. At the same time he discussed the utility, and enumerated the expenses, of the Islington turnpike. But Sam's ambition is at present raised to nobler undertakings.

When the happy hour of the annual expedition arrives, the seat of the chaise is furnished with Ogilvy's Book of Roads, and a choice quantity of cold tongues. The most alarming disaster which can happen to our hero, who thinks he *throws a whip* admirably well, is to be overtaken in a road which affords no *quarter* for wheels. Indeed, few men possess more skill or discernment for concerting and conducting a *party of pleasure*. When a seat is to be surveyed, he has a peculiar talent in selecting some shady bench in the park, where the company may most commodiously refresh themselves with cold tongue, chicken, and French rolls; and is very sagacious in discovering what cool temple in the garden will be best adapted for drinking tea, brought for this purpose, in the afternoon, and from which the chaise may be resumed with the greatest convenience. In viewing the house itself, he is principally attracted

by the chairs and beds, concerning the cost of which his minute inquiries generally gain the clearest information. An agate table easily diverts his eyes from the most capital strokes of Rubens, and a Turkey carpet has more charms than a Titian. Sam, however, dwells with some attention on the family portraits, particularly the most modern ones; and as this is a topic on which the housekeeper usually harangues in a more copious manner, he takes this opportunity of improving his knowledge of intermarriages. Yet, notwithstanding this appearance of satisfaction, Sam has some objection to all he sees. One house has too much gilding; at another, the chimney-pieces are all monuments; at a third, he conjectures that the beautiful canal must certainly be dried up in a hot summer. He despises the statues at Wilton, because he thinks he can see much better carving at Westminster Abbey. But there is one general objection which he is sure to make at almost every house, particularly at those which are most distinguished. He allows that all the apartments are extremely fine, but adds, with a sneer, that they are too fine to be inhabited.

Misapplied genius most commonly proves ridiculous. Had Sam, as nature intended, contentedly continued in the calmer and less conspicuous pursuits of sugar-baking, he might have been a respectable and useful character. At present he dissipates his life in a specious idleness, which neither improves himself nor his friends. Those talents which might have benefited society, he exposes to contempt by false pretensions. He affects pleasures which he cannot enjoy, and is acquainted only with those subjects on which he has no right to talk, and which it is no merit to understand.

N° 94. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1760.

It is common to find young men ardent and diligent in the pursuit of knowledge; but the progress of life very often produces laxity and indifference; and not only those who are at liberty to choose their business and amusements, but those likewise whose professions engage them in literary inquiries, pass the latter part of their time without improvement, and spend the day rather in any other entertainment than that which they might find among their books.

This abatement of the vigour of curiosity is sometimes imputed to the insufficiency of learning. Men are supposed to remit their labours, because they find their labours to have been vain; and to search no longer after truth and wisdom, because they at last despair of finding them.

But this reason is for the most part very falsely assigned. Of learning, as of virtue, it may be affirmed, that it is at once honoured and neglected. Whoever forsakes it will for ever look after it with longing, lament the loss which he does not endeavour to repair, and desire the good which he wants resolution to seize and keep. The idler never applauds his own idleness, nor does any man repent of the diligence of his youth.

So many hindrances may obstruct the acquisition of knowledge, that there is little reason for wondering that it is in a few hands. To the greater part of mankind the duties of life are inconsistent with

much study; and the hours which they would spend upon letters must be stolen from their occupations and their families. Many suffer themselves to be lured by more sprightly and luxurious pleasures from the shades of contemplation, where they find seldom more than a calm delight, such as, though greater than all others, its certainty and its duration being reckoned with its power of gratification, is yet easily quitted for some extemporary joy, which the present moment offers, and another perhaps will put out of reach.

It is the great excellence of learning, that it borrows very little from time or place; it is not confined to season or to climate, to cities or to the country, but may be cultivated and enjoyed where no other pleasure can be obtained. But this quality, which constitutes much of its value, is one occasion of neglect; what may be done at all times with equal propriety, is deferred from day to day, till the mind is gradually reconciled to the omission, and the attention is turned to other objects. Thus habitual idleness gains too much power to be conquered, and the soul shrinks from the idea of intellectual labour and intenseness of meditation.

That those who profess to advance learning sometimes obstruct it, cannot be denied; the continual multiplication of books not only distracts choice, but disappoints inquiry. To him that has moderately stored his mind with images, few writers afford any novelty; or what little they have to add to the common stock of learning, is so buried in the mass of general notions, that, like silver mingled with the ore of lead, it is too little to pay for the labour of separation; and he that has often been deceived by the

promise of a title, at last grows weary of examining, and is tempted to consider all as equally fallacious.

There are indeed some repetitions always lawful, because they never deceive. He that writes the history of past times, undertakes only to decorate known facts by new beauties of method or of style, or at most to illustrate them by his own reflections. The author of a system, whether moral or physical, is obliged to nothing beyond care of selection and regularity of disposition. But there are others who claim the name of authors merely to disgrace it, and fill the world with volumes only to bury letters in their own rubbish. The traveller, who tells, in a pompous folio, that he saw the Pantheon at Rome, and the Medicean Venus at Florence; the natural historian, who, describing the productions of a narrow island, recounts all that it has in common with every other part of the world; the collector of antiquities, that accounts every thing a curiosity which the ruins of Herculaneum happen to emit, though an instrument already shown in a thousand repositories, or a cup common to the ancients, the moderns, and all mankind; may be justly censured as the persecutors of students, and the thieves of that time which never can be restored.

N° 95. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1760.

'TO THE IDLER.

'MR. IDLER,

'IT is, I think, universally agreed, that seldom any good is gotten by complaint; yet we find that few forbear to complain, but those who are afraid of being reproached as the authors of their own miseries. I hope therefore for the common permission, to lay my case before you and your readers, by which I shall disburden my heart, though I cannot hope to receive either assistance or consolation.

'I am a trader, and owe my fortune to frugality and industry. I began with little; but by the easy and obvious method of spending less than I gain, I have every year added something to my stock, and expect to have a seat in the common-council at the next election.

'My wife, who was as prudent as myself, died six years ago, and left me one son and one daughter, for whose sake I resolved never to marry again, and rejected the overtures of Mrs. Squeeze, the broker's widow, who had ten thousand pounds at her own disposal.

'I bred my son at a school near Islington; and when he had learned arithmetic, and wrote a good hand, I took him into the shop, designing, in about ten years, to retire to Stratford or Hackney, and leave him established in the business.

'For four years he was diligent and sedate, entered the shop before it was opened, and when it was shut always examined the pins of the window. In any intermission of business it was his constant practice to peruse the ledger. I had always great hopes of him, when I observed how sorrowfully he would shake his head over a bad debt, and how eagerly he would listen to me when I told him that he might at one time or other become an alderman.

'We lived together with mutual confidence, till unluckily a visit was paid him by two of his school-fellows who were placed, I suppose, in the army, because they were fit for nothing better: they came glittering in their military dress, accosted their old acquaintance, and invited him to a tavern, where, as I have been since informed, they ridiculed the meanness of commerce, and wondered how a youth of spirit could spend the prime of life behind a counter.

'I did not suspect any mischief. I knew my son was never without money in his pocket, and was better able to pay his reckoning than his companions; and expected to see him return triumphing in his own advantages, and congratulating himself that he was not one of those who expose their heads to a musket bullet for three shillings a day.

'He returned sullen and thoughtful; I supposed him sorry for the hard fortune of his friends; and tried to comfort him, by saying that the war would soon be at an end, and that, if they had any honest occupation, half-pay would be a pretty help. He looked at me with indignation; and snatching up his candle, told me, as he went up stairs, that *he hoped to see a battle yet.*

'Why he should hope to see a battle, I could not

conceive, but let him go quietly to sleep away his folly. Next day he made two mistakes in the first bill, disobliged a customer by surly answers, and dated all his entries in the journal in a wrong month. At night he met his military companions again, came home late, and quarrelled with the maid.

'From this fatal interview he has gradually lost all his laudable passions and desires. He soon grew useless in the shop, where, indeed, I did not willingly trust him any longer: for he often mistook the price of goods to his own loss, and once gave a promissory note instead of a receipt.

'I did not know to what degree he was corrupted, till an honest tailor gave me notice that he had bespoke a laced suit, which was to be left for him at a house kept by the sister of one of my journeymen. I went to this clandestine lodging, and found, to my amazement, all the ornaments of a fine gentleman, which he has taken upon credit, or purchased with money subducted from the shop.

'This detection has made him desperate. He now openly declares his resolution to be a gentleman; says that his soul is too great for a counting-house; ridicules the conversation of city taverns; talks of new plays, and boxes and ladies; gives duchesses for his toasts; carries silver, for readiness, in his waistcoat-pocket; and comes home at night in a chair, with such thunders at the door, as have more than once brought the watchmen from their stands.

'Little expenses will not hurt us; and I could forgive a few juvenile frolics, if he would be careful of the main; but his favourite topic is contempt of money, which, he says, is of no use but to be spent. Riches, without honour, he holds empty things; and

once told me to my face, that wealthy plodders were only purveyors to men of spirit.

'He is always impatient in the company of his old friends, and seldom speaks till he is warmed with wine; he then entertains us with accounts that we do not desire to hear, of intrigues among lords and ladies, and quarrels between officers of the guards; shows a miniature on his snuff-box, and wonders that any man can look upon the new dancer without rapture.

'All this is very provoking; and yet all this might be borne, if the boy could support his pretensions. But, whatever he may think, he is yet far from the accomplishments which he has endeavoured to purchase at so dear a rate. I have watched him in public places. He sneaks in like a man that knows he is where he should not be; he is proud to catch the slightest salutation, and often claims t when it is not intended. Other men receive dignity from dress, but my booby looks always more meanly for his finery. Dear Mr. Idler, tell him what must at last become of a fop, whom pride will not suffer to be a trader, and whom long habits in a shop forbid to be a gentleman.

'I am, SIR, &c.

'TIM. WAINSCOT.'

Nº 96. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1760.

HACHO, a king of Lapland, was in his youth the most renowned of the Northern warriors. His martial atchievements remain engraved on a pillar of flint in the rocks of Hanga, and are to this day carroled to the harp by the Laplanders, at the fires with which they celebrate their nightly festivities. Such was his intrepid spirit, that he ventured to pass the lake Vether to the isle of Wizards, where he descended alone into the dreary vault in which a magician had been kept bound for six ages, and read the Gothic characters inscribed on his brazen mace. His eye was so piercing, that, as ancient chronicles report, he could blunt the weapons of his enemies only by looking at them. At twelve years of age he carried an iron vessel of a prodigious weight, for the length of five furlongs, in the presence of all the chiefs of his father's castle.

Nor was he less celebrated for his prudence and wisdom. Two of his proverbs are yet remembered and repeated among Laplanders. To express the vigilance of the Supreme Being, he was wont to say, *Odin's belt is always buckled.* To show that the most prosperous condition of life is often hazardous, his lesson was, *When you slide on the smoothest ice, beware of pits beneath.* He consoled his countrymen, when they were once preparing to leave the frozen deserts

of Lapland, and resolved to seek some warmer climate, by telling them, that the Eastern nations, notwithstanding their boasted fertility, passed every night amidst the horrors of anxious apprehension, and were inexpressibly affrighted, and almost stunned, every morning, with the noise of the sun while he was rising.

His temperance and severity of manners were his chief praise. In his early years he never tasted wine; nor would he drink out of a painted cup. He constantly slept in his armour, with his spear in his hand; nor would he use a battle-axe whose handle was inlaid with brass. He did not, however, persevere in this contempt of luxury; nor did he close his days with honour.

One evening, after hunting the Gulos, or wild-dog, being bewildered in a solitary forest, and having passed the fatigues of the day without any interval of refreshment, he discovered a large store of honey in the hollow of a pine. This was a dainty which he had never tasted before; and being at once faint and hungry, he fed greedily upon it. From this unusual and delicious repast he received so much satisfaction, that, at his return home, he commanded honey to be served up at his table every day. His palate, by degrees, became refined and vitiated; he began to lose his native relish for simple fare, and contracted a habit of indulging himself in delicacies; he ordered the delightful gardens of his castle to be thrown open, in which the most luscious fruits had been suffered to ripen and decay, unobserved and untouched, for many revolving autumns, and gratified his appetite with luxurious desserts. At length he found it expedient to introduce wine, as an agree-

able improvement, or a necessary ingredient, to his new way of living; and having once tasted it, he was tempted, by little and little, to give a loose to the excesses of intoxication. His general simplicity of life was changed; he perfumed his apartments by burning the wood of the most aromatic fir, and commanded his helmet to be ornamented with beautiful rows of the teeth of the rein-deer. Indolence and effeminacy stole upon him by pleasing and imperceptible gradations, relaxed the sinews of his resolution, and extinguished his thirst of military glory.

While Hacho was thus immersed in pleasure and in repose, it was reported to him, one morning, that the preceding night, a disastrous omen had been discovered, and that bats and hideous birds had drunk up the oil which nourished the perpetual lamp in the temple of Odin. About the same time, a messenger arrived to tell him, that the King of Norway had invaded his kingdom with a formidable army. Hacho, terrified as he was with the omen of the night, and enervated with indulgence, rouzed himself from his voluptuous lethargy, and recollecting some faint and few sparks of veteran valour, marched forward to meet him. Both armies joined battle in the forest where Hacho had been lost after hunting; and it so happened, that the King of Norway challenged him to single combat, near the place where he had tasted the honey. The Lapland chief, languid and long disused to arms, was soon overpowered; he fell to the ground; and before his insulting adversary struck his head from his body, uttered this exclamation, which the Laplanders still use as an early lesson to their children: 'The vicious man should date his destruction from the first temptation. How justly do I fall a sacrifice to sloth and luxury,

in the place where I first yielded to those allurements which seduced me to deviate from temperance and innocence! the honey which I tasted in this forest, and not the hand of the King of Norway, conquers Hacho.'

N° 97. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1760.

It may, I think, be justly observed, that few books disappoint their readers more than the narrations of travellers. One part of mankind is naturally curious to learn the sentiments, manners, and condition of the rest; and every mind that has leisure or power to extend its views, must be desirous of knowing in what proportion Providence has distributed the blessings of nature, or the advantages of art, among the several nations of the earth.

This general desire easily procures readers to every book from which it can expect gratification. The adventurer upon unknown coasts, and the describer of distant regions, is always welcomed as a man who has laboured for the pleasure of others, and who is able to enlarge our knowledge and rectify our opinions; but when the volume is opened, nothing is found but such general accounts as leave no distinct idea behind them, or such minute enumerations as few can read with either profit or delight.

Every writer of travels should consider, that, like all other authors, he undertakes either to instruct or

please, or to mingle pleasure with instruction. He that instructs must offer to the mind something to be imitated, or something to be avoided; he that pleases must offer new images to his reader, and enable him to form a tacit comparison of his own state with that of others.

The greater part of travellers tell nothing, because their method of travelling supplies them with nothing to be told. He that enters a town at night and surveys it in the morning, and then hastens away to another place, and guesses at the manners of the inhabitants by the entertainment which his inn afforded him, may please himself for a time with a hasty change of scenes, and a confused remembrance of palaces and churches; he may gratify his eye with a variety of landscapes, and regale his palate with a succession of vintages; but let him be contented to please himself without endeavouring to disturb others. Why should he record excursions by which nothing could be learned, or wish to make a show of knowledge, which, without some power of intuition unknown to other mortals, he never could attain?

Of those who crowd the world with their itineraries, some have no other purpose than to describe the face of the country; those who sit idle at home, and are curious to know what is done or suffered in distant countries, may be informed by one of these wanderers, that on a certain day he set out early with the caravan, and in the first hour's march saw, towards the south, a hill covered with trees, then passed over a stream, which ran northward with a swift course, but which is probably dry in the summer months; that an hour after he saw something to the right which looked at a distance like a castle with towers, but which he discovered afterwards to be a

craggy rock; that he then entered a valley, in which he saw several trees tall and flourishing, watered by a rivulet not marked in the maps, of which he was not able to learn the name; that the road afterward grew stony, and the country uneven, where he observed among the hills many hollows worn by torrents, and was told that the road was passable only part of the year; that going on they found the remains of a building, once, perhaps, a fortress to secure the pass, or to restrain the robbers, of which the present inhabitants can give no other account than that it is haunted by fairies; that they went to dine at the foot of a rock, and travelled the rest of the day along the banks of a river, from which the road turned aside towards evening, and brought them within sight of a village, which was once a considerable town, but which afforded them neither good victuals nor commodious lodging.

Thus he conducts his reader through wet and dry, over rough and smooth, without incidents, without reflection; and, if he obtains his company for another day, will dismiss him again at night, equally fatigued with a like succession of rocks and streams, mountains and ruins.

This is the common style of those sons of enterprise, who visit savage countries, and range through solitude and desolation; who pass a desart, and tell that it is sandy; who cross a valley, and find that it is green. There are others of more delicate sensibility, that visit only the realms of elegance and softness; that wander through Italian palaces, and amuse the gentle reader with catalogues of pictures; that hear masses in magnificent churches, and recount the number of the pillars or variegations of the pave-

ment. And there are yet others, who, in disdain of trifles, copy inscriptions elegant and rude, ancient and modern; and transcribe into their book the walls of every edifice, sacred or civil. He that reads these books must consider his labour as its own reward; for he will find nothing on which attention can fix, or which memory can retain.

He that would travel for the entertainment of others, should remember that the great object of remark is human life. Every nation has something particular in its manufactures, its works of genius, its medicines, its agriculture, its customs, and its policy. He only is a useful traveller, who brings home something by which his country may be benefited; who procures some supply of want, or some mitigation of evil, which may enable his readers to compare their condition with that of others, to improve it whenever it is worse, and whenever it is better to enjoy it.

N° 98. SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 1760.

' TO THE IDLER.

' SIR,

' I AM the daughter of a gentleman, who during his life-time enjoyed a small income which arose from a pension from the court, by which he was enabled to live in a genteel and comfortable manner.

' By the situation of life in which he was placed, he was frequently introduced into the company of those of much greater fortunes than his own, among whom he was always received with complaisance, and treated with civility.

' At six years of age I was sent to a boarding-school in the country, at which I continued till my father's death. This melancholy event happened at a time when I was by no means of sufficient age to manage for myself, while the passions of youth continued unsubdued, and before experience could guide my sentiments or my actions.

' I was then taken from school by an uncle, to the care of whom my father had committed me on his dying-bed. With him I lived several years; and as he was unmarried, the management of his family was committed to me. In this character I always endeavoured to acquit myself, if not with applause, at least without censure.

' At the age of twenty-one, a young gentleman of some fortune paid his addresses to me, and offered

me terms of marriage. This proposal I should readily have accepted, because from vicinity of residence, and from many opportunities of observing his behaviour, I had in some sort contracted an affection for him. My uncle, for what reason I do not know, refused his consent to this alliance, though it would have been complied with by the father of the young gentleman; and as the future condition of my life was wholly dependant on him, I was not willing to disoblige him, and therefore, though unwillingly, declined the offer.

'My uncle, who possessed a plentiful fortune, frequently hinted to me in conversation, that at his death I should be provided for in such a manner that I should be able to make my future life comfortable and happy. As this promise was often repeated, I was the less anxious about any provision for myself. In a short time my uncle was taken ill, and though all possible means were made use of for his recovery, in a few days he died.

'The sorrow arising from the loss of a relation, by whom I had been always treated with the greatest kindness, however grievous, was not the worst of my misfortunes. As he enjoyed an almost uninterrupted state of health, he was the less mindful of his dissolution, and died intestate; by which means his whole fortune devolved to a nearer relation, the heir at law.

'Thus excluded from all hopes of living in the manner with which I have so long flattered myself, I am doubtful what method I shall take to procure a decent maintenance. I have been educated in a manner that has set me above a state of servitude, and my situation renders me unfit for the company of those with whom I have hitherto conversed. But,

though disappointed in my expectations, I do not despair. I will hope that assistance may still be obtained for innocent distress, and that friendship, though rare, is yet not impossible to be found.

'I am, SIR,

'Your humble servant,

'SOPHIA HEEDFUL.'

N° 99. SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 1760.

As Ortogrul of Basra was one day wandering along the streets of Bagdat, musing on the varieties of merchandise which the shops offered to his view, and observing the different occupations which busied the multitudes on every side, he was awakened from the tranquillity of meditation by a crowd that obstructed his passage. He raised his eyes, and saw the chief visier, who, having returned from the divan, was entering his palace.

Ortogrul mingled with the attendants, and being supposed to have some petition for the visier, was permitted to enter. He surveyed the spaciousness of the apartments, admired the walls hung with golden tapestry, and the floors covered with silken carpets, and despised the simple neatness of his own little habitation.

Surely, said he to himself, this palace is the seat

of happiness, where pleasure succeeds to pleasure, and discontent and sorrow can have no admission. Whatever Nature has provided for the delight of sense, is here spread forth to be enjoyed. What can mortals hope or imagine, which the master of this palace has not obtained? The dishes of Luxury cover his table, the voice of Harmony lulls him in his bowers; he breathes the fragrance of the groves of Java, and sleeps upon the down of the cygnets of Ganges. He speaks, and his mandate is obeyed; he wishes, and his wish is gratified; all whom he sees obey him, and all whom he hears flatter him. How different, Ortogrul, is thy condition, who art doomed to the perpetual torments of unsatisfied desire, and who hast no amusement in thy power that can withhold thee from thy own reflections. They tell thee that thou art wise! but what does wisdom avail with poverty? None will flatter the poor, and the wise have very little power of flattering themselves. That man is surely the most wretched of the sons of wretchedness, who lives with his own faults and follies always before him, and who has none to reconcile him to himself by praise and veneration. I have long sought content, and have not found it; I will from this moment endeavour to be rich.

Full of his new resolution, he shut himself in his chamber for six months, to deliberate how he should grow rich; he sometimes proposed to offer himself as a counsellor to one of the kings of India, and sometimes resolved to dig for diamonds in the mines of Golconda. One day, after some hours passed in violent fluctuation of opinion, sleep insensibly seized him in his chair; he dreamed that he was ranging a desert country in search of some one that might

teach him to grow rich; and as he stood on the top of a hill shaded with cypress, in doubt whither to direct his steps, his father appeared on a sudden standing before him. Ortogrul, said the old man, I know thy perplexity; listen to thy father; turn thine eye on the opposite mountain. Ortogrul looked, and saw a torrent tumbling down the rocks, roaring with the noise of thunder, and scattering its foam on the impending woods. Now, said his father, behold the valley that lies between the hills. Ortogrul looked, and espied a little well, out of which issued a small rivulet. Tell me now, said his father, dost thou wish for sudden affluence, that may pour upon thee like the mountain torrent, or for a slow and gradual encrease, resembling the rill gliding from the well? Let me be quickly rich, said Ortogrul; let the golden stream be quick and violent. Look round thee, said his father, once again. Ortogrul looked, and perceived the channel of the torrent dry and dusty; but following the rivulet from the well, he traced it to a wide lake, which the supply, slow and constant, kept always full. He waked, and determined to grow rich by silent profit and persevering industry.

Having sold his patrimony, he engaged in merchandise, and in twenty years purchased lands, on which he raised a house, equal in sumptuousness to that of the visier, to which he invited all the ministers of pleasure, expecting to enjoy all the felicity which he had imagined riches able to afford. Leisure soon made him weary of himself, and he longed to be persuaded that he was great and happy. He was courteous and liberal; he gave all that approached him hopes of pleasing him, and all who should please him hopes of being rewarded. Every

art of praise was tried, and every source of adulatory fiction was exhausted. Ortogrul heard his flatterers without delight, because he found himself unable to believe them. His own heart told him his frailties, his own understanding reproached him with his faults. How long, said he, with a deep sigh, have I been labouring in vain to amass wealth which at last is useless! Let no man hereafter wish to be rich, who is already too wise to be flattered.

N° 100. SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 1760.

'TO THE IDLER.

'SIR,

'THE uncertainty and defects of language have produced very frequent complaints among the learned; yet there still remain many words among us undefined, which are very necessary to be rightly understood, and which produce very mischievous mistakes when they are erroneously interpreted.

'I lived in a state of celibacy beyond the usual time. In the hurry first of pleasure, and afterwards of business, I felt no want of a domestic companion; but becoming weary of labour, I soon grew more weary of idleness, and thought it reasonable to follow the custom of life, and to seek some solace of my cares in female tenderness, and some amusement of my leisure in female cheerfulness.

'The choice which has been long delayed is commonly made at last with great caution. My resolution was, to keep my passions neutral, and to marry only in compliance with my reason. I drew upon a page of my pocket-book a scheme of all female virtues and vices, with the vices which border upon every virtue, and the virtues which are allied to every vice. I considered that wit was sarcastic, and magnanimity imperious; that avarice was economical, and ignorance obsequious; and having estimated the good and evil of every quality, employed my own diligence, and that of my friends, to find the lady in whom nature and reason had reached that happy mediocrity which is equally remote from exuberance and deficience.

'Every woman had her admirers and her censurers; and the expectations which one raised were by another quickly depressed; yet there was one in whose favour almost all suffrages concurred. Miss Gentle was universally allowed to be a good sort of woman. Her fortune was not large, but so prudently managed, that she wore finer clothes, and saw more company, than many who were known to be twice as rich. Miss Gentle's visits were every where welcome; and whatever family she favoured with her company, she always left behind her such a degree of kindness as recommended her to others. Every day extended her acquaintance; and all who knew her declared that they never met with a better sort of woman.

'To Miss Gentle I made my addresses, and was received with great equality of temper. She did not in the days of courtship assume the privilege of imposing rigorous commands, or resenting slight offences. If I forgot any of her injunctions, I was

gently reminded; if I missed the minute of appointment, I was easily forgiven. I foresaw nothing in marriage but a halcyon calm, and longed for the happiness which was to be found in the inseparable society of a good sort of woman.

'The jointure was soon settled by the intervention of friends, and the day came in which Miss Gentle was made mine for ever. The first month was passed easily enough in receiving and repaying the civilities of our friends. The bride practised with great exactness all the niceties of ceremony, and distributed her notice in the most punctilious proportions to the friends who surrounded us with their happy auguries.

'But the time soon came when we were left to ourselves, and were to receive our pleasures from each other, and I then began to perceive that I was not formed to be much delighted by a good sort of woman. Her great principle is, that the orders of a family must not be broken. Every hour of the day has its employment inviolably appropriated; nor will any importunity persuade her to walk in the garden at the time which she has devoted to her needlework, or to sit up stairs in that part of the forenoon which she has accustomed herself to spend in the back parlour. She allows herself to sit half an hour after breakfast, and an hour after dinner; while I am talking or reading to her, she keeps her eye upon her watch, and when the minute of departure comes, will leave an argument unfinished, or the intrigue of a play unravelled. She once called me to supper when I was watching an eclipse, and summoned me at another time to bed when I was going to give directions at a fire.

'Her conversation is so habitually cautious, that

she never talks to me but in general terms, as to one whom it is dangerous to trust. For discriminations of character she has no names: all whom she mentions are honest men and agreeable women. She smiles not by sensation, but by practice. Her laughter is never excited but by a joke, and her notion of a joke is not very delicate. The repetition of a good joke does not weaken its effect; if she has laughed once, she will laugh again.

'She is an enemy to nothing but ill-nature and pride; but she has frequent reason to lament that they are so frequent in the world. All who are not equally pleased with the good and the bad, with the elegant and gross, with the witty and the dull, all who distinguish excellence from defect, she considers as ill-natured; and she condemns as proud all who repress impertinence or quell presumption, or expect respect from any other eminence than that of fortune, to which she is always willing to pay homage.

'There are none whom she openly hates; for if once she suffers, or believes herself to suffer, any contempt or insult, she never dismisses it from her mind, but takes all opportunities to tell how easily she can forgive. There are none whom she loves much better than others; for when any of her acquaintance decline in the opinion of the world, she always finds it inconvenient to visit them; her affection continues unaltered, but it is impossible to be intimate with the whole town.

'She daily exercises her benevolence by pitying every misfortune that happens to every family within her circle of notice; she is in hourly terrors lest one should catch cold in the rain, and another be frighted by the high wind. Her charity she shows by la-

menting that so many poor wretches should languish in the streets, and by wondering what the great can think on, that they do so little good with such large estates.

'Her house is elegant, and her table dainty, though she has little taste of elegance, and is wholly free from vicious luxury; but she comforts herself that nobody can say that her house is dirty, or that her dishes are not well dressed.

'This, Mr. Idler, I have found by long experience to be the character of a good sort of woman, which I have sent you for the information of those by whom a *good sort of woman*, and a *good woman*, may happen to be used as equivalent terms, and who may suffer by the mistake, like

'Your humble servant,

'TIM. WARNER.'

N° 101. SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1760.

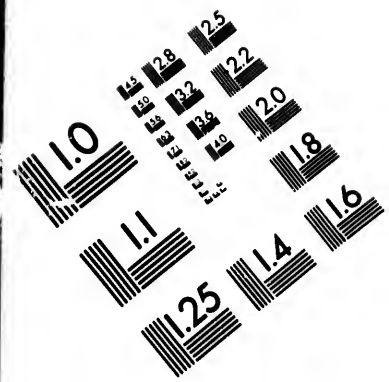
OMAR, the son of Hussan, had passed seventy-five years in honour and prosperity. The favour of three successive califs had filled his house with gold and silver; and whenever he appeared, the benedictions of the people proclaimed his passage.

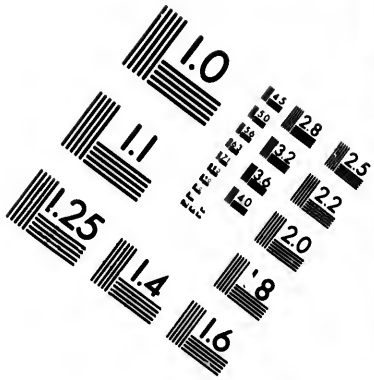
Terrestrial happiness is of short continuance. The brightness of the flame is wasting its fuel; the fragrant flower is passing away in its own odours. The vigour of Omar began to fail, the curls of beauty fell from his head, strength departed from his hands, and agility from his feet. He gave back to the calif the keys of trust and the seals of secrecy; and sought no other pleasure for the remains of life than the converse of the wise, and the gratitude of the good.

The powers of his mind were yet unimpaired. His chamber was filled by visitants, eager to catch the dictates of experience, and officious to pay the tribute of admiration. Caled, the son of the viceroy of Egypt, entered every day early, and retired late. He was beautiful and eloquent; Omar admired his wit, and loved his docility. Tell me, said Caled, thou to whose voice nations have listened, and whose wisdom is known to the extremities of Asia, tell me how I may resemble Omar the prudent. The arts by which you have gained power and preserved it, are to you no longer necessary or useful; impart

to me the secret of your conduct, and teach me the plan upon which your wisdom has built your fortune.

'Young man,' said Omar, 'it is of little use to form plans of life. When I took my first survey of the world, in my twentieth year, having considered the various conditions of mankind, in the hour of solitude I said thus to myself, leaning against a cedar which spread its branches over my head: Seventy years are allowed to man; I have yet fifty remaining: ten years I will allot to the attainment of knowledge, and ten I will pass in foreign countries; I shall be learned, and therefore shall be honoured; every city will shout at my arrival, and every student will solicit my friendship. Twenty years thus passed will store my mind with images which I shall be busy through the rest of my life in combining and comparing. I shall revel in inexhaustible accumulations of intellectual riches; I shall find new pleasures for every moment, and shall never more be weary of myself. I will, however, not deviate too far from the beaten track of life, but will try what can be found in female delicacy. I will marry a wife beautiful as the Houries, and wise as Zobeide; with her I will live twenty years within the suburbs of Bagdat, in every pleasure that wealth can purchase, and fancy can invent. I will then retire to a rural dwelling, pass my last days in obscurity and contemplation, and lie silently down on the bed of death. Through my life it shall be my settled resolution, that I will never depend upon the smile of princes; that I will never stand exposed to the artifices of courts; I will never pant for public honours, nor disturb my quiet with affairs of state. Such was my





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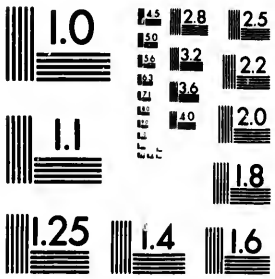

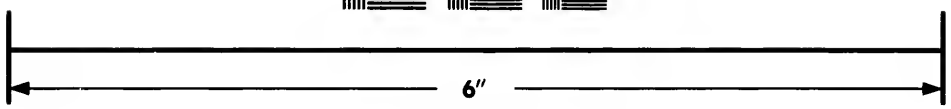

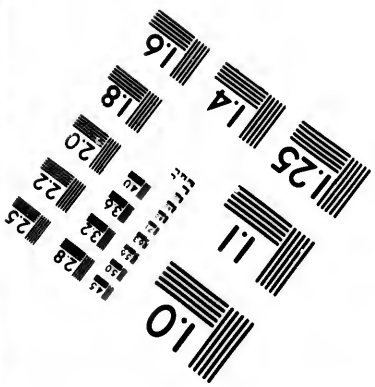

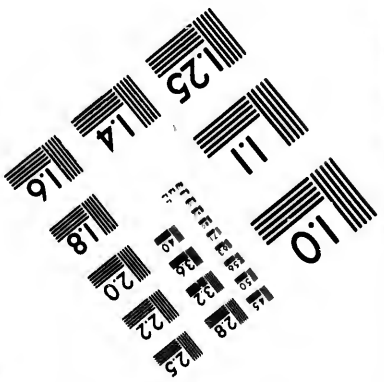

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scheme of life, which I impressed indelibly upon my memory.

'The first part of my ensuing time was to be spent in search of knowledge; and I know not how I was diverted from my design. I had no visible impediments without, nor any ungovernable passions within. I regarded knowledge as the highest honour and the most engaging pleasure; yet day stole upon day, and month glided after month, till I found that seven years of the first ten had vanished, and left nothing behind them. I now postponed my purpose of travelling; for why should I go abroad whil so much remained to be learned at home? I immured myself for four years, and studied the laws of the empire. The fame of my skill reached the judges; I was found able to speak upon doubtful questions, and was commanded to stand at the footstool of the calif. I was heard with attention, I was consulted with confidence, and the love of praise fastened on my heart.

'I still wished to see distant countries, listened with rapture to the relations of travellers, and resolved some time to ask my dismission, that I might feast my soul with novelty; but my presence was always necessary, and the stream of business hurried me along. Sometimes I was afraid lest I should be charged with ingratitude; but I still proposed to travel, and therefore would not confine myself by marriage.

'In my fiftieth year I began to suspect that the time of travelling was past, and thought it best to lay hold on the felicity yet in my power, and indulge myself in domestic pleasures. But at fifty no man easily finds a woman beautiful as the Houries,

and wise as Zobeide. I inquired and rejected, consulted and deliberated, till the sixty-second year made me ashamed of gazing upon girls. I had now nothing left but retirement, and for retirement I never found a time, till disease forced me from public employment.

'Such was my scheme, and such has been its consequence. With an insatiable thirst for knowledge, I trifled away the years of improvement; with a restless desire of seeing different countries, I have always resided in the same city; with the highest expectation of connubial felicity, I have lived unmarried; and with unalterable resolutions of contemplative retirement, I am going to die within the walls of Bagdat.'

N° 102. SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 1760.

It very seldom happens to man that his business is his pleasure. What is done from necessity is so often to be done when against the present inclination, and so often fills the mind with anxiety, that an habitual dislike steals upon us, and we shrink involuntarily from the remembrance of our task. This is the reason why almost every one wishes to quit his employment; he does not like another state, but is disgusted with his own.

From this unwillingness to perform more than is required of that which is commonly performed with reluctance, it proceeds that few authors write their own lives. Statesmen, courtiers, ladies, generals, and seamen, have given to the world their own stories, and the events with which their different stations have made them acquainted. They retired to the closet as to a place of quiet and amusement, and pleased themselves with writing, because they could lay down the pen whenever they were weary. But the author, however conspicuous, or however important, either in the public eye or in his own, leaves his life to be related by his successors, for he cannot gratify his vanity but by sacrificing his ease.

It is commonly supposed that the uniformity of a studious life affords no matter for narration: but the truth is, that of the most studious life a great part passes without study. An author partakes of the common condition of humanity; he is born and mar-

ried like another man; he has hopes and fears, expectations and disappointments, griefs and joys, and friends and enemies, like a courtier or a statesman; nor can I conceive why his affairs should not excite curiosity as much as the whisper of a drawing-room, or the factions of a camp.

Nothing detains the reader's attention more powerfully than deep involutions of distress, or sudden vicissitudes of fortune; and these might be abundantly afforded by memoirs of the sons of literature. They are intangled by contracts which they know not how to fulfil, and obliged to write on subjects which they do not understand. Every publication is a new period of time, from which some increase or declension of fame is to be reckoned. The gradations of a hero's life are from battle to battle, and of an author's from book to book.

Success and miscarriage have the same effects in all conditions. The prosperous are feared, hated, and flattered; and the unfortunate avoided, pitied, and despised. No sooner is a book published than the writer may judge of the opinion of the world. If his acquaintance press round him in public places, or salute him from the other side of the street; if invitations to dinner come thick upon him, and those with whom he dines keep him to supper; if the ladies turn to him when his coat is plain, and the footmen serve him with attention and alacrity; he may be sure that his work has been praised by some leader of literary fashions.

Of declining reputation the symptoms are not less easily observed. If the author enters a coffee-house, he has a box to himself; if he calls at a bookseller's, the boy turns his back; and, what is the most fatal of all prognostics, authors will visit him in a morn-

ing, and talk to him hour after hour of the malevolence of critics, the neglect of merit, the bad taste of the age, and the candour of posterity.

All this, modified and varied by accident and custom, would form very amusing scenes of biography, and might recreate many a mind which is very little delighted with conspiracies or battles, intrigues of a court, or debates of a parliament; to this might be added all the changes of the countenance of a patron, traced from the first glow which flattery raises in his cheek, through ardour of fondness, vehemence of promise, magnificence of praise, excuse of delay, and lamentation of inability, to the last chill look of final dismission, when the one grows weary of soliciting, and the other of hearing solicitation.

Thus copious are the materials which have been hitherto suffered to lie neglected, while the repositories of every family that has produced a soldier or a minister are ransacked, and libraries are crowded with useless folios of state-papers which will never be read, and which contribute nothing to valuable knowledge.

I hope the learned will be taught to know their own strength and their value, and, instead of devoting their lives to the honour of those who seldom thank them for their labours, resolve at last to do justice to themselves.

N° 103. SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 1760.

Respicere ad longæ jussit spatia ultima vitæ.
JUV.

MUCH of the pain and pleasure of mankind arises from the conjectures which every one makes of the thoughts of others; we all enjoy praise which we do not hear, and resent contempt which we do not see. The IDLER may therefore be forgiven, if he suffers his imagination to represent to him what his readers will say or think, when they are informed that they have now his last paper in their hands.

Value is more frequently raised by scarcity than by use. That which lay neglected when it was common, rises in estimation as its quantity becomes less. We seldom learn the true want of what we have till it is discovered that we can have no more.

This essay will, perhaps, be read with care even by those who have not yet attended to any other; and he that finds this late attention recompensed, will not forbear to wish that he had bestowed it sooner.

Though the IDLER and his readers have contracted no close friendship, they are perhaps both unwilling to part. There are few things not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, *this is the last*. Those who never could agree together, shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation; of a place which

has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart; and the IDLER, with all his chillness of tranquillity, is not wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is now before him.

This secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination; when we have done any thing for the last time, we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted us is past, and that as more is past there is less remaining.

It is very happily and kindly provided, that in every life there are certain pauses and interruptions, which force consideration upon the careless, and seriousness upon the light; points of time where one course of action ends, and another begins; and by vicissitudes of fortune, or alteration of employment, by change of place or loss of friendship, we are forced to say of something, *this is the last.*

An even and unvaried tenour of life always hides from our apprehension the approach of its end. Succession is not perceived but by variation; he that lives to-day as he lived yesterday, and expects that as the present day is, such will be the morrow, easily conceives time as running in a circle and returning to itself. The uncertainty of our duration is impressed commonly by dissimilitude of condition; it is only by finding life changeable that we are reminded of its shortness.

This conviction, however forcible at every new impression, is every moment fading from the mind; and partly by the inevitable incursion of new images, and

partly by voluntary exclusion of unwelcome thoughts, we are again exposed to the universal fallacy; and we must do another thing for the last time, before we consider that the time is nigh when we shall do no more.

As the last Idler is published in that solemn week which the Christian world has always set apart for the examination of the conscience, the review of life, the extinction of earthly desires, and the renovation of holy purposes; I hope that my readers are already disposed to view every incident with seriousness, and improve it by meditation; and that, when they see this series of trifles brought to a conclusion, they will consider that, by outliving the IDLER, they have passed weeks, months, and years, which are now no longer in their power; that an end must in time be put to every thing great as to every thing little; that to life must come its last hour, and to this system of being its last day; the hour at which probation ceases, and repentance will be vain; the day in which every work of the hand and imagination of the heart shall be brought to judgment, and an everlasting futurity shall be determined by the past.

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