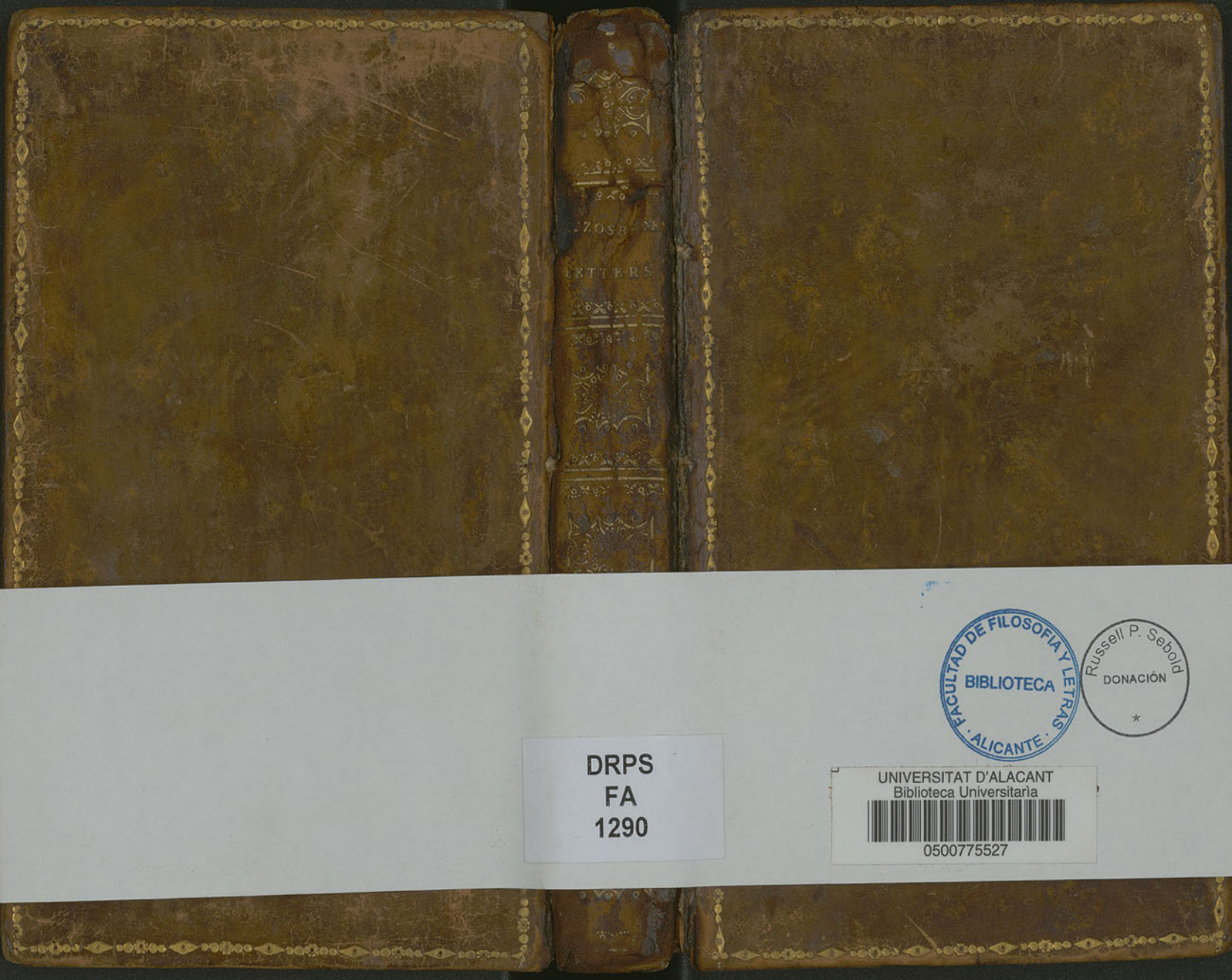
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FITZOSBORNE'S

LETTERS,

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY

WILLIAM MELMOTH, ESQ.

Translator of the Letters of Cicero, &c.

TWELFTH EDITION.

WITH

THE DIALOGUE ON ORATORY.

To which is prefixed,

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

See Letter 35.

LONDON,

Printed for the Proprietors of Mr. Melmoth's Works:

W. J. and J. Richardson; Otridge and Son; J. Walker; R. Lea; J. Nunn; Cuthell and Martin; Ogilvy and Son; Darton and Harvey; Lackington, Allen, and Co.; Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme; Vernor, Hood, and Sharpe; Cadell and Davies; J. Murray; J. Booker; and J. Asperne.

1807

WRIGHT, Printer, St. John's Square, Clerkenwell.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Proprietors of Mr. Melmoth's Works beg leave to apprize the Public that a spurious and incomplete edition of these Letters is now in circulation.

In the copy here recommended to their notice, will be found the celebrated Dialogue on the Rise and Decline of Eloquence among the Romans, and an authentic and interesting sketch of the author's life and writings. The Greek and Latin quotations, hitherto very incorrectly printed, have also been revised with the greatest care.

These advantages, added to superior elegance of printing and embellishment, will, they trust, be amply sufficient to ensure this edition a decided preference over every other. 1805.

That the confidence, reposed by the Proprietors in the merits of their large edition of 1805, *was not vain and presumptuous is verified by the necessity of another of equal magnitude, even before the expiration of twelve months. It is just to observe, and it is all they have now respectfully to add, that the present differs in nothing from the former edition, except in a single improvement, which relates to the reformation of the "Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Author."* 1806.

MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE AUTHOR.

It has frequently been remarked that biographical anecdotes rarely abound in the circle described by literary characters, who, lost in the fascinating wilds of speculation and fancy, or immersed in the laborious investigations of science, avoid the tumultuous business and pleasures of society, which alone tend, in any great measure, to vary and chequer the scenes of human life. That this was or was not the case with the subject of the present memoir, we are not prepared peremptorily to assert; but the rich legacy which he has bequeathed to us, gives rise most reasonably to the conclusion, that he was a man devoted to letters, and a lover of the *secretum iter*. If he had no humble and industrious, idolizing and vigilant attendant, no Boswell to pursue his steps, like a shadow, and to record all his weaknesses and virtues, we have no reason to complain, for we have something still better.—The best of an author is his works, and these we possess. Here we have the gold without alloy. His writings are the temple of the Graces, who, to use the language of an ingenious commentator, "can give that certain happiness of manner, which we all understand, yet no one is able to express; which often supplies the place of merit, and without which merit itself is imperfect."

William Melmoth, Esq. late of Bath, was the eldest son of an eminent lawyer of the same name, and member of the honourable society of Lincoln's Inn. His father, who was born in the year 1666,

exercised his profession, as we learn, "with a skill and integrity, which nothing could equal but the disinterested motive, that animated his labours. He often exerted his distinguished abilities, yet refused the reward of them, in defence of *the widow, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.* His admirable treatise on *The great Importance of a religious Life*, deserves to be held in perpetual remembrance. In a word, few ever passed a more useful, none a more blameless life. He died in 1743."

Under the tuition of his venerable father, and with the advantage of his good example, it is not difficult to suppose that he greatly improved in every estimable quality; and though we are deprived, through his advanced age, of all information from the companions of his earlier years, we may safely conjecture, that they were so well husbanded, and sedulously applied to the acquisition of literature and science, as to lay a solid foundation for that maturity and distinction in taste and judgment, which he afterwards displayed. He is said to have been as amiable and engaging in his progress to manhood, as he certainly became respectable and even worthy of reverence in the later stages of his protracted existence.

Of his juvenile and domestic habits, whether of a grave or sprightly deportment, and whether his education was public or private, at what seminary he studied, or to what particular master he owed his classical taste, little is correctly known. The first indications of his future excellence have probably perished with the friends of his youth, whom he survived. The public's principal acquaintance with him, therefore, is through the medium of his works.

About five and twenty years have elapsed since a publication entitled "*Liberal Opinions*," issued from the press, under the assumed name of *Courtney Melmoth*, and was commonly ascribed to our author. Their discernment, however, is not to be envied, who could mistake the masterly and philosophical, the refined and useful emanations of an enlightened intellect, for the transient productions of that anonymous author.

William Melmoth, Esq. so far from giving the least countenance to the loose dogmas industriously propagated by the modern school of infidelity, asserts his belief of christianity, in the genuine spirit which she inspires, and honestly and unequivocally, in several parts of his writings,* avows a preference for the religious establishment of his native country.

Our author, according to the best information, was of Emanuel's College, Cambridge; but how long he studied at that university, or whether he took any degree, is uncertain. From one of his letters † in this collection, it would appear that his life had commenced by mixing more or less with the active world in a public character, possibly in the same profession, which his father had previously pursued with so much honour. His motives for relinquishing this situation, and adopting one more retired and consonant to his own inclinations and habits, are briefly, but explicitly stated, and afford a very satisfactory apology for his choice. "How, indeed," says he, "could a man hope to ren-
"der himself acceptable to the various parties, which
"divide our nation, who professes it as his princi-
"ple, that there is no striking wholly into the mea-

* See Lælius, or an Essay on Friendship, Remark 68, Page 318, and Letters 8 and 46 of Fitzosborne.

† Letter 36.

" sures of any, without renouncing either one's
" sense, or one's integrity; and yet, as the world
" is at present constituted, it is scarce possible, I
" fear, to do any good in one's generation (in public
" life I mean) without listing under some or other
" of those various banners, which distinguish the
" several corps in these our political warfares."

In the same letter, as well as in others, he expatiates with evident complacency on the peculiar felicities, which arise from the possession and exercise both of the social and conjugal virtues. His villa, which he has described with so much picturesque taste and elegance, was probably the spot, where his first nuptials took place, and he retreated into the country, fortunately emancipated, as one of his feelings must have conceived, from all the turmoil and dissention incident to party contest. His domestic comforts are not obscurely specified in a preceding letter, where he breathes those manly sentiments, which so well become the head of a family. It is written, as we presume, on the anniversary of their marriage, and addressed to Mrs. Melmoth, under the feigned name of *Cleora*. He there alludes to several passages in his private history, which none but such as knew it intimately can explain. He speaks particularly of a musical instrument, for the use of a young lady, whom he calls *Tarminta;* and probably his grand-niece, at that time, as it would seem, recently entered on the practice of music, celebrates the day by the composition of an appropriate ode, and concludes with a rapturous encomium on wedded love.

From this beautiful and romantic situation in the vicinity of Shrewsbury, where he first selected his rural sequestration, he removed, it would appear, to Bath. Here he had the misfortune to lose Mrs.

Melmoth, of whom, in his letters, he frequently speaks in such raptures, and to whom he repeatedly avows the strongest attachment. Soon after her death, however, he married a Miss Ogle, of an Irish family. It is reported that he was precipitated into this match by a gigantic Hibernian cousin of the lady, and that a scene in the *Irish Widow* originated in the incident. It is, notwithstanding, well known, that she proved herself highly deserving of his esteem, by an affectionate and dutiful attention to him on every occasion.

He was grievously afflicted, even at a great age, by violent attacks of the stone and gravel, which rendered walking so painful to him, that he was confined for several years to his own house, and never went abroad but when carried in a sedan chair. For ten or twelve years, however, before his death, by persevering in the regular use of mephitic water, he latterly recovered even an active use of his locomotive powers. It is not surprising that these dilapidations of nature, connected with a long series of intense study, which wears the mind as much, at least, as labour impairs the body, rendered him, in old age, very petulant, and easily provoked. Yet such were his domestic virtues and the goodness of his heart, that though often cross, he was never implacable, and generally retained his servants until death put an end to their mutual dependance.

Mr. Melmoth resided in Bath for the last thirty years of his life, and died at Bladud's Buildings, in that city, in 1799, aged 89, full of years and good works. He was of middle stature, and very thin. His eyes were of a lively cast, and his face discovered strong lines of thought. From a very wrinkled countenance, occasioned, perhaps, by

much deep and intense thought, he exhibited, even before he was an old man, extraordinary marks of age. He was a person of exemplary piety, and stern integrity, "*incorrupta fides, nudáque veritas*;" and his writings are not a greater ornament to literature, than his whole life was honourable to human nature.

Happily circumstanced as he seems to have been during the better part of the flower of his days; far from the noisy world, and richly stored with literature and science, he was not idle, though retired; nor lost that time in dissipation or luxury which he denied to the pursuit of honour and ambition. His studies, indeed, manifestly prove that his life, if not laborious, was dedicated to ingenious research and fruitful contemplation.

Our author's literary debût appeared in an essay *On active and retired Life*, in an Epistle to Henry Coventry, Esq. which was printed in 1735. It was afterwards inserted in *Dodsley's Collection*, and contains some good passages, and many beautiful lines. His versification, however, is not equal to his prose: and, notwithstanding his youth when this poem was published, he seems to have declined a pursuit from which his good sense taught him to expect no distinguished success.

Several passages in his *Fitzosborne's Letters* demonstrate that he was accustomed to canvass with himself the difference between an *active and retired Life*, and how much better he thought the one accommodated to his plan of happiness than the other, will be seen by a reference to letters thirty-two and fifty.

English literature was not a little enriched, and the history of Roman manners elucidated by his elegant version of the Epistles of Pliny the younger,

which appeared in 1753. The pupil of Quintilian was the most polite and agreeable writer of his time. He moved in the highest sphere of society; was intimate with all the most eminent men of that period; possessed the readiest access to all circles, and citizens of every description, and with these advantages, such powers of intelligence and observation as enabled him to make the best use of whatever he heard or saw. None of his contemporaries appear to us so full of anecdote, or picture the private as well as the public life of the Romans, so accurately as Pliny. Although he wrote with great purity, considering the date of his compositions, he is still not free from that meretricious refinement, which then marked the degeneracy of Roman taste, both in letters and manners. The style of the translation of these Epistles would, on the contrary, have passed the ordeal of the chastest periods of our language, when Addison, Swift and Bolingbroke fixed the standard of its simplicity and elegance. The *notes* to this version are judicious, learned, and amusing.

In the same, or about the beginning of the subsequent year, followed his translation of Cicero's familiar Epistles to several of his Friends, with Remarks. With the critical, literary, and philosophical excellencies of the former, they are far more historical, political, and professional. Written on the eve of a momentous revolution in the empire of the world, and while the minds of men were startled and laboured under repeated presages of that stupendous event, they are replete with interest, observation, and instruction. The author himself was a conspicuous actor in these important scenes, in which his several correspondents also performed their respective parts. Mr. Melmoth,

according to his advertisement, prefers them to those particularly addressed to Atticus, "as they "shew the author of them in a greater variety of "connexions, and afford an opportunity of con- "sidering him in almost every possible point of "view." His comments on them few will read without profit, and none without pleasure.

An elegant translation of *Cato, or an Essay on Old Age*; and *Lælius, or an Essay on Friendship*, both with *Remarks*, were produced successively, in 1777. Nothing was ever written in a style of more exquisite reasoning, or more refined and animated illustration, than these two incomparable performances. As far as the different genius of a dead and living language would permit, it is allowed that our translator has done him ample justice. The *Remarks* on each, doubling the quantity of the original, are critical, biographical, and explanatory, and disclose such a fund of Roman antiquities, as must be eminently useful and acceptable to every classical student.

Besides a few temporary productions, in verse and prose, which were, as usual, anonymous and fugitive, his contributions to the *World*, in which, it is said, he had some share, and the letters in this volume, he published an answer to the attack of Jacob Briant, Esq. on the opinion of our author concerning the persecution of the Christians under the emperor Trajan. He proves unexceptionably that this circumstance, horrid as it was, originated not in any antipathy conceived against the truths which they believed, but in the laws of the constitution or established police of the state, against practices deemed by them indispensible to a general profession of their religion. *Memoirs of a late eminent Advocate*, which he doubtless intended as a tribute of filial duty,

was also written and edited by him, at a very late period of life. Here we perceive the same composure of mind and the same unaffected simplicity which distinguished all his preceding pieces; but, to use the language of Longinus, διχα της σφοδροτητος, the fire and genius of his earlier exertions are no longer apparent.

* *Fitzosborne's Letters*, presented to the public in this elegant impression, we mention last, though among the first of his works, as they form that portion of them to which our Memoir more particularly belongs. He was probably pleased with this disguise, under which he might with modesty speak familiarly of his own concerns, as well as of those of his friends. It divested him of feelings that would, otherwise, to a certain degree, have repressed the freedom of his remarks, and laid him under such a restraint as must have contracted his conception, and cramped his expression. The fiction was harmless, and he has rendered it useful. These letters, treating chiefly of objects with which the heart is most conversant, have always had their admirers. The various domestic scenes, the tranquil felicities of private life, the harmonies of social fellowship and concord, the occurrences of the day, the interest we are all made to feel and participate in the enjoyments of one another, and the indefinite number of nameless circumstances, to which the affections of none are altogether insensible, are the various strings on which these letters touch, and with which our hearts are for ever in unison. These delicacies, uniformly directed to the best moral purposes, impart such a charm to all he utters, and stamp such a value on his writings, as we rarely

* First printed in 1742.

meet with in the compositions of other men. One of the best letters in the whole collection, though merely introductory to our author's translation of the celebrated, but, as he calls it, anonymous dialogue on oratory, is replete with observations of great and public importance. We are not aware that this beautiful fragment of antiquity has been transfused into English by any former writer, but here it appears with peculiar elegance, and exhibits specimens of the purest eloquence and the soundest wisdom. The translator has, indeed, arranged his letters in such a manner, as to render them altogether imperfect without it; and, to many readers of a particular cast, it may probably be deemed the most valuable part of the volume. The tract entitled *de Oratoribus, sive de caussis corruptæ eloquentiæ dialogus*, has been ascribed to Tacitus, Quintilian, and Suetonius, but it was the opinion of Mr. Melmoth that it was the production of Pliny the Younger, and it is to be lamented that his promise "one day or other to attempt to prove it in form," was never fulfilled. On this subject Lipsius and M. Brotier will be consulted with advantage. Mr. Murphy, as much attached to Tacitus as Mr. Melmoth to Pliny, gives it to his favourite, in the notes to his version of the *Dialogue*.

Notwithstanding the constitutional diffidence and reserve of this amiable writer, and his invincible reluctance to solicit public attention, he was not entirely overlooked even by the most fashionable and celebrated literary characters of his day. We find him an occasional visitor at the late Mrs. Montague's, who lost no opportunity of enhancing her own popularity by that of her guests. With other wits, who sparkled at the levee of that lady, he was also sometimes seen, and all who knew or conversed with him there, or elsewhere, acknowledge his politeness both as a gentleman and a scholar.

The silly flippancy with which Mrs. Piozzi mentions her dislike of him in a letter* to Dr. Johnson, and the doctor's contumelious coincidence in his reply, *suo more et modo*, reflect no credit on the judgment or good manners of either, and rather improve than detract from the reader's opinion of the polished and unassuming genius of our author. The reputation of Mr. Melmoth was not to be depreciated by the scandal or jealousy of this presumptuous school. The most respectable of his contemporaries bore witness to his worth as a man, and his merit as a writer. He is even mentioned by a celebrated satirist, "*whose charity exceedeth not*," with commendable veneration. "William Melmoth, Esq." according to the *Pursuits of Literature*, "a most "elegant and distinguished writer near half an age "with every good man's praise. His translation of "Cicero and Pliny will speak for him, while Ro"man and English eloquence can be united. Mr. "Melmoth is a happy example of the mild influence "of learning on a cultivated mind, I mean of that "learning which is declared to be the aliment of "youth, and the delight and consolation of declin"ing years. Who would not envy this 'Fortu"nate Old Man' his most finished translation and

* See Boswell's Life of Johnson, Vol. 1. 457. "Yesterday "evening," says she, "was past at Mrs. Montague's. There was "Mr. Melmoth. I do not like him tho', nor he me. It was ex"pected we should have pleased each other. He is, however, just "tory enough to hate the bishop of Peterboro' for his whiggism, "and whig enough to abhor you for toryism. Mrs. Montague "flattered him finely; so he had a good afternoon of it." Johnson returned this answer. "From the author of Fitzosborne's Letters I "cannot think myself in much danger. I met him only once, about "thirty years ago, and, in some small dispute, reduced him to a "whistle. Having never seen him since, that is the last impression.'

" comment on Tully's Cato ? or rather, who would " not rejoice in the refined and mellowed pleasures " of so accomplished a gentleman and so liberal a " scholar."

The traveller, Mr. Coxe, whose tour it would seem was originally communicated to our author, begins his work by addressing him in these respectful terms. " I am persuaded that I shall travel " with much greater profit to myself, when I am " thus to inform you of all I have seen ; as the " reflection that my observations are to be commu- " nicated to you, will be one means of rendering " me more attentive and accurate in forming " them." The concluding words of his last edition are still more affectionate and emphatical. We forbear, however, to transcribe them, as well as the honourable testimony of many others, which it seems unnecessary to repeat. He has long been removed from this bustling scene, and is alike insensible to good or ill report. Were it otherwise, his gratification must be great indeed, since few writers continue to receive and deserve so much commendation. Distinguished as he is in all his labours, his talents are peculiarly prominent in the letters here presented to the world. To the composition of this delightful and instructive work, he brought his genius in its happiest mood, and exerted in its execution " the whole strength of his clear, unclouded faculties." But time and experience have given judgment in the case, and all our praise, however merited, is at best superfluous.

LETTERS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

LETTER I.

TO CLYTANDER.

Sept. 1739.

I ENTIRELY approve of your design: but whilst I rejoice in the hope of seeing Enthusiasm thus successfully attacked in her strongest and most formidable holds, I would claim your mercy for her in another quarter; and after having expelled her from her religious dominions, let me entreat you to leave her in the undisturbed enjoyment of her civil possessions. To own the truth, I look upon enthusiasm, in all other points but that of religion, to be a very necessary turn of mind ; as indeed it is a vein which Nature seems to have marked, with more or less strength, in the tempers of most men. No matter what the object is, whether business, pleasures, or the fine arts; whoever pursues them to any purpose, must do so *con amore ;* and enamoratos, you know, of every kind, are all enthusiasts. There is, indeed, a certain heightening faculty which universally prevails through our species; and we are all of us, perhaps, in our several favourite pursuits, pretty much in the circumstances of the renowned knight of La Mancha, when he attacked the barber's brazen bason for Mambrino's golden helmet.

What is Tully's *aliquid immensum infinitumque*, which he professes to aspire after in oratory, but a piece of true rhetorical Quixotism ? Yet never, I will venture to affirm, would he have glowed with so much eloquence, had he been warmed with less enthusiasm. I am persuaded, in-

deed, that nothing great or glorious was ever performed, where this quality had not a principal concern; and as our passions add vigour to our actions, enthusiasm gives spirit to our passions. I might add, too, that it even opens and enlarges our capacities. Accordingly, I have been informed, that one of the great lights of the present age never sits down to study till he has raised his imagination by the power of music. For this purpose, he has a band of instruments placed near his library, which play till he finds himself elevated to a proper height; upon which he gives a signal, and they instantly cease.

But those *high conceits* which are suggested by enthusiasm, contribute not only to the pleasure and perfection of the fine arts, but to most other effects of our action and industry. To strike this spirit, therefore, out of the human constitution, to reduce things to their precise philosophical standard, would be to check some of the main wheels of society, and to fix half the world in an useless apathy. For if enthusiasm did not add an imaginary value to most of the objects of our pursuit; if fancy did not give them their brightest colours, they would generally, perhaps, wear an appearance too contemptible to excite desire:

> Weary'd we should lie down in death,
> This cheat of life would take no more,
> If you thought fame but empty breath,
> I Phillis but a perjur'd whore. *Prior.*

In a word, this enthusiasm for which I am pleading, is a beneficent enchantress, who never exerts her magic but to our advantage, and only deals about her friendly spells in order to raise imaginary beauties, or to improve real ones. The worst that can be said of her is, that she is a kind deceiver, and an obliging flatterer. Let me conjure you, then, good Clytander, not to break up her useful enchantments, which thus surround us on every side; but spare her harmless deceptions in mere charity to mankind. I am, &c.

LETTER II.

TO PHILOTES.

I SHOULD not have suffered so long an interval to interrupt our correspondence, if my expedition to Euphronius had not wholly employed me for these last six weeks. I had long promised to spend some time with him before he embarked with his regiment for Flanders; and, as he is not one of those Hudibrastic heroes who choose to run away one day that they may live to fight another, I was unwilling to trust the opportunity of seeing him to the very precarious contingency of his return.—The high enjoyments he leaves behind him, might, indeed, be a pledge to his friends that his caution would at least be equal to his courage, if his notions of honour were less exquisitely delicate. But he will undoubtedly act as if he had nothing to hazard; though, at the same time, from the generous sensibility of his temper, he feels every thing that his family can suffer in their fears for his danger. I had an instance, whilst I was in his house, how much Euphronia's apprehensions for his safety are ready to take alarm upon every occasion. She called me one day into the gallery, to look upon a picture which was just come out of the painter's hands; but the moment she carried me up to it, she burst out into a flood of tears. It was drawn at the request, and after a design of her father, and is a performance which does great honour to the ingenious artist who executed it. Euphronius is represented under the character of Hector, when he parts from Andromache, who is personated, in the piece, by Euphronia; as her sister, who holds their little boy in her arms, is shadowed out under the figure of the beautiful nurse with the young Astyanax.

I was so much pleased with the design in this uncommon family-piece, that I thought it deserved particular mention; as I could wish it were to become a general fashion to have all pictures of the same kind executed in some such manner. If, instead of furnishing a room with

separate portraits, a whole family were to be thus introduced into a single piece, and represented under some interesting historical subject, suitable to their rank and character, portraits, which are now so generally and so deservedly despised, might become of real value to the public. By this means history-painting would be encouraged among us, and a ridiculous vanity turned to the improvement of one of the most instructive, as well as the most pleasing, of the imitative arts. Those who never contributed a single benefit to their own age, nor will ever be mentioned in any after-one, might by this means employ their pride and their expence in a way, which might render them entertaining and useful both to the present and future times. It would require, indeed, great judgment and address in the painter, to choose and recommend subjects proper to the various characters which would present themselves to his pencil; and undoubtedly we should see many enormous absurdities committed, if this fashion were universally to be followed. It would certainly, however, afford a glorious scope to genius, and probably supply us, in due time, with some productions which might be mentioned with those of the most celebrated schools. I am persuaded, at least, that great talents have been sometimes lost to this art, by being confined to the dull, though profitable, labour of senseless portraits; as I should not doubt, if the method I am speaking of were to take effect, to see that very promising genius, who, in consequence of your generous offices, is now forming his hand by the noblest models in Rome, prove a rival to those great masters whose works he is studying.

It cannot, I think, be denied, that the prevailing fondness of having our persons copied out for posterity, is, in the present application of it, a most absurd and useless vanity; as, in general, nothing affords a more ridiculous scene, than those grotesque figures which usually line the mansions of a man who is fond of displaying his canvass-ancestry:

> Good Heav'n! that sots and knaves should be so vain,
> To wish their vile resemblance may remain;
> And stand recorded, at their own request,
> To future times a libel or a jest. *Dryden.*

You must by no means, however, imagine that I absolutely condemn this lower application of one of the noblest arts. It has certainly a very just use, when employed in perpetuating the resemblances of that part of our species, who have distinguished themselves in their respective generations. To be desirous of an acquaintance with the person of those who have recommended themselves by their writings or their actions to our esteem and applause, is a very natural and reasonable curiosity. For myself, at least, I have often found much satisfaction in contemplating a well-chosen collection of the portrait kind, and comparing the mind of a favourite character, as it was either expressed or concealed in its external lineaments. There is something, likewise, extremely animating in these lively representations of celebrated merit; and it was an observation of one of the Scipios, that he could never view the figures of his ancestors without finding his bosom glow with the most ardent passion of imitating their deeds. However, as the days of exemplary virtue are now no more, and we are not, many of us, disposed to transmit the most inflaming models to future times; it would be but prudence, methinks, if we are resolved to make posterity acquainted with the persons of the present age, that it should be by viewing them in the actions of the past. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER III.

TO PALAMEDES.

July 4, 1739.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fine things you alledge in favour of the Romans, I do not yet find myself disposed to become a convert to your opinion: on the contrary, I am still obstinate enough to maintain that the fame of your admired nation is more dazzling than solid, and owing rather to those false prejudices which we are early taught to conceive of them, than to their real and intrinsic merit. If conquest indeed be the genuine glory of a state,

and extensive dominions the most infallible test of national virtue, it must be acknowledged that no people in all history have so just a demand of our admiration. But if we take an impartial view of this celebrated nation, perhaps much of our applause may abate. When we contemplate them, for instance, within their own walls, what do we see but the dangerous convulsions of an ill-regulated policy? as we can seldom, I believe, consider them with respect to foreign kingdoms, without the utmost abhorrence and indignation.

But there is nothing which places these sons of Romulus lower in my estimation, than their unmanly conduct in the article of their triumphs. I must confess, at the same time, that they had the sanction of a god to justify them in this practice. Bacchus, or (as Sir Isaac Newton has proved) the Egyptian Sesostris, after his return from his Indian conquests, gave the first instance of this ungenerous ceremony. But though his divinity was confessed in many other parts of the world, his example does not seem to have been followed, till we find it copied out in all its insolent pomp at Rome.

It is impossible to read the descriptions of these arrogant exhibitions of prosperity, and not to be struck with indignation at this barbarous method of insulting the calamities of the unfortunate. One would be apt, at the first glance, to suspect that every sentiment of humanity must be extinguished in a people, who could behold with pleasure the moving instances, which these solemnities afforded, of the caprice of fortune; and could see the highest potentates of the earth dragged from their thrones to fill up the proud parade of these ungenerous triumphs. But the prevailing maxim which ran through the whole system of Roman politics, was to encourage a spirit of conquest; and these honours were evidently calculated to awaken that unjust principle of mistaken patriotism. Accordingly, by the fundamental laws of Rome, no general was entitled to a triumph, unless he had added some new acquisition to her possessions. To suppress a civil insurrection, however dangerous; to recover any former member of her dominions, however important; gave no claim

to this supreme mark of ambitious distinction. For it was their notion, it seems, (and Valerius Maximus is my authority for saying so) that there is as much difference between adding to the territories of a commonwealth, and restoring those it has lost, as between the actual conferring of a benefit, and the mere repelling of an injury. It was but of a piece, indeed, that a ceremony conducted in defiance of humanity, should be founded in contempt of justice; and it was natural enough that they should gain by oppression, what they were to enjoy by insult.

If we consider Paulus Æmilius, after his conquest of Macedonia, making his public entry into Rome, attended by the unfortunate Perseus and his infant family; and at the same time reflect upon our Black Prince, when he passed through London with his royal captive, after the glorious battle of Poictiers; we cannot fail of having the proper sentiments of a Roman triumph. What generous mind who saw the Roman consul in all the giddy exultation of unfeeling pride, but would rather, (as to that single circumstance) have been the degraded Perseus, than the triumphant Æmilius? There is something indeed in distress that reflects a sort of merit upon every object which is so situated, and turns off our attention from those blemishes that stain even the most vicious characters. Accordingly, in the instance of which I am speaking, the perfidious monarch was overlooked in the suffering Perseus; and a spectacle so affecting checked the joy of conquest even in a Roman breast. For Plutarch assures us, when that worthless, but unhappy, prince was observed, together with his two sons and a daughter, marching amidst the train of prisoners, nature was too hard for custom, and many of the spectators melted into a flood of tears. But with what a generous tenderness did the British hero conduct himself upon an occasion of the same kind? He employed all the artful address of the most refined humanity, to conceal from this unhappy prisoner every thing that could remind him of his disgrace; and the whole pomp that was displayed upon this occasion, appeared singly as intended to lighten the

weight of his misfortunes, and to do honour to the vanquished monarch.

You will remember, Palamedes, I am only considering the Romans in a political view, and speaking of them merely in their national character. As to individuals, you know, I pay the highest veneration to many that rose up amongst them. It would not, indeed, be just to involve particulars in general reflections of any kind: and I cannot but acknowledge, ere I close my letter, that though, in the article I have been mentioning, the Romans certainly acted a most unworthy part towards their public enemies, yet they seem to have maintained the most exalted notions of conduct with respect to their private ones. That noble (and may I not add, that Christian) sentiment of Juvenal,

> ———*minuti*
> *Semper et infirmi est animi exiguique voluptas,*
> *Ultio—*

was not merely the refined precept of their more improved philosophers, but a general and popular maxim among them: and that generous sentiment so much and so deservedly admired in the Roman orator; *Non pœnitet me mortales inimicitias, sempiternas amicitias habere*, was, as appears from Livy, so universally received as to become even a proverbial expression. Thus Sallust likewise, I remember, speaking of the virtues of the ancient Romans, mentions it as their principal characteristic, that, upon all occasions, they shewed a disposition rather to forgive than revenge an injury. But the false notions they had embraced concerning the glory of their country, taught them to subdue every affection of humanity, and extinguish every dictate of justice which opposed that destructive principle. It was this spirit, however, in return, and by a very just consequence, that proved at length the means of their total destruction. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

TO PHILOTES.

July 4, 1743.

Whilst you are probably enjoying blue skies and cooling grots, I am shivering here in the midst of summer.—The *molles sub arbore somni*, the *speluncæ vivique lacus*, are pleasures which we in England can seldom taste but in description. For in a climate, where the warmest season is frequently little better than a milder sort of winter, the sun is much too welcome a guest to be avoided. If ever we have occasion to complain of him, it must be for his absence: at least I have seldom found his visits troublesome. You see I am still the same cold mortal as when you left me. But whatever warmth I may want in my constitution, I want none in my affections; and you have not a friend who is more ardently yours than I pretend to be. You have indeed such a right to my heart from mere gratitude, that I almost wish I owed you less upon that account, that I might give it you upon a more disinterested principle. However, if there is any part of it which you cannot demand in justice, be assured you have it by affection; so that, on one or other of these titles, you may always depend upon me as wholly yours. Can it be necessary, after this, to add, that I received your letter with singular satisfaction, as it brought me an account of your welfare, and of the agreeable manner in which you pass your time? If there be any room to wish you an increase of pleasure, it is, perhaps, that the three virgins you mention, were a few degrees handsomer and younger. But I would not desire their charms should be heightened, were I not sure they will never lessen your repose; for knowing your stoicism, as I do, I dare trust your ease with any thing less than a goddess: and those females, I perceive, are so far removed from the order of divinities, that they seem to require a considerable advance before I could even allow them to be so much as women.

It was mentioned to me, the other day, that there is

some probability we may see you in England by the winter. When I considered only my private satisfaction, I heard this with a very sensible pleasure. But as I have long learned to submit my own interests to yours, I could not but regret there was a likelihood of your being so soon called off from one of the most advantageous opportunities of improvement that can attend a sensible mind. An ingenious Italian author, of your acquaintance, compares a judicious traveller to a river, which increases its stream the farther it flows from its source; or to certain springs, which, running through rich veins of mineral, improve their qualities as they pass along. It were pity then you should be checked in so useful a progress, and diverted from a course, from whence you may derive so many noble advantages. You have hitherto, I imagine, been able to do little more than lay in materials for your main design.—But six months now, would give you a truer notion of what is worthy of observation in the countries through which you pass, than twice that time when you were less acquainted with the languages. The truth is, till a man is capable of conversing with ease among the natives of any country, he can never be able to form a just and adequate idea of their policy and manners. He who sits at a play without understanding the dialect, may indeed discover which of the actors are best dressed, and how well the scenes are painted or disposed; but the characters and conduct of the drama must for ever remain a secret to him. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER V.

TO CLYTANDER.

If I had been a party in the conversation you mention, I should have joined, I believe, with your friend, in supporting those sentiments you seem to condemn. I will venture, indeed, to acknowledge, that I have long been of opinion, the moderns pay too blind a deference to the ancients; and though I have the highest veneration for several of their remains, yet I am inclined to think they have occasioned us the loss of some excellent originals. They are the proper and best guides, I allow, to those who have not the force to break out into new paths. But whilst it is thought sufficient praise to be their followers, genius is checked in her flights, and many a fair tract lies undiscovered in the boundless regions of imagination.—Thus, had Virgil trusted more to his native strength, the Romans, perhaps, might have seen an original Epic in their language. But Homer was considered by that admired poet, as the sacred object of his first and principal attention; and he seemed to think it the noblest triumph of genius, to be adorned with the spoils of that glorious chief.

You will tell me, perhaps, that even Homer himself was indebted to the ancients; that the full streams he dispensed, did not flow from his own source, but were derived to him from an higher. This, I acknowledge, has been asserted; but asserted without proof, and, I may venture to add, without probability. He seems to have stood alone and unsupported; and to have stood, for that very reason, so much the nobler object of admiration.—Scarce, indeed, I imagine, would his works have received that high regard which was paid to them from their earliest appearance, had they been formed upon prior models; had they shone only with reflected light.

But will not this servile humour of subjecting the powers of invention to the guidance of the ancients, account, in some degree at least, for our meeting with so small a number of authors who can claim the merit of being originals? Is not this a kind of submission, that damps the fire, and weakens the vigour of the mind? For the ancients seem to be considered by us as so many guards to prevent the free excursions of imagination, and set bounds to her flight. Whereas they ought rather to be looked upon (the few, I mean, who are themselves originals) as encouragements to a full and uncontrolled exertion of her faculties. But if here or there a poet has courage enough to trust to his own unassisted reach of thought, his example

does not seem so much to incite others to make the same adventurous attempts, as to confirm them in the humble disposition of imitation. For if he succeeds, he immediately becomes himself the occasion of a thousand models: if he does not, he is pointed out as a discouraging instance of the folly of renouncing those established leaders which antiquity has authorized. Thus invention is depressed, and genius enslaved: the creative power of poetry is lost, and the ingenious, instead of exerting that productive faculty, which alone can render them the just objects of admiration, are humbly contented with borrowing both the materials and the plans of their mimic structures. I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

TO ORONTES.

March 10, 1729.

THERE is nothing, perhaps, wherein mankind are more frequently mistaken than in the judgments which they pass on each other. The stronger lines, indeed, in every man's character, must always be marked too clearly and distinctly to deceive even the most careless observer; and no one, I am persuaded, was ever esteemed in the general opinion of the world, as highly deficient in his moral or intellectual qualities, who did not justly merit his reputation. But I speak only of those more nice and delicate traits which distinguish the several degrees of probity and good sense, and ascertain the quantum (if I may so express it) of human merit. The powers of the soul are so often concealed by modesty, diffidence, timidity, and a thousand other accidental affections; and the nice complexion of her moral operations depends so entirely on those internal principles from whence they proceed; that those who form their notions of others by casual and distant views, must unavoidably be led into very erroneous judgments. Even Orontes, with all his candour and penetration, is not, I perceive, entirely secure from mistakes of this sort; and the sentiments you expressed in your last letter concerning

Varus, are by no means agreeable to the truth of his character.

It must be acknowledged, at the same time, that Varus is an exception to all general rules: neither his head nor his heart are exactly to be discovered by those indexes which are usually supposed to point directly to the genius and temper of other men. Thus, with a memory that will scarce serve him for the common purposes of life, with an imagination even more slow than his memory, and with an attention that could not carry him through the easiest proposition in Euclid; he has a sound and excellent understanding, joined to a refined and exquisite taste. But the rectitude of his sentiments seems to arise less from reflection than sensation; rather from certain suitable feelings which the objects that present themselves to his consideration instantly occasion in his mind, than from the energy of any active faculties which he is capable of exerting for that purpose. His conversation is unentertaining: for though he talks a great deal, all that he utters is delivered with labour and hesitation. Not that his ideas are really dark and confused; but because he is never contented to convey them in the first words that occur. Like the orator mentioned by Tully, *metuens ne vitiosum colligeret, etiam verum sanguinem deperdebat*, he expresses himself ill by always endeavouring to express himself better. His reading cannot so properly be said to have rendered him knowing, as not ignorant: it has rather enlarged, than filled his mind.

His temper is as singular as his genius, and both equally mistaken by those who only know him a little. If you were to judge of him by his general appearance, you would believe him incapable of all the more delicate sensations: nevertheless, under a rough and boisterous behaviour, he conceals a heart full of tenderness and humanity. He has a sensibility of nature, indeed, beyond what I ever observed in any other man; and I have often seen him affected by those little circumstances, which would make no impression on a mind of less exquisite feelings. This extreme sensibility in his temper influences his speculations as well as his actions, and he hovers

between various hypotheses without settling upon any, by giving importance to these minuter difficulties which would not be strong enough to suspend a more active and vigorous mind. In a word, Varus is in the number of those whom it is impossible not to admire, or not to despise; and, at the same time that he is the esteem of all his friends, he is the contempt of all his acquaintance.—Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

TO HORTENSIUS.

YOUR excellent brawn wanted no additional recommendation to make it more acceptable but that of your company. However, though I cannot share it with my friend, I devote it to his memory, and make daily offerings of it to a certain divinity, whose temples, though now well-nigh deserted, were once held in the highest veneration; she is mentioned by ancient authors under the name and title of DIVA AMICITIA. To her I bring the victim you have furnished me with, in all the pomp of Roman rites. Wreathed with the sacred *vitta*, and crowned with the branch of rosemary, I place it on an altar of well-polished mahogany, where I pour libations over it of acid wine, and sprinkle it with flour of mustard. I deal out certain portions to those who assist at this social ceremony, reminding them, with an *hoc age*, of the important business upon which they are assembled; and conclude the festival with this votive couplet:

> Close as this brawn the circling fillet binds,
> May friendship's sacred bands unite our minds!

Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

TO CLYTANDER.

July 2, 1736.

YOU must have been greatly distressed, indeed, Clytander, when you thought of calling me in as your auxiliary, in the debate you mention. Or was it not rather a motive of generosity which suggested that design? and you were willing, perhaps, I should share the glory of a victory which you had already secured. Whatever *your* intention was, *mine* is always to comply with your requests; and I very readily enter the lists, when I am at once to combat in the cause of truth and on the side of my friend.

It is not necessary, I think, in order to establish the credibility of a particular Providence, to deduce it (as your objector, I find, seems to require) from known and undisputed facts. I should be exceedingly cautious in pointing out any supposed instances of that kind; as those who are fond of indulging themselves in determining the precise cases wherein they imagine the immediate interposition of the Divinity is discoverable, often run into the weakest and most injurious superstitions. It is impossible, indeed, unless we were capable of looking through the whole chain of things, and of viewing each effect in its remote connexions and final issues, to pronounce of any contingency, that it is absolutely and in its ultimate tendencies either good or bad. *That* can only be known by the great Author of nature, who comprehends the full extent of our total existence, and sees the influence which every particular circumstance will have in the general sum of our happiness. But though the peculiar points of divine interposition are thus necessarily, and from the natural imperfection of our discerning faculties, extremely dubious, yet it can by no means from thence be justly inferred, that the doctrine of a particular Providence is either groundless or absurd: the general principle may be true, though the application of it to any given purpose be involved in very inextricable difficulties.

The notion, that the material world is governed by general mechanical laws, has induced your friend to argue that "it is probable the Deity should act by the same "rule of conduct in the intellectual; and leave moral "agents entirely to those consequences which necessarily "result from the particular exercise of their original "powers." But this hypothesis takes a question for granted, which requires much proof before it can be admitted. The grand principle which preserves this system of the universe in all its harmonious order, is gravity, or that property by which all the particles of matter mutually tend to each other. Now this is a power which, it is acknowledged, does not essentially reside in matter, but must be ultimately derived from the action of some immaterial cause. Why therefore may it not reasonably be supposed to be the effect of the divine agency, immediately and constantly operating for the preservation of this wonderful machine of nature? Certain, at least, it is, that the explication which Sir Isaac Newton has endeavoured to give of this wonderful phenomenon, by means of his subtil ether, has not afforded universal satisfaction: and it is the opinion of a very great writer, who seems to have gone far into enquiries of this abstruse kind, that the numberless effects of this power are inexplicable upon mechanical principles, or in any other way than by having recourse to a spiritual agent, who connects, moves, and disposes all things according to such methods as best comport with his incomprehensible purposes.

But successful villany and oppressed virtue are deemed, I perceive, in the account of your friend, as powerful instances to prove that the Supreme Being remains an uninterposing spectator of what is transacted upon this theatre of the world. However, ere this argument can have a determining weight, it must be proved (which yet, surely, never can be proved) that prosperous iniquity has all those advantages in reality which it may seem to have in appearance; and that those accidents which are usually esteemed as calamities, do, in truth, and in the just scale of things, deserve to be distinguished by that appellation.

It is a noble saying of the philosopher cited by Seneca, that "there cannot be a more unhappy man in the world "than he who has never experienced adversity." There is nothing, perhaps, in which mankind are more apt to make false calculations, than in the article both of their own happiness and that of others; as there are few, I believe, who have lived any time in the world, but have found frequent occasions to say with the poor hunted stag in the fable, who was entangled by those horns he had but just before been admiring:

O me infelicem! qui nunc demum intelligo
Ut illa mihi profuerint quæ despexeram,
Et quæ laudaram, quantum luctûs habuerint! Phæd.

If we look back upon the sentiments of past ages, we shall find the opinion for which I am contending has prevailed from the remotest account of time. It must undoubtedly have entered the world as early as religion herself; since all institutions of that kind must necessarily be founded upon the supposition of a particular Providence. It appears, indeed, to have been the favourite doctrine of some of the most distinguished names in antiquity.—Xenophon tells us, when Cyrus led out his army against the Assyrians, the word which he gave to his soldiers was, ΖΕΥΣ ΣΥΜΜΑΧΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΗΓΕΜΩΝ, "Jupiter the de-"fender and conductor:" and he represents that prince as attributing success, even in the sports of the field, to Divine Providence. Thus, likewise, Timoleon, as the author of his life assures us, believed every action of mankind to be under the immediate influence of the gods: and Livy remarks of the first Scipio Africanus, that he never undertook any important affair, either of private or public concern, without going to the Capitol in order to implore the assistance of Jupiter. Balbus, the stoic, in the dialogue on the nature of the gods, expressly declares for a particular providence: and Cicero himself, in one of his orations, imputes that superior glory which attended the Roman nation, singly to this animating persuasion. But none of the ancients seem to have had a stronger impression of this truth upon their minds, than the immortal Homer. Every page in the works of that

divine poet will furnish proofs of this observation. I cannot, however, forbear mentioning one or two remarkable instances, which just now occur to me. When the Grecian chiefs cast lots which of them should accept the challenge of Hector, the poet describes the army as lifting up their eyes and hands to heaven, and imploring the gods that they would direct the lot to fall on one of their most distinguished heroes:

Λαοι,—θεοισι δε χειρας ανεσχον,
Ωδε τις ειπεσκεν, ιδων εις ουρανον ευρυν·
Ζευ πατερ, η Αιανθ λαχειν, η Τυδεος υιον,
Η αυτον Βασιληα πολυχρυσοιο Μυκηνης.*

So likewise Antenor proposes to the Trojans the restitution of Helen, as having no hopes, he tells them, that any thing would succeed with them after they had broken the faith of treaties:

νυν ορκια πιστα
Ψευσαμενοι μαχομεσθα· τω ε νυ τι κερδιον ημιν
Ελπομαι εκλελεεσθαι.†

And indeed Homer hardly ever makes his heroes succeed (as his excellent translator justly observes) unless they have first offered a prayer to heaven. "He is perpetu-
"ally," says Mr. Pope, "acknowledging the hand of God
"in all events, and ascribing to that alone all the vic-
"tories, triumphs, rewards, or punishments of men. The
"grand moral laid down at the entrance of his poem, Διος
"δ' ετελειετο βουλη, *The will of God was fulfilled*, runs
"through his whole work, and is, with a most remarka-
"ble care and conduct, put into the mouths of his great-
"est and wisest persons on every occasion."

* The people pray with lifted eyes and hands,
And vows like those ascend from all the bands:
Grant, thou, Almighty, in whose hand is fate,
A worthy champion for the Grecian state:
This task let Ajax or Tydides prove,
Or he, the king of kings, belov'd of Jove. *Pope.*

† The ties of faith, the sworn alliance broke,
Our impious battles the just gods provoke. *Pope.*

Upon the whole, Clytander, we may safely assert, that the belief of a particular providence is founded upon such probable reasons as may well justify our assent. It would scarce, therefore, be wise to renounce an opinion, which affords so firm a support to the soul in those seasons wherein she stands most in need of assistance, merely because it is not possible, in questions of this kind, to solve every difficulty which attends them. If it be highly consonant to the general notions of the benevolence of the Deity (as highly consonant it surely is) that he should not leave so impotent a creature as man to the single guidance of his own precarious faculties; who would abandon a belief so full of the most enlivening consolation, in compliance with those metaphysical reasonings which are usually calculated rather to silence, than to satisfy, an humble enquirer after truth? Who indeed would wish to be convinced, that he stands unguarded by that heavenly shield, which can protect him against all the assaults of an injurious and malevolent world? The truth is, the belief of a particular providence is the most animating persuasion that the mind of man can embrace; it gives strength to our hopes, and firmness to our resolutions; it subdues the insolence of prosperity, and draws out the sting of affliction. In a word, it is like the golden branch to which Virgil's hero was directed, and affords the only secure passport through the regions of darkness and sorrow. I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

TO TIMOCLEA.

July 29, 1748.

It is with wonderful satisfaction I find you are grown such an adept in the occult arts, and that you take a laudable pleasure in the ancient and ingenious study of making and solving riddles. It is a science, undoubtedly, of most necessary acquirement, and deserves to make a part in the education of both sexes. Those of yours may by

this means very innocently indulge their usual curiosity of discovering and disclosing a secret; whilst such amongst ours who have a turn for deep speculations, and are fond of puzzling themselves and others, may exercise their faculties this way with much private satisfaction, and without the least disturbance to the public. It is an art, indeed, which I would recommend to the encouragement of both the universities, as it affords the easiest and shortest method of conveying some of the most useful principles of logic, and might therefore be introduced as a very proper substitute in the room of those dry systems, which are at present in vogue in those places of education. For, as it consists in discovering truth under borrowed appearances, it might prove of wonderful advantage in every branch of learning, by habituating the mind to separate all foreign ideas, and consequently preserving it from that grand source of error, the being deceived by false connexions. In short, Timoclea, this your favourite science contains the sum of all human policy; and as there is no passing through the world without sometimes mixing with fools and knaves; who would not choose to be master of the enigmatical art, in order, on proper occasions, to be able to lead aside craft and impertinence from their aim, by the convenient artifice of a prudent disguise? It was the maxim of a very wise prince, that "he who "knows not how to dissemble, knows not how to reign;" and I desire you would receive it as mine, that "he who "knows not how to riddle, knows not how to live."

But besides the general usefulness of this art, it will have a further recommendation to all true admirers of antiquity, as being practised by the most considerable personages of early times. It is almost three thousand years ago since Samson proposed his famous riddle so well known; though the advocates for ancient learning must forgive me, if in this article I attribute the superiority to the moderns: for if we may judge of the skill of the former in this profound art, by that remarkable specimen of it, the geniuses of those early ages were by no means equal to those which our times have produced. But, as a friend of mine has lately finished, and intends very shortly

to publish, a most curious work in folio, wherein he has fully proved that important point, I will not anticipate the pleasure you will receive by perusing his ingenious performance. In the mean while let it be remembered to the immortal glory of this art, that the wisest man, as well as the greatest prince that ever lived, is said to have amused himself and a neighbouring monarch in trying the strength of each other's talents in this way; several riddles, it seems, having passed between Solomon and Hiram, upon condition that he who failed in the solution should incur a certain penalty. It is recorded, likewise, of the great father of poetry, even the divine Homer himself, that he had a taste of this sort; and we are told, by a Greek writer of his life, that he died with vexation for not being able to discover a riddle, which was proposed to him by some fisherman at a certain island called Iö.

I am inclined to think, indeed, that the ancients in general were such admirers of this art, as to inscribe riddles upon their tombstones, and that, not satisfied with puzzling the world in their life time, they bequeathed enigmatical legacies to the public after their decease. My conjecture is founded upon an ancient inscription, which I will venture to quote to you, though it is in Latin, as your friend and neighbour the antiquarian will, I am persuaded, be very glad of obliging you with a dissertation upon it. Be pleased then to ask him, whether he does not think that the following inscription favours my sentiments:

VIATORES. OPTIMI.
HIS. NVGIS. GRYPHIS. AMBAGIBVSQVE.
MEIS. CONDONARE. POSCIMUS.

However this may be, it is certain that it was one of the great entertainments of the pastoral life, and therefore, if for no other reason, highly deserving the attention of our modern Arcadians. You remember, I dare say, the riddle which the shepherd Dametas proposes to Mænalcas, in Dryden's Virgil:

> Say where the round of Heav'n, which all contains,
> To three short ells on earth our sight restrains:
> Tell that, and rise a Phœbus for thy pains.

This ænigma, which has exercised the guesses of many a learned critic, remains yet unexplained; which I mention not only as an instance of the wonderful penetration which is necessary to render a man a complete adept in this most noble science, but as an incitement to you to employ your skill in attempting the solution. And now, Timoclea, what will your grave friend say, who reproached you, it seems, for your riddling genius, when he shall find you are thus able to defend your favourite study by the lofty examples of kings, commentators, and poets? I am, &c.

LETTER X.

TO PHIDIPPUS.

HARDLY, I imagine, were you in earnest, when you required my thoughts upon friendship: for to give you the truest idea of that generous intercourse, may I not justly refer you back to the sentiments of your own heart? I am sure, at least, I have learned to improve my own notions of that refined affection, by those instances which I have observed in yourself; as it is from thence I have received the clearest conviction, that it derives all its strength and stability from virtue and good sense.

There is not, perhaps, a quality more uncommon in the world, than that which is necessary to form a man for this refined commerce: for however sociableness may be esteemed a just characteristic of our species, *friendliness*, I am persuaded, will scarce be found to enter into its general definition. The qualifications requisite to support and conduct friendship in all its strength and extent, do not seem to be sufficiently diffused among the human race, to render them the distinguishing marks of mankind; unless generosity and good sense should be allowed (what they never can be allowed) universally to prevail. On the contrary, how few are in possession of those most amiable of endowments? How few are capable of that noble elevation of mind, which raises a man above those little jealou-

sies and rivalships that shoot up in the paths of common amities?

We should not, indeed, so often hear complaints of the inconstancy and falseness of friends, if the world in general were more cautious than they usually are, in forming connexions of this kind. But the misfortune is, our friendships are apt to be too *forward*, and thus either fall off in the blossom, or never arrive at just maturity. It is an excellent piece of advice, therefore, that the poet Martial gives upon this occasion:

Tu tantum inspice, qui novus *paratur,*
An possit fieri vetus *sodalis.*

Were I to make trial of any person's qualifications for an union of so much delicacy, there is no part of his conduct I would sooner single out, than to observe him in his resentments. And this not upon the maxim frequently advanced, "that the best friends make the bitterest ene-"mies;" but, on the contrary, because I am persuaded that he who is capable of being a bitter enemy, can never possess the necessary virtues that constitute a true friend. For must he not want generosity (that most essential principle of an amicable combination) who can be so mean as to indulge a spirit of *settled* revenge, and coolly triumph in the oppression of an adversary? Accordingly there is no circumstance in the character of the excellent Agricola, that gives me a higher notion of the true heroism of his mind, than what the historian of his life mentions concerning his conduct in this particular instance. *Ex Iracundia* (says Tacitus) *nihil supererat: secretum et silentium ejus non timeres.* His elevated spirit was too great to suffer his resentment to survive the occasion of it; and those who provoked his indignation had nothing to apprehend from the *secret* and silent workings of unextinguished malice. But the practice, it must be owned, (perhaps I might have said the principle too) of the world runs strongly on the side of the contrary disposition; and thus, in opposition to that generous sentiment of your admired orator, which I have so often heard you quote with applause, our friendships are mortal, whilst it is our enmities only that never die.

But though judgment must collect the materials of this goodly structure, it is affection that gives the cement; and passion as well as reason should concur in forming a firm and lasting coalition. Hence, perhaps, it is, that not only the most powerful, but the most lasting friendships are usually the produce of the early season of our lives, when we are most susceptible of the warm and affectionate impressions. The connexions into which we enter in any after period, decrease in strength, as our passions abate in heat; and there is not, I believe, a single instance of a vigorous friendship that ever struck root in a bosom chilled by years. How irretrievable then is the loss of those best and fairest acquisitions of our youth? Seneca, taking notice of Augustus Cæsar's lamenting, upon a certain occasion, the death of Mæcenas and Agrippa, observes, that he who could instantly repair the destruction of whole fleets and armies, and bid Rome, after a general conflagration, rise out of her ashes even with more lustre than before; was yet unable, during a whole life, to fill up those lasting vacancies in his friendship: a reflection which reminds me of renewing my solicitations, that you would be more cautious in hazarding a life which I have so many reasons to love and honour.—For whenever an accident of the same kind shall separate (and what other accident can separate) the happy union which has so long subsisted between us, where shall I retrieve so severe a loss? I am utterly indisposed to enter into new habitudes, and extend the little circle of my friendships, happy if I may but preserve it firm and unbroken to the closing moment of my life! Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

TO HORTENSIUS.

August 12, 1742.

If any thing could tempt me to read the Latin poem you mention, it would be your recommendation. But shall I venture to own, that I have no taste for modern

compositions of that kind? There is one prejudice which always remains with me against them, and which I have never yet found cause to renounce: no true genius, I am persuaded, would submit to write any considerable poem in a dead language. A poet, who glows with the genuine fire of a warm and lively imagination, will find the copiousness of his own native English scarce sufficient to convey his ideas in all their strength and energy. The most comprehensive language sinks under the weight of great conceptions; and a pregnant imagination disdains to stint the natural growth of her thoughts to the confined standard of classical expression. An ordinary genius, indeed, may be humbly contented to pursue words through indexes and dictionaries, and tamely borrow phrases from Horace and Virgil; but could the elevated invention of Milton, or the brilliant sense of Pope, have ingloriously submitted to lower the force and majesty of the most exalted and nervous sentiments, to the scanty measure of the Roman dialect? For copiousness is by no means in the number of those advantages which attend the Latin language; as many of the ancients have both confessed and lamented. Thus Lucretius and Seneca complain of its deficiency with respect to subjects of philosophy; as Pliny the younger owns he found it incapable of furnishing him with proper terms, in compositions of wit and humour. But if the Romans themselves found their language thus penurious, in its entire and most ample supplies; how much more contracted must it be to us, who are only in possession of its broken and scattered remains?

To say truth, I have observed, in most of the modern Latin poems which I have accidentally run over, a remarkable barrenness of sentiment, and have generally found the poet degraded into the parodist. It is usually the little dealers on Parnassus, who have not a sufficient stock of genius to launch out into a more enlarged commerce with the Muses, that hawk about these classical gleanings. The style of these performances always puts me in mind of Harlequin's snuff, which he collected by borrowing a pinch out of every man's box he could meet,

and then retailed it to his customers under the pompous title of *tabac de mille fleurs*. Half a line from Virgil or Lucretius, pieced out with a bit from Horace or Juvenal, is generally the motley mixture which enters into compositions of this sort. One may apply to these jack-daw poets, with their stolen feathers, what Martial says to a contemporary plagiarist:

Stat contra, dicitque tibi tua pagina: Fur es.

This kind of theft, indeed, every man must necessarily commit, who sets up for a poet in a dead language.—For, to express himself with propriety, he must not only be sure that every *single* word which he uses is authorized by the best writers, but he must not even venture to throw them out of that particular combination in which he finds them connected: otherwise he may run into the most barbarous solecisms. To explain my meaning by an instance from modern language: the French words *arene* and *rive*, are both to be met with in their approved authors; and yet if a foreigner, unacquainted with the niceties of that language, should take the liberty of bringing those two words together, as in the following verse,

Sur la rive du fleuve amassant de l'arene;

he would be exposed to the ridicule, not only of the critics, but of the most ordinary mechanic in Paris. For the idiom of the French tongue will not admit of the expression *sur la rive du fleuve*, but requires the phrase *sur le bord de la riviere;* as they never say *amasser de l'arene* but *du sable*. The same observation may be extended to all languages, whether living or dead. But as no reasonings from analogy can be of the least force in determining the idiomatic proprieties of any language whatsoever; a modern Latin poet has no other method of being sure of avoiding absurdities of this kind, than to take whole phrases as he finds them formed to his hands. Thus, instead of accommodating his expression to his sentiment, (if any he should have) he must necessarily bend his sentiment to his expression, as he is not at liberty to strike out into that boldness of style, and those unexpected

combinations of words, which give such grace and energy to the thoughts of every true genius. True genius, indeed, is as much discovered by style, as by any other distinction; and every eminent writer, without indulging any unwarranted licences, has a language which he derives from himself, and which is peculiarly and literally his own.

I would recommend, therefore, to these empty echoes of the ancients, which owe their voice to the ruins of Rome, the advice of an old philosopher to an affected orator of his times: *Vive moribus præteritis*, said he, *loquere verbis præsentibus*. Let these poets form their conduct, if they please, by the manners of the ancients; but if they would prove their genius, it must be by the language of the moderns. I would not, however, have you imagine, that I exclude all merit from a qualification of this kind. To be skilled in the mechanism of Latin verse, is a talent, I confess, extremely worthy of a pedagogue; as it is an exercise of singular advantage to his pupils.—Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

TO AMASIA.

July 8, 1744.

If good manners will not justify my long silence, policy at least will: and you must confess, there is some prudence in not owning a debt one is incapable of paying. I have the mortification, indeed, to find myself engaged in a commerce, which I have not a sufficient fund to support, though I must add, at the same time, if you expect an equal return of entertainment for that which your letters afford, I know not where you will find a correspondent. You will scarcely at least look for him in the desart, or hope for any thing very lively from a man who is obliged to seek his companions among the dead. You who dwell in a land flowing with mirth and good humour, meet with many a gallant occurrence worthy of record;

but what can a village produce, which is more famous for repose than for action, and is so much behind the manners of the present age, as scarce to have got out of the simplicity of the first? The utmost of our humour rises no higher than punch; and all that we know of assemblies, is once a year round our May-pole. Thus unqualified, as I am, to contribute to *your* amusement, I am as much at a loss to supply my *own;* and am obliged to have recourse to a thousand stratagems to help me off with those lingering hours, which run so swiftly, it seems, by you. As one cannot always, you know, be playing at push-pin, I sometimes employ myself with a less philosophical diversion; and either pursue butterflies, or hunt rhymes, as the weather and the seasons permit. This morning not proving very favourable to my sports of the field, I contented myself with those under covert; and as I am not at present supplied with any thing better for your entertainment, will you suffer me to set before you some of my game?

A TALE.

Ere Saturn's sons were yet disgrac'd,
And heathen gods were all the taste,
Full oft (we read) 'twas Jove's high will
To take the air on Ida's hill.
It chanc'd, as once, with serious ken,
He view'd from thence the ways of men,
He saw (and pity touch'd his breast)
The world by three foul fiends possest.
Pale *Discord* there, and *Folly* vain,
With haggard *Vice*, upheld their reign.
Then forth he sent his summons high,
And call'd a senate of the sky.
Round as the winged orders prest,
Jove thus his sacred mind express'd:
"Say, which of all this shining train
"Will *Virtue's* conflict hard sustain?
"For see! she drooping takes her flight,
"While not a god supports her right."
He paus'd---when, from amidst the sky,
Wit, *Innocence*, and *Harmony*,
With one united zeal arose,
The triple tyrants to oppose.
That instant from the realms of day,
With gen'rous speed they took their way;
To Britain's isle direct their car,
And enter'd with the ev'ning star.

Beside the road a mansion stood,
Defended by a circling wood.
Hither, disguis'd, their steps they bend
In hopes, perchance, to find a friend.
Nor vain their hope; for records say
Worth ne'er from thence was turn'd away,
They urge the trav'ller's common chance,
And ev'ry piteous plea advance.
The artful tale that *Wit* had feign'd,
Admittance easy soon obtain'd.
The dame who own'd, adorn'd the place;
Three blooming daughters added grace.
The first, with gentlest manners blest,
And temper sweet, each heart possest;
Who view'd her, catch'd the tender flame:
And soft Amasia was her name.
In sprightly sense and polish'd air,
What maid with Mira might compare?
While Lucia's eyes and Lucia's lyre,
Did unresisted love inspire.
Imagine now the table clear,
And mirth in ev'ry face appear:
The song, the tale, the jest went round,
The riddle dark, the trick profound.
Thus each admiring and admir'd,
The hosts and guests at length retir'd:
When *Wit* thus spake her sister-train;
"Faith, friends, our errand is but vain---
"Quick let us measure back the sky;
"These nymphs alone may well supply
"*Wit, Innocence*, and *Harmony*."

You see to what expedient solitude has reduced me, when I am thus forced to string rhymes, as boys do birds' eggs, in order to wile away my idle hours. But a gayer scene is, I trust, approaching, and the day will shortly, I hope, arrive, when I shall only complain that it steals away too fast. It is not from any improvement in the objects which surround me, that I expect this wondrous change; nor yet that a longer familiarity will render them more agreeable. It is from a promise I received that Amasia will visit the hermit in his cell, and disperse the gloom of a solitaire by the cheerfulness of her conversation. What inducements shall I mention to prevail with you to hasten that day? Shall I tell you that I have a bower overarched with jessamine? that I have an oak which is the favourite haunt of a dryad? that I have a plantation which flourishes with all the verdure of May, in the midst of all the cold of December? Or, may I not hope that I

have something still more prevailing with you than all these, as I can with truth assure you, that I have a heart which is faithfully yours, &c.

LETTER XIII.

TO PHILOTES.

Among all the advantages which attend friendship, there is not one more valuable than the liberty it admits in laying open the various affections of one's mind, without reserve or disguise. There is something in disclosing to a friend the occasional emotions of one's heart, that wonderfully contributes to sooth and allay its perturbations, in all its most pensive or anxious moments. Nature, indeed, seems to have *cast* us with a general disposition to communication: though at the same time it must be acknowledged, there are few to whom one may safely be communicative. Have I not reason, then, to esteem it as one of the most desirable circumstances of my life, that I dare, without scruple or danger, *think aloud* to Philotes? It is merely to exercise that happy privilege, I now take up my pen; and you must expect nothing in this letter but the picture of my heart in one of its splenetic hours. There are certain seasons, perhaps, in every man's life, when he is dissatisfied with himself and every thing around him, without being able to give a substantial reason for being so. At least I am unwilling to think that this dark cloud, which at present hangs over my mind, is peculiar to my constitution, and never gathers in any breast but my own. It is much more, however, my concern to dissipate this vapour in myself, than to discover that it sometimes arises in others: as there is no disposition a man would rather endeavour to cherish, than a constant aptitude of being pleased. But my practice will not always credit my philosophy; and I find it much easier to point out my distemper than to remove it. After all, is it not a mortifying consideration, that the powers of reason should be less prevalent than those of matter; and that a page of Seneca cannot raise the spirits, when a pint of claret will? It might, methinks, somewhat abate the insolence of human pride to consider, that it is but increasing or diminishing the velocity of certain fluids in the animal machine, to elate the soul with the gayest hopes, or sink her into the deepest despair; to depress the hero into a coward, or advance the coward into a hero. It is to some such mechanical cause I am inclined to attribute the present gloominess of my mind: at the same time I will confess, there is something in that very consideration which gives strength to the fit, and renders it so much the more difficult to throw off. For, tell me, is it not a discouraging reflection to find one's self *servile* (as Shakespeare expresses it) *to every skyey influence*, and the sport of every paltry atom? to owe the ease of one's mind not only to the disposition of one's own body, but almost to that of every other which surrounds us? Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

TO ORONTES.

The passage you quote is entirely in my sentiments. I agree both with that celebrated author and yourself, that our oratory is by no means in a state of perfection; and, though it has much strength and solidity, that it may yet be rendered far more polished and affecting.—The growth, indeed, of eloquence, even in those countries where she flourished most, has ever been exceedingly slow. Athens had been in possession of all the other polite improvements, long before her pretensions to the persuasive arts were in any degree considerable; as the earliest orator of note among the Romans did not appear sooner than about a century before Tully.

That great master of persuasion, taking notice of this remarkable circumstance, assigns it as an evidence of the superior difficulty of his favourite art. Possibly there

may be some truth in the observation: but whatever the cause be, the fact, I believe, is undeniable. Accordingly, eloquence has by no means made equal advances in our own country, with her sister arts; and though we have seen some excellent poets, and a few good painters, rise up amongst us, yet I know not whether our nation can supply us with a single orator of deserved eminence. One cannot but be surprised at this, when it is considered that we have a profession set apart for the purposes of persuasion; and which not only affords the most animating and interesting topics of rhetoric, but wherein a talent of this kind would prove the likeliest, perhaps, of any other to obtain those ambitious prizes which were thought to contribute so much to the successful progress of ancient eloquence.

Among the principal defects of our English orators, their general disregard of harmony has, I think, been the least observed. It would be injustice indeed to deny that we have some performances of this kind amongst us, tolerably musical; but it must be acknowledged, at the same time, that it is more the effect of accident than design, and rather a proof of the power of our language, than of the art of our orators.

Dr. Tillotson, who is frequently mentioned as having carried this species of eloquence to its highest perfection, seems to have had no sort of notion of rhetorical numbers: and may I venture, Orontes, to add, without hazarding the imputation of an affected singularity, that I think no man had ever less pretensions to genuine oratory, than this celebrated preacher? If any thing could raise a flame of eloquence in the breast of an orator, there is no occasion upon which, one should imagine, it would be more likely to break out, than in celebrating departed merit; yet the two sermons which he preached upon the death of Mr. Gouge and Dr. Whichcote are as cold and languid performances as were ever, perhaps, produced upon such an animating subject. One cannot indeed but regret, that he who abounds with such noble and generous sentiments, should want the art of setting them off with all the advantage they deserve; that the

sublime in morals should not be attended with a suitable elevation of language. The truth however is, his words are frequently ill chosen, and almost always ill-placed; his periods are both tedious and unharmonious; as his metaphors are generally mean, and often ridiculous. It were easy to produce numberless instances in support of this assertion. Thus, in his sermon preached before Queen Anne, when she was Princess of Denmark, he talks of *squeezing* a parable, *thrusting* religion *by*, *driving* a strict *bargain* with God, *sharking shifts*, &c. and, speaking of the day of judgment, he describes the world as *cracking about our ears*. I cannot however but acknowledge, in justice to the oratorical character of this most valuable prelate, that there is a noble simplicity in some few of his sermons, as his excellent discourse on *sincerity* deserves to be mentioned with particular applause.

But to show his deficiency in the article I am considering at present, the following stricture will be sufficient, among many others that might be cited to the same purpose. "One might be apt," says he, "to think, at first "view, that this parable was *over done*, and wanted some-"thing of a due decorum; it being hardly credible, that "a man, after he had been so mercifully and generously "dealt *withal*, as upon his humble request to have so *huge* "a debt so freely forgiven, should, whilst the memory of "so much mercy was fresh upon him, even in the very "next moment, *handle* his fellow-servant, who had made "the same humble request to him which he had *done* to "his Lord, with so much roughness and cruelty for so in-"considerable a sum."

This whole period (not to mention other objections which might justly be raised against it) is unmusical throughout; but the concluding members, which ought to have been particularly flowing, are most miserably loose and disjointed. If the delicacy of Tully's ear was so exquisitely refined, as not always to be satisfied even when he read Demosthenes, how would it have been offended at the harshness and dissonance of so unharmonious a sentence!

Nothing, perhaps, throws our eloquence at a greater distance from that of the ancients, than this gothic arrangement; as those wonderful effects, which sometimes attended their elocution, were, in all probability, chiefly owing to their skill in musical concords. It was by the charm of numbers, united with the strength of reason, that Tully confounded the audacious Catiline, and silenced the eloquent Hortensius. It was this that deprived Curio of all power of recollection when he rose up to oppose that great master of enchanting rhetoric: it was this, in a word, made even Cæsar himself tremble; nay, what is yet more extraordinary, made Cæsar alter his determined purpose, and acquit the man he had resolved to condemn.

You will not suspect that I attribute too much to the power of numerous composition, when you recollect the instance which Tully produces of its wonderful effect.—He informs us, you may remember, in one of his rhetorical treatises, that he was himself a witness of its influence, as Carbo was once haranguing to the people.—When that orator pronounced the following sentence, *patris dictum sapiens, temeritas filii cōmpröbāvit*, it was astonishing, says he, to observe the general applause which followed that harmonious close. A modern ear, perhaps, would not be much affected upon this occasion; and, indeed, it is more than probable, that we are ignorant of the art of pronouncing that period with its genuine emphasis and cadence. We are certain, however, that the music of it consisted in the *dichoree* with which it is terminated: for Cicero himself assures us, that if the final measure had been changed, and the words placed in a different order, their whole effect would have been absolutely destroyed.

This art was first introduced among the Greeks by Thrasymachus, though some of the admirers of Isocrates attributed the invention to that orator. It does not appear to have been observed by the Romans till near the times of Tully, and even then it was by no means universally received. The ancient and less numerous manner of composition, had still many admirers, who were such

enthusiasts to antiquity as to adopt her very defects. A disposition of the same kind may, perhaps, prevent its being received with us; and while the archbishop shall maintain his authority as an orator, it is not to be expected that any great advancement will be made in this species of eloquence. That strength of understanding, likewise, and solidity of reason, which is so eminently our national characteristic, may add somewhat to the difficulty of reconciling us to a study of this kind; as at first glance it may seem to lead an orator from his grand and principal aim, and tempt him to make a sacrifice of sense to sound. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that in the times which succeeded the dissolution of the Roman republic, this art was so perverted from its true end, as to become the single study of their enervated orators. Pliny, the younger, often complains of this contemptible affectation; and the polite author of that elegant dialogue which, with very little probability, is attributed either to Tacitus or Quintilian, assures us it was the ridiculous boast of certain orators, in the time of the declension of genuine eloquence, that their harangues were capable of being set to music, and sung upon the stage. But it must be remembered, that the true end of this art I am recommending, is to aid, not to supersede reason; that it is so far from being necessarily effeminate, that it not only adds grace but strength to the powers of persuasion. For this purpose Tully and Quintilian, those great masters of numerous composition, have laid it down as a fixed and invariable rule that it must never appear the effect of labour in the orator; that the tuneful flow of his periods must always seem the casual result of their disposition; and that it is the highest offence against the art, to weaken the expression, in order to give a more musical tone to the cadence. In short, that no unmeaning words are to be thrown in merely to fill up the requisite measure, but that they must still rise in sense as they improve in sound. I am, &c.

LETTER XV.

TO CLEORA.

August 11, 1738.

THOUGH it is but a few hours since I parted from my Cleora, yet I have already, you see, taken up my pen to write to her. You must not expect, however, in this, or in any of my future letters, that I say fine things to you; since I only intend to tell you true ones. My heart is too full to be regular, and too sincere to be ceremonious. I have changed the manner, not the style of my former conversations: and I write to you, as I used to talk to you, without form or art. Tell me then, with the same undissembled sincerity, what effect this absence has upon your usual cheerfulness? as I will honestly confess, on my own part, that I am too interested to wish a circumstance, so little consistent with my own repose, should be altogether reconcileable to yours. I have attempted, however, to pursue your advice, and divert myself by the subject you recommended to my thoughts: but it is impossible, I perceive, to turn off the mind at once from an object which it has long dwelt upon with pleasure. My heart, like a poor bird which is hunted from her nest, is still returning to the place of its affections, and after some vain efforts to fly off, settles again where all its cares and all its tenderness are centered. Adieu.

LETTER XVI.

TO PHILOTES.

August 20, 1739.

I FEAR I shall lose all my credit with you as a gardener, by this specimen which I venture to send you of the produce of my walls. The snails, indeed, have had more than their share of my peaches and nectarines this season: but will you not smile when I tell you, that I deem it a sort of cruelty to suffer them to be destroyed?

I should scarce dare to acknowledge this weakness (as the generality of the world, no doubt, would call it) had I not experienced, by many agreeable instances, that I may safely lay open to you every sentiment of my heart: To confess the truth, then, I have some scruples with respect to the liberty we assume in the *unlimited* destruction of these lower orders of existence. I know not upon what principle of reason and justice it is, that mankind have founded their right over the lives of every creature that is placed in a subordinate rank of being to themselves. Whatever claim they may have in right of food and self-defence, did they extend their privilege no farther than those articles would reasonably carry them, numberless beings might enjoy their lives in peace, who are now hurried out of them by the most wanton and unnecessary cruelties. I cannot, indeed, discover why it should be thought less inhumane to crush to death a harmless insect, whose single offence is that he eats that food which nature has prepared for its sustenance: than it would be, were I to kill any more bulky creature for the same reason. There are few tempers so hardened to the impressions of humanity, as not to shudder at the thought of the latter; and yet the former is universally practised without the least check of compassion. This seems to arise from the gross error of supposing that every creature is really in itself contemptible, which happens to be cloathed with a body infinitely disproportionate to our own; not considering that *great* and *little* are merely relative terms. But the inimitable Shakespeare would teach us, that

> ---------the poor beetle, that we tread upon,
> In corp'ral suff'rance feels a pang as great
> As when a giant dies.

And this is not thrown out in the latitude of poetical imagination, but supported by the discoveries of the most improved philosophy; for there is every reason to believe that the sensations of many insects are as exquisite as those of creatures of far more enlarged dimensions; perhaps even more so. The millepedes, for instance, rolls itself round, upon the slightest touch; and the

snail gathers in her horns upon the least approach of your hand. Are not these the strongest indications of *their* sensibility, and is it any evidence of *ours*, that we are not therefore induced to treat them with a more sympathizing tenderness?

I was extremely pleased with a sentiment I met with the other day in honest Montaigne. That good-natured author remarks, that there is a certain general claim of kindness and benevolence which every species of creatures has a right to from us. It is to be regretted that this generous maxim is not more attended to, in the affair of education, and pressed home upon tender minds in its full extent and latitude. I am far, indeed, from thinking that the early delight which children discover in tormenting flies, &c. is a mark of any *innate* cruelty of temper; because this turn may be accounted for upon other principles, and it is entertaining unworthy notions of the Deity to suppose he forms mankind with a propensity to the most detestable of all dispositions. But most certainly, by being unrestrained in sports of this kind, they may acquire by habit, what they never would have learned from nature, and grow up into a confirmed inattention to every kind of suffering but their own. Accordingly, the supreme court of judicature at Athens thought an instance of this sort not below its cognizance, and punished a boy for putting out the eyes of a poor bird that had unhappily fallen into his hands.

It might be of service, therefore, it should seem, in order to awaken, as early as possible, in children, an extensive sense of humanity, to give them a view of several sorts of insects as they may be magnified by the assistance of glasses, and to shew them that the same evident marks of wisdom and goodness prevail in the formation of the minutest insect, as in that of the most enormous Leviathan: that they are equally furnished with whatever is necessary not only to the preservation but the happiness of their beings, in that class of existence to which Providence has assigned them: in a word, that the whole construction of their respective organs distinctly proclaims them the objects of the divine benevolence, and therefore that they justly ought to be so of ours. I am, &c.

LETTER XVII.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 1, 1738.

You see how much I trust to your good-nature and your judgment, whilst I am the only person, perhaps, among your friends, who have ventured to omit a congratulation in form. I am not, however, intentionally guilty; for I really designed you a visit before now; but hearing that your acquaintance flowed in upon you from all quarters, I thought it would be more agreeable to you, as well as to myself, if I waited till the inundation was abated. But if I have not joined in the general voice of congratulation, I have not, however, omitted the sincere, though silent wishes, which the warmest friendship can suggest to a heart entirely in your interests.—Had I not long since forsaken the regions of poetry, I would tell you, in the language of that country, how often I have said, may

> all heav'n,
> And happy constellations on that hour
> Shed their selectest influence! *Milton.*

But plain prose will do as well for plain truth; and there is no occasion for any art to persuade you, that you have, upon every occurrence of your life, my best good wishes. I hope shortly to have an opportunity of making myself better known to Aspasia. When I am so, I shall rejoice with her, on the choice she has made of a man, from whom I will undertake to promise her all the happiness which the state she has entered into can afford. Thus much I do not scruple to say of her husband to *you*; the rest I had rather say to *her*. If upon any occasion you should mention me, let it be in the character which I most value myself upon, that of your much obliged and very affectionate friend.

LETTER XVIII.

TO HORTENSIUS.

July 5, 1739.

I CAN by no means subscribe to the sentiments of your last letter, nor agree with you in thinking that the love of fame is a passion which either reason or religion condemns. I confess, indeed, there are some who have represented it as inconsistent with both; and I remember, in particular, the excellent author of *The Religion of Nature delineated*, has treated it as highly irrational and absurd. As the passage falls in so thoroughly with your own turn of thought, you will have no objection, I imagine, to my quoting it at large; and I give it you, at the same time, as a very great authority on your side. "In "reality," says that writer, "the man is not known ever "the more to posterity, because his name is transmitted "to them; *He* doth not live because his *name* does.— "When it is said, Julius Cæsar subdued Gaul, conquered "Pompey, &c. it is the same thing as to say, the con- "queror of Pompey was Julius Cæsar, i. e. Cæsar and "the conqueror of Pompey is the same thing; Cæsar "is as much known by one designation as by the other. "The amount then is only this: that the conqueror of Pom- "pey conquered Pompey; or somebody conquered some- "body; or rather, since Pompey is as little known now "as Cæsar, *somebody* conquered *somebody*. Such a poor "business is this boasted immortality! and such is the "thing called glory among us! To discerning men this "fame is mere air, and what they despise, if not shun."

But surely, *'twere to consider too curiously* (as Horatio says to Hamlet) *to consider thus*. For though fame with posterity should be, in the strict analysis of it, no other than what is here described, a mere uninteresting proposition, amounting to nothing more than that *somebody* acted meritoriously; yet it would not necessarily follow, that true philosophy would banish the desire of it from the human breast. For this passion may be (as most certainly it is) wisely implanted in our species, notwithstanding

the corresponding object should in reality be very different from what it appears in imagination. Do not many of our most refined and even contemplative pleasures owe their existence to our mistakes? It is but extending (I will not say improving) some of our senses to a higher degree of acuteness than we now possess them, to make the fairest views of nature, or the noblest productions of art, appear horrid and deformed. To see things as they truly and in themselves are, would not always, perhaps, be of advantage to us in the intellectual world, any more than in the natural. But after all, who shall certainly assure us, that the pleasure of virtuous fame dies with its possessor, and reaches not to a farther scene of existence? There is nothing, it should seem, either absurd or unphilosophical in supposing it possible, at least, that the praises of the good and the judicious, *that sweetest music to an honest ear* in this world, may be echoed back to the mansions of the next: that the poet's description of Fame may be literally true, and though she walks upon earth, she may yet lift her head into heaven.

But can it be reasonable to extinguish a passion which nature has universally lighted up in the human breast, and which we constantly find to burn with most strength and brightness in the noblest and best-formed bosoms? Accordingly, revelation is so far from endeavouring (as you suppose) to eradicate the seed which nature has thus deeply planted, that she rather seems, on the contrary, to cherish and forward its growth. To be *exalted with honour*, and to be had *in everlasting remembrance*, are in the number of those encouragements which the Jewish dispensation offered to the virtuous; as the person from whom the sacred author of the christian system received his birth, is herself represented as rejoicing that *all generations should call her blessed*.

To be convinced of the great advantage of cherishing this high regard to posterity, this noble desire of an after-life in the breath of others, one need only look back upon the history of the ancient Greeks and Romans. What other principle was it, Hortensius, which produced that exalted strain of virtue in *those* days, that may well serve

as a model to *these?* Was it not the *consentiens laus bonorum*, the *incorrupta vox bene judicantium* (as Tully calls it) the concurrent approbation of the *good*, the uncorrupted applause of the *wise*, that animated their most generous pursuits?

To confess the truth, I have been ever inclined to think it a very dangerous attempt, to endeavour to lessen the motives of right acting, or to raise any suspicion concerning their solidity. The tempers and dispositions of mankind are so extremely different, that it seems necessary they should be called into action by a variety of incitements. Thus, while some are willing to wed Virtue for her personal charms, others are engaged to take her for the sake of her expected dowry: and since her followers and admirers have so little to hope from her in present, it were pity, methinks, to reason them out of any imaginary advantage in reversion. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER XIX.

TO CLEORA.

I THINK, Cleora, you are the truest female hermit I ever knew; at least I do not remember to have met with any among your sex of the same order with yourself; for as to the religious on the other side of the water, I can by no means esteem them worthy of being ranked in your number. They are a sort of people who either have seen nothing of the world, or too much: and where is the merit of giving up what one is not acquainted with, or what one is weary of? But you are a far more illustrious recluse, who have entered into the world with innocency, and retired from it with good humour. That sort of life, which makes so amiable a figure in the description of poets and philosophers, and which kings and heroes have professed to aspire after, Cleora actually enjoys: she lives her own, free from the follies and impertinences, the hurry and disappointments of false pursuits of every

kind. How much do I prefer one hour of such solitude to all the glittering, glaring, gaudy days of the ambitious? I shall not envy them their gold and their silver, their precious jewels, and their changes of raiment, while you permit me to join you and Alexander in your hermitage. I hope to do so on Sunday evening, and attend you to the siege of Tyre, or the deserts of Africa, or wherever else your hero shall lead you. But should I find you in more elevated company, and engaged with the rapturous ****, even then, I hope, you will not refuse to admit me of your party. If I have not yet a proper *goût* for the mystic writers, perhaps I am not quite incapable of acquiring one; and as I have every thing of the hermit in my composition except the enthusiasm, it is not impossible but I may catch that also, by the assistance of you and ****. I desire you would receive me as a probationer, at least, and as one who is willing, if he is worthy, to be initiated into your secret doctrines. I think I only want this taste, and a relish for the marvellous, to be wholly in your sentiments. Possibly I may be so happy as to attain both in good time: I fancy, at least, there is a close connexion between them, and I shall not despair of obtaining the one, if I can by any means arrive at the other. But which must I endeavour at first? shall I prepare for the mystic, by commencing with the romance, or would you advise me to begin with Malbranch, before I undertake Clelia? Suffer me, however, ere I enter the regions of fiction, to bear testimony to one constant truth, by assuring you that I am, &c.

LETTER XX.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

October 10, 1742.

I HAVE often mentioned to you the pleasure I received from Mr. Pope's translation of the Iliad: but my admiration of that inimitable performance has increased upon me, since you tempted me to compare the copy with the

original. To say of this noble work, that it is the best which ever appeared of the kind, would be speaking in much lower terms than it deserves; the world, perhaps, scarce ever before saw a truly poetical translation; for, as Denham observes,

> Such is our pride, our folly, or our fate,
> That few, but those who cannot write, translate.

Mr. Pope seems, in most places, to have been inspired with the same sublime spirit that animates his original; as he often takes fire from a single hint in his author, and blazes out even with a stronger and brighter flame of poetry. Thus the character of Thersites, as it stands in the English Iliad, is heightened, I think, with more masterly strokes of satire than appear in the Greek; as many of those similies in Homer, which would appear, perhaps, to a modern eye too naked and unornamented, are painted by Pope in all the beautiful drapery of the most graceful metaphor. With what propriety of figure, for instance, has he raised the following comparison!

> Ευτ' ορεος κορυφησι Νοτος καλεχευεν ομιχλην,
> Ποιμεσιν ουτι φιλην, κλεπτη δε τε νυκτος αμεινων,
> Τοσσον τις τ' επιλευσσει, οσον τ' επι λααν ικηται·
> Ως αρα των υπο ποσσι κονισσαλος ωρνυτ' αελλης
> Ερχομενων. Il. iii. 10.

> Thus from his flaggy wings when Eurus sheds
> A night of vapours round the mountain-heads,
> Swift gliding mists the dusky fields invade;
> To thieves more grateful than the midnight shade:
> While scarce the swains their feeding flocks survey,
> Lost and confus'd amidst the thicken'd day;
> So wrapt in gath'ring dust the Grecian train,
> A moving cloud, swept on and hid the plain.

When Mars, being wounded by Diomed, flies back to heaven, Homer compares him, in his passage, to a dark cloud raised by summer heats, and driven by the wind.

> Οιη δ' εκ νεφεων ερεβεννη φαινεται αηρ,
> Καυμαλος εξ ανεμοιο δυσαεος ορνυμενοιο. Il. v. 864.

The inimitable translator improves this image, by

throwing in some circumstances, which, though not in the original, are exactly in the spirit of Homer:

> As vapours, blown by Auster's sultry breath,
> Pregnant with plagues, and shedding seeds of death,
> Beneath the rage of burning Sirius rise,
> Choak the parch'd earth, and blacken all the skies:
> In such a cloud the god, from combat driven,
> High o'er the dusty whirlwind scales the heaven.

There is a description in the eighth book, which Eustathius, it seems, esteemed the most beautiful night-piece that could be found in poetry. If I am not greatly mistaken, however, I can produce a finer: and I am persuaded even the warmest admirer of Homer will allow the following lines are inferior to the corresponding ones in the translation:

> Ως δ' οτ' εν ουρανω αστρα φαεινην αμφι σεληνην
> Φαινετ' αριπρεπεα, οτε τ' επλετο νηνεμος αιθηρ,
> Εκ τ' εφανον πασαι σκοπιαι και πρωονες ακροι,
> Και ναπαι· ουρανοθεν δ' αρ' υπερραγη ασπετος αιθηρ,
> Παντα δε τ' ειδεται αστρα· γεγηθε δε τε φρενα ποιμην.
> Il. viii. 555.

> As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
> O'er heav'n's clear azure spreads her sacred light;
> When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
> And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene,
> Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
> And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole:
> O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
> And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head;
> Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
> A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
> The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
> Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.

I fear the enthusiastic admirers of Homer would look upon me with much indignation, were they to hear me speak of any thing in modern language as equal to the strength and majesty of that great father of poetry. But the following passage having been quoted by a celebrated author of antiquity, as an instance of the true sublime, I will leave it to you to determine whether the translation has not at least as just a claim to that character as the original.

Ως δ' οτε χειμαρροι ποδαμοι κατ' ορεσφι ρεοντες,
Ες μισγαγκειαν συμβαλλετον οβριμον υδωρ,
Κρηνων εκ μεγαλων κοιλης εντοσθε χαραδρης,
Τωνδε τε τηλοσε δυπον εν ερεσιν εκλυε ποιμην·
Ως των μισγομενων γενετο ιαχη τε φοβος τε.

As torrents roll, increas'd by num'rous rills,
With rage impetuous down their echoing hills,
Rush to the vales, and, pour'd along the plain,
Roar through a thousand channels to the main;
The distant shepherd, trembling, hears the sound;
So mix both hosts, and so their cries rebound.

There is no ancient author more likely to betray an injudicious interpreter into meannesses, than Homer; as it requires the utmost skill and address to preserve that venerable air of simplicity which is one of the characteristical marks of that poet, without sinking the expression or the sentiment into contempt. Antiquity will furnish a very strong instance of the truth of this observation, in a single line which is preserved to us from a translation of the Iliad by one Labeo, a favourite poet, it seems, of Nero: it is quoted by an old scholiast upon Persius, and happens to be a version of the following passage in the fourth Book:

Ωμον βεβρωθοις Πριαμον Πριαμοιο τε παιδας.

which Nero's admirable poet rendered literally thus:

Crudum manduces Priamum Priamique pisinnos.

I need not indeed have gone so far back for my instance: a Labeo of our own nation would have supplied me with one much nearer at hand. Ogilby or Hobbs (I forget which) has translated this very verse in the same ridiculous manner:

And eat up Priam and his children all.

But, among many other passages of this sort, I observed one in the same book, which raised my curiosity to examine in what manner Mr. Pope had conducted it.—Juno, in a general council of the gods, thus accosts Jupiter:

Αινοταλε Κρονιδη,
Πως εθελεις αλιον θειναι πονον, ηδ' ατελεστον
Ιδρωθ', ον ιδρωσα μογῳ; καμεΐην δε μοι ιπποι
Λαον αγειρουσῃ, Πριαμῳ κακα, τοιο τε παισιν—

which is as much as if she had said, in plain English, "Why surely, Jupiter, you won't be so cruel as to ren-"der ineffectual all my expence of labour and sweat.—"Have I not tired both my horses, in order to raise forces "to ruin Priam and his family?" It requires the most delicate touches imaginable to raise such a sentiment as this into any tolerable degree of dignity. But a skilful artist knows how to embellish the most ordinary subject; and what would be low and spiritless from a less masterly pencil, becomes pleasing and graceful when worked up by Mr. Pope's:

Shall then, O tyrant of th' etherial plain,
My schemes, my labours, and my hopes be vain?
Have I for this shook Ilion with alarms,
Assembled nations, set two worlds in arms?
To spread the war I flew from shore to shore,
Th' immortal coursers scarce the labour bore.

But, to shew you that I am not so enthusiastic an admirer of this glorious performance, as to be blind to its imperfections, I will venture to point out a passage or two (amongst others which might be mentioned) wherein Mr. Pope's usual judgment seems to have failed him.

When Iris is sent to inform Helen that Paris and Menelaus were going to decide the fate of both nations by single combat, and were actually upon the point of engaging, Homer describes her as hastily throwing a veil over her face, and flying to the Scæan gate, from whence she might have a full view of the field of battle.

Αυτικα δ' αργεννῃσι καλυψαμενη οθονῃσιν,
Ωρματ' εκ θαλαμοιο, τερεν κατα δακρυ χεουσα.
Ουκ οιη· αμα τηγε και αμφιπολοι δυ' επονΐο, &c.
Αιψα δ' επειθ' ικανον, οθι Σκαιαι πυλαι ησαν.
Il. iii. 141.

Nothing could possibly be more interesting to Helen, than the circumstances in which she is here represented:

it was necessary therefore to exhibit her, as Homer we see has, with much eagerness and impetuosity in her motion. But what can be more calm and quiet than the attitude wherein the Helen of Mr. Pope appears?

> O'er her fair face a snowy veil she threw,
> And softly sighing from the loom *withdrew*:
> Her handmaids---------- -------*wait*
> Her *silent* footsteps to the Scæan gate.

Those expressions of speed and impetuosity, which occur so often in the original lines, αυτικα—ωρματο—αἰψα ικανον, would have been sufficient, one should have imagined, to have guarded a translator from falling into an impropriety of this kind.

This brings to my mind another instance of the same nature, where our English poet, by not attending to the particular expression of his author, has given us a picture of a very different kind than what Homer intended. In the first Iliad the reader is introduced into a council of the Grecian chiefs, where very warm debates arise between Agamemnon and Achilles. As nothing was likely to prove more fatal to the Grecians than a dissension between those two princes, the venerable old Nestor is represented as greatly alarmed at the consequences of this quarrel, and rising up to moderate between them with a vivacity much beyond his years. This circumstance Homer has happily intimated by a single word:

τοισι δε Νεςωρ
ΑΝΟΡΟΥΣΕ.

Upon which one of the commentators very justly observes—*ut in re magna et periculosa, non placidè assurgentem facit, sed* prorumpentem *senem quoque.* A circumstance which Horace seems to have had particularly in his view in the epistle to Lollius:

> *Nestor componere lites*
> *Inter Peleiden* festinat *et inter Atreiden.* Ep. i. 2.

This beauty Mr. Pope has utterly overlooked, and substituted an idea very different from that which the verb ανορεω suggests: he renders it,

> *Slow* from his seat arose the Pylian sage.

But a more unfortunate word could scarcely have been joined with *arose*, as it destroys the whole spirit of the piece, and is just the reverse of what both the occasion and the original required.

I doubt, Euphronius, you are growing weary: will you have patience, however, whilst I mention one observation more? and I will interrupt you no longer.

When Menelaus and Paris enter the lists, Pope says,

> Amidst the dreadful vale the chiefs advance,
> All pale with rage, and shake the threat'ning lance.

In the original it is,

> Ες μεσσον Τρωων και Αχαιων εςιχοωντο,
> Δεινον δερκομενοι. Il. iii. 341.

But does not the expression—*all pale with rage*—call up a very contrary idea to δεινον δερκομενοι? The former seems to suggest to one's imagination, the ridiculous passion of a couple of female scolds; whereas the latter conveys the terrifying image of two indignant heroes, animated with calm and deliberate valour. Farewel.—I am, &c.

LETTER XXI.

TO CLEORA.

March 3, 1739.

After having read your last letter, I can no longer doubt of the truth of those salutary effects which are said to have been produced by the application of certain written words. I have myself experienced the possibility of the thing: and a few strokes of your pen have abated a pain, which of all others is the most uneasy, and the most difficult to be relieved; even the pain, my Cleora, of the mind. To sympathize with my sufferings, as Cleora kindly assures me she does, is to assuage them; and half the uneasiness of her absence is removed, when she tells me that she regrets mine.

Since I thus assuredly find that you can work miracles, I will believe likewise that you have the gift of prophecy; and I can no longer despair that the time will come, when we shall again meet, since you have absolutely pronounced that it will. I have ventured, therefore, (as you will see by my last letter) already to name the day. In the mean time, I amuse myself with doing every thing that looks like a preparation for my journey; *e gia apro le braccia per stringervi affettuosamente al mio senno.*

The truth is, you are every instant in my thoughts, and each occurrence that arises suggests you to my remembrance. If I see a clear sky, I wish it may extend to you; and if I observe a cloudy one, I am uneasy lest my Cleora should be exposed to it. I never read an interesting story, or a pertinent remark, that I do not long to communicate it to you, and learn to double my relish by hearing your judicious observations. I cannot take a turn in my garden but every walk calls you into my mind. Ah Cleora! I never view those scenes of our former conversations, without a sigh. Judge then how often I sigh, when every object that surrounds me brings you fresh to my imagination. You remember the attitude in which the faithful Penelope is drawn in Pope's Odyssey, when she goes to fetch the bow of Ulysses for the suitors:

> Across her knees she laid the well-known bow,
> And pensive sat, and tears began to flow.

I find myself in numberless such tender reveries; and if I were ever so much disposed to banish you from my thoughts, it would be impossible I should do so, in a place where every thing that presents itself to me, reminds me that you were once here. I must not expect (I ought not, indeed, for the sake of your repose, to wish) to be thus frequently and thus fondly the subject of your meditations: but may I not hope that you employ a few moments at least of every day, in thinking of him whose whole attention is fixed upon you?

I have sent you the History of the Conquest of Mexico, in English, which, as it is translated by so good a hand, will be equally pleasing and less troublesome, than

reading it in the original. I long to be of this party in your expedition to the new world, as I lately was in your conquests of Italy. How happily could I sit by Cleora's side, and pursue the Spaniards in their triumphs, as I formerly did the Romans; or make a transition from a nation of heroes to a republic of ants! Glorious days indeed! when we passed whole mornings either with dictators or butterflies; and sometimes sent out a colony of Romans, and sometimes of emmets! Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXII.

TO PALEMON.

Dec. 18, 1740.

Though I am not convinced by your arguments, I am charmed by your eloquence, and admire the preacher at the same time that I condemn the doctrine. But there is no sort of persons whose opinions one is more inclined to wish right, than those who are ingeniously in the wrong; who have the art to add grace to error, and can dignify mistakes.

Forgive me, then, Palemon, if I am more than commonly solicitous that you should review the sentiments you advanced, (I will not say supported) with so much elegance in your last letter, and that I press you to reconsider your notions again and again. Can I fail, indeed, to wish that you may find reason to renounce an opinion, which may possibly, one day or other, deprive me of a friend, and my country of a patriot, while Providence, perhaps, would yet have spared him to both?—Can I fail to regret, that I should hold one of the most valuable enjoyments of my life upon a tenure more than ordinarily precarious; and that, besides those numberless accidents by which chance may snatch you from the world, a gloomy sky, or a cross event, may determine Palemon to put an end to a life, which all who have been a witness to must for ever admire?

But, "does the Supreme Being (you ask) dispense his

" bounties upon conditions different from all other bene-
" factors, and will he force a gift upon me which is no
" longer acceptable ?"

Let me demand, in return, whether a creature, so confined in its perceptions as man, may not mistake his true interest, and reject, from a partial regard, what would be well worth accepting upon a more comprehensive view? May not even a mortal benefactor better understand the value of that present he offers, than the person to whom it is tendered? And shall the supreme Author of all beneficence be esteemed less wise in distinguishing the worth of those grants he confers? I agree with you, indeed, that we were called into existence in order to receive happiness: but I can by no means infer from thence, that we are at liberty to resign our being whenever it becomes a burden. On the contrary, those premises seem to lead to a conclusion directly opposite; and if the gracious Author of my life created me with an intent to make me happy, does it not necessarily follow, that I shall most certainly obtain that privilege, if I do not justly forfeit it by my own misconduct? Numberless ends may be answered, if the schemes of Providence, by turning aside or interrupting that stream of bounty, which our limited reason can in no sort discover. How presumptuous, then, must it be, to throw back a grant upon the hands of the great Governor of the universe, merely because we do not immediately feel, or understand, its full advantages!

That it is the intention of the Deity we should remain in this state of being, till his summons calls us away, seems as evident as that we at first entered into it by his command: for we can no more continue, than we could begin to exist, without the concurrence of the same supreme interposition. While, therefore, the animal powers do not cease to perform those functions to which they were directed by their great Author, it may justly, I think, be concluded that it is his design they should not.

Still, however, you urge, " That by putting a period to
" your own existence here, you only alter the modifica-
" tion of matter; and how (you ask) is the order of Pro-

" vidence disturbed by changing the combination of a
" parcel of atoms from one figure to another?"

But surely, Palemon, there is a fallacy in this reasoning: suicide is something more than changing the component parts of the animal machine. It is striking out a spiritual substance from that rank of beings wherein the wise Author of nature has placed it, and forcibly breaking in upon some other order of existence. And as it is impossible for the limited powers of reason to penetrate the designs of Providence, it can never be proved that this is not disturbing the schemes of nature. We possibly may be, and indeed most probably are, connected with some higher rank of creatures: now philosophy will never be able to determine, that those connexions may not be disconcerted by prematurely quitting our present mansion.

One of the strongest passions implanted in human nature is the fear of death. It seems, indeed, to be placed by Providence as a sort of guard to retain mankind within their appointed station. Why, else, should it so universally, and almost invariably, operate? It is observable that no such affection appears in any species of beings below us. They have no temptation, or no ability, to desert the post assigned to them, and therefore it should seem, they have no checks of this kind to keep them within their prescribed limits. This general horror, then, in mankind, at the apprehension of their dissolution, carries with it, I think, a very strong presumptive argument in favour of the opinion I am endeavouring to maintain: for if it were not given to us for the purpose I have supposed, what other can it serve? Can it be imagined that the benevolent Author of nature would have so deeply wove it into our constitution, only to interrupt our present enjoyments?

I cannot, I confess, discover how the practice of suicide can be justified upon any principle, except upon that of downright atheism. If we suppose a good Providence to govern the world, the consequence is undeniable, that we must entirely rely upon it. If we imagine an evil one to prevail, what chance is there of finding

that happiness in another scene, which we have in vain sought for in this? The same malevolent omnipotence can as easily pursue us in the next remove, as persecute us in this our first station.

Upon the whole, Palemon, prudence strongly forbids so hazardous an experiment as that of being our own executioners. We know the worst that can happen in supporting life under all its most wretched circumstances: and if we should be mistaken in thinking it our duty to endure a load, which in truth we may securely lay down; it is an error extremely limited in its consequences. They cannot extend beyond this present existence, and possibly may end much earlier: whereas no mortal can, with the least degree of assurance, pronounce what may not be the effect of acting agreeably to the contrary opinion.—I am, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

TO CLYTANDER.

Sept. 23, 1733.

I AM by no means in the sentiments of that Grecian of your acquaintance, who, as often as he was pressed to marry, replied either that it was too soon or too late: and I think my favourite author, the honest Montaigne, a little too severe when he observes, upon this story, *qu'il faut refuser l'opportunité à toute action importune:* for

> ---------higher of the genial bed by far
> And with mysterious reverence I deem. *Milton.*

However, I am not adventurous enough to join with those friends you mention, who are soliciting you, it seems, to look out for an engagement of this kind. It is an union which requires so much delicacy in the cementing; it is a commerce where so many nice circumstances must concur to render it successful, that I would not venture to pronounce of any two persons, that they are qualified for each other.

I do not know a woman in the world who seems more formed to render a man of sense and generosity happy in this state, than Amasia: yet I should scarcely have courage to recommend even Amasia to my friend. You have seen her, I dare say, a thousand times; but I am persuaded she never attracted your particular observation, for she is in the number of those who are ever overlooked in a crowd. As often as I converse with her, she puts me in mind of the golden age: there is an innocency and simplicity in all her words and actions, that equals any thing the poets have described of those pure and artless times. Indeed the greatest part of her life has been spent much in the same way as the early inhabitants of the world, in that blameless period of it, used, we are told, to dispose of theirs; under the shade and shelter of her own venerable oaks, and in those rural amusements which are sure to produce a confirmed habit both of health and cheerfulness. Amasia never said, or attempted to say, a sprightly thing in all her life; but she has done ten thousand generous ones: and if she is not the most conspicuous figure at an assembly, she never envied or maligned those who are. Her heart is all tenderness and benevolence: no success ever attended any of her acquaintance, which did not fill her bosom with the most disinterested complacency; as no misfortune ever reached her knowledge, that she did not relieve or participate by her generosity. If ever she should fall into the hands of a man she loves, (and I am persuaded she would esteem it the worst kind of prostitution to resign herself into any other) her whole life would be one continued series of kindness and compliance. The humble opinion she has of her own uncommon merit, would make her so much the more sensible of her husband's; and those little submissions on his side, which a woman of more pride and spirit would consider only as a claim of right, would be esteemed by Amasia as so many additional motives to her love and gratitude.

But if I dwell any longer upon this amiable picture, I may be in danger, perhaps, of resembling that ancient artist, who grew enamoured of the production of his own

pencil: for my security, therefore, as well as to put an end to your trouble, it will be best, I believe, to stop here. I am, &c.

LETTER XXIV.

TO ORONTES.

I WAS apprehensive my last had given you but too much occasion of recollecting the remark of one of your admired ancients, that "the art of eloquence is taught by "man, but it is the Gods alone that inspire the wisdom "of silence." That wisdom, however, you are not willing I should yet practise; and you must needs, it seems, have my farther sentiments upon the subject of oratory. Be it then as my friend requires: but let him remember, it is a hazardous thing to put some men upon talking on a favourite topic.

One of the most pleasing exercises of the imagination, is that wherein she is employed in comparing distinct ideas, and discovering their various resemblances. There is no single perception of the mind that is not capable of an infinite number of considerations in reference to other objects; and it is in the novelty and variety of these unexpected connexions, that the richness of a writer's genius is chiefly displayed. A vigorous and lively fancy does not tamely confine itself to the idea which lies before it, but looks beyond the immediate object of its contemplation, and observes how it stands in conformity with numberless others. It is the prerogative of the human mind thus to bring its images together, and compare the several circumstances of similitude that attend them. By this means, eloquence exercises a kind of magic power; she can raise innumerable beauties from the most barren subjects, and give the grace of novelty to the most common. The imagination is thus kept awake by the most agreeable motion, and entertained with a thousand different views both of art and nature, which still terminate upon the principal object. For this reason I prefer the metaphor

to the simile, as a far more pleasing method of illustration. In the former, the action of the mind is less languid, as it is employed at one and the same instant, in comparing the resemblance with the idea it attends; whereas, in the latter, its operations are more slow, being obliged to stand still, as it were, in order to contemplate first the principal object, and then its corresponding image.

Of all the flowers, however, that embellish the regions of eloquence, there is none of a more tender and delicate nature; as there is nothing wherein a fine writer is more distinguished from one of an ordinary class, than in the conduct and application of this figure. He is at liberty, indeed, to range through the whole compass of creation, and collect his images from every object that surrounds him. But though he may be thus amply furnished with materials, great judgment is required in choosing them: for to render a metaphor perfect, it must not only be apt, but pleasing; it must entertain, as well as enlighten. Mr. Dryden, therefore, can hardly escape the imputation of a very unpardonable breach of delicacy, when, in the dedication of his Juvenal, he observes to the Earl of Dorset, that "some bad poems carry their owner's marks "about them—some brand or other on this *buttock*, or "that *ear*, that it is notorious who are the owners of the "cattle." The poet Manilius seems to have raised an image of the same injudicious kind, in that compliment which he pays to Homer in the following verses:

cujusque ex ore profusos
Omnis posteritas latices in carmine duxit.

I could never read these lines without calling to mind those grotesque heads, which are fixed to the roof of the old building of King's college in Cambridge: which the ingenious architect has represented in the act of vomiting out the rain, that falls through certain pipes most judiciously stuck in their mouths for that purpose. Mr. Addison, recommends a method of trying the propriety of a metaphor, by drawing it out in visible representation.—Accordingly, I think this curious conceit of the builder might be employed to the advantage of the youth in that university, and serve for as proper an illustration of the

absurdity of the poet's image, as that ancient picture which Ælian mentions, where Homer was figured with a stream running from his mouth, and a groupe of poets lapping it up at a distance.

But besides a certain decorum which is requisite to constitute a perfect metaphor; a writer of true taste and genius will always single out the most obvious images, and place them in the most unobserved points of resemblance. Accordingly, all allusions which point to the more abstruse branches of the arts or sciences, and with which none can be supposed to be acquainted but those who have gone far into the deeper studies, should be carefully avoided, not only as pedantic, but impertinent; as they pervert the single use of this figure, and add neither grace nor force to the idea they would elucidate.—The most pleasing metaphors, therefore, are those which are derived from the more frequent occurrences of art or nature, or the civil transactions and customs of mankind. Thus, how expressive, yet at the same time how familiar, is that image which Otway has put into the mouth of Metellus, in his play of Caius Marius, where he calls Sulpicius

> That mad wild bull whom Marius lets loose
> On each occasion, when he'd make Rome feel him,
> To toss our laws and liberties i' th' air!

But I never met with a more agreeable, or a more significant allusion, than one in Quintus Curtius, which is borrowed from the most ordinary object in common life. That author represents Craterus as dissuading Alexander from continuing his Indian expedition, against enemies too contemptible, he tells him, for the glory of his arms; and concludes his speech with the following beautiful thought: *Citò gloria obsolescit in sordidis hostibus: nec quidquam indignius est quam* consumi *eam ubi non potest* ostendi. Now I am got into Latin quotations, I cannot forbear mentioning a most beautiful passage, which I lately had the pleasure of reading, and which I will venture to produce as equal to any thing of the same kind, either in ancient or modern composition. I met with it in the speech of a young orator, to whom I have the happiness to be related, and who will one day, I persuade

myself, prove as great an honour to his country as he is at present to that learned society of which he is a member. He is speaking of the writings of a celebrated prelate, who received his education in that famous seminary to which he belongs, and illustrates the peculiar elegance which distinguishes all that author's performances, by the following just and pleasing assemblage of diction and imagery: *In quodcumque opus se parabat (et per omnia sane versatile illius se duxit ingenium) nescio quâ luce sibi soli propriâ, id illuminavit; haud dissimili ei aureo Titiani radio, qui per totam tabulam gliscens eam verè suam denunciat.* As there is nothing more entertaining to the imagination than the productions of the fine arts; there is no kind of similitudes or metaphors which are in general more striking, than those which allude to their properties and effects. It is with great judgment, therefore, that the ingenious author of the dialogue concerning the decline of eloquence among the Romans, recommends to his orator a general acquaintance with the whole circle of the polite arts. A knowledge of this sort furnishes an author with illustrations of the most agreeable kind, and sets a gloss upon his compositions which enlivens them with singular grace and spirit.

Were I to point out the beauty and efficacy of metaphorical language, by particular instances, I should rather draw my examples from the moderns than the ancients; the latter being scarcely, I think, so exact and delicate in this article of composition, as the former. The great improvements, indeed, in natural knowledge, which have been made in these later ages, have opened a vein of metaphor entirely unknown to the ancients, and enriched the fancy of modern wits with a new stock of the most pleasing ideas: a circumstance which must give them a very considerable advantage over the Greeks and Romans. I am sure, at least of all the writings with which I have been conversant, the works of Mr. Addison will afford the most abundant supply of this kind, in all its variety and perfection. Truth and beauty of imagery is, indeed, his characteristical distinction, and the principal point of eminence which raises his style above that of

every author in any language that has fallen within my notice. He is every where highly figurative; yet, at the same time, he is the most easy and perspicuous writer I have ever perused. The reason is, his images are always taken from the most natural and familiar appearances; as they are chosen with the utmost delicacy and judgment. Suffer me only to mention one out of a thousand I could name, as it appears to me the finest and most expressive that ever language conveyed. It is in one of his inimitable papers upon Paradise Lost, where he is taking notice of those changes in nature which the author of that truly divine poem describes as immediately succeeding the fall. Among other prodigies, Milton represents the sun in an eclipse; and at the same time a bright cloud in the western region of the heavens descending with a band of angels. Mr. Addison, in order to shew his author's art and judgment in the conduct and disposition of this sublime scenery, observes, "the whole *thea-*
"*tre* of nature is *darkened*, that this glorious *machine*
"may appear in all its lustre and magnificence." I know not, Orontes, whether you will agree in sentiment with me; but I must confess I am at a loss which to admire most upon this occasion, the poet or the critic.

There is a double beauty in images of this kind when they are not only metaphors, but illusions. I was much pleased with an instance of this uncommon species, in a little poem entitled *The Spleen*. The author of that piece (who has thrown together more original thoughts than I ever read in the same compass of lines) speaking of the advantages of exercise in dissipating those gloomy vapours, which are so apt to hang upon some minds, employs the following image:

Throw but a stone, the giant dies.

You will observe, Orontes, that the metaphor here is conceived with great propriety of thought, if we consider it only in its primary view; but when we see it pointing still farther, and hinting at the story of David and Goliah, it receives a very considerable improvement from this double application.

It must be owned some of the greatest authors, both ancient and modern, have made many remarkable slips in the management of this figure, and have sometimes expressed themselves with as much impropriety as an honest sailor of my acquaintance, a captain of a privateer, who wrote an account to his owners of an engagement, "in
"which he had the good fortune," he told them, "of having
"only one of his *hands* shot through the nose." The great caution, therefore, should be, never to join any idea to a figurative expression, which would not be applicable to it in a literal sense. Thus Cicero, in his treatise De *Claris Oratoribus*, speaking of the family of the Scipios, is guilty of an impropriety of this kind: *O generosam stirpem* (says he) *et tanquam in unam arborem plura genera, sic in istam domum multorum insitam atque* illuminatam *sapientiam*. Mr. Addison, likewise, has fallen into an error of the same sort, where he observes, "There is not a
"single view of human nature, which is not sufficient to
"*extinguish* the *seeds* of pride." In this passage he evidently unites images together which have no connexion with each other. When a seed has lost its power of vegetation, I might, in a metaphorical sense, say it is *extinguished*: but when, in the same sense, I call that disposition of the heart which produces pride the *seed* of that passion, I cannot, without introducing a confusion of ideas, apply any word to *seed* but what corresponds with its real properties or circumstances.

Another mistake in the use of this figure is, when different images are crowded too close upon each other, or (to express myself after Quintilian) when a sentence sets out with storms and tempests, and ends with fire and flames. A judicious reader will observe an impropriety of this kind in one of the late essays of the inimitable author last quoted, where he tells us, "that women were
"formed to temper mankind, not to set an *edge* upon
"their minds, and blow up in them those passions which
"are too apt to rise of their own accord." Thus a celebrated orator, speaking of that little blackening spirit in mankind, which is fond of discovering spots in the brightest characters, remarks, that when persons of this cast

of temper have mentioned any virtue of their neighbour, "it is well if, to balance the matter, they do not clap "some fault into the opposite scale, that so *the enemy* "*may not go off with flying colours.*" Dr. Swift also, whose style is the most pure and simple of any of our classic writers, and who does not seem in general very fond of the figurative manner, is not always free from censure in his management of the metaphorical language. In his Essay on the Dissentions of Athens and Rome, speaking of the populace, he takes notice, that, "though "in their corrupt notions of divine worship, they are apt "to multiply their gods, yet their earthly devotion is "seldom paid to above one *idol* at a time, whose *oar* "they pull with less murmuring and much more skill, "than when they shared the *lading*, or even hold the "*helm*." The most injudicious writer could not possibly have fallen into a more absurd inconsistency of metaphor than this eminent wit has inadvertently been betrayed into, in this passage. For what connexion is there between worshipping and *rowing*, and who ever heard before of pulling the *oar* of an idol?

As there are certain metaphors which are common to all language, there are others of so delicate a nature, as not to bear transplanting from one nation into another, There is no part, therefore, of the business of a translator more difficult to manage than this figure, as it requires great judgment to distinguish when it may, and may not, be naturalized with propriety and elegance.—The want of this necessary discernment has led the common race of translators into great absurdities, and is one of the principal reasons that performances of this kind are generally so insipid. What strange work, for instance, would an injudicious interpreter make with the following metaphor in Homer?

Νυν γαρ δη παντεσσιν επι ξυρῃ ιζαται ακμης.

Il. x. 173.

But Mr. Pope, by artfully dropping the particular image yet retaining the general idea, has happily preserved the spirit of his author, and at the same time humoured the different state of his own countrymen.

Each single Greek, in this conclusive strife,
Stands on the *sharpest edge* of death or life.

And now, Orontes, do you not think it high time to be dismissed from this fairy land? Permit me, however, just to add, that this figure, which casts so much light and beauty upon works of genius, ought to be entirely banished from the severer compositions of philosophy. It is the business of the latter to separate resemblances, not to find them, and to deliver her discoveries in the plainest and most unornamented expressions. Much dispute, and, perhaps, many errors, might have been avoided, if metaphor had been thus confined within its proper limits, and never wandered from the regions of eloquence and poetry. I am, &c.

LETTER XXV.

TO PHILOTES.

August 5, 1744.

Don't you begin to think that I ill deserve the prescription you sent me, since I have scarce had the manners even to thank you for it? It must be confessed I have neglected to *honour my physician with the honour due unto him*: that is, I have omitted not only what I ought to have performed by good-breeding, but what I am expressly enjoined by my Bible. I am not, however, entirely without excuse; a silly one, I own; nevertheless, it is the truth. I have lately been a good deal out of spirits. But at length the fit is over. Amongst the number of those things which are wanting to secure me from a return of it, I must always reckon the company of my friend. I have, indeed, frequent occasion for you; not in the way of your profession, but in a better: in the way of friendship. There is a healing quality in that intercourse, which a certain author has, with infinite propriety, termed *the medicine of life*. It is a medicine which, unluckily, lies almost wholly out of my reach; fortune having separated me from those few friends

whom I pretend or desire to claim. General acquaintances, you know, I am not much inclined to cultivate; so that I am at present as much secluded from society as if I were a *sojourner in a strange land*. Though retirement is my dear delight, yet, upon some occasions, I think I have too much of it; and I agree with Balzac, *que la solitude est certainement une belle chose: mais il y a plaisir d'avoir quelqu'un qui sache repondre; à qui on puisse dire de tems en tems, que la solitude est une belle chose*. But I must not forget, that, as I sometimes want company, you may as often wish to be alone; and that I may, perhaps, be, at this instant breaking in upon one of those hours which you desire to enjoy without interruption. I will only detain you, therefore, whilst I add that I am, &c.

LETTER XXVI.

TO PHIDIPPUS.

May 1, 1745.

If that friend of yours, whom you are desirous to add to the number of mine, were endued with no other quality than the last you mentioned in the catalogue of his virtues; I should esteem his acquaintance as one of my most valuable privileges. When you assured me, therefore, of the generosity of his disposition, I wanted no additional motive to embrace your proposal of joining you and him at **. To say truth, I consider a generous mind as the noblest work of the creation, and am persuaded, wherever it resides, no real merit can be wanting. It is, perhaps, the most singular of all the moral endowments. I am sure, at least, it is often imputed where it cannot justly be claimed. The meanest self-love, under some refined disguise, frequently passes upon common observers for this godlike principle; and I have known many a popular action attributed to this motive, when it flowed from no higher a source than the suggestions of concealed vanity. Good-nature, as it has many features in common with this

virtue, is usually mistaken for it: the former, however, is but the effect, possibly, of a happy disposition of the animal structure, or, as Dryden somewhere calls it, of a certain "milkiness of blood:" whereas the latter is seated in the mind, and can never subsist where good sense and enlarged sentiments have no existence. It is entirely founded, indeed, upon justness of thought: which, perhaps, is the reason this virtue is so little the characteristic of mankind in general. A man, whose mind is warped by the selfish passions, or contracted by the narrow prejudices of sects or parties, if he does not want honesty, must undoubtedly want understanding. The same clouds that darken his intellectual views, obstruct his moral ones; and his generosity is extremely circumscribed, because his reason is exceedingly limited.

It is the distinguishing pre-eminence of the Christian system, that it cherishes this elevated principle in one of its noblest exertions. Forgiveness of injuries, I confess, indeed, has been inculcated by several of the heathen moralists; but it never entered into the established ordinances of any religion, till it had the sanction of the great Author of our's. I have often, however, wondered that the ancients, who raised so many virtues and affections of the mind into divinities, should never have given a place in their temples to Generosity; unless, perhaps, they included it under the notion of FIDES or HONOS. But surely she might reasonably have claimed a separate altar, and superior rites. A principle of honour may restrain a man from counteracting the social ties, who yet has nothing of that active flame of generosity, which is too powerful to be confined within the humbler boundaries of mere negative duties. True generosity rises above the ordinary rules of social conduct, and flows with much too full a stream to be comprehended within the precise marks of formal precepts. It is a vigorous principle in the soul, which opens and expands all her virtues far beyond those which are only the forced and unnatural productions of a timid obedience. The man who is influenced singly by motives of the latter kind, aims no higher than at certain authoritative standards,

without ever attempting to reach those glorious elevations which constitute the only true heroism of the social character. Religion, without this sovereign principle, degenerates into slavish fear, and wisdom into a specious cunning: learning is but the avarice of the mind, and wit its more pleasing kind of madness. In a word, generosity sanctifies every passion, and adds grace to every acquisition of the soul; and if it does not necessarily include, at least it reflects a lustre upon the whole circle of moral and intellectual qualities.

But I am running into a general panegyric upon generosity, when I only meant to acknowledge the particular instance you have given me of yours, in being desirous of communicating to me a treasure, which I know much better how to value than how to deserve. Be assured, therefore, though Euphronius had none of those polite accomplishments you enumerate, yet, after what you have informed me concerning his heart, I should esteem his friendship of more worth, than all the learning of ancient Greece, and all the *virtù* of modern Italy. I am, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

TO SAPPHO.*

March 10, 1731.

While yet no am'rous youths around thee bow,
Nor flatt'ring verse conveys the faithless vow;
To graver notes will Sappho's soul attend,
And ere she hears the lover, hear the friend?
Let maids less bless'd employ their meaner arts
To reign proud tyrants o'er unnumber'd hearts;
May Sappho learn (for nobler triumphs born)
Those little conquests of her sex to scorn.
To form the bosom to each gen'rous deed;
To plant thy mind with ev'ry useful seed;
Be these thy arts; nor spare the grateful toil,
Where nature's hand has bless'd the happy soil.

* A young lady of thirteen years of age.

So shalt thou know, with pleasing skill to blend
The lovely mistress and instructive friend:
So shalt thou know, when unrelenting time
Shall spoil those charms yet op'ning to their prime,
To ease the loss of beauty's transient flow'r,
While reason keeps what rapture gave before.
And oh! whilst wit, fair dawning, spreads its ray,
Serenely rising to a glorious day,
To hail the growing lustre oft be mine,
Thou early fav'rite of the sacred Nine!
And shall the Muse with blameless boast pretend,
In youth's gay bloom that Sappho call'd me friend;
That urg'd by me she shunn'd the dang'rous way,
Where heedless maids in endless error stray;
That scorning soon her sex's idler art,
Fair praise inspir'd, and virtue warm'd her heart;
That fond to reach the distant paths of fame,
I taught her infant genius where to aim?
Thus when the feather'd choir first tempt the sky,
And, all unskill'd, their feeble pinions try,
Th' experienc'd sire prescribes th' advent'rous height,
Guides the young wing, and pleas'd attends the flight.

LETTER XXVIII.

TO PHIDIPPUS.

Yes, Phidippus, I entirely agree with you; the ancients most certainly had much loftier notions of friendship than seem to be generally entertained at present. But may they not justly be considered, on this subject, as downright enthusiasts? Whilst, indeed, they talk of friendship as a virtue, or place it in a rank little inferior, I can admire the generous warmth of their sentiments; but when they go so far as to make it a serious question, whether justice herself ought not, in some particular cases, to yield to this their supreme affection of the heart; there, I confess, they leave me far behind.

If we had not a treatise extant upon the subject, we should scarce believe this fact, upon the credit of those authors, who have delivered it down to us: but Cicero himself has ventured to take the affirmative side of this debate, in his celebrated dialogue inscribed Lælius. He followed, it seems, in this notion, the sentiments of the Grecian Theophrastus, who publicly maintained the same astonishing theory.

It must be confessed, however, these admirers of the false sublime in friendship talk upon this subject with so much caution, and in such general terms, that one is inclined to think they themselves a little suspected the validity of those very principles they would inculcate. We find, at least, a remarkable instance to that purpose, in a circumstance related of Chilo, one of those famous sages who are distinguished by the pompous title of the wise men of Greece.

That celebrated philosopher, being upon his death-bed, addressed himself, we are informed, to his friends who stood round him, to the following effect: "I cannot, "through the course of a long life, look back with uneasi- "ness upon any single instance of my conduct, unless, "perhaps, on that which I am going to mention, wherein, "I confess, I am still doubtful whether I acted as I ought, "or not. I was once appointed judge, in conjunction "with two others, when my particular friend was ar- "raigned before us. Were the laws to have taken their "free course, he must inevitably have been condemned "to die. After much debate, therefore, with myself, "I resolved upon this expedient: I gave my own vote "according to my conscience, but, at the same time, em- "ployed all my eloquence to prevail with my associates "to absolve the criminal. Now I cannot but reflect upon "this act with concern, as fearing there was something of "perfidy, in persuading others to go counter to what I "myself esteemed right."

It does not, certainly, require any great depth of casuistry to pronounce upon a case of this nature. And yet had Tully, that great master of reason, been Chilo's confessor, upon this occasion, it is very plain he would

have given him absolution, to the just scandal of the most ignorant curate that ever lulled a country village.

What I have here observed, will suggest, if I mistake not, a very clear answer to the question you propose: "Whence it should happen, that we meet with instances "of friendship among the Greeks and Romans, far su- "perior to any thing of the same kind which modern "times have produced?" For while the greatest geniuses among them employed their talents in exalting this noble affection, and it was encouraged even by the laws themselves; what effects might not one expect to arise from the concurrence of such powerful causes? The several examples of this kind, which you have pointed out, are undoubtedly highly animating and singular: to which give me leave to add one instance, no less remarkable, though, I think, not so commonly observed.

Eudamidas, the Corinthian, (as the story is related in Lucian's Toxaris) though in low circumstances himself, was happy in the friendship of two very wealthy persons, Charixenus and Aretheus. Eudamidas, finding himself drawing near his end, made his will in the following terms: "I leave my mother to Aretheus, to be main- "tained and protected by him in her old age. I bequeath "to Charixenus the care of my daughter; desiring that "he would see her disposed of in marriage, and portion "her, at the same time, with as ample a fortune as his "circumstances shall admit; and, in case of the death "of either of these my two friends, I substitute the sur- "vivor in his place."

This will was looked upon, by some, as we may well imagine, to be extremely ridiculous: however, the legatees received information of it with very different sentiments, accepting of their respective legacies with great satisfaction. It happened that Charixenus died a few days after his friend, the testator: the survivorship, therefore, taking place in favour of Aretheus, he, accordingly, not only took upon himself the care of his friend's mother, but also made an equal distribution of his estate between this child of Eudamidas, and an only daughter of his own, solemnizing both their marriages on the same day.

I do not recollect that any of the moderns have raised their notions of friendship to these extravagant heights, excepting only a very singular French author, who talks in a more romantic strain upon this subject than even the ancients themselves. Could you, Phidippus, believe a man in earnest, who should assert that the secret one has sworn never to reveal, may, without perjury, be discovered to one's friend? Yet the honest Montaigne has ventured gravely to advance this extraordinary doctrine, in clear and positive terms. But I never knew a sensible man in my life, that was not an enthusiast upon some favourite point; as, indeed, there is none where it is more excusable than in the article of friendship. It is that which affords the most pleasing sunshine of our days; if, therefore, we see it now and then break out with a more than reasonable warmth and lustre, who is there that will not be inclined to pardon an excess, which can only flow from the most generous principles? Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXIX.

TO THE SAME.

July 3, 1746.

When I mentioned *grace* as essential in constituting a fine writer, I rather hoped to have found my sentiments reflected back with a clearer light by yours, than imagined you would have called upon me to explain in form, what I only threw out by accident. To confess the truth, I know not whether, after all that can be said to illustrate this uncommon quality, it must not at last be resolved into the poet's *nequeo monstrare et sentio tantùm.* In cases of this kind, where language does not supply us with proper words to express the notions of one's mind, we can only convey our sentiments in figurative terms: a defect which necessarily introduces some obscurity.

I will not, therefore, undertake to mark out, with any sort of precision, that idea which I would express by the

word *grace*: and, perhaps, it can no more be clearly described than justly defined. To give you, however, a general intimation of what I mean, when I apply that term to compositions of genius, I would resemble it to that easy air, which so remarkably distinguishes certain persons of a genteel and liberal cast. It consists, not only in the particular beauty of single parts, but arises from the general symmetry and construction of the whole. An author may be just in his sentiments, lively in his figures, and clear in his expression; yet may have no claim to be admitted into the rank of finished writers. Those several members must be so agreeably united as mutually to reflect beauty upon each other: their arrangement must be so happily disposed as not to admit of the least transposition, without manifest prejudice to the entire piece. The thoughts, the metaphors, the allusions, and the diction should appear easy and natural, and seem to arise like so many spontaneous productions, rather than as the effects of art or labour.

Whatever, therefore, is forced, or affected, in the sentiments; whatever is pompous, or pedantic, in the expression, is the very reverse of *grace*. Her mien is neither that of a prude nor a coquet; she is regular without formality, and sprightly without being fantastical. Grace, in short, is to good writing what a proper light is to a fine picture; it not only shews all the figures in their several proportions and relations, but shews them in the most advantageous manner.

As gentility (to resume my former illustration) appears in the minutest action, and improves the most inconsiderable gesture; so *grace* is discovered in the placing even of a single word, or the turn of a mere expletive. Neither is this inexpressible quality confined to one species of composition only, but extends to all the various kinds; to the humble pastoral as well as to the lofty epic; from the slightest letter to the most solemn discourse.

I know not whether Sir William Temple may not be considered as the first of our prose authors, who introduced a graceful *manner* into our language. At least that quality does not seem to have appeared early, or spread

far amongst us. But wheresoever we may look for its origin, it is certainly to be found in its highest perfection in the essays of a gentleman whose writings will be distinguished so long as politeness and good sense have any admirers. That becoming air which Tully esteemed the criterion of fine composition, and which every reader, he says, imagines so easy to be imitated, yet will find so difficult to attain, is the prevailing characteristic of all that excellent author's most elegant performances. In a word, one may justly apply to him what Plato, in his allegorical language, says of Aristophanes; that the *Graces* having searched all the world round for a temple wherein they might for ever dwell, settled at last in the breast of Mr. Addison. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXX.

TO CLYTANDER.

Can it then be true, Clytander, that, after all the fine things which have been said concerning the love of our country, it owes its rise to the principles you mention, and was originally propagated among mankind in order to cheat them into the service of the community? And is it thus, at last, that the most generous of the human passions, instead of bearing the sacred signature of nature, can produce no higher marks of its legitimacy than the suspicious impress of art? The question is worth, at least, a few thoughts; and I will just run over the principal objections in your letter, without drawing them up, however, in a regular form.

That the true happiness of the individual cannot arise from the single exercise of the mere selfish principles, is evident, I think, above all reasonable contradiction. If a man would thoroughly enjoy his own being, he must, of necessity, look beyond it; his private satisfactions always increasing in the same proportion with which he promotes those of others. Thus self-interest, if rightly directed,

flows through the nearer charities of relations, friends, and dependents, till it rises, and dilates itself into general benevolence. But if every addition which we make to the welfare of others be really an advancement of our own; the love of our country must necessarily, upon a principle of self-interest, be a passion founded in the strictest reason; because it is a disposition pregnant with the greatest possible good, which the limited powers of man are capable of producing. Benevolence, therefore, points to our country, as to her only adequate mark: whatever falls short of that glorious end, is too small for her full gratification: and all beyond is too immense for her grasp.

Thus our country appears to have a claim to our affection, as it has a correspondent passion in the human breast: a passion, not raised by the artifices of policy, or propagated by the infection of enthusiasm, but necessarily resulting from the original constitution of our species, and conducive to the highest *private* advantage of each individual. When Curtius, therefore, or the two Decii, sacrificed their lives, in order to rescue their community from the calamities with which it was threatened, they were by no means impelled (as you seemed to represent them) by a political phrenzy, but acted on the most solid and rational principles. The method they pursued, for that purpose, was dictated, I confess, by the most absurd and groundless superstition: yet, while the impression of that national belief remained strong upon their minds, and they were thoroughly persuaded that falling, in the manner we are assured they did, was the only effectual means of preserving their country from ruin; they took the most rational measures of consulting their private happiness, by thus consenting to become the public victims. Could it even be admitted (what, with any degree of probability, never, indeed, can be admitted) that these glorious heroes considered fame as the vainest of shadows, and had no hopes of an after-life in any other scene of existence; still, however, their conduct might be justified as perfectly wise. For surely, to a mind that was not wholly immersed in the lowest dregs of the most con-

tracted selfishness; that had not totally extinguished every generous and social affection; the thoughts of having preferred a mere joyless existence (for such it must have been) to the supposed preservation of numbers of one's fellow-creatures, must have been far more painful than a thousand deaths.

I cannot, however, but agree with you, that this affection was productive of infinite mischief to mankind, as it broke out among the Romans, in the impious spirit of their unjust conquests. But it should be remembered, at the same time, that it is the usual artifice of ambition, to mask herself in the semblance of patriotism. And it can be no just objection to the noblest of the social passions, that it is capable of being inflamed beyond its natural heat, and turned, by the arts of policy, to promote those destructive purposes, which it was originally implanted to prevent.

This zeal for our country may, indeed, become irrational, not only when it thus pushes us on to act counter to the natural rights of any other community; but, likewise, when it impels us to take the measures of violence in opposition to the general sense of our own. For may not public happiness be estimated by the same standard as that of private? and as every man's own opinion must determine his particular satisfaction, shall not the general opinion be considered as decisive in the question concerning general interest? Far am I, however, from insinuating, that the true welfare of mankind, in their collective capacities, depends singly upon a prevailing fancy, any more than it does in their separate; undoubtedly, in both instances, they may equally embrace a false interest. But whenever this is the case, I should hardly imagine that the love of our country, on the one hand, or of our neighbour on the other, would justify any methods of bringing them to a wiser choice, than those of calm and rational persuasion.

I cannot at present recollect which of the ancient authors it is that mentions the Cappadocians to have been so enamoured of subjection to a despotic power, as to refuse the enjoyment of their liberties, though generously tendered to them by the Romans. Scarcely, I suppose, can there be an instance produced of a more remarkable depravity of national taste, and of a more false calculation of public welfare: yet, even in this instance, it should seem the highest injustice to have attempted, by force, and at the expence, perhaps, of half the lives in the state, the introduction of a more improved system of government.

In this notion I am not singular, but have the authority of Plato himself on my side, who held it as a maxim of undoubted truth, in politics, that the prevailing sentiments of a state, how much soever mistaken, ought by no means to be opposed by the measures of violence: a maxim, which if certain pretended or misguided patriots had happily embraced, much effusion of civil blood had been lately spared to our nation. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXI.

TO PALAMEDES.

Nov. 4, 1740.

The dawn is overcast, the morning lours,
And heavily with clouds brings on the day.

How then can I better disappoint the gloomy effects of a louring sky, than by calling my thoughts off from the dull scene before me, and placing them upon an object which I always consider with pleasure? Much, certainly, are we indebted to that happy faculty, by which, with a sort of magic power, we can bring before one's mind whatever has been the subject of its most agreeable contemplation. In vain, therefore, would that lovely dame, who has so often been the topic of our conversations, pretend to enjoy you to herself: in spite of your favourite philosophy, or even of a more powerful divinity; in spite of Fortune herself, I can place you in my view, though half a century of miles lies between us. But am I for ever to be indebted to imagination only for your presence? and will you not sometimes let me owe that

pleasure to yourself? Surely you might spare me a few weeks before the summer ends, without any inconvenience to that noble plan upon which I know you are so intent. As for my own studies, they go on but slowly: I am, like a traveller without a guide in an unknown country, obliged to enquire the way at every turning, and consequently cannot advance with all the expedition I could wish. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXII.

TO THE SAME.

August 10, 1745.

Forgive me, Palamedes, if I mistrust an art, which the greatest of philosophers has called the art of deceiving, and by which the first of orators could persuade the people that he had conquered at the athletic games, though they saw him fall at his adversary's feet. The voice of Eloquence should ever, indeed, be heard with caution; and she, whose boast it has formerly been, to make little things appear considerable, may diminish objects, perhaps, as well as enlarge them, and lessen even the charms of repose. But I have too long experienced the joys of retirement, to quit her arms for a more lively mistress; and I can look upon ambition, though adorned in all the ornaments of your oratory, with the cool indifference of the most confirmed stoic. To confess the whole truth, I am too proud to endure a repulse, and too humble to hope for success: qualities little favourable, I imagine, to the pretensions of him who would claim the glittering prizes, which animate those that run the race of ambition. Let those honours, then, you mention, be inscribed on the tombs of others; be it rather told on mine, that I lived and died

Unplac'd, unpension'd, no man's heir or slave.

And is not this a privilege as valuable as any of those which you have painted to my view, in all the warmest colours of your enlivening eloquence? Bruyere, at least, has just now assured me, that, "to pay one's court to no "man, nor expect any to pay court to you, is the most "agreeable of all situations; it is the true golden age," says he, "and the most natural state of man."

Believe me, however, I am not in the mistake of those whom you justly condemn, as imagining that wisdom is the companion only of retirement, and that virtue enters not the more open and conspicuous walks of life: but I will confess, at the same time, that though it is to Tully I give my applause, it is Atticus that has my affection.

"Life," says a celebrated ancient, "may be compared "to the Olympic games: some enter into those assem- "blies for glory, and others for gain; while there is a "third party (and those by no means the most contempti- "ble) who choose to be merely spectators." I need not tell you, Palamedes, how early it was my inclination to be numbered with the last; and as nature has not formed me with powers, am I not obliged to her for having divested me of every inclination for bearing a part in the ambitious contentions of the world? Providence, indeed, seems to have designed some tempers for the obscure scenes of life; as there are some plants which flourish best in the shade. But the lowest shrub has its use, you are sensible, as well as the loftiest oak; and, perhaps, your friend may find some method of convincing you, that even the humblest talents are not given in vain. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXIII.

TO PALEMON.

May 28, 1748.

Is it possible you can thus descend from the highest concerns to the lowest, and, after deliberating upon the affairs of Europe, have the humility to enquire into mine? But the greatest statesmen, it seems, have their trifling as well as their serious hours; and I have read of a Roman

consul that amused himself with gathering cockle-shells, and of a Spartan monarch who was found riding upon a hobby-horse. Or shall I rather say, that friendship gilds every object upon which she shines? As it is the singular character of Palemon to preserve that generous flame in all its strength and lustre, amidst that ambitious atmosphere which is generally esteemed so unfavourable to every brighter affection.

It is upon one or other of those principles alone, that you can be willing to suspend your own more important engagements, by attending to an account of mine. They have lately, indeed, been more diversified than usual, and I have passed these three months in a continual succession of new scenes. The most agreeable, as well as the farthest part of my progress, was to the seat of Hortensius; and I am persuaded you will not think my travels have been in vain, since they afford me an opportunity of informing you, that our friend is in possession of all that happiness which I am sure you wish him. It is probable, however, you have not yet heard that he owes the chief part of it to female merit; for his marriage was concluded even before those friends, who are most frequently with him, had the least suspicion of his intentions. But though he had some reasons for concealing his designs, he has none for being ashamed of them now they are executed. I say not this from any hasty approbation, but as having long known and esteemed the lady whom he has chosen: and, as there is a pleasure in bringing two persons of merit to the knowledge of each other, will you allow me, in the remainder of this letter, to introduce her to your acquaintance?

Hortensia is of a good stature, and perfectly well proportioned; but one cannot so properly say her air is genteel, as that it is pleasing: for there is a certain unaffected carelessness in her dress and mien, that wins by degrees rather than strikes at first sight. If you were to look no farther than the upper part of her face, you would think her handsome; were you only to examine the lower, you would immediately pronounce the reverse; yet there is something in her eyes which, without any pretence to be

called fine, gives such an agreeable liveliness to her whole countenance, that you scarce observe, or soon forget, all her features are not regular. Her conversation is rather cheerful than gay, and more instructive than sprightly.—But the principal and most distinguished faculties of her mind are her memory and her judgment, both which she possesses in a far higher degree than one usually finds even in persons of our sex. She has read most of the capital authors both in French and English; but her chief and favourite companions of that kind have lain among the historical and dramatic writers. There is hardly a remarkable event, in ancient or modern story, of which she cannot give a very clear and judicious account; as she is equally well versed in all the principal characters and incidents of the most approved stage compositions. The mathematics is not wholly a stranger to her; and though she did not think proper to pursue her enquiries of that kind to any great length, yet the very uncommon facility with which she entered into the reasonings of that science, plainly discovered she was capable of attaining a thorough knowledge of all its most abstruse branches.—Her taste, in performances of polite literature, is always just; and she is an excellent critic, without knowing any thing of the artificial rules of that science. Her observations, therefore, upon subjects of that sort, are so much the more to be relied upon, as they are the pure and unbiassed dictates of nature and good sense. Accordingly Hortensius, in the several pieces which you know he has published, constantly had recourse to her judgment; and I have often heard him, upon those occasions, apply with singular pleasure, and with equal truth, what the tender Propertius says of his favourite Cynthia:

Me juvat in gremio doctæ legisse puellæ,
Auribus et puris scripta probâsse mea:
Hæc ubi contigerint, populi confusa valeto
Fabula; nam, dominâ judice, tutus ero.

But her uncommon strength of understanding has preserved her from that fatal rock of all female knowledge, the impertinent ostentation of it; and she thinks a reserve in this article an essential part of that modesty

which is the ornament of her sex. I have heard her observe, that it is not in the acquired endowments of the female mind, as in the beauties of her person, where it may be sufficient praise, perhaps, to follow the example of the virgin described by Tasso, who,

Non copre sue bellezze, e non l'espose.

On the contrary, she esteems it a point of decency to throw a veil over the superior charms of her understanding: and if ever she draws it aside, you plainly perceive it is rather to gratify her good-nature than her vanity; less in compliance with her own inclinations, than with those of her company.

Her refined sense and extensive knowledge have not, however, raised her above the more necessary acquisitions of female science; they have only taught her to fill that part of her character with higher grace and dignity. She enters into all the domestic duties of her station with the most consummate skill and prudence. Her economical deportment is calm and steady; and she presides over her family like the Intelligence of some planetary orb, conducting it in all its proper directions without violence or disturbed efforts.

These qualities, however considerable they might appear in a less shining character, are but under parts in Hortensia's; for it is from the virtues of her heart that she derives her most irresistible claim to esteem and approbation. A constant flow of uniform and unaffected cheerfulness gladdens her own breast, and enlivens that of every creature around her. Her behaviour, under the injuries she has received (for injuries even the blameless Hortensia has received) was with all the calm fortitude of the most heroic patience; as she firmly relied, that Providence would either put an end to her misfortunes, or support her under them. And with that elevated hope, she seemed to feel less for herself than for the unjust and inhuman author of her sufferings, generously lamenting to see one, so nearly related to her, stand condemned by that severest and most significant of sentences, the united reproaches of the world and of his conscience.

Thus, Palemon, I have given you a faithful copy of an excellent original; but whether you will join with me in thinking my pencil has been true to its subject, must be left to some future opportunity to determine. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO HORTENSIUS.

Dec. 10, 1730.

I HAVE read over the treatise you recommended to me, with attention and concern. I was sorry to find an author, who seems so well qualified to serve the cause of truth, employing his talents in favour of what appears to me a most dangerous error. I have often wondered, indeed, at the policy of certain philosophers of this cast, who endeavour to advance religion by depreciating human nature. Methinks it would be more for the interest of virtue, to represent her congenial (as congenial she surely is) with our make, and agreeable to our untainted constitution of soul: to prove that every deviation from moral rectitude is an opposition to our native bias, and contrary to those characters of dignity which the Creator has universally impressed upon the mind. This, at least, was the principle which many of the ancient philosophers laboured to inculcate; as there is not, perhaps, any single topic in ethics that might be urged with more truth, or greater efficacy.

It is upon this generous and exalted notion of our species, that one of the noblest precepts of the excellent Pythagoras is founded: Παντων δε μαλιστα (says that philosopher) αισχυνεο σαυτον. The first and leading disposition to engage us on the side of virtue, was, in that sage's estimation, to preserve, above all things, a constant reverence to our own mind, and to dread nothing so much as to offend against its native dignity. The ingenious Mr. Norris, I remember, recommends this precept as one of the best, perhaps, that was ever given to the world. May one not justly, then, be surprised to find it so sel-

dom enforced in our modern systems of morality? To confess the truth, I am strongly inclined to suspect that much of that general contempt of every manly principle, which so remarkably distinguishes the present times, may fairly be attributed to the humour of discarding this animating notion of our kind. It has been the fashion to paint human nature in the harshest and most unpleasing colours. Yet there is not, surely, any argument more likely to induce a man to act unworthily, than to persuade him that he has nothing of innate worthiness in his genuine disposition; than to reason him out of every elevated notion of his own grandeur of soul; and to destroy, in short, every motive that might justly inspire him with a principle of self-reverence, that surest *internal* guard heaven seems to have assigned to the human virtues. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXV.

TO CLEORA.

THOUGH it was not possible for me to celebrate with you, as usual, that happy anniversary which we have so many reasons to commemorate, yet I could not suffer so joyful a festival to pass by me without a thousand tender reflections. I took pleasure in tracing back that stream to its rise, which has coloured all my succeeding days with happiness; as my Cleora, perhaps, was at that very instant running over in her own mind those many moments of calm satisfaction which she has derived from the same source.

My heart was so entirely possessed with the sentiments which this occasion suggested, that I found myself raised into a sort of poetical enthusiasm; and I could not forbear expressing, in verse, what I have often said in prose, of the dear author of my most valuable enjoyments. As I imagined Teraminta would, by this time, be with you, I had a view to her harpsichord in the composition, and I desire you would let her know, I hope

she will shew me, at my return, to what advantage the most ordinary numbers will appear, when judiciously accompanied with a fine voice and instrument.

I must not forget to tell you, it was in your favourite grove, which we have so often traversed together, that I indulged myself in these pleasing reveries; as it was not, you are to suppose, without having first invoked the Genius of the place, and called upon the Muses in due form, that I broke out in the following rhapsody:

ODE FOR MUSIC.

AIR I.

Thrice has the circling earth, swift-pacing, run,
And thrice again around the sun,
Since first the white-rob'd priest, with sacred band,
Sweet union! join'd us hand in hand.

CHORUS.

All Heav'n, and ev'ry friendly pow'r,
Approv'd the vow and bless'd the hour.

RECITATIVE.

What tho' in silence sacred Hymen trod,
Nor lyre proclaim'd, nor garland crown'd the God;
What tho' nor feast nor revel dance was there,
(Vain pomp of joy the happy well may spare!)
Yet Love unfeign'd, and conscious Honour, led
The spotless virgin to the bridal bed;
Rich, tho' *despoil'd* of all her little store;
For who shall *seize* fair virtue's better dow'r?

AIR II.

Blest with sense, with temper blest,
Wisdom o'er thy lips presides;
Virtue guards thy gen'rous breast,
Kindness all thy actions guides.

AIR III.

Ev'ry home-felt bliss is mine,
Ev'ry matron grace is thine;
Chaste deportment, artless mien,
Converse sweet, and heart serene.

Sinks my soul with gloomy pain?
See, she smiles!---'tis joy again!
Swells a passion in my breast?
Hark, she speaks! and all is rest.

Oft as clouds my paths o'erspread
(Doubtful where my steps should tread)
She, with judgment's steady ray,
Marks, and smooths, the better way.

CHORUS.

Chief amongst ten thousand she,
Worthy, sacred Hymen! thee.

While such are the sentiments which I entertain of my Cleora, can I find myself obliged to be thus distant from her, without the highest regret? The truth, believe me, is, though both the company and the scene wherein I am engaged are extremely agreeable, yet I find a vacancy in my happiness, which none but you can fill up. Surely those who have recommended these little separations as necessary to revive the languor of the married state, have ill understood its most refined gratifications: there is no satiety in the mutual exchange of tender offices.

There seems to have been a time when a happiness of this kind was considered as the highest glory, as well as the supreme blessing of human life. I remember, when I was in Italy, to have seen several conjugal inscriptions upon the sepulchral monuments of ancient Rome, which, instead of running out into a pompous panegyric upon the virtues of the deceased, mentioned singly, as the most significant of encomiums, how many years the parties had lived together in full and uninterrupted harmony.—The Romans, indeed, in this, as in many other instances, afford the most remarkable examples; and it is an observation of one of their writers, that, notwithstanding divorces might very easily be obtained among them, their republic had subsisted many centuries, before there was a single instance of that privilege ever having been exerted. Thus, my Cleora, you see, however unfashionable I may appear in the present generation, I might have been kept in countenance in a former; and by those too who had as much true gallantry and good-sense as one usually meets with in this. But affections which are founded in truth and nature stand not in need of any precedent to support them; and I esteem it my honour no less than my happiness, that I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVI.

TO CLYTANDER.

Did you imagine I was really in earnest, when I talked of quitting ***, and withdrawing from those gilded prospects which ambition had once so strongly set in my view? But my vows, you see, are not in the number of those which are made to be broken; for the retreat I had long meditated is now, at last, happily executed. To say truth, my friend, the longer I lived in the high scenes of action, the more I was convinced that nature had not formed me for bearing a part in them; and though I was once so unexperienced in the ways of the world, as to believe I had talents, as I was sure I had inclination, to serve my country, yet every day's conversation contributed to wean me, by degrees, from that flattering delusion.

How, indeed, could a man hope to render himself acceptable to the various parties which divide our nation, who professes it as his principle that there is no striking wholly into the measures of any, without renouncing either one's sense or one's integrity? and yet, as the world is at present constituted, it is scarce possible, I fear, to do any good in one's generation, (in public life I mean) without listing under some or other of those various banners which distinguish the several corps in these our political warfares. To those, therefore, who may have curiosity enough to enter into my concerns, and ask a reason for my quitting the town, I answer, in the words of the historian, *Civitatis morum tædet pigetque.*—But I am wandering from the purpose of my letter, which was not so much to justify my retreat, as to incline you to follow me into it: to follow me, I mean, as a visitor only; for I love my country too well to call you off from those great services you are capable of doing her.

I have pitched my tent upon a spot which I am persuaded will not displease you. My villa (if you will allow me to call by that fine name, what, in truth, is no better

than a neat farm-house,) is situated upon a gentle rise, which commands a short, though agreeable, view of about three miles in circumference. This is bounded on the north by a ridge of hills, which afford me at once both a secure shelter and a beautiful prospect; for they are as well cultivated as the most fertile valleys. In the front of my house, which stands south-east, I have a view of the river that runs, at the distance of somewhat less than a quarter of a mile, at the end of my grounds, and, after making several windings and turnings, seems to lose itself at the foot of those hills I just now mentioned. As for my garden, I am obliged to nature for its chief beauties; having no other (except a small spot which I have allotted for the purposes of my table) but what the fields and meadows afford. These, however, I have embellished with some care, having intermixed among the hedges all the several sorts of flowering shrubs.

But I must not forget to mention what I look upon to be the principal ornament of the place; as, indeed, I do not recollect to have seen any thing of the kind in our English plantations. I have covered a small spot with different sorts of ever-greens, many of which are of a species not very usual in our country. This little plantation I have branched out into various labyrinth-walks, which are all terminated by a small temple in the centre. I have a double advantage from this artificial wood; for it not only affords me a very shady retreat in summer, but, as it is situated opposite to my library, supplies me in winter with a perspective of the most agreeable verdure imaginable.

What heightens my relish of this retirement, is the company of my Cleora; as, indeed, many of the best improvements I have made in it are owing to hints which I have received from her exquisite taste and judgment.—She will rejoice to receive you as her guest here, and has given it me in charge to remind you, that you have promised to be so. As the business of parliament is now drawing to a conclusion, I may urge this to you without any imputation upon my patriotism; though, at the same time, I must add, I make a very considerable sacrifice of

private interest, whenever I resign you for the sake of the public. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO HORTENSIUS.

Are you aware, Hortensius, how far I may mislead you, when you are willing to resign yourself to my guidance, through the regions of criticism? Remember, however, that I take the lead in these paths, not in confidence of my own superior knowledge of them, but in compliance with a request, which I never yet knew how to refuse.—In short, Hortensius, I give you my sentiments, because it is my sentiments you require: but I give them, at the same time, rather as doubts than decisions.

After having thus acknowledged my insufficiency for the office you have assigned me, I will venture to confess that the poet who has gained over your approbation, has been far less successful with mine. I have ever thought, with a very celebrated modern writer, that

Le vers le mieux rempli, la plus noble pensée,
Ne peut plaire à l'esprit quand l'oreille est blessée.
Boileau.

Thus, though I admit there is both wit in the raillery, and strength in the sentiments, of your friend's moral epistle, it by no means falls in with those notions I have formed to myself concerning the essential requisites in compositions of this kind. He seems, indeed, to have widely deviated from the model he professes to have had in view, and is no more like Horace, than *Hyperion to a Satyr*. His deficiency in point of versification, not to mention his want of elegance in the general manner of his poem, is sufficient to destroy the pretended resemblance. Nothing, in truth, can be more absurd, than to write in poetical measure, and yet neglect harmony; as, of all the kinds of false style, that which is neither prose nor verse, but I know not what inartificial combination of powerless

words bordered with rhyme, is far, surely, the most insufferable.

But you are of opinion, I perceive (and it is an opinion in which you are not singular) that a negligence of this kind may be justified by the authority of the Roman satirist: yet surely those who entertain that notion, have not thoroughly attended either to the precepts or the practice of Horace. He has attributed, I confess, his satirical composition to the inspiration of a certain Muse, whom he distinguishes by the title of the *Musa pedestris*, and it is this expression which seems to have misled the generality of his imitators. But though he will not allow her to fly, he by no means intends she should creep: on the contrary, it may be said of the Muse of Horace, as of the Eve of Milton, that

Grace is in all her steps.

That this was the idea which Horace himself had of her, is evident, not only from the general air which prevails in his satires and epistles, but from several express declarations, which he lets fall in his progress through them. Even when he speaks of her in his greatest fits of modesty, and describes her as exhibited in his own moral writings, he particularly insists upon the ease and harmony of her motions. Though he humbly disclaims, indeed, all pretensions to the higher poetry, the *acer spiritus et vis*, as he calls it; he represents his style as being governed by the *tempora certa modosque*, as flowing with a certain regular and agreeable cadence. Accordingly, we find him particularly condemning his predecessor, Lucilius, for the dissonance of his numbers; and he professes to have made the experiment, whether the same kind of moral subject might not be treated in more soft and easy measures:

Quid vetat et nosmet Lucilî scripta legentes
Quærere, num illius, num rerum dura negârit
Versiculos natura magis factos, et euntes
Mollius?

The truth is, a tuneful cadence is the single prerogative of poetry which he pretends to claim to his writings of

this kind: and so far is he from thinking it unessential, that he acknowledges it as the only separation which distinguishes them from prose If that were once to be broken down, and the musical order of his words destroyed; there would not, he tells us, be the least appearance of poetry remaining:

Non
Invenias etiam disjecti membra poetæ.

However, when he delivers himself in this humble strain, he is not, you will observe, sketching out a plan of this species of poetry in general, but speaking merely of his own performances in particular. His demands rise much higher, when he informs us what he expects of those, who would succeed in compositions of this moral kind. He then not only requires flowing numbers, but an expression concise and unincumbered; wit, exerted with good breeding, and managed with reserve; as, upon some occasions, the sentiments may be enforced with all the strength of eloquence and poetry; and though, in some parts, the piece may appear with a more serious and solemn cast of colouring, yet, upon the whole, he tells us, it must be lively and *riant*. This I take to be his meaning in the following passage:

Est brevitate opus, ut currat sententia, neu se
Impediat verbis lassas onerantibus aures;
Et sermone opus est, modò tristi, sæpè jocoso,
Defendente vicem modò rhetoris, atque poëtæ;
Interdum urbani, parcentis viribus, atque
Extenuantis eas consultò.

Such, then, was the notion which Horace had of this kind of writing. And if there is any propriety in these his rules, if they are founded on the truth of taste and art; I fear the performance in question, with numberless others of the same stamp, (which have not, however, wanted admirers) must inevitably stand condemned. The truth of it is, most of the pieces which are usually produced upon this plan, rather give one an image of Lucilius, than of Horace: the authors of them seem to mistake the awkward negligence of the favourite of Scipio, for the easy air of the friend of Mæcenas.

You will still tell me, perhaps, that the example of Horace himself is an unanswerable objection to the notion I have embraced; as there are numberless lines in his satires and epistles, where the versification is evidently neglected. But are you sure, Hortensius, that those lines which sound so unharmonious to a modern ear, had the same effect upon a Roman one? For myself, at least, I am much inclined to believe the contrary; and it seems highly incredible, that he who had ventured to censure Lucilius for the uncouthness of his numbers, should himself be notoriously guilty of the very fault, against which he so strongly exclaims. Most certain it is, that the delicacy of the ancients, with respect to numbers, was far superior to any thing that modern taste can pretend to; and that they discovered differences, which are to us absolutely imperceptible. To mention only one remarkable instance: A very ancient writer has observed upon the following verse in Virgil,

Arma, virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris---

that if, instead of *primus*, we were to pronounce it *primis*, (*is* being long, and *us* short) the entire harmony of the line would be destroyed. But whose ear is now so exquisitely sensible, as to perceive the distinction between those two quantities? Some refinement of this kind might probably give music to those lines in Horace, which now seem so untuneable.

In subjects of this nature, it is not possible, perhaps, to express one's ideas in any very precise and determinate manner. I will only, therefore, in general, observe, with respect to the requisite style of these performances, that it consists in a natural ease of expression, an elegant familiarity of phrase, which, though formed of the most usual terms of language, has yet a grace and energy, no less striking than that of a more elevated diction. There is a certain lively colouring peculiar to compositions in this way, which, without being so bright and glowing as is necessary for the higher poetry, is, nevertheless, equally removed from whatever appears harsh and dry. But particular instances will, perhaps, better illustrate my

meaning, than any thing I can farther say to explain it. There is scarce a line in the moral epistles of Mr. Pope, which might not be produced for this purpose. I choose, however, to lay before you the following verses, not as preferring them to many others which might be quoted from that inimitable satirist; but as they afford me an opportunity of comparing them with a version of the same original lines, of which they are an imitation; and, by that means, of shewing you, at one view, what I conceive is, and is not, in the true manner of Horace:

Peace is my dear delight--not Fleury's more;
But touch me, and no minister so sore:
Whoe'er offends, at some unlucky time,
Slides into verse, and hitches in a rhyme;
Sacred to ridicule his whole life long,
And the sad burthen of some merry song.

I will refer you to your own memory for the Latin passage, from whence Mr. Pope has taken the general hint of these verses; and content myself with adding a translation of the lines from Horace by another hand:

Behold me blameless bard, how fond of peace!
But he who hurts me, (nay, I will be heard)
Had better taken a lion by the beard;
His eyes shall weep the folly of his tongue,
By laughing crowds in rueful ballad sung.

There is a strength and spirit in the former of these passages, and a flatness and languor in the latter, which cannot fail of being discovered by every reader of the least delicacy of discernment; and yet the words which compose them both are equally sounding and significant. The rules then, which I just now mentioned from Horace, will point out the real cause of the different effects which these two passages produce in our minds; as the passages themselves will serve to confirm the truth and justice of the rules. In the lines from Mr. Pope, one of the principal beauties will be found to consist in the shortness of the expression; whereas, the sentiments in the other are too much incumbered with words. Thus, for instance,

Peace is my dear delight,

is pleasing because it is concise; as

Behold me blameless bard, how fond of peace!

is, in comparison of the former, the *verba lassas onerantia aures*. Another distinguishing perfection in the imitator of Horace, is that spirit of gaiety which he has diffused through these lines, not to mention those happy, though familiar, images of *sliding* into verse, and *hitching* in a rhyme: which can never be sufficiently admired.—But the translator, on the contrary, has cast too serious an air over his numbers, and appears with an emotion and earnestness that disappoint the force of his satire:

Nay, I will be heard,

has the mien of a man in a passion; and

His eyes shall weep the folly of his tongue:

though a good line in itself, is much too solemn and tragical for the undisturbed pleasantry of Horace.

But I need not enter more minutely into an examination of those passages. The general hints I have thrown out in this letter will suffice to shew you wherein I imagine the true manner of Horace consists. And after all, perhaps, it can no more be explained, than acquired, by rules of art. It is what true genius can only execute, and just taste alone discover. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 7, 1730.

YOUR admired poet, I remember, somewhere lays it down as a maxim, that

The proper study of mankind is man.

There cannot, indeed, be a more useful, nor, one should imagine, a more easy science: so many lessons of this kind are every moment forcing themselves upon our observation, that it should seem scarce possible not to be well acquainted with the various turns and dispositions of the

human heart. And yet there are so few who are really adepts in this article, that to say of a man, *he knows the world*, is generally esteemed a compliment of the most significant kind.

The reason, perhaps, of the general ignorance which prevails in this sort of knowledge, may arise from our judging too much by universal principles. Whereas there is a wonderful disparity in mankind, and numberless characters exist which cannot properly be reduced to any regular and fixed standard. Monsieur Paschal observes, that the greater sagacity any man possesses, the more originals he will discern among his species: as it is the remark of Sir William Temple, that no nation under the sun abounds with so many as our own. Plutarch, if I remember right, is of opinion, that there is a wider difference between the individuals of our own kind, than what is observable between creatures of a separate order: while Montaigne (who seems to have known human nature perfectly well) supposes the distance to be still more remote, and asserts that the distinction is much greater between man and man, than between man and beast.

The comic writers have not, I think, taken all the advantage they might of this infinite diversity of humour in the human race. A judicious observer of the world might single out abundant materials for ridicule, without having recourse to those worn-out characters which are for ever returning upon the stage. If I were acquainted with any genius in this class of writers, I think I could furnish him with an original, which, if artfully represented, and connected with proper incidents, might be very successfully introduced into comedy. The person I have in view is my neighbour Stilotes.

Stilotes, in his youth, was esteemed to have good sense, and a tolerable taste for letters; as he gained some reputation at the university in the exercises usual at that place. But as soon as he was freed from the restraint of tutors, the natural restlessness of his temper broke out, and he has never, from that time to this, applied himself for half an hour together to any single pursuit. He is extremely active in his disposition; but his whole life is one

incessant whirl of trifles. He rises, perhaps, with a full intent of amusing himself all the morning with his gun: but before he has got half the length of a field, he recollects that he owes a visit, which he must instantly pay: accordingly his horse is saddled, and he sets out. But in his way he remembers that he has not given proper orders about such a flower, and he must absolutely return, or the whole economy of his nursery will be ruined.—Thus, in whatever action you find him engaged, you may be sure it is the very reverse of what he proposed. Yet with all this quickness of transition and vivacity of spirits, he is so indolent in every thing which has the air of business, that he is at least two or three months before he can persuade himself to open any letter he receives: and, from the same disposition, he has suffered the dividends of his stocks to run on for many years, without receiving a shilling of the interest. Stilotes is possessed of an estate in Dorsetshire, but that being the place where his chief business lies, he chooses constantly to reside with a friend near London. This person submits to his humour and his company, in hopes that Stilotes will consider him in his will: but it is more than possible that he will never endure the fatigue of signing one. However, having here every thing provided for him but clothes and pocket-money, he lives perfectly to his satisfaction, in full employment without any real business; and while those who look after his estate take care to supply him with sufficient to answer those two articles, he is entirely unconcerned as to all the rest: though, when he is disposed to appear more than ordinarily important, he will gravely harangue upon the roguery of stewards, and complain that his rents will scarce maintain him in powder and shot half the partridge season.—In short, Stilotes is one of the most extraordinary compounds of indolence and activity that I ever met with; and, as I know you have a taste for curiosities, I present you with his character as a rarity that merits a place in your collection. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XXXIX.

TO PHIDIPPUS.

'Tis well, my friend, that the age of transformation is no more; otherwise I should tremble for your severe attack upon the Muses, and expect to see the story of your metamorphosis embellish the poetical miracles of some modern Ovid. But it is long since the fate of the Piërides has gained any credit in the world, and you may now, in full security, contemn the divinities of Parnassus, and speak irreverently of the daughters of Jove himself. You see, nevertheless, how highly the ancients conceived of them, when they thus represented them as the offspring of the great father of gods and men. You reject, I know, this article of the heathen creed: but I may venture, however, to assert, that philosophy will confirm what fable has thus invented, and that the Muses are, in strict truth, of heavenly extraction.

The charms of the fine arts are, indeed, literally derived from the author of all nature, and founded in the original frame and constitution of the human mind. Accordingly, the general principles of *taste* are common to our whole species, and arise from that internal sense of beauty which every man, in some degree at least, evidently possesses. No rational mind can be so wholly void of all perceptions of this sort, as to be capable of contemplating the various objects that surround him, with one equal coldness and indifference. There are certain forms which must necessarily fill the soul with agreeable ideas; and she is instantly determined in her approbation of them, previous to all reasonings concerning their use and convenience. It is upon these general principles that what is called fine taste in the arts is founded; and, consequently, is by no means so precarious and unsettled an idea as you choose to describe it. The truth is, taste is nothing more than this universal sense of beauty, rendered more exquisite by genius, and more correct by cultivation: and it is from the simple and original ideas of

this sort, that the mind learns to form her judgment of the higher and more complex kinds. Accordingly, the whole circle of the imitative and oratorical arts is governed by the same general rules of criticism; and to prove the certainty of these with respect to any one of them, is to establish their validity with regard to all the rest. I will, therefore, consider the criterion of taste in relation only to fine writing.

Each species of composition has its distinct perfections; and it would require a much larger compass than a letter affords to prove their respective beauties to be derived from truth and nature; and consequently reducible to a regular and precise standard. I will only mention, therefore, those general properties which are essential to them all, and without which they must necessarily be defective in their several kinds. These, I think, may be comprehended under uniformity in the designs, variety and resemblance in the metaphors and similitudes, together with propriety and harmony in the diction. Now some or all of these qualities constantly attend our ideas of beauty, and necessarily raise that agreeable perception of the mind, in what object soever they appear. The charms of fine composition, then, are so far from existing only in the heated imagination of an enthusiastic admirer, that they result from the constitution of nature herself. And, perhaps, the principles of criticism are as certain and indisputable even as those of the mathematics. Thus, for instance, that order is preferable to confusion, that harmony is more pleasing than dissonance, with some few other axioms upon which the science is built, are truths which strike at once upon the mind with the same force of conviction, as that the whole is greater than any of its parts, or that, if from equals you take away equals, the remainder will be equal. And, in both cases, the propositions which rest upon these plain and obvious maxims, seem equally capable of the same evidence of demonstration.

But as every intellectual as well as animal faculty is improved and strengthened by exercise, the more the soul exerts this her internal sense of beauty upon any particular object, the more she will enlarge and refine her relish of that peculiar species. For this reason, the works of those great masters, whose performances have been long and generally admired, supply a farther criterion of fine taste, equally fixed and certain as that which is immediately derived from nature herself. The truth is, fine writing is only the art of raising agreeable sensations of the most intellectual kind; and, therefore, as by examining those original forms which are adapted to awaken this perception in the mind, we learn what those qualities are which constitute beauty in general; so, by observing the peculiar construction of those compositions of genius which have always pleased, we perfect our idea of fine writing in particular. It is this united approbation, in persons of different ages, and of various characters and languages, that Longinus has made the test of the true sublime; and he might with equal justice have extended the same criterion to all the inferior excellencies of elegant composition. Thus, the deference paid to the performances of the great masters of antiquity, is fixed upon just and solid reasons: it is not because Aristotle and Horace have given us the rules of criticism, that we submit to their authority; it is because those rules are derived from works which have been distinguished by the uninterrupted admiration of all the more improved part of mankind, from their earliest appearance down to this present hour. For whatever, through a long series of ages, has been universally esteemed as beautiful, cannot but be conformable to our just and natural ideas of beauty.

The opposition, however, which sometimes divides the opinions of those whose judgments may be supposed equal and perfect, is urged as a powerful objection against the reality of a fixed canon of criticism: it is a proof, you think, that, after all which can be said of fine taste, it must ultimately be resolved into the peculiar relish of each individual. But this diversity of sentiments will not, of itself, destroy the evidence of the criterion; since the same effect may be produced by numberless other causes. A thousand accidental circumstances may con-

cur in counteracting the force of the rule, even allowing it to be ever so fixed and invariable, when left in its free and uninfluenced state. Not to mention that false bias which party or personal dislike may fix upon the mind, the most unprejudiced critic will find it difficult to disengage himself entirely from those partial affections in favour of particular beauties, to which either the general course of his studies, or the peculiar cast of his temper, may have rendered him most sensible. But as perfection, in any works of genius, results from the united beauty and propriety of its several distinct parts; and as it is impossible that any human compositions should possess all those qualities in their highest and most sovereign degree; the mind, when she pronounces judgment upon any piece of this sort, is apt to decide of its merit, as those circumstances which she most admires either prevail or are deficient. Thus, for instance, the excellency of the Roman masters, in painting, consists in beauty of design, nobleness of attitude, and delicacy of expression; but the charms of good colouring are wanting. On the contrary, the Venetian school is said to have neglected design a little too much; but at the same time has been more attentive to the grace and harmony of well-disposed lights and shades. Now it will be admitted, by all admirers of this noble art, that no composition of the pencil can be perfect, where either of these qualities are absent; yet the most accomplished judge may be so particularly struck with one or other of these excellencies, in preference to the rest, as to be influenced in his censure or applause of the whole tablature by the predominancy or deficiency of his favourite beauty. Something of this kind (where the meaner prejudices do not operate) is ever, I am persuaded, the occasion of that diversity of sentences which we occasionally hear pronounced, by the most improved judges, on the same piece. But this only shews that much caution is necessary to give a fine taste its full and unobstructed effect; not that it is in itself uncertain and precarious. I am, &c.

LETTER XL.

TO PALAMEDES.

Your resolution to decline those overtures of acquaintance which Mezentius, it seems, has lately made to you, is agreeable to the refined principles which have ever influenced your conduct. A man of your elegant notions of integrity will observe the same delicacy with respect to his companions, as Cæsar did with regard to his wife, and refuse all commerce with persons even but of suspected honour. It would not, indeed, be doing justice to Mezentius, to represent him in that number: for though his hypocrisy has preserved to him some few friends, and his immense wealth draws after him many followers, the world in general are by no means divided in their sentiments concerning him.

But, whilst you can have his picture from so many better hands, why are you desirous of seeing it by mine? It is a painful employment to contemplate human nature in its deformities; as there is nothing, perhaps, more difficult, than to execute a portrait of the characteristical kind with strength and spirit. However, since you have assigned me the task, I do not think myself at liberty to refuse it: especially as it is your interest to see him delineated in his true form.

Mezentius, with the designs and artifice of a Catiline, affects the integrity and patriotism of a Cato. Liberty, justice, and honour, are words which he knows perfectly well how to apply with address; and having them always ready, upon proper occasions, he conceals the blackest purposes under the fairest appearances. For void, as in truth he is, of every worthy principle, he has too much policy not to pretend to the noblest; well knowing, that counterfeit virtues are the most successful vices. It is by arts of this kind that, notwithstanding he has shewn himself unrestrained by the most sacred engagements of society, and uninfluenced by the most tender affections of nature, he has still been able to retain some degree of

credit in the world; for he never sacrifices his honour to his interest, that he does not, in some less considerable, but more open instance, make a concession of his interest to his honour; and thus, while he sinks his character on one side, very artfully raises it on the other. Accordingly, under pretence of the most scrupulous delicacy of conscience, he lately resigned a post which he held under my lord Godolphin; when, at the same time, he was endeavouring, by the most shameless artifices and evasions, to deceive and defraud a friend of mine in one of the most solemn and important transactions that can pass between man and man.

But will you not suspect that I am describing a phantom of my own imagination, when I tell you, after this, that he has erected himself into a reformer of manners, and is so injudiciously officious as to draw the enquiry of the world upon his own morals, by attempting to expose the defects of others? A man who ventures publicly to point out the blemishes of his contemporaries, should, at least, be free from any uncommon stain himself, and have nothing remarkably dark in the complexion of his own private character. But MEZENTIUS, not satisfied with being vicious, has at length determined to be ridiculous; and, after having wretchedly squandered his youth and his patrimony in riot and dissoluteness, is contemptibly mispending his old age in measuring impotent syllables, and dealing out pointless abuse. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER XLI.

TO ORONTES.

March 10, 1738.

WHAT haughty Sacharissa has put you out of humour with her whole sex? For it is some disappointment, I suspect, of the tender kind, that has thus sharpened the edge of your satire, and pointed its invective against the fairer half of our species. You were not mistaken, however, when you supposed I should prove no convert to your doctrine; but rise up as an advocate, where I profess myself an admirer. I am not, 'tis true, altogether of old Montaigne's opinion, that the souls of both sexes *sont jettez* (as he expresses it) *en mesme moules*: on the contrary, I am willing enough to join with you in thinking that they may be wrought off from different models. Yet, the *casts* may be equally perfect, though it should be allowed that they are essentially different. Nature, it is certain, has traced out a separate course of action for the two sexes; and as they are appointed to distinct offices of life, it is not improbable that there may be something distinct likewise in the frame of their minds; that there may be a kind of sex in the very soul.

I cannot, therefore, but wonder that Plato should have thought it reasonable to admit them into an equal share of the dignities and offices of his imaginary commonwealth; and that the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians should have so strangely inverted the evident intentions of Providence, as to confine the men to domestic affairs, whilst the women, it is said, were engaged abroad in the active and laborious scenes of business. History, it must be owned, will supply some few female instances of all the most masculine virtues: but appearances of that extraordinary kind are too uncommon, to support the notion of a general equality in the natural powers of their minds.

Thus much, however, seems evident, that there are certain moral boundaries which Nature has drawn between the two sexes, and that neither of them can pass over the limits of the other, without equally deviating from the beauty and decorum of their respective characters: Boadicea, in armour, is to me, at least, as extravagant a sight as Achilles in petticoats.

In determining, therefore, the comparative merit of the two sexes, it is no derogation from female excellency, that it differs in kind from that which distinguishes the male part of our species. And if, in general, it shall be found, (what, upon an impartial enquiry, I believe, will most certainly be found) that women fill up their ap-

pointed circle of action with greater regularity and dignity than men, the claim of preference cannot justly be decided in our favour. In the prudential and œconomical part of life, I think it undeniable that they rise far above us. And if true fortitude of mind is best discovered by a cheerful resignation to the measures of Providence, we shall not find reason, perhaps, to claim that most singular of the human virtues as our peculiar privilege. There are numbers of the other sex, who, from the natural delicacy of their constitution, pass through one continued scene of suffering, from their cradles to their graves, with a firmness of resolution that would deserve so many statues to be erected to their memories, if heroism were not estimated more by the splendour than the merit of actions.

But, whatever real difference there may be between the moral or intellectual powers of the male and female mind. Nature does not seem to have marked the distinction so strongly as our vanity is willing to imagine: and, after all, perhaps, education will be found to constitute the principal superiority. It must be acknowledged, at least, that in this article we have every advantage over the softer sex, that art and industry can possibly secure to us. The most animating examples of Greece and Rome are set before us, as early as we are capable of any observation; and the noblest compositions of the ancients are given into our hands, almost as soon as we have strength to hold them: while the employments of the other sex, at the same period of life, are generally the reverse of every thing that can open and enlarge their minds, or fill them with just and rational notions. The truth of it is, female education is so much worse than none, as it is better to leave the mind to its natural and uninstructed suggestions, than to lead it into false pursuits, and contract its views by turning them upon the lowest and most trifling objects. We seem, indeed, by the manner in which we suffer the youth of that sex to be trained, to consider women agreeably to the opinion of certain Mahometan doctors, and treat them as if we believed they have no souls: why else are they

> Bred only and completed to the taste
> Of lustful appetence, to sing, to dance,
> To dress, and troule the tongue, and roll the eye?
> *Milt.*

This strange neglect of cultivating the female mind, can hardly be allowed as good policy, when it is considered how much the interest of society is concerned in the rectitude of their understandings. That season of every man's life which is most susceptible of the strongest impressions, is necessarily under female direction; as there are few instances, perhaps, in which that sex is not one of the secret springs which regulates the most important movements of private or public transactions. What Cato observed of his countrymen, is, in one respect, true of every nation under the sun: "The Romans," said he, "govern the world, but it is the women that govern the "Romans." Let not, however, a certain pretended Cato of your acquaintance take occasion, from this maxim, to *insult*, a second time, that *innocence* he has so often *injured*: for I will tell him another maxim as true as the former, that "there are *circumstances* wherein no woman "has power enough to control a man of spirit."

If it be true, then, (as true beyond all peradventure it is) that female influence is thus extensive; nothing, certainly, can be of more importance, than to give it a proper tendency, by the assistance of a well-directed education. Far am I from recommending any attempts to render women learned; yet, surely, it is necessary they should be raised above ignorance. Such a general tincture of the most useful sciences, as may serve to free the mind from vulgar prejudices, and give it a relish for the rational exercise of its powers, might very justly enter into the plan of female erudition. That sex might be taught to turn the course of their reflections into a proper and advantageous channel, without any danger of rendering them too elevated for the feminine duties of life. In a word, I would have them considered as designed by Providence for use as well as shew, and trained up not only as women, but as rational creatures. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XLII.

TO PALEMON.

May 5, 1746.

WHILST you are engaged in turning over the records of past ages, and tracing our constitution from its rise through all its several periods, I sometimes amuse myself with reviewing certain annals of an humbler kind, and considering the various turns and revolutions that have happened in the sentiments and affections of those with whom I have been most connected. A history of this sort is not, indeed, so striking as that which exhibits kings and heroes to our view; but may it not be contemplated, Palemon, with more private advantage?

Methinks we should scarce be so embittered against those who differ from us in principle or practice, were we oftener to reflect how frequently we have varied from ourselves in both those articles. It was but yesterday that Lucius, whom I once knew a very zealous advocate for the most controverted points of faith, was arguing, with equal warmth and vehemence, on the principles of deism; as Bathillus, who set out in the world a cool infidel, has lately drawn up one of the most plausible defences of the mystic devotees, that, perhaps, was ever written. The truth is, a man must either have passed his whole life without reflecting, or his thoughts must have run in a very limited channel, who has not often experienced many remarkable revolutions of mind.

The same kind of inconstancy is observable in our pursuits of happiness as well as truth. Thus our friend Curio, whom we both remember, in the former part of his life, enamoured of every fair face he met, and enjoying every woman he could purchase, has at last collected this diffusive flame into a single point, and could not be tempted to commit an infidelity to his marriage vow, though a form as beautiful as the Venus of Apelles was to court his embrace: whilst Apamenthes, on the other hand, who was the most sober and domestic man I ever knew, till he lost his wife, commenced a rake at five and forty, and is now for ever in a tavern or stew.

Who knows, Palemon, whether even this humour of moralizing, which, as you often tell me, so strongly marks my character, may not wear out in time, and be succeeded by a brighter and more lively vein? Who knows but I may court again the mistress I have forsaken, and die at last in the arms of ambition? Cleora, at least, who frequently rallies me upon that fever of my youth, assures me I am only in the intermission of a fit, which will certainly return. But though there may be some excuse, perhaps, in exchanging our follies or our errors, there can be none in resuming those we have once happily quitted: for surely he must be a very injudicious sportsman, who can be tempted to beat over those fields again which have ever disappointed him of his game. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER XLIII.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

July 2, 1742.

IT is a pretty observation, which I have somewhere met, that, "the most pleasing of all harmony arises from "the censure of a single person, when mixed with the "general applauses of the world." I almost suspect, therefore, that you are considering the interest of your admired author, when you call upon me for my farther objections to his performance; and are for joining me, perhaps, to the number of those who advance his reputation by opposing it. The truth, however, is, you could not have chosen a critic (if a critic I might venture to call myself) who has a higher esteem for all the compositions of Mr. Pope; as, indeed, I look upon every thing that comes from his hands with the same degree of veneration as if it were consecrated by antiquity. Nevertheless, though I greatly revere his judgment, I cannot absolutely renounce my own; and since some have been bold enough to advance, that even the sacred writings themselves do not always speak the language of the Spi-

rit, I may have leave to suspect of the poets what has been asserted of the prophets, and suppose that their pens are not at all seasons under the guidance of inspiration. But as there is something extremely ungrateful to the mind, in dwelling upon those little spots that necessarily attend the lustre of all human merit; you must allow me to join his beauties with his imperfections, and admire with rapture, after having condemned with regret.

There is a certain modern figure of speech, which the authors of *The art of sinking in poetry* have called the *diminishing*. This, so far as it relates to words only, consists in debasing a great idea, by expressing it in a term of meaner import. Mr. Pope has himself now and then fallen into this kind of the *profound*, which he has with such uncommon wit and spirit exposed in the writings of others. Thus Agamemnon, addressing himself to Menelaus and Ulysses, asks,

> And can you, chiefs, without a blush, survey
> Whole *troops* before you, *lab'ring* in the *fray?* B. iv.

So likewise Pandarus, speaking of Diomed, who is performing the utmost efforts of heroism in the field of battle, says,

> some guardian of the skies,
> Involv'd in clouds, protects him in the *fray*. V. 235.

But what would you think, Euphronius, were you to hear of the "impervious foam" and "rough waves" of a "*brook?*" would it not put you in mind of that droll thought of the ingenious Dr. Young, in one of his epistles to our author, where he talks of a puddle *in a storm?* yet, by thus confounding the properties of the highest objects with those of the lowest, Mr. Pope has turned one of the most pleasing similies in the whole Iliad into downright burlesque.

> As when some simple swain his cot forsakes,
> And wide thro' fens an unknown journey takes;
> If chance a swelling *brook* his passage stay,
> And *foam impervious* cross the wand'rer's way,
> Confus'd he stops, a length of country past,
> Eyes the *rough waves*, and tir'd returns at last, v. 734.

This swelling brook, however, of Mr. Pope, is in Homer a rapid river, rushing with violence into the sea:

Στην επ' ωκυροω ποταμω αλαδε προρεοντι. v. 598.

It is one of the essential requisites of an epic poem, and indeed of every other kind of serious poetry, that the style be raised above common language; as nothing takes off so much from that solemnity of diction, from which the poet ought never to depart, as idioms of a vulgar and familiar cast. Mr. Pope has sometimes neglected this important rule; but most frequently in the introduction of his speeches. To mention only a few instances:

> *That done*, to Phœnix Ajax gave the sign. ix. 291.
> *With that* stern Ajax his long silence broke. ix. 735.
> *With that* the venerable warrior rose. x. 150.
> *With that they stepp'd aside*, &c. x. 415.

whereas Homer generally prefaces his speeches with a dignity of phrase, that calls up the attention of the reader to what is going to be uttered. Milton has very happily copied his manner in this particular, as in many others: and though he often falls into a flatness of expression, he has never once, I think, committed that error upon occasions of this kind. He usually ushers in his harangues with something characteristical of the speaker, or that points out some remarkable circumstance of his present situation, in the following manner:

> Satan with bold words
> Breaking the horrid silence, thus began. i. 82.
> Him thus answer'd soon his bold compeer. i. 125.
> He ended, frowning:
> On the other side uprose
> Belial,
> And with persuasive accents thus began. ii. 106.

If you compare the effect which an introduction of this descriptive sort has upon the mind, with those low and unawakening expressions which I have marked in the lines I just now quoted from our English Iliad, you will not, perhaps, consider my objection as altogether without foundation.

All opposition of ideas should be carefully avoided in a poem of this kind, as unbecoming the gravity of the heroic Muse. But does not Mr. Pope sometimes sacrifice simplicity to false ornament, and lose the majesty of Homer in the affectations of Ovid? Of this sort a severe critic would perhaps esteem his calling an army, marching with spears erect, a *moving iron wood*:

> Such and so thick th' embattled squadrons *stood*,
> With spears erect, a *moving iron wood*.

There seems also to be an inconsistency in the two parts of this description; for the troops are represented as standing still, at the same time that the circumstance mentioned of the spears should rather imply (as indeed the truth is) that they were in motion. But if the translator had been faithful to his author, in this passage, neither of these objections could have been raised: for in Homer it is,

> Τοιαι
> πυκιναι κινυντο φαλαγγες
> Κυανεαι, σακεσιν τε και εγκεσι πεφρικυιαι. iv. 280.

Is there not likewise some little tendency to a pun, in those upbraiding lines which Hector addresses to Paris?

> For thee great Ilion's guardian heroes fall,
> Till heaps of dead alone defend the wall.

Mr. Pope at least deserts his guide, in order to give us this conceit of dead men *defending* a town; for the original could not possibly lead him into it. Homer, with a plainness suitable to the occasion, only tells us,

> Λαοι μεν φθινυθασι περι πτολιν, αιπυ τε τειχος,
> Μαρναμενοι. vi. 327.

Teucer, in the eighth book, aims a dart at Hector, which, missing its way, slew Gorgythion; upon which we are told

> Another shaft the raging archer threw;
> That other shaft with erring fury flew;
> From Hector Phœbus turn'd the *flying wound*)
> Yet fell not *dry* or *guiltless* to the ground.

A *flying wound* is a thought exactly in the spirit of Ovid; but highly unworthy of Pope as well as of Homer; and, indeed, there is not the least foundation for it in the original. But what do you think of the shaft that fell *dry* or *guiltless?* where, you see, one figurative epithet is added as explanatory of the other. The doubling of epithets, without raising the idea, is not allowable in compositions of any kind; but least of all in poetry. It is, says Quintilian, as if every common soldier in an army were to be attended with a valet; you increase your number, without adding to your strength.

But if it be a fault to crowd epithets of the same import one upon the other, it is much more so to employ such as call off the attention from the principal idea to be raised, and turn it upon little or foreign circumstances.—When Æneas is wounded by Tydides, Homer describes Venus as conducting him through the thickest tumult of the enemy, and conveying him from the field of battle.—But while we are following the hero with our whole concern, and trembling for the danger which surrounds him on all sides, Mr. Pope leads us off from our anxiety for Æneas, by an uninteresting epithet relating to the structure of those instruments of death, which were every where flying about him; and we are coldly informed, that the darts were *feathered*:

> Safe thro' the rushing horse and *feather'd* flight
> Of sounding shafts, she bears him thro' the fight. v. 393.

But as his epithets sometimes debase the general image to be raised, so they now and then adorn them with a false brilliancy. Thus, speaking of a person slain by an arrow, he calls it a *pointed death*, iv. 607. Describing another who was attacked by numbers at once, he tells us,

> A grove of lances *glitter'd* at his breast. iv. 621.

and representing a forest on fire, he says,

> In blazing heaps the grove's old honours fall,
> And one *refulgent* ruin levels all. x. 201.

But one of the most unpardonable instances of this kind

is, where he relates the death of Hypsenor, a person who, it seems, exercised the sacerdotal office:

> On his broad shoulder fell the forceful brand,
> Thence glancing downward lopt his holy hand,
> And stain'd with sacred blood the *blushing* sand.

To take the force of this epithet, we must suppose that the redness which appeared upon the sand, on this occasion, was an effect of its blushing to find itself stained with the blood of so sacred a person: than which there cannot be a more forced and unnatural thought. It puts me in mind of a passage in a French dramatic writer, who has formed a play upon the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. The hapless maid, addressing herself to the dagger, which lies by the side of her lover, breaks out into the following exclamation:

> *Ah! voici le poignard qui du sang de son maître*
> *S' est souillé lachement: il en* rougit *le traître.*

Boileau, taking notice of these lines, observes, *toutes les glaces du Nord ensemble ne sont pas, à mon sens, plus froides que cette pensée.* But of the two poets, I know not whether Mr. Pope is not most to be condemned; for whatever shame the poignard might take to itself, for being concerned in the murder of the lover; it is certain that the sand had not the least share in the death of the priest.

The ancient critics have insisted much upon propriety of language; and, indeed, one may with great justice say what the insulted Job does to his impertinent friends, *how forcible are right words?* The truth is, though the sentiment must always support the expression, yet the expression must give grace and efficacy to the sentiment; and the same thought shall frequently be admired or condemned, according to the merit of the particular phrase in which it is conveyed. For this reason J. Cæsar, in a treatise which he wrote concerning the Latin language, calls a judicious choice of words, *the origin of eloquence*: as, indeed, neither oratory nor poetry can be raised to any degree of perfection, where this their principal root is neglected. In this art Virgil particularly excels; and

it is the inimitable grace of his words (as Mr. Dryden somewhere justly observes) wherein that beauty principally consists, which gives so inexpressible a pleasure to him, who best understands their force. No man was ever a more skilful master of this powerful art than Mr. Pope; as he has, upon several occasions throughout this translation, raised and dignified his style with certain antiquated words and phrases, that are most wonderfully solemn and majestic. I cannot, however, forbear mentioning an instance, where he has employed an obsolete term less happily, I think, than is his general custom. It occurs in some lines which I just now quoted for another purpose:

> On his broad shoulder fell the forceful *brand*,
> Thence glancing downward lopt his holy hand. v. 105.

Brand is sometimes used by Spenser for a sword; and in that sense it is here introduced. But as we still retain this word in a different application, it will always be improper to adopt it in its antiquated meaning, because it must necessarily occasion ambiguity: an error in style of all others the most to be avoided. Accordingly, every reader of the lines I have quoted must take up an idea very different from that which the poet intends, and which he will carry on with him, till he arrives at the middle of the second verse. And if he happens to be unacquainted with the language of our old writers, when he comes to

> *Lopt* his holy hand,

he will be lost in a confusion of images, and have absolutely no idea remaining.

There is another uncommon elegance in the management of words, which requires a very singular turn of genius, and great delicacy of judgment to attain. As the art I just before mentioned turns upon employing antiquated words with force and propriety, so this consists in giving the grace of novelty to the received and current terms of a language, by applying them in a new and unexpected manner:

> *Dixeris egregiè, notum si callida verbum*
> *Reddiderit junctura novum.* Hor.

The great caution, however, to be observed in any attempt of this kind, is so jucidiously to connect the expressions, as to remove every doubt concerning the signification in which they are designed: for as perspicuity is the end and supreme excellency of writing, there cannot be a more fatal objection to an author's style, than that it stands in need of a commentator. But will not this objection lie against the following verse?

Next *artful* Phereclus untimely fell. V. 75.

The word *artful* is here taken out of its appropriated acceptation, in order to express

ος χερσιν επιστατο δαιδαλα παντα.
Τευχειν.

But however allowable it may be (as indeed it is not only allowable, but graceful) to raise a word above its ordinary import, when the *callida junctura* (as Horace calls it) determines at once the sense in which it is used: yet it should never be cast so far back from its customary meaning, as to stand for an idea which has no relation to what it implies in its primary and natural state. This would be introducing uncertainty and confusion into a language; and turning every sentence into a riddle. Accordingly, after we have travelled on through the several succeeding lines in this passage, we are obliged to change the idea with which we set out; and find, at last, that by the *artful* Phereclus we are to understand, not what we at first apprehend, a man of cunning and design, but one who is skilled in the mechanical arts.

It is with a liberty of the same unsuccessful kind, that Mr. Pope has rendered

Τον προτερος προσεειπε Λυκαονος αγλαος υιος.
V. 276.

Stern Lycaon's warlike race begun.

I know not by what figure of speech the whole race of a man can denote his next immediate descendant: and, I fear no synecdoche can acquit this expression of nonsense. The truth is, whoever ventures to strike out of

the common road, must be more than ordinarily careful, or he will probably lose his way.

This reminds me of a passage or two, where our poet has been extremely injurious to the sense of his author, and made him talk a language, which he never uses; the language, I mean, of absurdity. In the sixth Iliad, Agamemnon assures Menelaus,

Ιλιος εξαπολοιατ', ακηδεστοι παντες vi. 60.

But, in Mr. Pope's version, that chief tells his brother,

Ilion shall perish whole, and *bury* all.

Perhaps it may be over-nice to remark, that, as the destruction of Troy is first mentioned, it has a little the appearance of nonsense to talk afterwards of her burying her sons. However, the latter part of this verse directly contradicts the original; for Agamemnon is so far from asserting that Ilion should bury all her inhabitants, that he pronounces, positively, they should not be buried at all: a calamity, in the opinion of the ancients, of all others the most terrible. But possibly the error may lie in the printer, not in the poet; and perhaps the line originally stood thus:

Ilion shall perish whole, *unbury'd* all.

If so, both my objections vanish: and those who are conversant with the press, will not think this supposition improbable; since much more unlikely mistakes often happen by the carelessness of compositors.

But though I am willing to make all the allowance possible to an author, who raises our admiration too often not to have a right to the utmost candour, wherever he fails; yet I can find no excuse for an unaccountable absurdity he has fallen into, in translating a passage of the tenth book. Diomed and Ulysses, taking advantage of the night, set out in order to view the Trojan camp. In their way they meet with Dolon, who is going from thence to the Grecian, upon an errand of the same kind. After having seized this unfortunate adventurer, and ex-

amined him concerning the situation and designs of the enemy; Diomed draws his sword, and strikes off Dolon's head, in the very instant that he is supplicating for mercy:

Φθεγξομενε δ' αρα τε γε καρη κονιησιν εμιχθη. x. 457.

Mr. Pope has turned this into a most extraordinary miracle, by assuring us that the head spoke after it had quitted the body:

The head yet speaking, *mutter'd as it fell.*

This puts me in mind of a wonder of the same kind in the *Fairy Queen*, where Corflambo is represented as blaspheming, after his head had been struck off by Prince Arthur:

He smote at him with all his might and main
So furiously, that, ere he wist, he found
His head before him tumbling on the ground,
The whiles his babbling tongue did yet blaspheme,
And curs'd his God, that did him so confound. Book iv. 8.

But Corflambo was the son of a giantess, and could conquer whole kingdoms by only looking at them. We may, perhaps, therefore allow him to talk, when every other man must be silent: whereas there is nothing in the history of poor Dolon, that can give him the least pretence to this singular privilege. The truth is, Mr. Pope seems to have been led into this blunder by Scaliger, who has given the same sense to the verse, and then with great wisdom and gravity observes, *falsum est a pulmone caput avulsum loqui posse.*

The most pleasing picture in the whole Iliad, is, I think, the parting of Hector and Andromache: and our excellent translator has, in general, very successfully copied it. But in some places he seems not to have touched it with that delicacy of pencil, which graces the original; as he has entirely lost the beauty of one of the figures.—Hector is represented as extending his arms to embrace the little Astyanax, who being terrified with the unusual appearance of a man in armour, throws himself back upon his nurse's breast, and falls into tears. But though the hero and his son were designed to draw our principal

attention, Homer intended likewise that we should cast a glance towards the nurse. Accordingly, he does not mark her out merely by the name of her office; but adds an epithet to shew that she makes no inconsiderable figure in the piece: he does not simply call her τιθηνη, but εϋζωνος τιθηνη. This circumstance Mr. Pope has entirely overlooked:

Ως ειπων, ε παιδος ορεξατο φαιδιμος Εκτωρ.
Αψ δ' ο παϊς προς κολπον εϋζονοιο τιθηνης
Εκλινθη ιαχων, πατρος φιλε ὀψιν ατυχθεις,
Ταρβησας χαλκον τε ιδε λοφον ιπποχαιτην,
Δεινον απ' ακροτατης κορυθος νευοντα νοησας.
Εκ δ' εγελασσε πατηρ τε φιλος, και ποτνια μητηρ.
Αυτικ' απο κρατος κορυθ' ειλετο φαιδιμος Εκτωρ,
Και την μεν κατεθηκεν επι χθονι παμφανοωσαν.
vi. 466.

Thus having said, th' illustrious chief of Troy
Stretch'd his fond arms to clasp the lovely boy;
The babe clung crying to his *nurse's* breast,
Scar'd by the dazzling helm and nodding crest:
With secret pleasure each fond parent smil'd,
And Hector hasted to relieve his child:
The *glitt'ring terrors* from his head unbound,
And plac'd the beaming helmet on the ground.

I was going to object to the *glittering terrors*, in the last line but one: but I have already taken notice of these little affected expressions, where the substantive is set at variance with its attribute.

It is the observation of Quintilian, that no poet ever excelled Homer in the sublimity with which he treats great subjects, or in the delicacy and propriety he always discovers in the management of small ones. There is a passage in the ninth Iliad, which will justify the truth of the latter of these observations. When Achilles receives Ajax and Ulysses in his tent, who were sent to him in the name of Agamemnon, in order to prevail with him to return to the army, Homer gives a very minute account of the entertainment, which was prepared for them upon that occasion. It is impossible, perhaps, in modern language to preserve the same dignity in descriptions of this kind, which so considerably raises the original: and

indeed Mr. Pope warns his readers not to expect much beauty in the picture. However, a translator should be careful not to throw in any additional circumstances, which may lower and debase the piece; which yet Mr. Pope has, in his version of the following line:

Πυρ δε Μενοιτιαδης δαιεν μεγα, ισοθεος φως.
ix. 211.

Meanwhile Patroclus *sweats*, the fire to raise.

Own the truth, Euphronius: does not this give you the idea of a greasy cook at a kitchen fire? whereas nothing of this kind is suggested in the original. On the contrary the epithet ισοθεος, seems to have been added by Homer, in order to reconcile us to the meanness of the action, by reminding us of the high character of the person who is engaged in it; and as Mr. Addison observes of Virgil's husbandman, that "he tosses about his dung with an air "of gracefulness;" one may, with the same truth, say of Homer's hero, that he lights his fire with an air of dignity.

I intended to have closed these hasty objections, with laying before you some of those passages, where Mr. Pope seems to have equalled, or excelled his original.—But I perceive I have already extended my letter beyond a reasonable limit: I will reserve, therefore, that more pleasing, as well as much easier task, to some future occasion. In the mean time, I desire you will look upon those remarks, not as proceeding from a spirit of cavil (than which I know not any more truly contemptible) but as an instance of my having read your favourite poet with that attention, which his own unequalled merit and your judicious recommendation most deservedly claim. I am, &c.

LETTER XLIV.

TO PALAMEDES.

April 18, 1739.

I HAVE had occasion, a thousand times since I saw you, to wish myself *in the land where all things are*

forgotten; at least, that I did not live in the memory of certain restless mortals of your acquaintance, who are visitors by profession. The misfortune is, no retirement is so remote, nor sanctuary so sacred, as to afford a protection from their impertinence; and though one were to fly to the desart, and take refuge in the cells of saints and hermits, one should be alarmed with their unmeaning *voice, crying* even *in the wilderness.* They spread themselves, in truth, over the whole face of the land, and lay waste the fairest hours of conversation. For my own part, (to speak of them in a style suitable to their taste and talents) I look upon them, not as paying visits, but *visitations;* and am never obliged to give audience to one of this species, that I do not consider myself as under a judgment for those numberless hours which I have spent in vain. If these sons and daughters of idleness and folly would be persuaded to enter into an exclusive society among themselves, the rest of the world might possess their moments unmolested: but nothing less will satisfy them than opening a general commerce, and sailing into every port where choice or chance may drive them. Were we to live indeed, to the years of the antediluvians, one might afford to resign some part of one's own time in charitable relief of the unsufferable weight of theirs; but, since the days of man are shrunk into a few hasty revolutions of the sun, whole afternoons are much too considerable a sacrifice to be offered up to tame civility. What heightens the contempt of this character, is, that they who have so much of the form, have always least of the power of friendship; and though they will *craze their chariot wheels* (as Milton expresses it) to destroy your repose, they would not drive half the length of a street to assist your distress.

It was owing to an interruption from one of these obsequious intruders, that I was prevented keeping my engagement with you yesterday; and you must indulge me in this discharge of my invective against the ridiculous occasion of so mortifying a disappointment. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XLV.

TO HORTENSIUS.

May 8, 1737.

To be able to suppress my acknowledgments of the pleasure I received from your approbation, were to shew that I do not deserve it; for is it possible to value the praise of the judicious as one ought, and yet be silent under its influence! I can, with strict truth, say of you, what a Greek poet did of Plato, who, reading his performance to a circle where that great philosopher was present, and finding himself deserted, at length, by all the rest of the company, cried out, "I will proceed, nevertheless, "for Plato is himself an audience."

True fame, indeed, is no more in the gift than in the possession of numbers, as it is only in the disposal of the wise and the impartial. But if both those qualifications must concur to give validity to a vote of this kind, how little reason has an author to be either depressed or elated by general censure or applause?

The triumphs of genius are not like those of ancient heroism, where the meanest captive made a part of the pomp, as well as the noblest. It is not the multitude, but the dignity of those that compose her followers, that can add any thing to her real glory; and a single attendant may often render her more truly illustrious than a whole train of common admirers. I am sure, at least, I have no ambition of drawing after me vulgar acclamations; and, whilst I have the happiness to enjoy your applause, I shall always consider myself in possession of the truest fame. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER XLVI.

TO CLYTANDER.

Sept. 10, 1738.

You, who never forget any thing, can tell me, I dare say, whose observation it is, that, "of all the actions of

"our life, nothing is more uncommon than to laugh or to "cry with a good grace." But, though I cannot recollect the author, I shall always retain his maxim; as, indeed, every day's occurrences suggest the truth of it to my mind. I had particularly an occasion to see one part of it verified in the treatise I herewith return you; for never, surely, was mirth more injudiciously directed, than that which this writer of your acquaintance has employed. To droll upon the established religion of a country, and laugh at the most sacred and inviolable of her ordinances, is as far removed from good politics, as it is from good manners. It is, indeed, upon maxims of policy alone, that one can reason with those who pursue the principles which this author has embraced: I will add, therefore, (since, it seems, you sometimes communicate to him my letters) that to endeavour to lessen that veneration which is due to the religious institutions of a nation, when they neither run counter to any of the great lines of morality, nor oppose the natural rights of mankind, is a sort of zeal which I know not by what epithet sufficiently to stigmatize: it is attacking the strongest hold of society, and attempting to destroy the firmest guard of human security. Far am I, indeed, from thinking there is no other, or that the notion of a moral sense is a vain and groundless hypothesis. But wonderfully limited must the experience of those philosophers undoubtedly be, who imagine that an implanted love of virtue is sufficient to conduct the generality of mankind through the paths of moral duties, and supersede the necessity of a farther and more powerful guide. A sense of honour, likewise, where it operates in its true and genuine vigour, is, I confess, a most noble and powerful principle, but far too refined a motive of action, even for the more cultivated part of our species to adopt in general; and, in fact, we find it much oftener professed, than pursued. Nor are the laws of a community sufficient to answer all the restraining purposes of government; as there are many moral points which it is impossible to secure by express provisions. Human institutions can reach no farther than to certain general duties, in which the collective

welfare of society is more particularly concerned.—Whatever else is necessary for the ease and happiness of social intercourse, can be derived only from the assistance of religion; which influences the nicer connexions and dependencies of mankind, as it regulates and corrects the heart. How many tyrannies may I exercise as a parent, how many hardships may I inflict as a master, if I take the statutes of my country for the only guides of my actions, and think every thing lawful that is not immediately penal? The truth is, a man may be injured in a variety of instances far more atrociously, than by what the law considers either as a fraud or a robbery. Now, in cases of this kind, (and many very important cases of this kind there are) to remove the bars of religion, is to throw open the gates of oppression: it is to leave the honest exposed to the injurious inroads of those (and they are far, perhaps, the greatest part of mankind) who, though they would never *do justice and love mercy*, in compliance with the dictates of nature, would scrupulously practise both in obedience to the rules of revelation.

The gross of our species can never, indeed, be influenced by abstract reasoning, nor captivated by the naked charms of virtue: on the contrary, nothing seems more evident than that the generality of mankind must be engaged by sensible objects; must be wrought upon by their hopes and fears. And this has been the constant maxim of all the celebrated legislators, from the earliest establishment of government, to this present hour. It is true, indeed, that none have contended more warmly than the ancients for the dignity of human nature, and the native disposition of the soul to be enamoured with the beauty of virtue: but it is equally true, that none have more strenuously inculcated the expediency of adding the authority of religion to the suggestions of nature, and maintaining a reverence to the appointed ceremonies of public worship. The sentiments of Pythagoras (or whoever he be who was author of those verses which pass under that philosopher's name) are well known upon this subject:

Αθανατες μεν πρωτα θεος, νομῳ ως διακειται,
Τιμα.

Many, indeed, are the ancient passages which might be produced in support of this assertion, if it were necessary to produce any passages of this kind to you, whom I have so often heard contend for the same truth with all the awakening powers of learning and eloquence. Suffer me, however, for the benefit of your acquaintance, to remind you of one or two, which I do not remember ever to have seen quoted.

Livy has recorded a speech of Appius Claudius Crassus, which he made in opposition to certain demands of the tribunes. That zealous senator warmly argues against admitting the plebeians into a share of the consular dignity; from the power of taking the auspices being originally and solely vested in the patrician order. "But, "perhaps," says Crassus, "I shall be told, that the pecking of a chicken, &c. are trifles unworthy of regard: "trifling, however, as these ceremonies may now be "deemed, it was by the strict observance of them that "our ancestors raised this commonwealth to its present "point of grandeur." *Parva sunt hæc: sed parva ista non contemnendo, majores nostri maximam hanc rem fecerunt.*—Agreeably to this principle, the Roman historian of the life of Alexander, describes that monarch, after having killed his friend Clitus, as considering, in his cool moments, whether the gods had not permitted him to be guilty of that horrid act, in punishment for his irreligious neglect of their sacred rites. And Juvenal* imputes the source of that torrent of vice which broke in upon the age in which he wrote, to the general disbelief that prevailed of the public doctrines of their established religion. Those tenets, he tells us, that influenced the glorious conduct of the Curii, the Scipios, the Fabricii, and the Camilli, were in his days so totally exploded, as scarce to be received even by children. It were well for some parts of the Christian world, if the same observation might not with justice be extended beyond the limits

* Sat. II. 149.

of ancient Rome: and I often reflect upon the very judicious remark of a great writer of the last century, who takes notice, that "the generality of Christendom is now "well nigh arrived at that fatal condition, which imme- "diately preceded the destruction of the worship of the "ancient world; when the face of religion, in their pub- "lic assemblies, was quite different from that apprehen- "sion which men had concerning it in private."

Nothing, most certainly, could less plead the sanction of reason, than the general rites of pagan worship. Weak and absurd, however, as they were in themselves, and, indeed, in the estimation too of all the wiser sort; yet, the more thinking and jucidious part, both of their states- men and philosophers, unanimously concurred in sup- porting them as sacred and inviolable: well persuaded, no doubt, that religion is the strongest cement in the great structure of moral government. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER XLVII.

TO CLEORA.

Sep. 1.

I LOOK upon every day, wherein I have not some com- munication with my Cleora, as a day lost; and I take up my pen every afternoon to write to you, as regularly as I drink my tea, or perform any the like important article of my life.

I frequently bless the happy art that affords me a means of conveying myself to you, at this distance, and by an easy kind of magic, thus transports me to your par- lour at a time when I could not gain admittance by any other method. Of all people in the world, indeed, none are more obliged to this paper commerce, than friends and lovers. It is by this they elude, in some degree, the malevolence of fate, and can enjoy an intercourse with each other, though the Alps themselves shall rise up between them. Even this imaginary participation of your

society is far more pleasing to me than the real enjoyment of any other conversation the whole world could supply. The truth is, I have lost all relish for any but yours; and, if I were invited to an assembly of all the wits of the Augustan age, or all the heroes that Plutarch has cele- brated, I should neither have spirits nor curiosity to be of the party. Yet with all this indolence or indifference about me, I would take a voyage as far as the pole to sup with Cleora on a lettuce, or only to hold the bowl while she mixed the syllabub. Such happy evenings I once knew: ah, Cleora! will they never return? Adieu.

LETTER XLVIII.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

I HAVE read the performance you communicated to me, with all the attention you required; and I can, with strict sincerity, apply to your friend's verses, what an ancient has observed of the same number of Spartans who de- fended the passage of Thermopylæ; *nunquam vidi plures trecentos!* Never, indeed, was there greater energy of language and sentiment united together in the same com- pass of lines: and it would be an injustice to the world, as well as to himself, to suppress so animated and so use- ful a composition.

A satirist, of true genius, who is warmed by a generous indignation of vice, and whose censures are conducted by candour and truth, merits the applause of every friend to virtue. He may be considered as a sort of supplement to the legislative authority of his country; as assisting the unavoidable defects of all legal institutions for the regulating of manners, and striking terror even where the divine prohibitions themselves are held in contempt. The strongest defence, perhaps, against the inroads of vice, among the more cultivated part of our species, is well- directed ridicule: they who fear nothing else, dread to be marked out to the contempt and indignation of the

world. There is no succeeding in the secret purposes of dishonesty, without preserving some sort of credit among mankind; as there cannot exist a more impotent creature than a knave convict. To expose, therefore, the false pretensions of counterfeit virtue, is to disarm it at once of all power of mischief, and to perform a public service of the most advantageous kind, in which any man can employ his time and his talents. The voice, indeed, of an honest satirist, is not only beneficial to the world, as giving alarm against the designs of an enemy so dangerous to all social intercourse, but as proving likewise the most efficacious preventative to others, of assuming the same character of distinguished infamy. Few are so totally vitiated, as to have abandoned all sentiments of shame; and when every other principle of integrity is surrendered, we generally find the conflict is still maintained in this last post of retreating virtue. In this view, therefore, it should seem, the function of a satirist may be justified, notwithstanding it should be true, (what an excellent moralist has asserted) that his chastisements rather exasperate than reclaim those on whom they fall. Perhaps, no human penalties are of any moral advantage to the criminal himself; and the principal benefit that seems to be derived from civil punishments of any kind, is their restraining influence upon the conduct of others.

It is not every arm, however, that is qualified to manage this formidable blow. The arrows of satire, when they are not pointed by virtue, as well as wit, recoil back upon the hand that directs them, and wound none but him from whom they proceed. Accordingly, Horace rests the whole success of writings of this sort upon the poet's being *Integer Ipse;* free himself from those immoral stains which he points out in others. There cannot, indeed, be a more odious, nor at the same time a more contemptible character than that of a vicious satirist:

Quis cœlum terris non misceat et mare cœlo,
Si fur displiceat Verri, homicida Miloni? Juv.

The most favourable light in which a censor of this species could possibly be viewed, would be that of a public

executioner, who inflicts the punishment on others, which he has already merited himself. But the truth of it is, he is not qualified even for so wretched an office; and there is nothing to be dreaded from a satirist of known dishonesty, but his applause. Adieu.

LETTER XLIX.

TO PALAMEDES.

Aug. 2, 1734.

Ceremony is never more unwelcome, than at that season in which you will, probably, have the greatest share of it; and, as I should be extremely unwilling to add to the number of those, who, in pure good manners, may interrupt your enjoyments, I choose to give you my congratulations a little prematurely. After the happy office shall be completed, your moments will be too valuable to be laid out in forms; and it would be paying a compliment with a very ill grace, to draw off your eyes from the highest beauty, though it were to turn them on the most exquisite wit. I hope, however, you will give me timely notice of your wedding day, that I may be prepared with my epithalamium. I have already laid in half a dozen deities extremely proper for the occasion, and have even made some progress in my first simile. But I am somewhat at a loss how to proceed, not being able to determine whether your future bride is most like Venus or Hebe. That she resembles both, is universally agreed, I find, by those who have seen her. But it would be offending, you know, against all the rules of poetical justice, if I should only say she is as handsome as she is young, when, after all, perhaps, the truth may be, that she has even more beauty than youth. In the mean while, I am turning over all the tender compliments that love has inspired, from the Lesbia of Catullus to the Chloe of Prior, and hope to gather such a collection of flowers as may not be unworthy of entering into a garland

composed for your Stella. But, before you introduce me as a poet, let me be recommended to her by a much better title, and assure her that I am yours, &c.

LETTER L.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

I AM much inclined to join with you in thinking that the Romans had no peculiar word in their language which answers precisely to what we call *good sense* in ours. For though *prudentia*, indeed, seems frequently used by their best writers to express that idea, yet it is not confined to that single meaning, but is often applied by them to signify skill in any particular science. But good sense is something very distinct from knowledge; and it is an instance of the poverty of the Latin language, that she is obliged to use the same word as a mark for two such different ideas.

Were I to explain what I understand by good sense, I should call it right reason; but right reason that arises, not from formal and logical deductions, but from a sort of intuitive faculty in the soul, which distinguishes by immediate perception: a kind of innate sagacity, that, in many of its properties, seems very much to resemble instinct. It would be improper, therefore, to say, that Sir Isaac Newton shewed his good sense by those amazing discoveries which he made in natural philosophy: the operations of this gift of Heaven are rather instantaneous, than the result of any tedious process. Like Diomed, after Minerva had endowed him with the power of discerning gods from mortals, the man of good sense discovers, *at once*, the truth of those objects he is most concerned to distinguish, and conducts himself with suitable caution and security.

It is for this reason, possibly, that this quality of the mind is not so often found united with learning as one could wish: for good sense being accustomed to receive her discoveries without labour or study, she cannot so

easily wait for those truths, which being placed at a distance, and lying concealed under numberless covers, require much pains and application to unfold.

But though good sense is not in the number, nor always, it must be owned, in the company of the sciences; yet it is (as the most sensible of poets has justly observed)

fairly worth the seven.

Rectitude of understanding is, indeed, the most useful, as well as the most noble, of human endowments, as it is the sovereign guide and director in every branch of civil and social intercourse.

Upon whatever occasion this enlightening faculty is exerted, it is always sure to act with distinguished eminence; but its chief and peculiar province seems to lie in the commerce of the world. Accordingly we may observe, that those who have conversed more with men than with books, whose wisdom is derived rather from experience than contemplation, generally possess this happy talent with superior perfection: for good sense, though it cannot be acquired, may be improved; and the world, I believe, will ever be found to afford the most kindly soil for its cultivation.

I know not whether true good sense is not a more uncommon quality even than true wit; as there is nothing, perhaps, more extraordinary than to meet with a person, whose entire conduct and notions are under the direction of this supreme guide. The single instance, at least, which I could produce of its acting steadily and invariably throughout the whole of a character, is that which Euphronius, I am sure, would not allow me to mention: at the same time, perhaps, I am rendering my own pretensions of this kind extremely questionable, when I thus venture to throw before you my sentiments upon a subject, of which you are universally acknowledged so perfect a master. I am, &c.

LETTER LI.

TO PALEMON.

May 29, 1743.

I ESTEEM your letters in the number of my most valuable possessions, and preserve them as so many prophetical *leaves* upon which the fate of our distracted nation is inscribed. But, in exchange for the maxims of a patriot, I can only send you the reveries of a recluse, and give you *the stones of the brook* for *the gold of Ophir*. Never, indeed, Palemon, was there a commerce more unequal than that wherein you are contented to engage with me; and I could scarce answer it to my conscience to continue a traffic, where the whole benefit accrues singly to myself, did I not know, that to confer without the possibility of an advantage, is the most pleasing exercise of generosity. I will venture then to make use of a privilege which I have long enjoyed; as I well know you love to mix the meditations of the philosopher with the reflections of the statesman, and can turn with equal relish from the politics of Tacitus to the morals of Seneca.

I was in my garden this morning somewhat earlier than usual, when the sun, as Milton describes him,

> With wheels yet hov'ring o'er the ocean brim
> Shot parallel to th' earth his dewy ray.

There is something in the opening of the dawn, at this season of the year, that enlivens the mind with a sort of cheerful seriousness, and fills it with a certain calm rapture in the consciousness of its existence. For my own part, at least, the rising of the sun has the same effect on me, as it is said to have had on the celebrated statue of Memnon: and I never observe that glorious luminary breaking out upon me, that I do not find myself harmonized for the whole day.

Whilst I was enjoying the freshness and tranquillity of this early season, and, considering the many reasons I had to join in offering up that *morning incense*, which the

poet I just now mentioned, represents as particularly arising at this hour *from the earth's great altar*; I could not but esteem it as a principal blessing, that I was entering upon a new day with health and spirits. To awake with recruited vigour for the transactions of life, is a mercy so generally dispensed, that it passes, like other the ordinary bounties of Providence, without making its due impression. Yet, were one never to rise under these happy circumstances, without reflecting what numbers there are, (who, to use the language of the most pathetic of authors) when they said, *My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint*, were, like him, *full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day*, or *scared with dreams, and terrified through visions*—were one to consider, I say, how many pass their nights in all the horrors of a disturbed imagination, or all the wakefulness of real pains, one could not find one's self exempt from such uneasy slumbers, or such terrible vigils, without double satisfaction and gratitude. There is nothing, indeed, contributes more to render a man contented with that draught of life which is poured out to himself, than thus to reflect on those more bitter ingredients which are sometimes mingled in the cup of others.

In pursuing the same vein of thought, I could not but congratulate myself, that I had no part in that turbulent drama which was going to be re-acted upon the great stage of the world; and rejoiced that it was my fortune to stand a distant and unengaged spectator of those several characters that would shortly fill the scene. This suggested to my remembrance, a passage in the Roman tragic poet where he describes the various pursuits of the busy and ambitious world, in very just and lively colours:

> *Ille superbos aditus regum*
> *Durasque fores, expers somni,*
> *Colit: Hic nullo fine beatus*
> *Componit opes, gazis inhians,*
> *Et congesto pauper in auro est.*
> *Illum populi favor attonitum,*
> *Fluctuque magis mobile vulgus,*
> *Aura tumidum tollit inani.*
> *Hic clamosi rabiosa fori*

Jurgia vendens improbus, tras
Et verba locat.

and I could not forbear saying to myself, in the language of the same anthor,

me mea tellus
Lare secreto tutoque tegat!

Yet this circumstance, which your friend considers as so valuable a privilege, has been esteemed by others as the most severe of afflictions. The celebrated count de Bussy Rabutin has written a little treatise, wherein, after having shewn that the greatest men upon the stage of the world are generally the most unhappy, he closes the account by producing himself as an instance of the truth of what he had been advancing. But can you guess, Palemon, what this terrible disaster was, which thus entitled him to a rank in the number of these unfortunate heroes? He had composed, it seems, certain satirical pieces which gave offence to Lewis the XIVth; for which reason that monarch banished him from the slavery and dependence of a court, to live in ease and freedom at his country-house. But the world had taken too strong possession of his heart, to suffer him to leave even the worst part of it without reluctance; and, like the patriarch's wife, he looked back with regret upon the scene from which he was kindly driven, though there was nothing in the prospect but flames. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LII.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

Aug. 20, 1742.

Surely, Euphronius, the spirit of criticism has strangely possessed you. How else could you be willing to step aside so often from the amusements of the gayest scenes, in order to examine with me certain beauties, far other than those which at present it might be imagined, would wholly engage your attention? Who, indeed, that sees my friend over night supporting the vivacity of the

most sprightly assemblies, would expect to find him the next morning gravely poring over antiquated Greek, and weighing the merits of ancient and modern geniuses? But I have long admired you as an elegant *spectator formarum*, in every sense of the expression; and you can turn, I know, from the charms of beauty to those of wit, with the same refinement of taste and rapture. I may venture, therefore, to resume our critical correspondence without the form of an apology; as it is the singular character of Euphronius to reconcile the philosopher with the man of the world, and judiciously divide his hours between action and retirement.

What has been said of a celebrated French translator, may, with equal justice, be applied to Mr. Pope: "that "it is doubtful whether the dead or the living are most "obliged to him." His translations of Homer, and imitations of Horace, have introduced to the acquaintance of the English reader, two of the most considerable authors in all antiquity; as, indeed, they are equal to the credit of so many original works. A man must have a very considerable share of the different spirit which distinguishes those most admirable poets, who is capable of representing, in his own language, so true an image of their respective *manners*. If we look no farther than these works themselves, without considering them with respect to any attempts of the same nature which have been made by others, we shall have sufficient reason to esteem them for their own intrinsic merit. But how will this uncommon genius rise in our admiration, when we compare his classical translations with those similar performances, which have employed some of the most celebrated of our poets? I have lately been turning over the Iliad with this view; and, perhaps, it will be no unentertaining amusement to you, to examine the several copies which I have collected of the original, as taken by some of the most considerable of our English masters. To single them out for this purpose according to the order of the particular books, or passages, upon which they have respectively exercised their pencils, the pretensions of Mr. Tickel stand first to be examined.

The action of the Iliad opens, you know, with the speech of Chryses, whose daughter, having been taken captive by the Grecians, was allotted to Agamemnon. This venerable priest of Apollo is represented as addressing himself to the Grecian chiefs, in the following pathetic simplicity of eloquence:

Ατρειδαι τε, και αλλοι ευκνημιδες Αχαιοι,
Υμιν μεν θεοι δοιεν, ολυμπια δωματ' εχοντες,
Εκπερσαι Πριαμοιο πολιν, ευ δ' οικαδ' ικεσθαι·
Παιδα δε μοι λυσασθε φιλην, τα δ' αποινα δεχεσθε,
Αζομενοι Διος υιον εκηβολον Απολλωνα. i. 17.

Great Atreus' sons, and warlike Greece, attend,
So may th' immortal Gods your cause defend,
So may you Priam's lofty bulwarks burn,
And rich in gather'd spoils to Greece return.
As, for these gifts, my daughter you bestow,
And rev'rence due to great Apollo shew,
Jove's fav'rite offspring, terrible in war,
Who sends his shafts unerring from afar. *Tickel.*

That affecting tenderness of the father, which Homer has marked out by the melancholy flow of the line, as well as by the endearing expression of

Παιδα δε μοι λυσασθε φιλην,

is entirely lost by Mr. Tickel. When Chryses coldly mentions his daughter, without a single epithet of concern or affection, he seems much too indifferent himself to move the audience in his favour. But the whole passage, as it stands in Mr. Pope's Iliad, is in general animated with a far more lively spirit of poetry. Who can observe the moving posture of supplication in which he has drawn the venerable old priest, stretching out his arms in all the affecting warmth of entreaty, without sharing in his distress, and melting into pity?

Ye kings and warriors! may your vows be crown'd,
And Troy's proud walls lie level with the ground:
May Jove restore you, when your toils are o'er,
Safe to the pleasures of your native shore:
But oh! relieve a wretched parent's pain,
And give Chryseïs to these arms again.
If mercy fail, yet let my presents move,
And dread avenging Phœbus, son of Jove. *Pope.*

The insinuation with which Chryses closes his speech that the Grecians must expect the indignation of Apollo would pursue them if they rejected the petition of his priest, is happily intimated by a single epithet:

And dread *avenging* Phœbus;

whereas, the other translator takes the compass of three lines to express the same thought less strongly.

When the heralds are sent by Agamemnon to Achilles in order to demand Briseïs, that chief is prevailed upon to part with her: and, accordingly, directs Patroclus to deliver up this contested beauty into their hands:

Πατροκλῳ δε φιλῳ επεπειθεθ' εταιρῳ,
Εκ δ' αγαγε κλισιης Βρισηϊδα καλλιπαρηον,
Δωκε δ' αγειν· τω δ' αυτις ιτην παρα νηας Αχαιων.
Η δ' ακεκα' αμα τοισι γυνη κιεν· i. 345.

The beauty of Briseïs, as described in these lines, together with the reluctance with which she is here represented as forced from her lord, cannot but touch the reader in a very sensible manner. Mr. Tickel, however, has debased this affecting picture, by the most unpoetical and familiar diction. I will not delay you with making my objections in form to his language; but have distinguished the exceptionable expressions, in the lines themselves:

Patroclus *his dear friend* obliged,
And usher'd in the lovely weeping maid;
ore sigh'd she, as the heralds took her hand,
And oft look'd back, slow moving o'er the strand. *Tickel.*

Our British Homer has restored this piece to its original grace and delicacy:

Patroclus now th' unwilling beauty brought:
She, in soft sorrows, and in pensive thought,
Pass'd silent, as the heralds held her hand,
And oft look'd back, slow moving o'er the strand. *Pope.*

The tumultuous behaviour of Achilles, as described by Homer in the lines immediately following, affords a very pleasing and natural contrast to the more composed and

silent sorrow of Briseïs. The poet represents that hero as suddenly rushing out from his tent, and flying to the sea-shore, where he gives vent to his indignation: and, in bitterness of soul, complains to Thetis, not only of the dishonour brought upon him by Agamemnon, but of the injustice even of Jupiter himself:

αυταρ Αχιλλευς
Δακρυσας, εταρων αφαρ εξετο νοσφι λιασθεις,
Θιν' εφ' αλος πολιης, οροων επι οινοπα ποντον.
Πολλα δε μητρι φιλη ηρησατο χειρας ορεγνυς.
i. 348.

Mr. Tickel, in rendering the sense of these lines, has risen into a somewhat higher flight of poetry than usual. However, you will observe his expression, in one or two places, is exceedingly languid and prosaical; as the epithet he has given to the waves is highly injudicious. *Curling billows* might be very proper in describing a calm, but suggests too pleasing an image to be applied to the ocean when represented as *black with storms.*

The widow'd hero, when the fair *was gone,*
Far from his friends, sat, bath'd in tears, alone.
On the cold beach he sat, and fix'd his eyes
Where, black with storms, the *curling billows* rise,
And as the sea, wide-rolling, he survey'd,
With out-stretch'd arms *to his fond mother pray'd.*
Tickel.

Mr. Pope has opened the thought in these lines with great dignity of numbers, and exquisite propriety of imagery; as the additional circumstances which he has thrown in, are so many beautiful improvements upon his author:

Not so his loss the fierce Achilles bore;
But sad retiring to the sounding shore,
O'er the wild margin of the deep he hung,
That kindred deep from which his mother sprung:
Then bath'd in tears of anger and disdain,
Thus loud lamented to the stormy main. *Pope.*

Apollo having sent a plague among the Grecians, in resentment of the injury done to his priest Chryses by detaining his daughter, Agamemnon consents that Chryseïs

shall be restored. Accordingly a ship is fitted out under the command of Ulysses, who is employed to conduct the damsel to her father. That hero and his companions being arrived at Chrysa, the place to which they were bound, deliver up their charge; and having performed a sacrifice to Apollo, set sail early the next morning for the Grecian camp. Upon this occasion Homer exhibits to us a most beautiful sea-piece:

Ημος δ' ηελιος καλεδυ, και επι κνεφας ηλθε,
Δη τοτε κοιμησαντο παρα πρυμνησια νηος.
Ημος δ' ηριγενεια φανη ροδοδακτυλος Ηως,
Και τοτ' επειτ' αναγον μετα στρατον ευρυν Αχαιων.
Τοισιν δ' ικμενον αυρον ιει εκαεργος Απολλων.
Οι δ' ιστον στησαντ', ανα δ' ιστια λευκα πετασσαν.
Εν δ' ανεμος πρησεν μεσον ιστιον, αμφι δε κυμα
Στειρη πορφυρεον μεγαλ' ιαχε, νηος ιεισης.
Η δ' εθεεν κατα κυμα διαπρησσουσα κελευθα. i. 475

If there is any passage throughout Mr. Tickel's translation of this book, which has the least pretence to stand in competition with Mr. Pope's version, it is undoubtedly that which corresponds with the Greek lines just now quoted. It would indeed be an instance of great partiality not to acknowledge they breathe the true spirit of poetry; and I must own myself at a loss which to prefer upon the whole; though I think Mr. Pope is evidently superior to his rival, in his manner of opening the description:

At ev'ning through the shore dispers'd, they sleep
Hush'd by the distant roarings of the deep.
When now, ascending from the shades of night,
Aurora glow'd in all her rosy light,
The daughter of the dawn: th' awaken'd crew
Back to the Greeks encamp'd their course renew:
The breezes freshen: for, with friendly gales,
Apollo swell'd their wide-distended sails:
Cleft by the rapid prow the waves divide,
And in hoarse murmurs break on either side. *Tickel.*

'Twas night: the chiefs beside their vessel lie,
Till rosy morn had purpled o'er the sky:
Then launch, and hoist the mast; indulgent gales,
Supplied by Phœbus, fill the swelling sails;

The milk-white canvas bellying as they blow,
The parted ocean foams and roars below:
Above the bounding billows swift they flew, &c. *Pope.*

There is something wonderfully pleasing in that judicious pause, which Mr. Pope has placed at the beginning of these lines. It necessarily awakens the attention of the reader, and gives a much greater air of solemnity to the scene, than if the circumstance of the time had been less distinctly pointed out and blended, as in Mr. Tickel's translation, with the rest of the description.

Homer has been celebrated by antiquity for those sublime images of the Supreme Being, which he so often raises in the Iliad. It is Macrobius, if I remember right, who informs us, that Phidias being asked from whence he took the idea of his celebrated statue of Olympian Jupiter, acknowledged that he had heated his imagination by the following lines:

Η, και κυανεησιν επ' οφρυσι νευσε Κρονιων·
Αμβροσιαι δ' αρα χαιται επερρωσαντο ανακτος
Κρατος απ' αθανατοιο· μεγαν δ' ελελιξεν Ολυμπον.
i. 528.

But whatever magnificence of imagery Phidias might discover in the original, the English reader will scarce, I imagine, conceive any thing very grand and sublime from the following copy:

This said, his kingly brow the sire inclin'd,
The large black curls fell awful from behind,
Thick shadowing the stern forehead of the god:
Olympus trembled at th' almighty nod. *Tickel.*

That our modern statuaries, however, may not have an excuse for burlesquing the figure of the great father of gods and men, for want of the benefit of so animating a model, Mr. Pope has preserved it to them in all its original majesty;

He spoke, and awful bends his sable brows;
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,
The stamp of fate, and sanction of the god:
High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
And all Olympus to the centre shook. *Pope.*

I took occasion, in a former letter, to make some exceptions to a passage or two in the parting of Hector and Andromache, as translated by your favourite poet.—I shall now produce a few lines from the same beautiful episode, for another purpose, and in order to shew, with how much more masterly a hand, even than Dryden himself, our great improver of English poetry has worked upon the same subject.

As Andromache is going to the tower of Ilion, in order to take a view of the field of battle, Hector meets her, together with her son, the young Astyanax, at the Scæan gate. The circumstances of this sudden interview are finely imagined. Hector, in the first transport of his joy, is unable to utter a single word; at the same time that Andromache, tenderly embracing his hands, bursts out into a flood of tears:

Ητοι ο μεν μειδησεν ιδων ες παιδα σιωπη·
Ανδρομαχη δε οι αγχι παρισταο δακρυχεουσα,
Εϋ' αρα οι φυ χειρι, επος τ' εφατ', εκ τ' ονομαζε·
vi. 404.

Dryden has translated this passage with a cold and unpoetical fidelity to the mere letter of the original:

Hector beheld him with a silent smile;
His tender wife stood weeping by the while;
Press'd in her own, his warlike hand she took,
Then sigh'd, and thus prophetically spoke. *Dryden.*

But Pope has judiciously taken a larger compass, and, by heightening the piece with a few additional touches, has wrought it up in all the affecting spirit of tenderness and poetry:

Silent the warrior smil'd, and pleas'd, resign'd
To tender passions all his mighty mind:
His beauteous princess cast a mournful look,
Hung on his hand, and then dejected spoke;
Her bosom labour'd with a boding sigh,
And the big tear stood trembling in her eye. *Pope.*

Andromache afterwards endeavours to persuade Hector to take upon himself the defence of the city, and not hazard a life so important, she tells him, to herself and his son, in the more dangerous action of the field:

Την δ' αυτε προσεειπε μεγας κορυθαιολος Εκτωρ,
Η και εμοι ταδε παντα μελει, γυναι· αλλα μαλ' αινως
Αιδεομαι Τρωας και Τρωαδας ελκεσιπεπλους,
Αικε, κακος ως, νοσφιν αλυσκαζω πολεμοιο. vi. 440.

To whom the noble Hector thus replied:
That and the rest are in my daily care;
But should I shun the dangers of the war,
With scorn the Trojans would reward my pains,
And their proud ladies with their sweeping trains.
The Grecian swords and lances I can bear:
But loss of honour is my only care. *Dryden.*

Nothing can be more flat and unanimated than these lines. One may say, upon this occasion, what Dryden himself, I remember, somewhere observes, that a good poet is no more like himself in a dull translation, than his dead carcase would be to his living body. To catch indeed the soul of our Grecian bard, and breathe his spirit into an English version, seems to have been a privilege reserved solely for Pope:

The chief replied: that post shall be my care;
Nor that alone, but all the works of war.
How would the sons of Troy, in arms renown'd,
And Troy's proud dames, whose garments sweep the ground,
Attaint the lustre of my former name,
Should Hector basely quit the fields of fame? *Pope.*

In the farther prosecution of this episode Hector prophesies his own death, and the destruction of Troy; to which he adds, that Andromache should be led captive into Argos, where, among other disgraceful offices, which he particularly enumerates, she should be employed, he tells her in the servile task of drawing water. The different manner in which this last circumstance is expressed by our two English poets, will afford the strongest instance, how much additional force the same thought will receive from a more graceful turn of phrase:

Or from deep wells the living stream to take,
And on thy weary shoulders bring it back. *Dryden.*

or bring
The *weight of waters* from Hyperia's spring. *Pope.*

It is in certain peculiar turns of diction that the language

of poetry is principally distinguished from that of prose as indeed the same words are, in general, common to them both. It is in a turn of this kind, that the beauty of the last quoted line consists. For the whole grace of the expression would vanish, if, instead, of the two substantives which are placed at the beginning of the verse, the poet had employed the more common syntax of a substantive with its adjective.

When this faithful pair have taken their final adieu of each other, Hector returns to the field of battle, at the same time that the disconsolate Andromache joins her maidens in the palace. Homer describes this circumstance in the following tender manner:

Ως αρα φωνησας κορυθ' ειλετο φαιδιμος Εκτωρ
Ιππηριν· αλοχος δε φιλη οικονδε βεβηκει
Εντροπαλιζομενη, θαλερον κατα δακρυ χεουσα.
Αιψα δ' επειθ' ικανε δομους ευ ναιεταοντας
Εκτορος ανδροφονοιο· κιχησατο δ' ενδοθι πολλας
Αμφιπολους, τησιν δε γοον πασησιν ενωρσεν.
Αι μεν ετι ζωον γοον Εκτορα ω ενι οικω. vi. 494.

I will make no remarks upon the different success of our two celebrated poets in translating this passage; but, after having laid both before you, leave their versions to speak for themselves. The truth is, the disparity between them is much too visible to require any comment to render it more observable:

At this, for new replies he did not stay,
But lac'd his crested helm, and strode away.
His lovely consort to her house return'd,
And looking often back, in silence mourn'd:
Home when she came, her secret woe she vents,
And fills the palace with her loud laments;
Those loud laments her echoing maids restore,
And Hector, yet alive, as dead deplore. *Dryden.*

Thus having said, the glorious chief resumes
His tow'ry helmet, black with shading plumes.
His princess parts with a prophetic sigh,
Unwilling parts, and oft reverts her eye.
That stream'd at ev'ry look: then moving slow,
Sought her own palace, and indulg'd her woe.

There, while her tears deplor'd the godlike man,
Through all the train the soft infection ran;
The pious maids their mingled sorrow shed,
And mourn the living Hector as the dead. *Pope.*

As I purpose to follow Mr. Pope through those several parts of the Iliad, where any of our distinguished poets have gone before him; I must lead you on till we come to the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus, in the XIIth book:

Γλαυκε, τιη δη νωϊ τετιμημεσθα μαλιστα
Εδρη τε, κρεασιν τε, ιδε πλειοις δεπαεσσιν,
Εν Λυκιη, πανσες δε, θεος ως, εισορωσι,
Και τεμενος νεμομεσθα μεγα Ξανθοιο παρ' οχθας
Καλον, φυταλιης και αρουρης πυροφοροιο;
Τω νυν χρη Λυκιοισι μετα πρωτοισιν εοντας
Εσταμεν, ηδε μαχης καυστειρης ανιζολησαι·
Οφρα τις ωδ' ειπη Λυκιων πυκα θωρηκταων,
Ου μαν ακλειεις Λυκιην καιακοιρανεουσιν
Ημετεροι βασιλης, εδουσι τε πιονα μηλα,
Οινον τ' εξαιτον, μελιηδεα· αλλ' αρα και ις
Εσθλη, επει Λυκιοισι μετα πρωτοισι μαχονται.
Ω πεπον· ει μεν γαρ πολεμον περι τονδε φυγοντες,
Αιει δη μελλοιμεν αγηρω τ' αθανατω τε
Εσσεσθ', ουτε κεν αυτος ενι πρωτοισι μαχοιμην,
Ουτε κε σε ζελλοιμι μαχην ες κυδιανειραν·
Νυν δ' (εμπης γαρ κηρες εφεστασιν θανατοιο
Μυριαι, ας ουκ εστι φυγειν βροτον, ουδ' υπαλυξαι)
Ιομεν· η τω ευχος ορεξομεν, η τις ημιν. xii. 310.

This spirited speech has been translated by the famous author of Cooper's Hill:

Above the rest why is our pomp and pow'r?
Our flocks, our herds, and our possessions more?
Why all the tributes land and sea afford,
Heap'd in great chargers, load our sumptuous board?
Our cheerful guests carouse the sparkling tears
Of the rich grape, whilst music charms their ears.
Why, as we pass, do those on Xanthus' shore
As gods behold us, and as gods adore?
But that, as well in danger as degree,
We stand the first: that when our Lycians see
Our brave examples, they admiring say,
Behold our gallant leaders! these are they
Deserve their greatness; and unenvied stand,
Since what they act transcends what they command.

Could the declining of this fate, oh! friend,
Our date to immortality extend,
Or if death sought not them who seek not death,
Would I advance, or should my vainer breath
With such a glorious folly thee inspire?
But since with fortune nature doth conspire;
Since age, disease, or some less noble end,
Though not less certain, does our days attend;
Since 'tis decreed, and to this period led
A thousand ways, the noblest path we'll tread;
And bravely on, till they, or we, or all,
A common sacrifice to honour fall. *Denham.*

Mr. Pope passes so high an encomium on these lines, as to assure us, that, if his translation of the same passage has any spirit, it is in some degree due to them. It is certain they have great merit, considering the state of our English versification when Denham flourished: but they will by no means support Mr. Pope's compliment, any more than they will bear to stand in competition with his numbers. And I dare say, you will join with me in the same opinion, when you consider the following version of this animated speech:

Why boast we, Glaucus, our extended reign,
Where Xanthus' streams enrich the Lycian plain?
Our num'rous herds, that range the fruitful field,
And hills where vines their purple harvest yield?
Our foaming bowls with purer nectar crown'd,
Our feasts enhanc'd with music's sprightly sound?
Why on these shores are we with joy survey'd,
Admir'd as heroes, and as gods obey'd?
Unless great acts superior merit prove,
And vindicate the bounteous powers above;
That when, with wond'ring eyes, our martial bands
Behold our deeds transcending our commands,
Such, they may cry, deserve the sov'reign state,
Whom those that envy dare not imitate.
Could all our care elude the gloomy grave,
Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war.
But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
The life which others pay, let us bestow,
And give to fame what we to nature owe;
Brave though we fall, and honour'd if we live,
Or let us glory gain, or glory give *Pope.*

If any thing can be justly objected to this translation, it is, perhaps, that in one or two places it is too diffused and

descriptive for that agitation in which it was spoken. In general, however, one may venture to assert, that it is warmed with the same ardour of poetry and heroism that glows in the original: as those several thoughts, which Mr. Pope has intermixed of his own, naturally arise out of the sentiments of his author, and are perfectly conformable to the character and circumstances of the speaker.

I shall close this review with Mr. Congreve, who has translated the petition of Priam to Achilles for the body of his son Hector, together with the lamentations of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen.

Homer represents the unfortunate king of Troy, as entering unobserved into the tent of Achilles: and illustrates the surprise which arose in that chief and his attendants, upon the first discovery of Priam, by the following simile:

Ως δ' οταν ανδρ' ατη πυκινη λαβη, ος τ' ενι παλρῃ
Φωτα καλακλεινας, αλλων εξικελο δημον,
Ανδρος ες αφνειη δαμβος δ' εχει εισοροωντας·
Ως Αχιλευς δαμβησεν, ιδων Πριαμον δεοειδεα·
xxiv. 480.

Nothing can be more languid and inelegant than the manner in which Congreve has rendered this passage:

But as a wretch who has a murder done,
And seeking refuge, does from justice run;
Ent'ring some house in haste where he's unknown,
Creates amazement in the lookers-on:
So did Achilles gaze, surpris'd to see
The godlike Priam's royal misery. *Congreve.*

But Pope has raised the same thought with his usual grace and spirit:

As when a wretch, who, conscious of his crime,
Pursu'd for murder, flies his native clime,
Just gains some frontier, breathless, pale, amaz'd!
All gaze, all wonder: thus Achilles gaz'd. *Pope.*

The speech of Priam is wonderfully pathetic and affecting. He tells Achilles, that, out of fifty sons he had one only remaining; and of him he was now unhappily bereaved by his sword. He conjures him, by his tenderness for his own father, to commiserate the most wretched of parents, who, by an uncommon severity of fate, was thus obliged to kiss those hands which were imbrued in the blood of his children:

τω νυν ειυεχ' ικανω νηας Αχαων,
Λυσομενος παρα σειο, φερω δ' απερεισι αποινα.
Αλλ' αιδειο θεους, Αχιλευ, αυτον τ' ελεησον,
Μνησαμενος σω πατρος· εγω δ' ελεεινοτερος περ,
Ετλην δ' οι ϐπω τις επιχθονιος ϐροτος αλλος,
Ανδρος παιδοφονοιο προτι ϛομα χειρ' ορεγεσθαι.
v. 501.

These moving lines Mr. Congreve has debased into the lowest and most unaffecting prose:

For his sake only I am hither come;
Rich gifts I bring, and wealth, an endless sum;
All to redeem that fatal prize you won,
A worthless ransom for so brave a son.
Fear the just gods, Achilles, and on me
With pity look; think you your father see:
Such as I am, he is: alone in this,
I can no equal have in miseries;
Of all mankind most wretched and forlorn,
Bow'd with such weight as never has been borne;
Reduc'd to kneel and pray to you, from whom
The spring and source of all my sorrows come;
With gifts to court mine and my country's bane,
And kiss those hands which have my children slain,
Congreve.

Nothing could compensate the trouble of labouring through these heavy and tasteless rhymes, but the pleasure of being relieved at the end of them with a more lively prospect of poetry:

For him thro' hostile camps I bent my way,
For him thus prostrate at thy feet I lay;
Large gifts proportion'd to thy wrath I bear;
O hear the wretched, and the gods revere!
Think of thy father, and this face behold!
See him in me, as helpless and as old!
Tho' not so wretched: there he yields to me,
The first of men in sov'reign misery;
Thus forc'd to kneel, thus grov'ling to embrace
The scourge and ruin of my realm and race:
Suppliant my children's murd'rer to implore,
And kiss those hands yet reeking with their gore. *Pope.*

Achilles having, at length, consented to restore the dead body of Hector, Priam conducts it to his palace. It is there placed in funeral pomp, at the same time that mournful dirges are sung over the corpse, intermingled with the lamentations of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen:

τον μεν επειτα
Τρηξις εν λεχεεσσι θεσαν, παρα δ' εισαν αοιδους,
Θρηνων εξαρχους οιτε γοωεσσαν αοιδην
Οι μεν αρ' εθρηνεον, επι δε γεναχοντο γυναικες. v.719.

There is something extremely solemn and affecting in Homer's description of this scene of sorrow. A translator who was touched with the least spark of poetry, could not, one should imagine, but rise beyond himself, in copying after so noble an original. It has not, however, been able to elevate Mr. Congreve above his usual flatness of numbers:

then laid
With care the body on a sumptuous bed,
And round about were skilful singers plac'd,
Who wept and sigh'd, and in sad notes express'd
Their moan: All in a chorus did agree
Of universal mournful harmony. *Congreve.*

It would be the highest injustice to the following lines to quote them in opposition to those of Mr. Congreve: I produce them, as marked with a vein of poetry much superior even to the original:

They weep, and place him on a bed of state
A melancholy choir attend around
With plaintive sighs, and music's solemn sound:
Alternately they sing, alternate flow
Th' obedient tears, melodious in their woe;
While deeper sorrows groan from each full heart,
And nature speaks at ev'ry pause of art. *Pope.*

Thus, Euphronius, I have brought before you some of the most renowned of our British bards, contending, as it were, for the prize of poetry: and there can be no debate to whom it justly belongs. Mr. Pope seems, indeed, to have raised our numbers to the highest possible perfection of strength and harmony: and, I fear, all the praise

that the best succeeding poets can expect, as to their versification, will be, that they have happily imitated his manner. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER LIII.

TO ORONTES.

July 2, 1741.

Your letter found me just upon my return from an excursion into Berkshire, where I had been paying a visit to a friend who is drinking the waters at Sunning-Hill. In one of my morning rides over that delightful country, I accidentally passed through a little village, which afforded me much agreeable meditation; as in times to come, perhaps, it will be visited by the lovers of the polite arts, with as much veneration as Virgil's tomb, or any other celebrated spot of antiquity. The place I mean is Binfield, where the poet to whom I am indebted (in common with every reader of taste) for so much exquisite entertainment, spent the earliest part of his youth. I will not scruple to confess, that I looked upon the scene where he planned some of those beautiful performances which first recommended him to the notice of the world, with a degree of enthusiasm; and could not but consider the ground as sacred that was impressed with the footsteps of a genius that undoubtedly does the highest honour to our age and nation.

The situation of mind in which I found myself, upon this occasion, suggested to my remembrance a passage in Tully, which I thought I never so thoroughly entered into the spirit of before. That noble author, in one of his philosophical conversation-pieces, introduces his friend Atticus as observing the pleasing effect which scenes of this nature are wont to have upon one's mind: *Movemur enim* (says that polite Roman) *nescio quo pacto, locis ipsis, in quibus eorum, quos diligimus aut admiramur, adsunt, vestigia. Me quidem ipsæ illæ nostræ Athenæ, non tam*

operibus magnificis exquisitisque antiquorum artibus delectant, quam recordatione summorum virorum, ubi quisque habitare, ubi sedere, ubi disputare sit solitus.

Thus, you see, I could defend myself by an example of great authority, were I in danger, upon this occasion, of being ridiculed as a romantic visionary. But I am too well acquainted with the refined sentiments of Orontes, to be under any apprehension he will condemn the impressions I have here acknowledged. On the contrary, I have often heard you mention, with approbation, a circumstance of this kind which is related of Silius Italicus. The annual ceremonies which that poet performed at Virgil's sepulchre, gave you a more favourable opinion of his taste, you confessed, than any thing in his works was able to raise.

It is certain, that some of the greatest names of antiquity have distinguished themselves by the high reverence they shewed to the poetical character. Scipio, you may remember, desired to be laid in the same tomb with Ennius: and I am inclined to pardon that successful madman Alexander many of his extravagancies, for the generous regard he paid to the memory of Pindar, at the sacking of Thebes.

There seems, indeed, to be something in poetry, that raises the possessors of that very singular talent far higher in the estimation of the world in general, than those who excel in any other of the refined arts. And, accordingly, we find that poets have been distinguished by antiquity with the most remarkable honours. Thus Homer, we are told, was deified at Smyrna; as the citizens of Mytilene stamped the image of Sappho upon their public coin: Anacreon received a solemn invitation to spend his days at Athens, and Hipparchus, the son of Pisistratus, fitted out a splendid vessel in order to transport him thither: and when Virgil came into the theatre at Rome, the whole audience rose up and saluted him with the same respect as they would have paid to Augustus himself.

Painting, one should imagine, has the fairest pretension of rivalling her sister art in the number of admirers;

and yet, where Apelles is mentioned once, Homer is celebrated a thousand times. Nor can this be accounted for by urging, that the works of the latter are still extant, while those of the former have perished long since: for is not Milton's Paradise Lost more universally esteemed than Raphael's cartoons?

The truth, I imagine, is, there are more who are natural judges of the harmony of numbers, than of the grace of proportions. One meets with but few who have not, in some degree at least, a tolerable ear; but a judicious eye is a far more uncommon possession. For as words are the universal medium which all men employ in order to convey their sentiments to each other, it seems a just consequence that they should be more generally formed for relishing and judging of performances in that way: whereas the art of representing ideas by means of lines and colours, lies more out of the road of common use, and is, therefore, less adapted to the taste of the general run of mankind.

I hazard this observation, in the hopes of drawing from you your sentiments upon a subject, in which no man is more qualified to decide: as, indeed, it is to the conversation of Orontes that I am indebted for the discovery of many refined delicacies in the imitative arts, which, without his judicious assistance, would have lain concealed to me with other common observers. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LIV.

TO PHIDIPPUS.

I AM by no means surprised that the interview you have lately had with Cleanthes, has given you a much lower opinion of his abilities than what you had before conceived: and since it has raised your curiosity to know my sentiments of his character, you shall have them with all that freedom you may justly expect.

I have always then considered Cleanthes as possessed of the most extraordinary talents; but his talents are of a kind, which can only be exerted upon uncommon occasions. They are formed for the greatest depths of business and affairs; but absolutely out of all size for the shallows of ordinary life. In circumstances that require the most profound reasonings, in incidents that demand the most penetrating politics, there Cleanthes would shine with supreme lustre. But view him in any situation inferior to these; place him where he cannot raise admiration, and he will, most probably, sink into contempt. Cleanthes, in short, wants nothing but the addition of certain minute accomplishments, to render him a finished character: but, being wholly destitute of those little talents which are necessary to render a man useful or agreeable in the daily commerce of the world, those great abilities which he possesses lie unobserved or neglected.

He often, indeed, gives one occasion to reflect how necessary it is to be master of a sort of under-qualities, in order to set off and recommend those of a superior nature. To know how to descend with grace and ease into ordinary occasions, and to fall in with the less important parties and purposes of mankind, is an art of more general influence, perhaps, than is usually imagined.

If I were to form, therefore, a youth for the world, I should certainly endeavour to cultivate in him these secondary qualifications, and train him up to an address in these lower arts, which render a man agreeable in conversation, or useful to the innocent pleasures and accommodations of life. A general skill and taste of this kind, with moderate abilities, will, in most instances, I believe, prove more successful in the world than a much higher degree of capacity without them. I am, &c.

LETTER LV.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

July 17, 1730.

If the temper and turn of Timanthes had not long prepared me for what has happened, I should have received your account of his death with more surprise; but I suspected, from our earliest acquaintance, that his sentiments and disposition would lead him into a satiety of life, much sooner than nature would, probably, carry him to the end of it. When unsettled principles fall in with a constitutional gloominess of mind, it is no wonder the *tædium vitæ* should gain daily strength, till it pushes a man to seek relief against this most desperate of all distempers, from the point of a sword, or the bottom of a river.

But to learn to accommodate our taste to that portion of happiness which Providence has set before us, is, of all the lessons of philosophy, surely the most necessary. High and exquisite gratifications are not consistent with the appointed measures of humanity: and, perhaps, if we would fully enjoy the relish of our being, we should rather consider the miseries we escape, than too nicely examine the intrinsic worth of the happiness we possess. It is, at least, the business of true wisdom, to bring together every circumstance which may light up a flame of cheerfulness in the mind: and though we must be insensible if it should perpetually burn with the same unvaried brightness, yet prudence should preserve it as a sacred fire which is never to be totally extinguished.

I am persuaded this disgust of life is frequently indulged out of a principle of mere vanity. It is esteemed as a mark of uncommon refinement, and as placing a man above the ordinary level of his species, to seem superior to the vulgar feelings of happiness. True good sense, however, most certainly consists not in despising, but in managing our stock of life to the best advantage; as a cheerful acquiescence in the measures of Providence is one of the strongest symptoms of a well-constituted

mind. Self-weariness is a circumstance that ever attends folly: and to contemn our being is the greatest, and, indeed, the peculiar, infirmity of human nature. It is a noble sentiment which Tully puts into the mouth of Cato, in his treatise upon old age: *Non lubet mihi* (says that venerable Roman) *deplorare vitam, quod multi, et ii docti sæpè fecerunt; neque me vixisse pœnitet: quoniam ita vixi, ut non frustrà me natum existimem.*

It is in the power, indeed, of but a very small proportion of mankind, to act the same glorious part that afforded such high satisfaction to this distinguished patriot: but the number is yet far more inconsiderable of those who cannot, in any station, secure to themselves a sufficient fund of complacency to render life justly valuable. Who is it that is placed out of the reach of the highest of all gratifications, those of the generous affections; and that cannot provide for his own happiness by contributing something to the welfare of others? As this disease of the mind generally breaks out with most violence in those who are supposed to be endowed with a greater delicacy of taste and reason, than is the usual allotment of their fellow-creatures, one may ask them, Whether there is any satiety in the pursuits of useful knowledge? or, if one can ever be weary of benefiting mankind? Will not the fine arts supply a lasting feast to the mind? Or can there be wanting a pleasurable employment, so long as there remains even one advantageous truth to be discovered or confirmed? To complain that life has no joys, while there is a single creature whom we can relieve by our bounty, assist by our counsels, or enliven by our presence, is to lament the loss of that which we possess, and is just as rational as to die of thirst with the cup in our hands. But the misfortune is, when a man is settled into a habit of receiving all his pleasures from the mere selfish indulgencies, he wears out of his mind the relish of every nobler enjoyment, at the same time that his powers of the sensual kind are growing more languid by each repetition. It is no wonder, therefore, he should fill up the measure of his gratifications, long before he has completed the circle of his

duration; and either wretchedly sit down the remainder of his days in discontent, or rashly throw them up in despair. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER LVI.

TO TIMOCLEA.

October 1, 1743.

CERTAINLY, Timoclea, you have a passion for the marvellous beyond all power of gratification. There is not an adventurer throughout the whole regions of chivalry, with whom you are unacquainted; and have wandered through more folios than would furnish out a decent library. Mine, at least, you have totally exhausted; and have so cleared my shelves of knights-errant, that I have not a single hero remaining that ever was regaled in bower or hall. But, though you have drained me of my whole stock of romance, I am not entirely unprovided for your entertainment; and have enclosed a little Grecian fable, for your amusement, which was lately transmitted to me by one of my friends. He discovered it, he tells me, among some old manuscripts, which have been long, it seems, in the possession of his family; and, if you will rely upon his judgment, it is a translation by Spenser's own hand.

This is all the history I have to give you of the following piece; the *genuineness* of which I leave to be settled between my friend and the critics; and am, &c.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LYCON AND EUPHORMIUS.

I.

DEEM not, ye plaintive crew, that suffer wrong,
Ne thou, O man! who deal'st the tort misween
The equal gods, who heav'n's sky mansions throng,
(Though viewless to the eyne they distant sheen)
Spectators reckless of our actions been.
Turning the volumes of grave sages old,
Where auncient saws in fable may be seen,
This truth I fond in paynim tale enroll'd,
Which for ensample drad my Muse shall here unfold.

II.

What time Arcadia's flowret vallies fam'd
Pelasgus, first of monarchs old, obey'd,
There wonn'd a wight, and Lycon was he nam'd,
Unaw'd by conscience, of no gods afraid,
Ne justice rul'd his heart, ne mercy sway'd.
Some held him kin to that abhorred race,
Which heav'n's high tow'rs with mad emprize assay'd;
And some his cruel lynage did ytrace
From fell Erynnis join'd in Pluto's dire embrace.

III.

But he, perdy, far other tale did feign,
And claim'd alliaunce with the sisters nine;
And deem'd himself (what deems not pride so vain?)
The peerless paragon of wit divine,
Vaunting that every foe should rue its tine.
Right doughty wight! yet, sooth, withouten smart,
All pow'rless fell the losel's shafts malign:
'Tis virtue's arm to wield wit's heav'nly dart,
Point its keen barb with force, and send it to the heart.

IV.

One only impe he had, Pastora hight,
Whose sweet amenaunce pleas'd each shepherd's eye:
Yet pleas'd she not base Lycon's evil spright,
Tho' blame in her not malice moten spy,
Clear, without spot, as summer's cloudless sky.
Hence poets feign'd, Lycean Pan array'd
In Lycon's form, enflamed with passion high,
Deceiv'd her mother in the covert glade;
And from the stol'n embrace ysprong the heav'nly maid.

V.

Thus fabling they: meanwhile the damsel fair
A shepherd youth remark'd, as o'er the plain
She deftly pac'd elong so debonair:
Seem'd she as one of Dian's chosen train,
Full many a fond excuse he knew to feign,
In sweet converse to while with her the day,
'Till love unwares his heedless heart did gain,
Nor dempt he, simple wight, no mortal may
The blinded God once harbour'd, when he list, foresay.

VI.

Now much he meditates if yet to speak,
And now resolves his passion to conceal:
But sure, quoth he, my seely heart will break
If aye I smother what I aye must feel
At length by hope embolden'd to reveal.
The lab'ring secret dropped from his tong.
Whiles frequent singults check'd his falt'ring tale,
In modest wise her head Pastora hong:
For never maid more chaste inspired shepherd's song.

VII.

What needs me to recount in long detail
The tender parley which these lemans held?
How oft he vow'd his love her ne'er should fail;
How oft the stream from forth her eyne outwell'd,
Doubting if constancy yet ever dwell'd
In heart of youthful wight: suffice to know,
Each rising doubt he in her bosome quell'd,
So parted they, more blithsome both, I trow:
For rankling love conceal'd, me seems, is deadly woe.

VIII.

Eftsoons to Lycon swift the youth did fare,
(Lagg'd ever youth when Cupid urg'd his way?)
And straight his gentle purpose did declare,
And sooth the mount'naunce of his herds display.
Ne Lycon meant his suiten to foresay:
"Be thine Pastora (quoth the masker sly)
"And twice two thousand sheep her dow'r shall pay."
Beat then the lover's heart with joyaunce high;
Ne dempt that aught his bliss could now betray,
Ne guess'd that foul deceit in Lycon's bosome lay.

IX.

So forthe he yode to seek his rev'rend sire
(The good Euphormius shepherds him did call)
How sweet Pastora did his bosome fire,
Her worth, her promis'd flocks, he tolden all.
"Ah! nere, my son, let Lycon thee enthrall,
(Reply'd the sage in wise experience old)
"Smooth is his tongue, but full of guile withal,
In promise faithless, and in vaunting bold:
Ne ever lamb of his will bleat within thy fold."

X.

With words prophetic thus Euphormius spake!
And fact confirm'd what wisdom thus foretold.
Full many a mean devise did Lycon make,
The hoped day of spousal to withhold,
Framing new trains when nought mote serve his old.
Nathless he vow'd, Cyllene, cloud-topt hill,
Should sooner down the lowly delve be roll'd,
Than he his plighted promise nould fulfill;
But when, perdy, or where, the caitiff sayen nill.

XI.

Whiles thus the tedious suns had journey'd round,
Ne ought mote now the lovers' hearts divide,
Ne trust was there, ne truth in Lycon found;
The maid with matron Juno for her guide,
The youth by *Concord* led in secret hy'd
To Hymen's sacred fane: the honest deed
Each god approv'd, and close the bands were ty'd.
Certes, till happier moments should succeed,
No prying eyne they ween'd their emprize mote areed.

XII.

But prying eyne of Lycon 'twas in vain
(Right practick in disguise) to hope beware.
He trac'd their covert steps to Hymen's fane,
And joy'd to find them in his long-laid snare.
Algates, in semblaunt ire, he 'gan to swear,
And roaren loud as in displeasaunce high;
Then out he hurlen forth his daughter fair,
Forelore, the houseless child of misery,
Expos'd to killing cold, and pinching penury.

XIII.

Ah! whither now shall sad Pastora wend,
To want abandon'd, and by wrongs oppress'd?
Who shall the wretched outcast's teen befriend?
Lives mercy then, if not in parent's breast?
Yes, Mercy lives, the gentle goddess blest,
At Jove's right hand, to Jove for ever dear.
Aye at his feet she pleads the cause distrest,
To sorrow's plains she turns his equal ear,
And wafts to heav'ns star-throne fair vertue's silent tear.

XIV.

Twas SHE that bade Euphormius quell each thought
That well mote rise to check his gen'rous aid.
Tho' high the torts which Lycon him had wrought,
Tho' few the flocks his humble pastures fed;
When as he learn'd Pastora's hapless sted,
His breast humane with wonted pity flows,
He op'd his gates, the naked exile led
Beneath his roof; a decent drapet throws
O'er her cold limbs, and sooths her undeserved woes.

XV.

Now loud-tongu'd Rumour bruited round the tale:
Th' astoned swains uneath could credence give,
That in Arcadia's unambitious vale
A faytor false as Lycon e'er did live,
But Jove (who in high heav'n does mortals prive,
And ev'ry deed in golden ballance weighs)
To earth his flaming charet baden drive,
And down descends, enwrapt in peerless blaze,
To deal forth guerdon meet to good and evil ways.

XVI.

Where Eurymanthus, crown'd with many a wood,
His silver stream through dasy'd vales does lead,
Stretch'd on the flow'ry marge, in reckless mood,
Proud Lycon sought by charm of jocund reed
To lull the dire remorse of tortious deed.
Him Jove accosts, in rev'rend semblaunce dight
Of good Euphormius, and 'gan mild areed
Of compact oft confirm'd, of fay yplight,
Of nature's tender tye, of sacred rule of right.

XVII.

With lofty eyne, half loth to looke so low,
Him Lycon view'd, and with swoll'n surquedry
'Gan rudely treat his sacred old: When now
Forth stood the God confest that rules the sky,
In sudden sheen of drad divinity:
"And know false man," the Lord of thunders said,
"Not unobserv'd by Heav'n's all persent eye
"Thy cruel deeds: nor shall be unappay'd:
"Go! be in form that best beseems thy thews, array'd."

XVIII.

Whiles yet he spake, th' affrayed trembling wight
Transmew'd to blatant beast, with hidious howl
Rush'd headlong forth, in well-deserved plight.
'Midst dragons, minotaurs, and fiends to prowl,
A wolf in form as erst a wolf in soul!
To Pholoe, forest wild, he hy'd away,
The horrid haunt of savage monsters foul.
There helpless innocence is still his prey,
Thief of the bleating fold, and shepherd's dire dismay.

XIX.

Then Jove to good Euphormius' cot did wend,
Where peaceful dwelt the man of vertue high,
Each shepherd's praise and eke each shepherd's friend,
In ev'ry act of sweet humanity,
Him Jove approaching in mild majesty,
Greeted all hail! then bade him join the throng
Of glit'rand lights that gild the glowing sky.
There shepherds nightly view his orb yhong,
Where bright he shines eterne, the brightest stars among.

LETTER LVII.

TO CLYTANDER.

Feb. 8, 1789.

If there was any thing in my former letter inconsistent with that esteem which is justly due to the ancients, I desire to retract it in this, and disavow every expression which might seem to give precedency to the moderns in works of genius. I am so far, indeed, from entertaining the sentiments you impute to me, that I have often endeavoured to account for that superiority which is so visible in the compositions of their poets; and have

frequently assigned their religion as in the number of those causes which probably concurred to give them this remarkable pre-eminence. That enthusiasm which is so essential to every true artist in the poetical way, was considerably heightened and inflamed by the whole turn of their sacred doctrines; and the fancied presence of their Muses had almost as wonderful an effect upon their thoughts and language, as if they had been really and divinely inspired. Whilst all nature was supposed to swarm with divinities, and every oak and fountain was believed to be the residence of some presiding deity; what wonder if the poet was animated by the imagined influence of such exalted society, and found himself transported beyond the ordinary limits of sober humanity? The mind, when attended only by mere mortals of superior powers, is observed to rise in her strength; and her faculties open and enlarge themselves, when she acts in the view of those, for whom she has conceived a more than common reverence. But when the force of superstition moves in concert with the powers of imagination, and genius is inflamed by devotion, poetry must shine out in all her brighest perfection and splendor.

Whatever, therefore, the philosopher might think of the religion of his country, it was the interest of the poet to be thoroughly orthodox. If he gave up his creed, he must renounce his numbers; and there could be no inspiration where there were no Muses. This is so true, that it is in compositions of the poetical kind alone, that the ancients seem to have the principal advantage over the moderns: in every other species of writing, one might venture, perhaps, to assert, that these latter ages have, at least, equalled them. When I say so, I do not confine myself to the productions of our own nation, but comprehend, likewise, those of our neighbours: and with that extent, the observation will possibly hold true, even without an exception in favour of history and oratory.

But whatever may with justice be determined concerning that question; it is certain, at least, that the practice of all succeeding poets confirms the notion for which I am

principally contending. Though the altars of paganism have many ages since been thrown down, and groves are no longer sacred; yet the language of the poets has not changed with the religion of the times, but the gods of Greece and Rome are still adored in modern verse. Is not this a confession, that fancy is enlivened by superstition, and that the ancient bards catched their rapture from the old mythology? I will own, however, that I think there is something ridiculous in this unnatural adoption, and that a modern poet makes but an awkward figure with his antiquated gods. When the pagan system was sanctified by popular belief, a piece of machinery of that kind, as it had the air of probability, afforded a very striking manner of celebrating any remarkable circumstance, or raising any common one. But now that this superstition is no longer supported by vulgar opinion, it has lost its principal grace and efficacy, and seems to be, in general, the most cold and uninteresting method in which a poet can work up his sentiments. What, for instance, can be more unaffecting and spiritless, than the compliment which Boileau has paid to Louis XIV. on his famous passage over the Rhine? He represents the Naiads, you may remember, as alarming the god of that river, with an account of the march of the French monarch; upon which the river god assumes the appearance of an old experienced commander, and flies to a Dutch fort, in order to exhort the garrison to sally out and dispute the intended passage. Accordingly they range themselves in form of battle, with the Rhine at their head, who, after some vain efforts, observing Mars and Bellona on the side of the enemy, is so terrified with the view of those superior divinities, that he most gallantly runs away, and leaves the hero in quiet possession of his banks. I know not how far this may be relished by critics, or justified by custom; but as I am only mentioning my particular taste, I will acknowledge, that it appears to me extremely insipid and puerile.

I have not, however, so much of the spirit of Typhœus in me, as to make war upon the gods without restriction, and attempt to exclude them from their whole poetical

dominions. To represent natural, moral, or intellectual qualities and affections as persons, and appropriate to them those general emblems by which their powers and properties are usually typified in pagan theology, may be allowed as one of the most pleasing and graceful figures of poetical rhetoric. When Dryden, addressing himself to the month of May, as to a person, says,

For thee the Graces lead the dancing hours

one may consider him as speaking only in metaphor: and when such shadowy beings are thus just shewn to the imagination, and immediately withdrawn again, they certainly have a very powerful effect. But I can relish them no farther than as figures only: when they are extended in any serious composition beyond the limits of metaphor, and exhibited under all the various actions of real persons, I cannot but consider them as so many absurdities, which custom has unreasonably authorized. Thus Spenser, in one of his pastorals, represents the god of love as flying, like a bird, from bough to bough. A shepherd, who hears a rustling among the bushes, supposes it to be some game, and accordingly discharges his bow. Cupid returns the shot, and after several arrows had been mutually exchanged between them, the unfortunate swain discovers whom it is he is contending with; but as he is endeavouring to make his escape, receives a desperate wound in the heel. This fiction makes the subject of a very pretty idyllium in one of the Greek poets, yet is extremely flat and disgusting as it is adopted by our British bard. And the reason of the difference is plain: in the former it is supported by a popular superstition; whereas no strain of imagination can give it the least air of probability, as it is worked up by the latter.

Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi. Hor.

I must confess, at the same time, that the inimitable Prior has introduced this fabulous scheme with such uncommon grace, and has paid so many genteel compliments to his mistress, by the assistance of Venus and Cupid, that one is carried off from observing the impropriety

of this machinery, by the pleasing address with which he manages it; and I never read his tender poems of this kind, without applying to him what Seneca somewhere says upon a similar occasion: *Major ille est qui judicium abstulit, quam qui meruit.*

To speak my sentiments in one word, I would leave the gods in full possession of allegorical and burlesque poems: in all others I would never suffer them to make their appearance in person, and as agents, but to enter only in simile, or allusion. It is thus Waller, of all our poets, has most happily employed them; and his application of the story of Daphne and Apollo will serve as an instance in what manner the ancient mythology may be adopted with the utmost propriety and beauty. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LVIII.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

Aug 8, 1741.

I KNOW not in what disposition of mind this letter may find you: but I am sure you will not preserve your usual cheerfulness of temper, when I tell you that poor Hydaspes died last night.

I will not at this time attempt to offer that consolation to you, of which I stand in so much need myself. But may it not somewhat abate the anxiety of our mutual grief, to reflect, that however considerable our own loss is, yet, with respect to himself, it scarce deserves to be lamented that he arrived so much earlier at the grave than his years and his health seemed to promise? For who, my friend, that has any experience of the world, would wish to extend his duration to old age? What, indeed, is length of days but to survive all one's enjoyments, and perhaps, to survive even one's very self? I have somewhere met with an ancient inscription founded upon this sentiment, which infinitely pleased me. It was fixed upon a bath, and contained an imprecation in the following terms, against any one who should attempt to remove the building:

QVISQVIS. HOC. SVSTVLERIT.
AVT. IVSSERIT.
VLTIMVS. SVORVM. MORIATVR.

The thought is conceived with great delicacy and justness, as there cannot, perhaps, be a sharper calamity to a generous mind, than to see itself stand single amidst the ruins of whatever rendered the world most desirable.

Instances of the sort I am lamenting, while the impressions remain fresh upon the mind, are sufficient to damp the gayest hopes, and chill the warmest ambition. When one sees a person in the full bloom of life, thus destroyed by one sudden blast, one cannot but consider all the distant schemes of mankind as the highest folly.

It is amazing indeed that a creature such as man, with so many memorials around him of the shortness of his duration, and who cannot ensure to himself even the next moment, should yet plan designs which run far into futurity. The business however of life must be carried on; and it is necessary, for the purpose of human affairs, that mankind should resolutely act upon very precarious contingencies. Too much reflection, therefore, is as inconsistent with the appointed measures of our station as too little; and there cannot be a less desirable turn of mind, than one that is influenced by an over-refined philosophy. At least it is by considerations of this sort, that I endeavour to call off my thoughts from pursuing too earnestly those reasonings, which the occasion of this letter is apt to suggest. This use, however, one may justly make of the present accident, that whilst it contracts the circle of friendship, it should render it so much the more valuable to *us*, w' o yet walk within its limits. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LIX.

TO HORTENSIUS.

May 4, 1740.

If the ingenious piece you communicated to me requires any farther touches of your pencil, I must acknowledge the truth to be, what you are inclined to suspect, that my friendship has imposed upon my judgment. But though, in the present instance, your delicacy seems far too refined, yet, in general, I must agree with you, that works of the most permanent kind are not the effect of a lucky moment, nor struck out at a single heat. The best performances, indeed, have generally cost the most labour; and that ease, which is so essential to fine writing, has seldom been attained without repeated and severe corrections: *Ludentis speciem dabit et torquebitur*, is a motto that may be applied, I believe, to most successful authors of genius. With as much facility as the numbers of the natural Prior seem to have flowed from him, they were the result (if I am not misinformed) of much application: and a friend of mine, who undertook to transcribe one of the noblest performances of the finest genius that this, or perhaps any age can boast, has often assured me, that there is not a single line, as it is now published, which stands in conformity with the original manuscript. The truth is, every sentiment has its peculiar expression, and every word its precise place, which do not always immediately present themselves, and generally demand frequent trials before they can be properly adjusted; not to mention the more important difficulties, which necessarily occur in settling the plan, and regulating the higher parts which compose the structure of a finished work.

Those, indeed, who know what pangs it cost even the most fertile genius to be delivered of a just and regular production, might be inclined, perhaps, to cry out, with the most ancient of authors, *Oh! that mine adversary had written a book!* A writer of refined taste has the continual mortification to find himself incapable of taking entire possession of that ideal beauty, which warms and fills his imagination. His conceptions still rise above all the powers of his art; and he can but faintly copy out those images of perfection, which are impressed upon his mind. Never was any thing, says Tully, more beautiful than the Venus of Apelles, or the Jove of Phidias: yet were they by no means equal to those high notions

of beauty which animated the geniuses of those wonderful artists. In the same manner, he observes, the great masters of oratory imaged to themselves a certain perfection of eloquence, which they could only contemplate in idea, but in vain attempted to draw out in expression. Perhaps no author ever perpetuated his reputation, who could write up to the full standard of his own judgment: and I am persuaded that he, who, upon a survey of his compositions, can, with entire complacency, pronounce them good, will hardly find the world join with him in the same favourable sentence.

The most judicious of all poets, the inimitable Virgil, used to resemble his productions to those of that animal, who, agreeably to the notions of the ancients, was supposed to bring her young into the world, a mere rude and shapeless mass: he was obliged to retouch them again and again, he acknowledged, before they acquired their proper form and beauty. Accordingly, we are told, that after having spent eleven years in composing his Æneid, he intended to have set apart three more for the revisal of that glorious performance. But being prevented, by his last sickness, from giving those finishing touches, which his exquisite judgment conceived to be still necessary, he directed his friends Tucca and Varius to burn the noblest poem that ever appeared in the Roman language. In the same spirit of delicacy, Mr. Dryden tells us, that, had he taken more time in translating this author, he might, possibly, have succeeded better; but never, he assures us, could he have succeeded so well as to have satisfied himself.

In a word, Hortensius, I agree with you, that there is nothing more difficult than to fill up the character of an author, who proposes to raise a just and lasting admiration; who is not contented with those little transient flashes of applause, which attend the ordinary race of writers, but considers only how he may shine out to posterity: who extends his views beyond the present generation, and cultivates those productions which are to flourish in future ages. What Sir William Temple observes of poetry, may be applied to every other work, where

taste and imagination are concerned. "It requires the "greatest contraries to compose it; a genius both pene- "trating and solid; an expression both strong and deli- "cate. There must be a great agitation of mind to in- "vent, a great calm to judge and correct: there must "be, upon the same tree, and at the same time, both "flower and fruit." But though I know you would not value yourself upon any performance, wherein these very opposite and very singular qualities were not conspicuous; yet, I must remind you, at the same time, that when the file ceases to polish, it must necessarily weaken. You will remember, therefore, that there is a medium between the immoderate caution of that orator, who was three olympiads in writing a single oration, and the extravagant expedition of that poet, whose funeral pile was composed of his own numberless productions. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LX.

TO PALEMON.

May 28, 1739.

I WRITE this while Cleora is angling by my side, under the shade of a spreading elm, that hangs over the banks of our river. A nightingale, more harmonious even than Strada's, is serenading us from a hawthorn bush, which smiles with all the gaiety of youth and beauty; while

> gentle gales,
> Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
> Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
> Those balmy spoils. *Milton.*

Whilst I am thus enjoying the innocent luxury of this vernal delight, I look back upon those scenes of turbulence, wherein I was once engaged, with more than ordinary distaste: and despise myself for ever having entertained so mean a thought as to be rich and great. One of our monarchs used to say, "that he looked upon those to be "the happiest men in the nation, whose fortune had "placed them in the country, above a high-constable,

"and below the trouble of a justice of peace." It is in a mediocrity of this happy kind that I here pass my life: with a fortune far above the necessity of engaging in the drudgery of business, and with desires much too humble to have any relish for the splendid baits of ambition.

You must not, however, imagine that I affect the stoic, or pretend to have eradicated all my passions: the sum of my philosophy amounts to no more than to cherish none but such as I may easily and innocently gratify, and to banish all the rest as so many bold intruders upon my repose. I endeavour to practise the maxim of a French poet, by considering every thing that is not within my possession, as not worth having:

pour m' assûrer le seul bien
Que l' on doit estimer au monde,
Tout ce que je n' ai pas, je le compte pour rien.

Is it not possible, Palemon, to reconcile you to these unaspiring sentiments, and to lower your flight to the humble level of genuine happiness? Let me, at least, prevail with you, to spare a day or two from the *certamina divitiarum* (as Horace I think calls them,) from those splendid contests in which you are engaged, just to take a view of the sort of life we lead in the country. If there is any thing wanting to complete the happiness I here find, it is that you are so seldom a witness to it. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LXI.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

July 3, 1744.

The beauties of style seem to be generally considered as below the attention both of an author and a reader. I know not, therefore, whether I may venture to acknowledge, that, among the numberless graces of your late performance, I particularly admired that strength and elegance, with which you have enforced and adorned the noblest sentiments.

There was a time, however, (and it was a period of the

truest refinements) when an excellence of this kind was esteemed in the number of the politest accomplishments; as it was the ambition of some of the greatest names of antiquity to distinguish themselves in the improvements of their native tongue. Julius Cæsar, who was not only the greatest hero, but the finest gentleman, that ever, perhaps, appeared in the world, was desirous of adding this talent to his other most shining endowments; and, we are told, he studied the language of his country with much application, as we are sure he possessed it in its highest elegance. What a loss, Euphronius, is it to the literary world, that the treatise which he wrote upon this subject is perished with many other valuable works of that age! But though we are deprived of the benefit of his observations, we are happily not without an instance of their effects; and his own memoirs will ever remain as the best and brightest exemplar not only of true generalship but of fine writing. He published them, indeed, only as materials for the use of those who should be disposed to enlarge upon that remarkable period of the Roman story; yet the purity and gracefulness of his style were such, that no judicious writer durst attempt to touch the subject after him.

Having produced so illustrious an instance in favour of an art for which I have ventured to admire you, it would be impertinent to add a second, were I to cite a less authority than that of the immortal Tully. This noble author, in his dialogue concerning the celebrated Roman orators, frequently mentions it as a very high encomium, that they possessed the elegance of their native language; and introduces Brutus as declaring, that he should prefer the honour of being esteemed the great master and improver of Roman eloquence, even to the glory of many triumphs.

But to add reason to precedent, and to view this art in its use as well as its dignity, will it not be allowed of some importance, when it is considered, that eloquence is one of the most considerable auxiliaries of truth? Nothing, indeed, contributes more to subdue the mind to the force of reason, than her being supported by the

powerful assistance of masculine and vigorous oratory. As, on the contrary, the most legitimate arguments may be disappointed of that success they deserve, by being attended with a spiritless and enfeebled expression. Accordingly, that most elegant of writers, the inimitable Mr. Addison, observes, in one of his essays, that "there "is as much difference between comprehending a thought "clothed in Cicero's language, and that of an ordinary "writer, as between seeing an object by the light of a "taper and the light of the sun.

It is surely then a very strange conceit of the celebrated Malbranche, who seems to think the pleasure which arises from perusing a well-written piece, is of the criminal kind, and has its source in the weakness and effeminacy of the human heart. A man must have a very uncommon severity of temper indeed, who can find any thing to condemn in adding charms to truth, and gaining the heart by captivating the ear: in uniting roses with the thorns of science, and joining pleasure with instruction.

The truth is, the mind is delighted with a fine style, upon the same principle that it prefers regularity to confusion, and beauty to deformity. A taste of this sort is, indeed, so far from being a mark of any depravity of our nature, that I should rather consider it as an evidence, in some degree, of the moral rectitude of its constitution; as it is a proof of its retaining some relish, at least, of harmony and order.

One might be apt, indeed, to suspect, that certain writers amongst us had considered all beauties of this sort in the same gloomy view with Malbranche: or, at least, that they avoided every refinement in style, as unworthy a lover of truth and philosophy. Their sentiments are sunk by the lowest expressions, and seem condemned to the first curse, of *creeping upon the ground all the days of their life*. Others, on the contrary, mistake pomp for dignity; and, in order to raise their expressions above vulgar language, lift them up beyond common apprehensions; esteeming it (one should imagine) a mark of their genius, that it requires some ingenuity to penetrate their

meaning. But how few writers, like Euphronius, know to hit that true medium which lies between those distant extremes? How seldom do we meet with an author whose expressions, like those of my friend, are glowing, but not glaring, whose metaphors are natural, but not common, whose periods are harmonious, but not poetical; in a word, whose sentiments are *well set*, and shewn to the understanding in their truest and most advantageous lustre. I am, &c.

LETTER LXII.

TO ORONTES.

I INTENDED to have closed with your proposal, and passed a few weeks with you at * * *; but some unlucky affairs have intervened, which will engage me, I fear, the remaining part of the season.

Among the amusements which the scene you are in affords, I should have esteemed the conversation of Timoclea as a very principal entertainment; and as I know you are fond of singular characters, I recommend that lady to your acquaintance.

Timoclea was once a beauty; but ill health, and worse fortune, have ruined those charms, which time would yet have spared. However, what has spoiled her for a mistress, has improved her as a companion; and she is far more conversable now, as she has much less beauty, than when I used to see her once a week triumphing in the drawing-room. For, as few women (whatever they may pretend) will value themselves upon their minds, while they can gain admirers by their persons, Timoclea never thought of charming by her wit, till she had no chance of making conquests by her beauty. She has seen a good deal of the world, and of the best company in it, as it is from thence she has derived whatever knowledge she possesses. You cannot, indeed, flatter her more, than by seeming to consider her as fond of reading and retirement. But the truth is, nature formed her for the joys of

society; and she is never so thoroughly pleased as when she has a circle round her.

It is upon those occasions she appears to full advantage; as I never knew any person who was endowed with the talents for conversation to a higher degree. If I were disposed to write the characters of the age, Timoclea is the first person in the world to whose assistance I should apply. She has the happiest art of marking out the distinguishing cast of her acquaintance, that I ever met with; and I have known her, in an afternoon's conversation, paint the manners with greater delicacy of judgment and strength of colouring than is to be found either in Theophrastus or Bruyere.

She has an inexhaustible fund of wit, but if I may venture to distinguish, where one knows not even how to define, I should say it is rather brilliant than strong. This talent renders her the terror of all her female acquaintance; yet she never sacrificed the absent, or mortified the present, merely for the sake of displaying the force of her satire: if any feel its sting, it is those only who first provoke it. Still, however, it must be owned, that her resentments are frequently without just foundation, and almost always beyond measure. But though she has much warmth, she has great generosity in her temper; and, with all her faults, she is well worth your knowing.

And now having given you this general plan of the strength and weakness of the place, I leave you to make your approaches as you shall see proper. I am, &c.

LETTER LXIII.

TO THE SAME.

I look upon verbal criticism as it is generally exercised, to be no better than a sort of learned legerdemain, by which the sense or nonsense of a passage is artfully conveyed away, and some other introduced in its stead,

as best suits with the purpose of the profound juggler. The dissertation you recommended to my perusal has but served to confirm me in these sentiments: for though I admired the ingenuity of the artist, I could not but greatly suspect the justness of an art, which can thus press any author into the service of any hypothesis.

I have sometimes amused myself with considering the entertainment it would afford to those ancients, whose works have had the honour to be attended by our commentators, could they rise out of their sepulchres, and peruse some of those curious conjectures, that have been raised upon their respective compositions. Were Horace, for instance, to read over only a few of those numberless restorers of his text, and expositors of his meaning, that have infested the republic of letters,—what a fund of pleasantry might he extract for a satire on critical erudition! How many harmless words would he see cruelly banished from their rightful possessions, merely because they happened to disturb some unmerciful philologist! On the other hand, he would, undoubtedly, smile at that penetrating sagacity, which has discovered meanings which never entered into his thoughts, and found out concealed allusions in his most plain and artless expressions.

One could not, I think, set the general absurdity of critical conjectures in a stronger light, than by applying them to something parallel in our own writers. If the English tongue should ever become a dead language, and our best authors be raised into the rank of classic writers, much of the force and propriety of their expressions, especially of such as turned upon humour, or alluded to any manners peculiar to the age, would inevitably be lost; or at best would be extremely doubtful. How would it puzzle, for instance, future commentators to explain Swift's epigram upon our musical contests! I imagine one might find them descanting upon that little humorous sally of our English Rabelais, in some such manner as this:

EPIGRAM ON THE FEUDS BETWEEN HANDEL AND BONONCINI.

Strange all this difference should be
'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

NOTES OF VARIOUS AUTHORS.

"*Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee*] I am persuaded "the poet gave it *Twiddle drum* and *Twiddle key*. To "*twiddle* signifies to make a certain ridiculous motion "with the fingers; what word, therefore, could be more "proper to express this epigram-writer's contempt of the "performances of those musicians, and of the folly of "his contemporaries in running into parties upon so ab-"surd an occasion? The *drum* was a certain martial in-"strument used in those times; as the word *key* is a tech-"nical term in music, importing the fundamental note "which regulates the whole composition. It means also "those little pieces of wood which the fingers strike against "in an organ, &c. in order to make the instrument sound. "The alteration here proposed is so *obvious* and *natural*, "that I am surprised none of the commentators hit upon "it before. *L. C. D.*"

"*Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.*] These words have "greatly embarrassed the critics, who are extremely ex-"pert in finding a difficulty where there is none. Tweedle-"dum and Tweedle-dee are, *most undoubtedly*, the names "of the two musicians; and though they are styled by "different appellations in the title of this epigram, yet "that is *no objection*; for it is well known that persons, "in those times, had more surnames than one. *S. M.*"

"Absurd! here is evidently an error of the press, for "there is not a single hint in all antiquity of the family "of the *Tweedle-dums* and *Tweedle-dees*. The learned "*S. M.* therefore nodded when he undertook to explain "this passage. The sense will be very plain, if we "read, with a small alteration, *Wheedle-Tom*, and *Waddle-*"*THE*; *THE* being a known contraction for Theodore, "as Tom is for Thomas. *Waddle* and *Wheedle* are like-"wise classical words. Thus Pope:

"As when a dab-chick *waddles* thro' the copse. *Dun.* ii. 59.
"Obliquely *waddling* to the mark in view. *Ib.* ii. 150.

"And though, indeed, I do not recollect to have met with "the verb *to wheedle* in any pure author, yet it is *plain* "that it was in use, since we find the participle *wheedling* "in an ancient tragedy composed about these times:

"A laughing, toying, *wheedling*, wimp'ring she
"Will make him amble on a gossip's message,
"And hold the distaff with a hand as patient
"As e'er did Hercules. *Jane Shore.*

"*Thomas* and *Theodore*, therefore, were *most certainly* "the christian names of these two musicians, to the con-"tractions of which the words *wheedle* and *waddle* are "added as characteristical of the persons and disposi-"tions of the men, the former implying that *Tom* was a "mean sycophant, and the latter that *THE* had an awk-"ward and ridiculous gait. *F. J. Z.*"

I know not, Orontes, how I shall escape your satire, for venturing to be thus free with a science which is some-times, I think, admitted into a share of your meditations: yet, tell me honestly, is not this a faithful specimen of the spirit and talents of the *general* class of critic-writers? Far am I, however, from thinking irreverently of those useful members of the republic of letters, who, with mo-desty and proper diffidence, have offered their assistance in throwing a light upon obscure passages in ancient au-thors. Even when this spirit breaks out in its highest pride and petulance of reformation, if it confines itself to classical enquiries, I can be contented with treating it only as an object of ridicule. But I must confess, when I find it, with an assured and confident air, supporting re-ligious or political doctrines upon the very uncertain foundation of various readings, forced analogies, and pre-carious conjectures, it is not without some difficulty I can suppress my indignation. Farewell. I am, &c.

LETTER LXIV.

TO PHILOTES.

Tunbridge, Aug. 4.

I THINK I promised you a letter from this place: yet have nothing more material to write than that I got safe hither. To any other man I should make an apology for troubling him with an information so trivial: but, among true friends there is nothing indifferent; and what would seem of no consequence to others, has, in intercourses of this nature, its weight and value. A by-stander, unacquainted with play, may fancy, perhaps, that the counters are of no more worth than they appear; but those who are engaged in the game, know they are to be considered at a higher rate. You see I draw my allusions from the scene before me: a propriety which the critics, I think, upon some occasions, recommend

I have often wondered what odd whim could first induce the healthy to follow the sick into places of this sort, and lay the scene of their diversions amidst the most wretched part of our species: one should imagine an hospital the last spot in the world, to which those who are in pursuit of pleasure would think of resorting. However, so it is, and by this means the company here furnish out a tragi-comedy of the most singular kind. While some are literally dying, others are expiring in metaphor; and, in one scene, you are presented with the real, and, in another, with the fantastical pains of mankind. An ignorant spectator might be apt to suspect, that each party was endeavouring to qualify itself for acting in the opposite character: for the infirm cannot labour more earnestly to recover the strength they have lost, than the robust to dissipate that which they possess. Thus the diseased pass not more anxious nights in their beds, than the healthy at the hazard-tables; and I frequently see a game at quadrille occasion as severe disquietudes as a fit of the gout. As for myself, I perform a sort of middle part in this motley drama; and am sometimes disposed to join with the invalids in envying the healthy, and

sometimes have spirits enough to mix with the gay in pitying the splenetic.

The truth is, I have found some benefit by the waters; but I shall not be so sanguine as to pronounce with certainty of their effects, till I see how they enable me to pass through the approaching winter. That season, you know, is the time of trial with me; and if I get over the next with more ease than the last, I shall think myself obliged to celebrate the nymph of these springs in grateful sonnet.

But let times and seasons operate as they may, there is one part of me over which they will have no power: and in all the changes of this uncertain constitution, my heart will ever continue fixed and firmly yours. I am, &c.

LETTER LXV.

TO ORONTES.

May 6, 1735.

LET others consider you for those ample possessions you enjoy: suffer me to say, that it is your application of them alone which renders either them or you valuable in my estimation. Your splendid roofs and elegant accommodations I can view without the least emotion of envy: but when I observe you in the full power of exerting the noble purposes of your exalted generosity—it is then, I confess, I am apt to reflect, with some regret, on the humbler supplies of my own more limited finances. *Nihil habet* (to speak of you in the same language that the first of orators addressed the greatest of emperors) *fortuna tua majus, quàm ut possis; nec natura melius, quàm ut velis servare quamplurimos.* To be able to soften the calamities of mankind, and inspire gladness into a heart oppressed with want, is, indeed, the noblest privilege of an enlarged fortune: but to exercise that privilege in all its generous refinements, is an instance of the most uncommon elegance both of temper and understanding.

In the ordinary dispensations of bounty, little address is required: but when it is to be applied to those of a superior rank and more elevated mind, there is as much charity discovered in the *manner* as in the measure of one's benevolence. It is something extremely mortifying to a well-formed spirit, to see itself considered as an object of compassion; as it is the part of improved humanity to humour this honest pride in our nature, and to relieve the necessities without offending the delicacy of the distressed.

I have seen charity (if charity it might be called) insult with an air of pity, and wound at the same time that it healed. But I have seen, too, the highest munificence dispensed with the most refined tenderness, and a bounty conferred with as much address as the most artful would employ in soliciting one. Suffer me, Orontes, upon this single occasion, to gratify my own inclinations in violence to yours, by pointing out the particular instance I have in my view; and allow me, at the same time, to join my acknowledgments with those of the unfortunate person I recommended to your protection, for the generous assistance you lately afforded him. I am, &c.

LETTER LXVI.

TO CLEORA.

Sep. 5, 1737.

Shall I own to you that I cannot repent of an offence which occasioned so agreeable a reproof? A censure conveyed in such genteel terms, charms more than corrects, and tempts rather than reforms. I am sure, at least, though I should regret the crime, I shall always admire the rebuke, and long to kiss the hand that chasteneth in so pleasing a manner. However, I shall, for the future, strictly pursue your orders; and have sent you, in this second parcel, no other books than what my own library supplied. Among these you will find a collection of letters; I do not recommend them to you, having never

read them; nor, indeed, am I acquainted with their characters; but they presented themselves to my hands as I was tumbling over some others; so I threw them in with the rest, and gave them a chance of adding to your amusement. I wish I could meet with any thing that had even the least probability of contributing to mine. But,

forlorn of thee,
Whither shall I betake me, where subsist? *Milton.*

Time, that reconciles one to most things, has not been able to render your absence, in any degree, less uneasy to me. I may rather be said to haunt the house in which I live, than to make one of the family. I walk in and out of the rooms like a restless spirit: for I never speak till I am spoken to, and then generally answer, like Banquo's ghost in Macbeth, with a deep sigh, and a nod. Thus abstracted from every thing about me, I am yet quite ruined for a hermit; and find no more satisfaction in retirement than you do in the company of ***.

How often do I wish myself in possession of that famous ring you were mentioning the other day, which had the property of rendering those who wore it invisible! I would rather be master of this wonderful *unique*, than of the kingdom which Gyges gained by means of it; as I might then attend you, like your guardian angel, without censure or obstruction. How agreeable would it be to break out upon you, like Æneas from his cloud, where you least expected me; and join again the dear companion of my fortunes in spite of that relentless power who has raised so many cruel storms to destroy us! But whilst I employed this extraordinary ring to these and a thousand other pleasing purposes, you would have nothing to apprehend from my being invested with such an invisible faculty. That innocence which guards and adorns my Cleora in her most gay and public hours, attends her, I well know, in her most private and retired ones; and she, who always acts as under the eye of the Best of Beings, has nothing to fear from the secret inspection of any mortal. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LXVII.

TO EUPHRONIUS.

May 5, 1743,

If you received the first account of my loss from other hands than mine, you must impute it to the dejection of mind into which that accident threw me. The blow, indeed, fell with too much severity, to leave me capable of recollecting myself enough to write to you immediately; as there cannot, perhaps, be a greater shock to a breast of any sensibility, than to see its earliest and most valuable connections irreparably broken; than to find itself for ever torn from the first and most endeared object of its highest veneration. At least, the affection and esteem I bore to that excellent parent were founded upon so many and such uncommon motives, that his death has given me occasion to lament not only a most tender father, but a most valuable friend.

That I can no longer enjoy the benefit of his animating example, is one among the many aggravating circumstances of my affliction; and I often apply to myself, what an excellent ancient has said upon a similar occasion, *Vereor ne nunc negligentiùs vivam.* There is nothing, in truth, puts us so much upon our guard, as to act under the constant inspection of one, whose virtues, as well as years, have rendered venerable. Never, indeed, did the dignity of goodness appear more irresistible in any man: yet there was something, at the same time, so gentle in his manners, such an innocency and cheerfulness in his conversation, that he was as sure to gain affection as to inspire reverence.

It has been observed (and I think by Cowley) "That "a man in much business must either make himself a "knave, or the world will make him a fool." If there is any truth in this observation, it is not, however, without an exception. My father was early engaged in the great scenes of business, where he continued almost to his very last hour; yet, he preserved his integrity firm and unbroken, though all those powerful assaults he must

necessarily have encountered in so long a course of action.

If it were justice, indeed, to his other virtues, to single out any particular one as shining with superior lustre to the rest, I should point to his probity as the brightest part of his character. But the truth is, the whole tenor of his conduct was one uniform exercise of every moral quality that can adorn and exalt human nature. To defend the injured, to relieve the indigent, to protect the distressed, was the chief end and aim of all his endeavours; and his principal motive both for engaging and persevering in his profession was, to enable himself more abundantly to gratify so glorious an ambition.

No man had a higher relish of the pleasures of retired and contemplative life; as none was more qualified to enter into those calm scenes with greater ease and dignity. He had nothing to make him desirous of flying from the reflections of his own mind, nor any passions which his moderate patrimony would not have been more than sufficient to have gratified. But to live for himself only, was not consistent with his generous and enlarged sentiments. It was a spirit of benevolence that led him into the active scenes of the world; which, upon any other principle, he would either never have entered, or soon have renounced. And it was that godlike spirit which conducted and supported him through his useful progress, to the honour and interest of his family and friends, and to the benefit of every creature that could possibly be comprehended within the extensive circle of his beneficence.

I well know, my dear Euphronius, the high regard you pay to every character of merit in general, and the esteem in which you held this most valuable man in particular. I am sure, therefore, you would not forgive me, were I to make an apology for leaving with you this private monument of my veneration for a parent, whose least and lowest claim to my gratitude and esteem is, that I am indebted to him for my birth. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LXVIII.

TO PHILOTES.

I AM particularly pleased with a passage in Homer, wherein Jupiter is represented as taking off his eyes, with a sort of satiety, from the horror of the field of battle, and relieving himself with a view of the Hippomolgi, a people famous, it seems, for their innocence and simplicity of manners. It is in order to practise the same kind of experiment, and give myself a short remission from that scene of turbulence and contention in which I am engaged, that I now turn my thoughts on you, Philotes, whose temperance and moderation may well justify me in calling you a modern Hippomolgian.

I forget which of the ancients it is that recommends this method of thinking over the virtues of one's acquaintance: but I am sure it is sometimes necessary to do so, in order to keep one's self in humour with our species, and preserve the spirit of philanthropy from being entirely extinguished. Those who frequent the ambitious walks of life, are apt to take their estimate of mankind from the small part of it that lies before them, and consider the rest of the world as practising in different and under parts, the same treachery and dissimulation which mark out the characters of their superiors. It is difficult, indeed, to preserve the mind from falling into a general contempt of our race, whilst one is conversant with the worst part of it. I labour, however, as much as possible, to guard against that ungenerous disposition; as nothing is so apt to kill those seeds of benevolence which every man should endeavour to cultivate in his breast.

Ill surely, therefore, have those wits employed their talents, who have made our species the object of their satire, and affected to subdue the vanity, by derogating from the virtues of the human heart. But it will be found, I believe, upon an impartial examination, that there is more folly than malice in our natures, and that mankind oftener act wrong through ignorance than design. Perhaps the true measure of human merit is neither to be taken from the histories of former times, nor from what passes in the more striking scenes of the present generation. The greatest virtues have, probably, been ever the most obscure; and I am persuaded, in all ages of the world, more genuine heroism has been overlooked and unknown, than either recorded or observed. That *aliquid divinum*, as Tully calls it, that celestial spark, which every man who coolly contemplates his own mind, may discover within him, operates where we least look for it; and often raises the noblest productions of virtue in the shade and obscurity of life.

But it is time to quit speculation for action, and return to the common affairs of the world. I shall certainly do so with more advantage, by keeping Philotes still in my view; as I shall enter into the interests of mankind with more alacrity, by thus considering the virtues of his honest heart, as less singular than I am sometimes inclined to suppose. Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LXIX.

TO THE SAME.

Aug. 3, 1735.

LET it not be any discouragement to you, Philotes, that you have hitherto received but little satisfaction from those noble speculations wherein you are employed. "Truth (to use the expression of the excellent Mr. Wol-"laston) is the offspring of unbroken meditations, and of "thoughts often revised and corrected." It requires, indeed, great patience and resolution to dissipate that cloud of darkness which surrounds her; or (if you will allow me to go to an old philosopher for my allusion) to draw her up from that profound well in which she lies concealed.

There is, however, such a general connexion in the operations of nature, that the discovery even of a single truth opens the way to numberless others; and when once

the mind has hit upon a right scent, she cannot wholly pursue her enquiries in vain.

------Canes ut montivagæ persæpe ferāi
Naribus inveniunt intectas fronde quietes,
Cùm semel institerint vestigia certa viāi
Sic aliud ex alio per te tute ipse videre
---in rebus poteris, cæcásque latebras
Insinuare omnes, et verum protrahere inde. Lucret.

It must be owned, nevertheless, that after having exerted all our sagacity and industry, we shall scarce arrive at certainty in many speculative truths. Providence does not seem to have intended that we should ever be in possession of *demonstrative* knowledge, beyond a very limited compass; though, at the same time, it cannot be supposed, without the highest injustice to the benevolent Author of our natures, that he has left any *necessary* truths without evident notes of distinction. But while the powers of the mind are thus limited in their extent, and greatly fallible, likewise, in their operations, is it not amazing, Philotes, that mankind should insult each other for difference in opinion, and treat every notion that opposes their own, with obloquy and contempt? Is it not amazing that a creature, with talents so precarious and circumscribed, should usurp that confidence which can only belong to much superior beings, and claim a deference which is due to perfection alone? Surely, the greatest arrogance that ever entered into the human heart, is that which not only pretends to be positive itself in points wherein the best and wisest have disagreed, but looks down with all the insolent superiority of contemptuous pity on those whose impartial reasonings have led them into opposite conclusions.

There is nothing, perhaps, more evident, than that our intellectual faculties are not formed by one general standard; and, consequently, that diversity of opinion is of the very essence of our natures. It seems probable that this disparity extends even to our sensitive powers: and though we agree, indeed, in giving the same names to certain visible appearances,—as whiteness, for instance, to snow,—yet it is by no means demonstration, that the

particular body which affects us with that sensation, raises the same precise idea in any two persons who shall happen to contemplate it together. Thus I have often heard you mention your youngest daughter as being the exact counter-part of her mother: now she does not appear to me to resemble her in any single feature. To what can this disagreement in our judgments be owing, but to a difference in the structure of our organs of sight? Yet as justly, Philotes, might you disclaim me for your friend, and look upon me with contempt for not discovering a similitude which appears so evident to your eyes, as any man can abuse or despise another for not apprehending the force of that argument which carries conviction to his own understanding.

Happy had it been for the peace of the world, if our maintainers of systems, either in religion or politics, had conducted their several debates with the full impression of this truth upon their minds. Genuine philosophy is ever, indeed, the least dogmatical; and I am always inclined to suspect the force of that argument which is obtruded with arrogance and sufficiency.

I am wonderfully pleased with a passage I met with the other day, in the preface to Mr. Boyle's Philosophical Essays: and would recommend that cautious spirit, by which he professes to have conducted himself in his physical researches, as worthy the imitation of enquirers after truth of every kind.

"Perhaps you will wonder," says he, "that in almost "every one of the following essays, I should use so often "*perhaps, it seems, it is not improbable*, as argue a diffi- "dence of the truth of the opinions I incline to; and "that I should be so shy of laying down principles, and "sometimes of so much as venturing at explications. But "I must freely confess, that having met with many things "of which I could give myself no one probable cause, and "some things of which several causes may be assigned, "so differing as not to agree in any thing, unless in their "being, all of them, probable enough, I have often "found such difficulties in searching into the causes and "manner of things, and I am so sensible of my own dis-

" ability to surmount those difficulties, that I dare speak " confidently and positively of very few things, except " matter of fact. And when I venture to deliver any " thing by way of opinion, I should, if it were not for " mere shame, speak yet more diffidently than I have " been wont to do. Nor have my thoughts been al- " together idle—in forming notions, and attempting to " devise hypotheses. But I have hitherto (though not " always, yet not unfrequently) found, that what pleased " me for a while, was soon after disgraced by some far- " ther or new experiment. And, indeed, I have the " less envied many (for I say not *all*) of those writers, " who have taken upon them to deliver the causes of " things, and explicate the mysteries of nature; since " I have had an opportunity to observe how many of " their doctrines after having been, for a while, ap- " plauded, and even admired, have afterwards been con- " futed by some new phænomenon in nature, which was " either unknown to such writers, or not sufficiently con- " sidered by them."

If positiveness could become any man, in any point of mere speculation, it must have been this truly noble philosopher, when he was delivering the result of his studies in a science, wherein, by the united confession of the whole world, he so eminently excelled. But he had too much generosity to prescribe his own notions as a measure to the judgment of others, and too much good sense to assert them with heat or confidence.

Whoever, Philotes, pursues his speculations with this humble, unarrogating temper of mind, and with the best exertion of those faculties which Providence has assigned him, though he should not find the conviction, never, surely, can he fail of the reward of truth. I am, &c.

LETTER LXX.

TO PALAMEDES.

If malice had never broke loose upon the world, till it seized your reputation, I might reasonably condole with you on falling the first prey to its unrestrained rage. But this spectre has haunted merit almost from its earliest existence: and when all mankind were as yet included within a single family, one of them, we know, rose up in malignity of soul against his innocent brother. Virtue, it should seem, therefore, has now been too long acquainted with this her constant persecutor, to be either terrified or dejected at an appearance so common. The truth of it is, she must either renounce her noblest theatre of action, and seclude herself in cells and deserts, or be contented to enter upon the stage of the world with this fiend in her train. She cannot triumph, if she will not be traduced; and she should consider the clamours of censure, when joined with her own conscious applause, as so many acclamations that confirm her victory.

Let those who harbour this worst of human dispositions consider the many wretched and contemptible circumstances which attend it: but it is the business of him who unjustly suffers from it, to reflect how it may be turned to his advantage. Remember, then, my friend, that Generosity would lose half her dignity, if Malice did not contribute to her elevation; and he that has never been injured, has never had it in his power to exercise the noblest privilege of heroic virtue. There is another consolation which may be derived from the rancour of the world, as it will instruct one in a piece of knowledge of the most singular benefit in our progress through it: it will teach us to distinguish genuine friendship from counterfeit. For he only who is warmed with the real flame of amity, will rise up to support his single negative, in opposition to the clamorous votes of an undistinguishing multitude.

He, indeed, who can see a cool and deliberate injury

done to his friend, without feeling himself wounded in his most sensible part, has never known the force of the most generous of all the human affections. Every man, who has not taken the sacred name of friendship in vain, will subscribe to those sentiments which Homer puts into the mouth of Achilles, and which Mr. Pope has opened and enlarged with such inimitable strength and spirit:

> A gen'rous friendship no cold medium knows,
> Burns with one love, with one resentment glows:
> One should our int'rests and our passions be;
> My friend must hate the man that injures me. ix. 609.

It may greatly also allay the pain which attends the wounds of defamation, and which are always most severely felt by those who least deserve them, to reflect, that though Malice generally flings the first stone, it is Folly and Ignorance, it is Indolence or Irresolution, which are principally concerned in swelling the heap. When the tide of Censure runs strongly against any particular character, the generality of mankind are too careless or too impotent to withstand the current; and thus, without any particular malice in their own natures, are often indolently carried along with others, by tamely falling in with the general stream. The number of those who really mean one harm, will wonderfully lessen after the deductions which may fairly be made of this sort: and the cup of unjust reproach must surely lose much of its bitterness, where one is persuaded that Malevolence has the least share in mingling the draught. For nothing, perhaps, stings a generous mind more sensibly in wrongs of this sort, than to consider them as evidences of a general malignity in human nature. But, from whatever causes these storms may arise, Virtue would not be true to her own native privileges, if she suffered herself to sink under them. It is from that strength and firmness, which upright intentions will ever secure to an honest mind, that Palamedes, I am persuaded, will stand superior to those unmerited reproaches which assault his character, and preserve an unbroken repose amidst the little noise and strife of ignorant or malicious tongues. Farewel. I am, &c.

LETTER LXXI.

TO PHILOTES.

April 9, 1740.

THERE is no advantage which attends a popular genius, that I am so much inclined to envy, as the privilege of rendering merit conspicuous. An author who has raised the attention of the public to his productions, and gained a whole nation for his audience, may be considered as guardian of the temple of Fame, and invested with the prerogative of giving entrance to whomsoever he deems worthy of that glorious distinction. But the praise of an ordinary writer obstructs rather than advances the honour due to merit, and sullies the lustre it means to celebrate. Impotent panegyric operates like a blight wherever it falls, and injures all that it touches. Accordingly, Henry the IVth. of France, was wont humorously to ascribe his early grey hairs to the effect of numberless wretched compliments which were paid him by a certain ridiculous orator of his times. But though the wreaths of folly should not disgrace the temple they surround, they wither, at least, as soon as received; and if they should not be offensive, most certainly, however, they will be transient. Whereas those, on the contrary, with which an Horace or a Boileau, an Addison or a Pope, have crowned the virtues of their contemporaries, are as permanent as they are illustrious, and will preserve their colours and fragrance to remotest ages.

If I could thus weave the garlands of unfading applause,—if I were in the number of those chosen spirits, whose approbation is fame,—your friend should not want that distinguishing tribute which his virtues deserve, and you request. I would tell the world, (and tell it in a voice that should be heard far, and remembered long) that Eusebes, with all the knowledge and experience of these later ages, has all the innocence and simplicity of the earliest: that he enforces the doctrines of his sacred function, not with the vain pomp of ostentatious eloquence, but with the far more powerful persuasion of ac-

tive and exemplary virtue: that he softens the severity of precept with the ease and familiarity of conversation; and, by generously mingling with the meanest committed to his care, insinuates the instructor under the air of the companion: that, whilst he thus fills up the circle of his private station, he still turns his regards to the public, and employs his genius, his industry, and his fortune, in prosecuting and perfecting those discoveries, which tend most to the general benefit of mankind: in a word, that whilst others of his order are contending for the ambitious prizes of ecclesiastical dignities, it is his glorious pre-eminence to merit the highest, without enjoying or soliciting even the lowest. This, and yet more than this, the world should hear of your friend, if the world were inclined to listen to my voice. But though you, perhaps, Philotes, may be willing to give audience to my Muse,

namque tu solebas
Meas esse aliquid putare nugas. Catul.

can she hope to find favour, likewise, in the sight of the public? Let me, then, rather content myself with the silent admiration of those virtues, which I am not worthy to celebrate; and leave it to others to place the good works of Eusebes, where they may *shine forth before men.* I am, &c.

LETTER LXXII.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 7, 1737.

The visits of a friend, like those of the sun at this season, are extremely enlivening. I am sure, at least, they would both be particularly acceptable to me at present, when my mind is as much overcast as the heavens. I hope, therefore, you will not drop the design your letter intimates, of spending a few days with me, in your way to ***. Your company will greatly contribute to disperse those clouds of melancholy which the loss of a

very valuable friend has hung over me. There is something, indeed, in the first moments of separation from those whom a daily commerce and long habitude of friendship has grafted upon the heart, that disorders our whole frame of thought and discolours all one's enjoyments. Let Philosophy assist with the utmost of her vaunted strength, the mind cannot immediately recover the firmness of its posture, when those amicable props, upon which it used to rest, are totally removed. Even the most indifferent objects with which we have long been familiar, take some kind of root in our hearts: and "I should hardly care" (as a celebrated author has with great good nature observed) "to have an old post pulled "up, which I remembered ever since I was a child."

To know how to receive the full satisfaction of a present enjoyment, with a disposition prepared at the same time to yield it up without reluctance, is hardly, I doubt, reconcileable to humanity: pain, in being disunited from those we love, is a tax we must be contented to pay, if we would enjoy the pleasures of the social affections.—One would not wish, indeed, to be wholly insensible to disquietudes of this kind; and we must renounce the most refined relish of our being, if we would, upon all occasions, possess our souls in a stoical tranquillity.

That ancient philosopher, whose precept it was to converse with our friends, as if they might one day prove our enemies, has been justly censured as advancing a very ungenerous maxim. To remember, however, that we must one day most certainly be divided from them, is a reflection, methinks, that should enter with us into our tender connexions of every kind. From the present discomposure, therefore, of my own breast, and from that share which I take in whatever may affect the repose of yours, I cannot bid you adieu, without reminding you, at the same time, of the useful caution of one of your poetical acquaintance:

Quicquid amas, cupias non placuisse nimis.

I am, &c.

LETTER LXXIII.

TO PALAMEDES.

Feb. 13, 1741.

If one would rate any particular merit according to its true valuation, it may be necessary, perhaps, to consider how far it can be justly claimed by mankind in general. I am sure, at least, when I read the very uncommon sentiments of your last letter, I found their judicious author rise in my esteem, by reflecting, that there is not a more singular character in the world than that of a thinking man. It is not merely having a succession of ideas which lightly skim over the mind, that can with any propriety be styled by that denomination. It is observing them separately and distinctly, and ranging them under their respective classes; it is calmly and steadily viewing our opinions on every side, and resolutely tracing them through all their consequences and connexions, that constitutes the man of reflection, and distinguishes reason from fancy. Providence, indeed, does not seem to have formed any very considerable number of our species for an extensive exercise of this higher faculty: as the thoughts of the far greater part of mankind are necessarily restrained within the ordinary purposes of animal life. But even if we look up to those who move in much superior orbits, and who have opportunities to improve, as well as leisure to exercise, their understandings, we shall find that thinking is one of the least exerted privileges of cultivated humanity.

It is, indeed, an operation of the mind which meets with many obstructions to check its just and free direction; but there are two principles which prevail more or less in the constitutions of most men, that particularly contribute to keep this faculty of the soul unemployed: I mean pride and indolence. To descend to truth through the tedious progression of well-examined deductions, is considered as a reproach to the quickness of understanding; as it is much too laborious a method for any but those who are possessed of a vigorous and resolute activity of mind. For this reason, the greater part of our species generally choose either to seize upon their conclusions at once, or to take them by rebound from others, as best suiting with their vanity or their laziness. Accordingly Mr. Locke observes, that there are not so many errors and wrong opinions in the world as is generally imagined. Not that he thinks mankind are by any means uniform in embracing truth; but because the majority of them, he maintains, have no thought or opinion at all about those doctrines concerning which they raise the greatest clamour. Like the common soldiers in an army, they follow where their leaders direct, without knowing or even enquiring into the cause for which they so warmly contend.

This will account for the slow steps by which truth has advanced in the world, on one side; and for those absurd systems which, at different periods, have had an universal currency on the other. For there is a strange disposition in human nature, either blindly to tread the same paths that have been traversed by others, or to strike out into the most devious extravagancies: the greater part of the world will either totally renounce their reason, or reason only from the wild suggestions of an heated imagination.

From the same source may be derived those divisions and animosities which break the union both of public and private societies, and turn the peace and harmony of human intercourse into dissonance and contention. For while men judge and act by such measures as have not been proved by the standard of dispassionate reason, they must equally be mistaken in their estimates both of their own conduct and that of others.

If we turn our view from active to contemplative life, we may have occasion, perhaps, to remark, that thinking is no less uncommon in the literary than the civil world. The number of those writers who can, with any justness of expression, be termed thinking authors, would not form a very copious library, though one were to take in all of that kind which both ancient and modern times have produced. Necessarily, I imagine, must one ex-

clude from a collection of this sort, all critics, commentators, modern Latin poets, translators, and, in short, all that numerous under-tribe in the commonwealth of literature, that owe their existence merely to the thoughts of others. I should reject, for the same reason, such compilers as Valerius Maximus and Aulus Gellius: though it must be owned, indeed, their works have acquired an accidental value, as they preserve to us several curious traces of antiquity, which time would otherwise have entirely worn out. Those teeming geniuses, likewise, who have propagated the fruits of their studies through a long series of tracts, would have little pretence, I believe, to be admitted as writers of reflection. For this reason, I cannot regret the loss of those incredible numbers of compositions which some of the ancients are said to have produced:

Quale fuit Cassi rapido ferventius amni
Ingenium; capsis quem fama est esse librisque
Ambustum propriis. Horace.

Thus Epicurus, we are told, left behind him three hundred volumes of his own works, wherein he had not inserted a single quotation; and we have it upon the authority of Varro's own words,* that he himself composed four hundred and ninety books. Seneca assures us, that Didymus, the Grammarian, wrote no less than four thousand; but Origen, it seems, was yet more prolific, and extended his performances even to six thousand treatises. It is obvious to imagine with what sort of materials the productions of such expeditious workmen were wrought up: sound thought and well-matured reflections could have no share, we may be sure, in these hasty performances. Thus are books multiplied, whilst authors are scarce; and so much easier is it to write than to think!

* This passage is to be found in Aul. Gellius, who quotes it from a treatise which Varro had written concerning the wonderful effects of the number seven. But the subject of this piece cannot be more ridiculous than the style in which it appears to have been composed: for that most learned author of his times (as Cicero, if I mistake not, somewhere calls him) informed his readers in that performance, *se jam duodecimam annorum hebdomadam ingressum esse, et ad eum diem septuaginta hebdomadas librorum conscripsisse.* Aul. Gell. iii. 10.

But shall I not myself, Palamedes, prove an instance that it is so, if I suspend, any longer, your own more important reflections, by interrupting you with such as mine? Adieu. I am, &c.

LETTER LXXIV.

TO ORONTES.

It is with much pleasure I look back upon that philosophical week which I lately enjoyed at ***; as there is no part, perhaps, of social life, which affords more real satisfaction, than those hours which one passes in rational and unreserved conversation. The free communication of sentiments amongst a set of ingenious and speculative friends, such as those you gave me the opportunity of meeting, throws the mind into the most advantageous exercise, and shews the strength or weakness of its opinions with greater force of conviction, than any other method we can employ.

That *it is not good for man to be alone*, is true in more views of our species than one; and society gives strength to our reason, as well as polish to our manners. The soul, when left entirely to her own solitary contemplations, is insensibly drawn by a sort of constitutional bias, which generally leads her opinions to the side of her inclinations. Hence it is that she contracts those peculiarities of reasoning, and little *habits* of thinking, which so often confirm her in the most fantastical errors. But nothing is more likely to recover the mind from this false bent, than the counter-warmth of impartial debate. Conversation opens our views and gives our faculties a more vigorous play; it puts us upon turning our notions on every side, and holds them up to a light that discovers those latent flaws, which would, probably, have lain concealed in the gloom of unagitated abstraction. Accordingly, one may remark, that most of those wild doctrines which have been let loose upon the world, have generally

owed their birth to persons whose circumstances or dispositions have given them the fewest opportunities of canvassing their respective systems, in the way of free and friendly debate. Had the authors of many an extravagant hypothesis discussed their principles in private circles, ere they had given vent to them in public, the observation of Varro had never, perhaps, been made (or never, at least, with so much justice) that "there is no "opinion so absurd, but has some philosopher or other to "produce in its support."

Upon this principle, I imagine, it is, that some of the finest pieces of antiquity are written in the dialogue manner. Plato and Tully, it should seem, thought truth could never be examined with more advantage, than amidst the amicable opposition of well-regulated converse. It is probable, indeed, that subjects of a serious and philosophical kind were more frequently the topics of Greek and Roman conversations, than they are of ours; as the circumstances of the world had not yet given occasion to those prudential reasons, which may now, perhaps, restrain a more free exchange of sentiments amongst us. There was something, likewise, in the very scenes themselves where they usually assembled, that almost unavoidably turned the stream of their conversations into this useful channel. Their rooms and gardens were generally adorned, you know, with the statues of the greatest masters of reason that had then appeared in the world; and while Socrates or Aristotle stood in their view, it is no wonder their discourse fell upon those subjects, which such animating representations would naturally suggest. It is probable, therefore, that many of those ancient pieces which are drawn up in the dialogue manner, were no imaginary conversations invented by their authors, but faithful transcripts from real life: and it is this circumstance, perhaps, as much as any other, which contributes to give them that remarkable advantage over the generality of modern compositions, which have been formed upon the same plan. I am sure, at least, I could scarce name more than three or four of this kind, which have appeared in our language, worthy

of notice. My lord Shaftesbury's dialogue, intituled *The Moralists;* Mr. Addison's upon Ancient Coins; Mr. Spence's upon the Odyssey; together with those of my very ingenious friend Philemon to Hydaspes, are almost the only productions, in this way, which have hitherto come forth amongst us with advantage. These, indeed, are all master-pieces of the kind, and written in the true spirit of learning and politeness. The conversation in each of these most elegant performances is conducted not in the usual absurd method of introducing one disputant to be tamely silenced by the other, but in the more lively dramatic manner, where a just contrast of characters is preserved throughout, and where the several speakers support their respective sentiments with all the strength and spirit of a well-bred opposition.

But of all the conversation pieces, whether ancient or modern, either of the moral or polite kind, I know not one which is more elegantly written than the little anonymous dialogue concerning the rise and decline of eloquence among the Romans. I call it anonymous, though I am sensible it has been ascribed not only to Tacitus and Quintillian but even to Suetonius. The reasons, however, which the critics have respectively produced, are so exceedingly precarious and inconclusive, that one must have a very extraordinary share of classical faith indeed, to receive it as the performance of any of those celebrated writers. It is evidently, however, a composition of that period in which they flourished; and, if I were disposed to indulge a conjecture, I should be inclined to give it to the younger Pliny. It exactly coincides with his age; it is addressed to one of his particular friends and correspondents; it is marked with some similar expressions and sentiments. But, as arguments of this kind are always more imposing than solid, I recommend it to you as a piece, concerning the author of which nothing satisfactory can be collected. This I may, one day or other, perhaps, attempt to prove in form, as I have amused myself with giving it an English dress. In the mean time, I have inclosed my translation in this packet; not only with a view to your sentiments, but in return to

your favour. I was persuaded I could not make you a better acknowledgment for the pleasure of that conversation which I lately participated through your means, than by introducing you to one, which (if my copy is not extremely injurious to its original) I am sure, you cannot attend to without equal entertainment and advantage. Adieu. I am, &c.

A DIALOGUE CONCERNING ORATORY*.

TO FABIUS.

You have frequently, my friend, required me to assign a reason, whence it has happened, that the oratorical character, which spread such a glorious lustre upon former ages, is now so totally extinct among us, as scarce to preserve even its name. It is the ancients alone, you observed, whom we distinguish with that appellation; while the eloquent of the present times are styled only pleaders, patrons, advocates, or any thing, in short, but orators.

Hardly, I believe, should I have attempted a solution of your difficulty, or ventured upon the examination of a question, wherein the genius of the moderns, if they cannot, or their judgment, if they will not, rise to the same heights, must necessarily be given up; had I nothing of greater authority to offer upon the subject, than my own particular sentiments. But having been present, in the very early part of my life, at a conversation between some persons of great eloquence, considering the age in which they lived, who discussed this very point, my memory, and not my judgment, will be concerned, whilst I endeavour, in their own style and manner, and according to the regular course of their debate, to lay before you the several reasonings of those celebrated geniuses: each of them, indeed, agreeably to the peculiar turn and character of the speaker, alledging different, though probable causes of the same fact; but all of them supporting their respective sentiments with ingenuity and good sense. Nor were the orators of the present age without an advocate in this debate: for one of the company took the opposite side, and treating the ancients with much severity and contempt, declared in favour of modern eloquence.

Marcus Aper and Julius Secundus, two distinguished geniuses of our forum, made a visit to Maternus the day after he had publicly recited his tragedy of Cato: a piece, which gave, it seems, great offence to those in power, and was much canvassed in all conversations. Maternus, indeed, seemed, throughout that whole performance, to have considered only what was suitable to the character of his hero, without paying a proper regard to those prudential restraints, which were necessary for his own security. I was, at that time, a warm admirer and constant follower of those great men; insomuch, that I not only attended them when they were engaged in the courts of judicature; but, from my fond attachment to the arts of eloquence, and with a certain ardency peculiar to youth, I joined in all their parties, and was present at their most private conversations. Their great abilities, however, could not secure them from the critics. They alledged, that Secundus had by no means an easy elocution; whilst Aper, they pretended, owed his reputation, as an orator, more to nature than to art. It is certain, nevertheless, that their objections were without foundation. The speeches of the former were always delivered with sufficient fluency; and his expression was clear, though concise: as the latter had, most undoubtedly, a general tincture of literature. The truth is, one could not so properly say he was *without*, as *above* the assistance of learning. He imagined, perhaps, the powers and application of his genius would be so much the more admired, as it should not appear to derive any of its lustre from the acquired arts.

We found Maternus, when we entered his apartment, with the tragedy in his hand which he had recited the

* It is necessary to inform those readers of the following dialogue, who may be disposed to compare it with the original, that the edition of Heumannus, printed at Gottingen, 1719, has been generally followed.

day before. " Are you then, said Secundus, addressing himself to him, " so little discouraged with the malicious insinuations of these ill-natured censures, as still to cherish this obnoxious tragedy of yours? Or, perhaps, you are revising it, in order to expunge the exceptionable passages; and purpose to send your Cato into the world, I will not say with superior charms, but, at least, with greater security than in its original form?"—" You may peruse it," returned he, " if you please; you will find it remains just in the same situation as when you heard it read. I intend, however, that Thyestes shall supply the defects of Cato: for I am meditating a tragedy upon that subject, and have already, indeed, formed the plan. I am hastening, therefore, the publication of this play in my hand, that I may apply myself entirely to my new design."—" Are you then in good earnest," replied Aper, " so enamoured of dramatic poetry, as to renounce the business of oratory in order to consecrate your whole leisure to—Medea, I think, it was before, and now, it seems, to Thyestes? when the causes of so many worthy friends, the interests of so many powerful communities, demand you in the forum: a task more than sufficient to employ your attention, though neither Cato nor Domitius had any share of it; though you were not continually turning from one dramatic performance to another, and adding the tales of Greece to the history of Rome."

" I should be concerned," answered Maternus, " at the severity of your rebuke, if the frequency of our debates, upon this subject, had not rendered it somewhat familiar to me. But how," added he, smiling, " can you accuse me of deserting the business of my profession, when I am every day engaged in *defending* poetry against your accusations? And I am glad," continued he, looking towards Secundus, " that we have now an opportunity of discussing this point before so competent a judge. His decision will either determine me to renounce all pretensions to poetry for the future, or, which I rather hope, will be a sanction for my quitting that confined species of

oratory, in which, methinks, I have sufficiently laboured and authorize the devoting myself to the more enlarged and sacred eloquence of the Muses."

" Give me leave," interposed Secundus, " before Aper takes exception to his judge, to say, what all honest ones usually do in the same circumstances, that I desire to be excused from sitting in judgment upon a cause, wherein I must acknowledge myself biassed in favour of a party concerned. All the world is sensible of that strict friendship which has long subsisted between me and that excellent man, as well as great poet, Saleius Bassus. To which let me add, if the Muses are to be arraigned, I know of none who can offer more prevailing bribes."

" I have nothing to alledge against Bassus," returned Aper, " or any other man, who, not having talents for the bar, chooses to establish a reputation of the poetical kind. Nor shall I suffer Maternus (for I am willing to join issue with him before you) to evade my charge, by drawing others into his party. My accusation is levelled singly against him; who, formed as he is, by nature, with a most masculine and truly oratorical genius, chooses to suffer so noble a faculty to lie waste and uncultivated. I must remind him, however, that, by the exercise of this commanding talent, he might, at once, both acquire and support the most important friendships, and have the glory to see whole provinces and nations rank themselves under his patronage; a talent, of all others, the most advantageous, whether considered with respect to interest or to honours; a talent, in short, that affords the most illustrious means of propagating a reputation, not only within our own walls, but throughout the whole compass of the Roman empire, and, indeed, to the most distant nations of the globe."

If utility ought to be the governing motive of every action and every design of our lives; can we possibly be employed to better purpose, than in the exercise of an art, which enables a man, upon all occasions, to support the interest of his friend, to protect the rights of the stranger, to defend the cause of the injured? that not only renders him the terror of his open and secret adver-

saries, but secures him, as it were, by the most firm and permanent guard?

The particular usefulness, indeed, of this profession is evidently manifested in the opportunities it supplies of serving others, though we should have no occasion to exert it in our own behalf: but should we, upon any occurrence, be ourselves attacked, the sword and buckler is not a more powerful defence in the day of battle, than oratory in the dangerous season of public arraignment. What had Marcellus lately to oppose to the united resentment of the whole senate, but his eloquence? Yet, supported by that formidable auxiliary, he stood firm and unmoved, amidst all the assaults of the artful Helvidius; who, notwithstanding he was a man of sense and elocution, was totally inexpert in the management of this sort of contests. But I need not insist farther on this head; well persuaded, as I am, that Maternus will not controvert so clear a truth. Rather let me observe the pleasure which attends the exercise of the persuasive art: a pleasure which does not arise only once, perhaps, in a whole life, but flows in a perpetual series of gratifications. What can be more agreeable to a liberal and ingenuous mind, formed with a relish of rational enjoyments, than to see one's levee crowded with a concourse of the most illustrious personages, not as followers of your interest or your power; not because you are rich, and destitute of heirs; but singly in consideration of your superior qualifications. It is not unusual, upon these occasions, to observe the wealthy, the powerful, and the childless, addressing themselves to a young man (and probably no rich one) in favour of themselves or their friends. Tell me now, has authority or wealth a charm equal to the satisfaction of thus beholding persons of the highest dignity, venerable by their age, or powerful by their credit, in the full enjoyment of every external advantage, courting your assistance, and tacitly acknowledging that, great and distinguished as they are, there is something still wanting to them more valuable than all their possessions? Represent to yourself the honourable crowd of clients conducting the orator from his house, and attending him in his

return; think of the glorious appearance he makes in public, the distinguishing respect that is paid to him in the courts of judicature, the exultation of heart when he rises up before a full audience, hushed in solemn silence and fixed attention, pressing round the admired speaker, and receiving every passion he deems proper to raise! Yet these are but the ordinary joys of eloquence, and visible to every common observer. There are others, and those far superior, of a more concealed and delicate kind, and of which the orator himself can alone be sensible. Does he stand forth prepared with a studied harangue? As the composition, so the pleasure, in this instance, is more solid and equal. If, on the other hand, he rises in a new and unexpected debate, the previous solicitude, which he feels upon such occasions, recommends and improves the pleasure of his success; as indeed the most exquisite satisfaction of this kind is, when he boldly hazards the unpremeditated speech. For it is in the productions of genius, as in the fruits of the earth; those which arise spontaneously, are ever the most agreeable. If I may venture to mention myself, I must acknowledge, that neither the satisfaction I received when I was first invested with the laticlave, nor even when I entered upon the several high posts in the state; though the pleasure was heightened to me, not only as those honours were new to my family, but as I was born in a city by no means favourable to my pretensions:—the warm transports, I say, which I felt at those times, were far inferior to the joy which has glowed in my breast, when I have successfully exerted my humble talents in defence of those causes and clients committed to my care. To say truth, I imagined myself, at such seasons, to be raised above the highest dignities, and in the possession of something far more valuable, than either the favour of the great, or the bounty of the wealthy can ever bestow.

"Of all the arts or sciences, there is no one which crowns its votaries with a reputation in any degree comparable to that of eloquence. It is not only those of a more exalted rank in the state, who are witnesses of the orator's fame; it is extended to the observation even of our very youth

of any hopes or merit. Whose example, for instance, do parents more frequently recommend to their sons? Or who are more the gaze and admiration of the people in general? Whilst every stranger that arrives, is curious of seeing the man, of whose character he has heard such honourable report. I will venture to affirm that Marcellus, whom I just now mentioned, and Vibius (for I choose to produce my instances from modern times, rather than from those more remote) are as well known in the most distant corners of the empire, as they are at Capua or Vercellæ, the places, it is said, of their respective nativity: an honour for which they are by no means indebted to their immense riches. On the contrary, their wealth may justly, it should seem, be ascribed to their eloquence. Every age, indeed, can produce persons of genius, who, by means of this powerful talent, have raised themselves to the most exalted station. But the instances I just now mentioned, are not drawn from distant times: they fall within the observation of our own eyes. Now the more obscure the original extraction of those illustrious persons was, the more humble the patrimony to which they were born, so much stronger proof they afford of the great advantage of the oratorical arts. Accordingly, without the recommendation of family or fortune, without any thing very extraordinary in their virtues (and one of them rather contemptible in his address) they have for many years maintained the highest credit and authority among their fellow-citizens. Thus, from being chiefs in the forum, where they preserved their distinguished eminence as long as they thought proper, they have passed on to the enjoyment of the same high rank in Vespasian's favour, whose esteem for them seems to be mixed even with a degree of reverence: as indeed they both support and conduct the whole weight of his administration. That excellent and venerable prince (whose singular character it is, that he can endure to hear truth) well knows that the rest of his favourites are distinguished only as they are the objects of his munificence; the supplies of which he can easily raise and with the same facility confer on others. Whereas Crispus and Marcellus recommended themselves to his notice, by advantages which no earthly potentate either did or could bestow. The truth of it is, inscriptions and statues, and ensigns of dignity, could claim but the lowest rank, amidst *their* more illustrious distinctions. Not that they are unpossessed of honours of this kind, any more than they are destitute of wealth or power; advantages, much oftener affectedly depreciated, than sincerely despised.

"Such, my friends, are the ornaments, and such the rewards of an early application to the business of the forum, and the arts of oratory! But poetry, to which Maternus wishes to devote his days (for it was that which gave rise to our debate) confers neither dignity to her followers in particular, nor advantage to society in general. The whole amount of her pretensions is nothing more than the transient pleasure of a vain and fruitless applause. Perhaps what I have already said, and am going to add, may not be very agreeable to my friend Maternus; however, I will venture to ask him, what avails the eloquence of his Jason or Agamemnon? What mortal does it either defend or oblige? Who is it that courts the patronage, or joins the train of Bassus, that ingenious (or if you think the term more honourable) that illustrious poet? Eminent as he may be, if his friend, his relation, or himself, were involved in any litigated transactions, he would be under the necessity of having recourse to Secundus, or, perhaps, to you, my friend!* but by no means, however, as you are a poet, and in order to solicit you to bestow some verses upon him: for verses he can compose himself, fair, it seems, and goodly.—Yet, after all, when he has at the cost of much time, and many a laboured lucubration, spun out a single canto, he is obliged to traverse the whole town in order to collect an audience. Nor can he procure even this compliment, slight as it is, without actually purchasing it: for the hiring a room, erecting a stage, and dispersing his tickets, are articles which must necessarily be attended with some expence.—And let us suppose his poem is approved: the whole admiration is over in a day or two, like that of a fine flower

* Maternus.

which dies away without producing any fruit. In a word, it secures to him neither friend nor patron, nor confers even the most inconsiderable favour upon a single creature. The whole amount of his humble gains is the fleeting pleasure of a clamorous applause! We looked upon it, lately, as an uncommon instance of generosity in Vespasian, that he presented Bassus with fifty thousand sesterces.* Honourable, I grant, it is, to possess a genius which merits the imperial bounty: but how much more glorious (if a man's circumstances will admit of it) to exhibit in one's own person an example of munificence and liberality? Let it be remembered, likewise, if you would succeed in your poetical labours, and produce any thing of real worth, in that art, you must retire, as the poets express themselves,

To silent grottoes and sequester'd groves:

that is, you must renounce the conversation of your friends, and every civil duty of life, to be concealed in gloomy and unprofitable solitude.

"If we consider the votaries of this idle art with respect to fame, that single recompence which they pretend to derive, or, indeed, to seek, from their studies, we shall find they do not, by any means, enjoy an equal proportion of it with the sons of Oratory. For even the best poets fall within the notice of but a very small proportion of mankind: whilst indifferent ones are universally disregarded. Tell me, Maternus, did ever the reputation of the most approved rehearsal of the poetical kind reach the cognizance even of half the town; much less extend itself to distant provinces? Did ever any foreigner, upon his arrival here, enquire after Bassus? or if he did, it was merely as he would after a picture or a statue; just to look upon him, and pass on. I would in no sort be understood as discouraging the pursuit of poetry in those who have no talents for oratory; if happily they can, by that means, amuse their leisure, and establish a just character. I look upon every species of eloquence as venerable and sacred; and prefer her, in whatever guise she may think proper to appear, before any other of her sister-arts: not only, Maternus, when she exhibits herself in your chosen favourite, the solemn tragedy, or lofty heroic, but even in the pleasant lyric, the wanton elegy, the severe iambic, the witty epigram, or in one word, in whatever other habit she is pleased to assume. But (I repeat it again) my complaint is levelled singly against you; who, designed as you are, by nature, for the most exalted rank of eloquence, choose to desert your station, and deviate into a lower order. Had you been endued with the athletic vigour of Nicostratus, and born in Greece, where arts of that sort are esteemed not unworthy of the most refined characters; as I could not patiently have suffered that uncommon strength of arm, formed for the nobler combat, to have idly spent itself in throwing the javelin, or tossing the coit: so I now call you forth from rehearsals and theatres, to the forum, and business, and high debate: especially, since you cannot urge the same plea for engaging in poetry which is now generally alledged, that it is less liable to give offence than oratory. For the ardency of your genius has already flamed forth, and you have incurred the displeasure of our superiors: not, indeed, for the sake of a friend;—*that* would have been far less dangerous; but in support truly of *Cato!* Nor can you offer, in excuse, either the duty of your profession, justice to your client, or the unguarded heat of debate. You fixed, it should seem, upon this illustrious and popular subject with deliberate design, and as a character that would give weight and authority to your sentiments. You will reply (I am aware) 'it was that very circumstance which gained you 'such universal applause, and rendered you the general 'topic of discourse.' Talk no more, then, I beseech you, of security and repose, whilst you thus industriously raise up to yourself so potent an adversary. For my own part, at least, I am contented with engaging in questions of a more modern and private nature; wherein, if in defence of a friend, I am under a necessity of taking liberties unacceptable, perhaps to my superiors, the

*About four hundred pounds of our money.

honest freedom of my zeal will, I trust, not only be excused, but applauded."

Aper having delivered this with his usual warmth and earnestness, "I am prepared," replied Maternus, in a milder tone, and with an air of pleasantry, "to draw up a charge against the orators, no less copious than my friend's panegyric in their behalf. I suspected, indeed, he would turn out of his road, in order to attack the poets: though I must own, at the same time, he has somewhat softened the severity of his satire, by certain concessions he is pleased to make in their favour. He is willing, I perceive, to allow those whose genius does not point to oratory, to apply themselves to poetry. Nevertheless, I do not scruple to acknowledge, that, with some talents, perhaps, for the forum, I choose to build my reputation on dramatic poetry. The first attempt I made for this purpose was by exposing the dangerous power of Vatinius: a power which even Nero himself disapproved, and which that infamous favourite abused, to the profanation of the sacred Muses. And I am persuaded, if I enjoy any share of fame, it is to poetry, rather than to oratory, that I am indebted for the acquisition. It is my fixed purpose, therefore, entirely to withdraw myself from the fatigue of the bar. I am by no means ambitious of that splendid concourse of clients, which Aper has represented in such pompous colours, any more than I am of those sculptured honours which he mentioned; though, I must confess, they have made their way into my family, notwithstanding my inclinations to the contrary. Innocence is, now at least, a surer guard than eloquence; and I am in no apprehension I shall ever have occasion to open my lips in the senate, unless, perhaps, in defence of a friend.

"Woods, and groves, and solitude, the objects of Aper's invective, afford me, I will own to him, the most exquisite satisfaction. Accordingly, I esteem it one of the great privileges of poetry, that it is not carried on in the noise and tumult of the world, amidst the painful importunity of anxious suitors, and the affecting tears of distressed criminals. On the contrary, a mind enamoured of the Muses, retires into scenes of innocence and repose, and enjoys the sacred haunts of silence and contemplation. Here genuine eloquence received her birth, and *here* she fixed her sacred and sequestered habitation. 'Twas *here*, in decent and becoming garb, she recommended herself to the early notice of mortals, inspiring the breasts of the blameless and the good: *here* first the voice divine of oracles was heard. But *she* of modern growth, offspring of lucre and contention, was born in evil days, and employed (as Aper very justly expresses it) instead of *weapon*: whilst happier times, or, in the language of the Muses, the golden age, free alike from orators and from crimes, abounded with inspired poets, who exerted their noble talents, not in defending the guilty, but in celebrating the good. Accordingly, no character was ever more eminently distinguished, or more augustly honoured: first by the gods themselves, to whom the poets were supposed to serve as ministers at their feasts, and messengers of their high behests, and afterwards by that sacred offspring of the gods, the first venerable race of legislators. In that glorious list we read the names, not of orators, indeed, but of Orpheus, and Linus, or, if we are inclined to trace the illustrious roll still higher, even of Apollo himself.

"But these, perhaps, will be treated by Aper as heroes of romance. He cannot, however, deny, that Homer has received as signal honours from posterity as Demosthenes: or that the fame of Sophocles or Euripides is as extensive as that of Lysias or Hyperides; that Cicero's merit is less universally confessed than Virgil's; or that not one of the compositions of Asinius or Messalla is in so much request as the Medea of Ovid, or the Thyestes of Varius. I will advance even farther, and venture to compare the unenvied fortune, and happy self-converse of the poet, with the anxious and busy life of the orator; notwithstanding the hazardous contentions of the latter may possibly raise him even to the consular dignity. Far more desirable, in my estimation, was the calm retreat of Virgil: where yet he lived not unhonoured by his prince, nor unregarded by the world. If the

truth of either of these assertions should be questioned, the letters of Augustus will witness the former; as the latter is evident from the conduct of the whole Roman people, who, when some verses of that divine poet were repeated in the theatre, where he happened to be present, rose up to a man, and saluted him with the same respect that they would have paid to Augustus himself. But, to mention our own times, I would ask whether Secundus Pomponius is any thing inferior, either in dignity of life, or solidity of reputation, to Afer Domitius? As to Crispus or Marcellus, to whom Aper refers me for an animating example, what is there in their present exalted fortunes really desirable? Is it that they pass their whole lives either in being alarmed for themselves, or in striking terror into others? Is it that they are daily under a necessity of courting the very men they hate; that, holding their dignities by unmanly adulation, their masters never think them sufficiently slaves, nor the people sufficiently free? And, after all, what is this their so much envied power? Nothing more, in truth, than what many a paltry freed-man has frequently enjoyed. But—

'Me let the lovely Muses lead,' (as Virgil sings) 'to silent groves and heavenly-haunted streams, remote from 'business and from care; and still superior to the painful 'necessity of acting in wretched opposition to my better 'heart. Nor let me more, with anxious steps and dangerous, pursue pale Fame amidst the noisy forum! May 'never clamorous suitors, nor panting freed-man with 'officious haste, awake my peaceful slumbers! Uncertain of futurity, and equally unconcerned, ne'er may I 'bribe the favour of the great; by rich bequests to avarice insatiate; nor accumulation vain! amass more 'wealth than I may transfer as inclination prompts, 'whenever shall arrive my life's last fatal period: and 'then, not in horrid guise of mournful pomp, but 'crown'd with chaplets gay, may I be entombed; nor let 'a friend, with unavailing zeal, solicit the useful tribute 'of posthumous memorials!' "

Maternus had scarce finished these words, which he uttered with great emotion, and with an air of inspiration,

when Messalla entered the room; who, observing much attention in our countenances, and imagining the conversation turned upon something of more than ordinary import: "Perhaps," said he, "you are engaged in a *consultation*; and, I doubt, I am guilty of an unseasonable interruption."—"By no means," answered Secundus: "on the contrary, I wish you had given us your company sooner; for I am persuaded, you would have been extremely entertained. Our friend Aper has, with great eloquence, been exhorting Maternus to turn the whole strength of his genius and his studies to the business of the forum; while Maternus, on the other hand, agreeably to the character of one who was pleading the cause of the Muses, has defended his favourite art with a boldness and elevation of style more suitable to a poet than an orator."

"It would have afforded me infinite pleasure," replied Messalla, "to have been present at a debate of this kind. And I cannot but express my satisfaction, in finding the most eminent orators of our times, not confining their geniuses to points relating to their profession; but canvassing such other topics, in their conversation, as give a very advantageous exercise to their faculties, at the same time that it furnishes an entertainment of the most instructive kind, not only to themselves, but to those who have the privilege of being joined in their party. And believe me, Secundus, the world received, with much approbation, your history of J. Asiaticus, as an earnest that you intend to publish more pieces of the same nature. On the other side," continued he, with an air of irony, "it is observed, with equal satisfaction, that Aper has not yet bid adieu to the questions of the schools, but employs his leisure rather after the example of the modern rhetoricians, than of the ancient orators."

"I perceive," returned Aper, "that you continue to treat the moderns with your usual derision and contempt, while the ancients alone are in full possession of your esteem. It is a maxim, indeed, I have frequently heard you advance, (and, allow me to say, with much injustice to yourself, and to your brother) that there is no such

thing in the present age as an orator. This you are the less scrupulous to maintain, as you imagine it cannot be imputed to a spirit of envy; since you are willing, at the same time, to exclude yourself from a character, which every body else is inclined to give you."

"I have, hitherto," replied Messalla, "found no reason to change my opinion, and I am persuaded, that even you yourself, Aper, (whatever you may sometimes affect to the contrary,) as well as my other two friends here, join with me in the same sentiments. I should, indeed, be glad, if any of you would discuss this matter, and account for so remarkable a disparity, which I have often endeavoured in my own thoughts. And what to some appears a satisfactory solution of this phænomenon, to me, I confess, heightens the difficulty: for I find the very same difference prevails among the Grecian orators; and that the priest Nicetes, together with others of the Ephesian and Mytilenean schools, who humbly content themselves with raising the acclamations of their tasteless auditors, deviate much farther from Æschines or Demosthenes, than you, my friends, from Tully or Asinius.

"The question you have started," said Secundus, "is a very important one, and well worthy of consideration. But who so capable of doing justice to it as yourself? who, besides the advantages of a fine genius and great literature, have given, it seems, particular attention to this enquiry."—"I am very willing," answered Messalla, "to lay before you my thoughts upon the subject, provided you will assist me with yours as I go along."—"I will engage for two of us," replied Maternus: "Secundus, and myself, will speak to such points as you shall, I do not say omit, but think proper to leave us. As for Aper, you just now informed us, it is usual with him to dissent from you in this article: and, indeed, I see he is already preparing to oppose us, and will not look with indifference upon this our association in support of the ancients."

"Undoubtedly," returned Aper, "I shall not tamely suffer the moderns to be condemned, unheard and undefended. But first let me ask, whom is it you call *ancients?* What age of orators do you distinguish by that designation? The word always suggests to me a Nestor, or an Ulysses, men who lived above a thousand years since: whereas you seem to apply it to Demosthenes and Hyperides, who, it is agreed, flourished so late as the times of Philip and Alexander, and, indeed, survived them. It appears, from hence, that there is not much above four hundred years distance between our age and that of Demosthenes: a portion of time, which, considered with respect to human duration, appears, I acknowledge, extremely long: but, if compared with that immense æra which the philosophers talk of, is exceedingly contracted, and seems almost but of yesterday. For if it be true, what Cicero observes in his treatise inscribed to Hortensius, that the great and genuine year is that period in which the heavenly bodies return to the same position, wherein they were placed when they first began their respective orbits; and this revolution contains 12,954 of our solar years; then Demosthenes, this ancient Demosthenes of yours, lived in the same year, or rather, I might say, in the same month, with ourselves. But to mention the Roman orators: I presume, you will scarcely prefer Menenius Agrippa (who may, with some propriety, indeed, be called an ancient) to the men of eloquence among the moderns. It is Cicero, then, I suppose, together with Cœlius, Cæsar, and Calvus, Brutus, Asinius, and Messalla, to whom you give this honourable precedency: yet I am at a loss to assign a reason, why these should be deemed ancients rather than moderns. To instance in Cicero: he was killed, as his freedman Tiro informs us, on the 26th of December, in the consulship of Hirtius and Pansa, in which year Augustus and Pedius succeeded them in that dignity. Now, if we take fifty-six years for the reign of Augustus, and add twenty-three for that of Tiberius, about four for that of Caius, fourteen apiece for Claudius and Nero, one for Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, together with the six that our present excellent prince* has enjoyed the empire, we shall have

* From this passage Fabricius asserts, that this dialogue was written in the 6th year of Vespasian's reign; but he evidently mistakes the time

about one hundred and twenty years from the death of Cicero to these times: a period to which it is not impossible that a man's life may extend. I remember, when I was in Britain, to have met with an old soldier, who assured me, he had served in the army which opposed Cæsar's descent upon that island. If we suppose this person, by being taken prisoner, or by any other means, to have been brought to Rome, he might have heard Cæsar and Cicero, and likewise any of our contemporaries. I appeal to yourselves, whether, at the last public donative, there were not several of the populace who acknowledged they had received the same bounty, more than once, from the hands of Augustus? It is evident, therefore, that these people might have been present at the pleadings both of Corvinus and Asinius: for Corvinus was alive in the middle of the reign of Augustus, and Asinius towards the latter end. Surely, then, you will not split a century, and call one orator an ancient, and another a modern, when the very same person might be an auditor of both; and thus as it were render them contemporaries.

"The conclusion I mean to draw from this observation is, that whatever advantages these orators might derive to their characters, from the period of time in which they flourished, the same will extend to us: and, indeed, with much more reason than to S. Galba, or to C. Carbonius. It cannot be denied that the compositions of these last are very inelegant and unpolished performances; as I could wish, that not only your admired Calvus and Cœlius, but I will venture to add too, even Cicero himself (for I shall deliver my sentiments with great freedom) had not considered them as the proper models of their imitation. Suffer me to premise, however, as I go along, that eloquence changes its qualities as it runs through different ages. Thus, as Gracchus, for instance, is much more copious and florid than old Cato, so Crassus rises into a far higher strain of politeness and refinement than

in which the scene of it is laid, for that in which it was composed. It is upon arguments not better founded, that the critics have given Tacitus and Quintillian the honour of this elegant performance. *Vid. Fabric. Bib. Lat.* V. I. 559.

Gracchus. Thus, likewise, as the speeches of Tully are more regular, and marked with superior elegance and sublimity, than those of the two orators last mentioned; so Corvinus is considerably more smooth and harmonious in his periods, as well as more correct in his language, than Tully. I am not considering which of them is most eloquent: all I endeavour to prove at present is, that oratory does not manifest itself in one uniform figure, but is exhibited by the ancients under a variety of different appearances. However, it is by no means a just way of reasoning, to infer, that one thing must necessarily be worse than another, merely because it is not the same. Yet such is the unaccountable perversity of human nature, that whatever has antiquity to boast, is sure to be admired, as every thing novel is certainly disapproved. There are critics, I doubt not, to be found, who prefer even Appius Cæcus to Cato; as it is well known that Cicero had his censurers, who objected that his style was swelling and redundant, and by no means agreeable to the elegant conciseness of attic eloquence. You have certainly read the letters of Calvus and Brutus to Cicero. It appears, by those epistolary collections, that Cicero considered Calvus as a dry, unanimated orator, at the same time that he thought the style of Brutus negligent and unconnected. These, in their turn, had their objections, it seems, to Cicero: Calvus condemned his oratorical compositions, for being weak and enervated; as Brutus (to use his own expression) esteemed them *feeble* and *disjointed*. If I were to give my opinion, I should say, they each spoke truth of one another. But I shall examine these orators separately hereafter; my present design is only to consider them in a general view.

"The admirers of antiquity are agreed, I think, in extending the æra of the ancients as far as Cassius Severus; whom they assert to have been the first that struck out from the plain and simple manner, which, till then, prevailed. Now I affirm that he did so, not from any deficiency in point of genius or learning, but from his superior judgment and good sense. He saw it was necessary to accommodate oratory, as I observed before, to

the different times and taste of the audience. Our ancestors, indeed, might be contented (and it was a mark of their ignorance and want of politeness that they were so) with the immoderate and tedious length of speeches, which was in vogue in those ages; as, in truth, to be able to harangue for a whole day together was itself looked upon, at that illiterate period, as a talent worthy of the highest admiration. The immeasurable introduction, the circumstantial detail, the endless division and subdivision, the formal argument drawn out into a dull variety of logical deductions, together with a thousand other impertinencies of the same tasteless stamp, which you may find laid down among the precepts of those driest of all writers, Hermagoras and Apollodorus, were then held in supreme honour. And, to complete all, if the orator had just dipped into philosophy, and could sprinkle the harangue with some of the most trite maxims of that science, they thundered out his applauses to the skies. For these were new and uncommon topics to them; as, indeed, very few of the orators themselves had the least acquaintance with the writings either of the philosophers or the rhetoricians. But in our more enlightened age, where even the lowest part of an audience have at least some general notion of literature, Eloquence is constrained to find out new and more florid paths. She is obliged to avoid every thing that may fatigue or offend the ears of her audience; especially as she must now appear before judges, who decide, not by law, but by authority; who prescribe what limits they think proper to the orator's speech: nor calmly wait till he is pleased to come to the point, but call upon him to return, and openly testify their impatience whenever he seems disposed to wander from the question. Who, I beseech you, would, in our days, endure an orator, who should open his harangue with a tedious apology for the weakness of his constitution? Yet almost every oration of Corvinus sets out in that manner. Would any man *now* have patience to hear out the five long books against Verres? or those endless volumes of pleading in favour of Tully, or Cæcina? The vivacity of our modern judges even pre-

vents the speaker; and they are apt to conceive some sort of prejudice against all he utters, unless he has the address to bribe their attention by the strength and spirit of his arguments, the liveliness of his sentiments, or the elegance and brilliancy of his descriptions. The very populace have some notion of the beauty of language, and would no more relish the uncouthness of antiquity in a modern orator, than they would the gesture of old Roscius or Ambivius in a modern actor. Our young students too, who are forming themselves to eloquence, and for that purpose attend the courts of judicature, expect not merely to *hear*, but to carry home something worthy of remembrance: and it is usual with them, not only to canvass among themselves, but to transmit to their respective provinces, whatever ingenious thought or poetical ornament the orator has happily employed. For even the embellishments of poetry are now required: and those too, not copied from the heavy and antiquated manner of Attius or Pacuvius, but formed in the lively and elegant spirit of Horace, Virgil, and Lucan. Agreeably, therefore, to the superior taste and judgment of the present age, our orators appear with a more polished and graceful aspect. And most certainly it cannot be thought that their speeches are the less efficacious, because they soothe the ears of the audience with the pleasing modulation of harmonious periods. Has Eloquence lost her power, because she has improved her charms? Are our temples less durable than those of old, because they are no formed of rude materials, but shine out in all the polish and splendour of the most costly ornaments?

"To confess the plain truth, the effect which many of the ancients have upon me, is to dispose me either to laugh or sleep. Not to mention the more ordinary race of orators, such as Canutius, Arrius, or Furnius, with some others of the same dry and unaffecting cast; even Calvus himself scarce pleases me in more than one or two short orations: though he has left behind him, if I mistake not, no less than one and twenty volumes. And the world in general seems to join with me in the same opi-

nion of them: for how few are the readers of his invective against Asinius or Drusus? Whereas, those against Vatinius are in every body's hands, particularly the second, which is, indeed, both in sentiment and language, a well-written piece. It is evident, therefore, that he had an idea of just composition, and rather wanted genius than inclination, to reach a more graceful and elevated manner. As to the orations of Cœlius, though they are by no means valuable upon the whole, yet they have their merit, so far as they approach to the exalted elegance of the present times. Whenever, indeed, his composition is careless and unconnected, his expression low, and his sentiments gross, it is then he is truly an ancient; and I will venture to affirm, there is no one so fond of antiquity as to admire him in that part of his character. We may allow Cæsar, on account of the great affairs in which he was engaged, as we may Brutus, in consideration of his philosophy, to be less eloquent than might otherwise be expected of such superior geniuses. The truth is, even their warmest admirers acknowledge, that, as orators, they by no means shine with the same lustre which distinguished every other part of their reputation. Cæsar's speech, in favour of Decius, and that of Brutus, in behalf of king Dejotarus, with some others of the same coldness and languor, have scarcely, I imagine, met with any readers; unless, perhaps, among such who can relish their verses. For verses, we know, they writ, (and published too,) I will not say with more spirit, but undoubtedly with more success, than Cicero, because they had the good fortune to fall into much fewer hands. Asinius, one would guess, by his air and manner, to have been contemporary with Menenius, and Appius: though, in fact, he lived much nearer to our times. It is visible he was a close imitator of Attius and Pacuvius, not only in his tragedies, but also in his orations; so remarkably dry and unpolished are all his compositions! But the beauty of eloquence, like that of the human form, consists in the smoothness, strength, and colour of its several parts. Corvinus I am inclined to spare, though it was his own

fault that he did not equal the elegant refinements of modern compositions, as it must be acknowledged his genius was abundantly sufficient for that purpose.

"The next I shall take notice of is Cicero; who had the same contest with those of his own times, as mine, my friends, with you. They, it seems, were favourers of the ancients, whilst he preferred the eloquence of his contemporaries; and, in truth, he excels the orators of his own age in nothing more remarkably, than in the solidity of his judgment. He was the first who set a polish upon oratory; who seemed to have any notion of delicacy of expression, and the art of composition. Accordingly, he attempted a more florid style; as he now and then breaks out into some lively flashes of wit; particularly in his later performances, when much practice and experience (those best and surest guides) had taught him a more improved manner. But his earlier compositions are not without the blemishes of antiquity. He is tedious in his exordiums, too circumstantial in his narrations, and careless in retrenching luxuriances. He seems not easily affected, and is but rarely fired; as his periods are seldom either properly rounded, or happily pointed; he has nothing, in fine, you would wish to make your own. His speeches, like a rude edifice, have strength, indeed, and permanency; but are destitute of that elegance and splendor, which are necessary to render them perfectly agreeable. The orator, however, in his compositions, as the man of wealth in his buildings, should consider ornament as well as use; his structure should be, not only substantial but striking; and his furniture not merely convenient, but rich, and such as will bear a close and frequent inspection: whilst every thing that has a mean and awkward appearance ought to be totally banished.—Let our orator, then, reject every expression that is obsolete, and grown rusty, as it were, by age: let him be careful not to weaken the force of his sentiments by a heavy and inartificial combination of words, like our dull compilers of annals: let him avoid all low and insipid raillery; in a word, let him vary the structure of his periods, nor end every sentence with the same uniform close,

"I will not expose the meanness of Cicero's conceits, nor his affectation of concluding almost every other period with, *as it should seem*, instead of pointing them with some lively and spirited turn. I mention even these with reluctance, and pass over many others of the same injudicious cast. It is singly, however, in little affectations of this kind, that they who are pleased to style themselves *ancient orators*, seem to admire and imitate him. I shall content myself with describing their characters, without mentioning their names; but, you are sensible, there are certain pretenders to taste who prefer Lucilius to Horace, and Lucretius to Virgil? who hold the eloquence of your favourite Bassus or Nonianus in the utmost contempt, when compared with that of Sisenna or Varro: in a word, who despise the productions of our modern rhetoricians, yet are in raptures with those of Calvus. These curious orators prate in the courts of judicature after the *manner of the ancients*, (as they call it) till they are deserted by the whole audience, and are scarce supportable even to their very clients. The truth of it is, that soundness of eloquence, which they so much boast, is but an evidence of the natural weakness of their genius, as it is the effect alone of tame and cautious art. No physician would pronounce a man to enjoy a proper constitution, whose health proceeded entirely from a studied and abstemious regimen. To be only not indisposed, is but a small acquisition; it is spirits, vivacity, and vigour that I require: whatever comes short of this, is but one remove from imbecility.

"Be it then (as with great ease it may, and, in fact, is) the glorious distinction of you, my illustrious friends, to ennoble our age with the most refined eloquence. It is with infinite satisfaction, Messalla, I observe, that you single out the most florid among the ancients for your model. And you, my other two ingenious friends,* so happily unite strength of sentiment with beauty of expression: such a pregnancy of imagination, such a symmetry of ordonnance, distinguish your speeches; so co-

* Maternus and Secundus.

pious or so concise in your elocution, as different occasions require; such an inimitable gracefulness of style, and such an easy flow of wit, adorn and dignify your compositions: in a word, so absolutely you command the passions of your audience, and so happily temper your own, that, however the envy and malignity of the present age may withhold that applause which is so justly your due, posterity, you may rely upon it, will speak of you in the advantageous terms which you well deserve."

When Aper had thus finished: "It must be owned," said Maternus, "our friend has spoken with much force and spirit. What a torrent of learning and eloquence has he poured forth in defence of the moderns! and how completely vanquished the ancients with those very weapons which he borrowed from them! However," continued he, applying himself to Messalla, "you must not recede from your engagement. Not that we expect you should enter into a defence of the ancients, or suppose (however Aper is pleased to compliment) that any of us can stand in competition with them. Aper, himself, does not sincerely think so, I dare say; but takes the opposite side in the debate, merely in imitation of the celebrated manner of antiquity. We do not desire you, therefore, to entertain us with a panegyric upon the ancients: their well-established reputation places them far above the want of our encomiums. But what we request of you is, to account for our having so widely departed from that noble species of eloquence which they displayed: especially since we are not, according to Aper's calculation, more than a hundred and twenty years distant from Cicero."

"I shall endeavour," returned Messalla, "to pursue the plan you have laid down to me.—I shall not enter into the question with Aper, (though, indeed, he is the first that ever made it one) whether those who flourished above a century before us, can properly be styled ancients. I am not disposed to contend about words; let them be called ancients, or ancestors, or whatever other name he pleases, so it be allowed their oratory was superior to ours. I admit too, what he just now advanced,

that there are various kinds of eloquence discernible in the same period; much more in different ages. But, as among the attic orators, Demosthenes is placed in the first rank, then Æschines, Hyperides next, and, after him, Lysias and Lycurgus; an æra which, on all hands, is agreed to have been the prime season of oratory: so amongst us, Cicero is, by universal consent, preferred to all his contemporaries; as, after him, Calvus, Asinius, Cæsar, Cœlius, and Brutus, are justly acknowledged to have excelled all our preceding or subsequent orators. Nor is it of any importance to the present argument, that they differ in manner, since they agree in kind. The compositions of Calvus, it is confessed, are distinguished by their remarkable conciseness; as those of Asinius are, by the harmonious flow of his language. Brilliancy of sentiment is Cæsar's characteristic: as poignancy of wit is that of Cœlius. Solidity recommends the speeches of Brutus; while copiousness, strength, and vehemence are the predominant qualities in Cicero. Each of them, however, displays an equal soundness of eloquence; and one may easily discover a general resemblance and kindred likeness run through their several works, though diversified, indeed, according to their respective geniuses. That they mutually detracted from each other, (as it must be owned there are some remaining traces of malignity in their letters) is not to be imputed to them as orators, but as men. Calvus, Asinius, and even Cicero himself, were liable, no doubt, to be infected with jealousy, as well as with other human frailties and imperfections. Brutus, however, I will singly except from all imputations of malignity, as I am persuaded he spoke the sincere and impartial sentiments of his heart: for can it be supposed that He should envy Cicero, who does not seem to have envied even Cæsar himself? As to Galba, Lælius, and some others of the ancients, whom Aper has thought proper to condemn; I am willing to admit that they have some defects, which must be ascribed to a growing and yet immature eloquence.

After all, if we must relinquish the nobler kind of oratory, and adopt some lower species, I should certainly

prefer the impetuosity of Gracchus, or the incorrectness of Crassus, to the studied foppery of Mæcenas, or the childish jingle of Gallio: so much rather would I see eloquence cloathed in the most rude and negligent garb, than decked out with the false colours of affected ornament! There is something in our present manner of elocution, which is so far from being oratorical, that it is not even manly; and one would imagine our modern pleaders, by the levity of their wit, the affected smoothness of their periods, and licentiousness of their style, had a view to the stage in all their compositions. Accordingly, some of them are not ashamed to boast (which one can scarce even mention without a blush) that their speeches are adapted to the soft modulation of stage-music. It is this depravity of taste which has given rise to the very indecent and preposterous, though very frequent expression, that such an orator speaks *smoothly*, and such a dancer moves *eloquently*. I am willing to admit, therefore, that Cassius Severus (the single modern whom Aper has thought proper to name) when compared to these his degenerate successors, may justly be deemed an orator; though, it is certain, in the greater part of his compositions, there appears far more strength than spirit. He was the first who neglected chastity of style, and propriety of method. Inexpert in the use of those very weapons with which he engages, he ever lays himself open to a thrust, by always endeavouring to attack; and one may much more properly say of him, that he pushes at random, than that he comports himself according to the just rules of regular combat. Nevertheless, he is greatly superior, as I observed before, in the variety of his learning, the agreeableness of his wit, and the strength of his genius, to those who succeeded him: not one of whom, however, has Aper ventured to bring into the field. I imagined, that after having deposed Asinius, and Cœlius, and Calvus, he would have substituted another set of orators in their place, and that he had numbers to produce in opposition to Cicero, to Cæsar, and the rest whom he rejected; or, at least, one rival to each of them. On the contrary, he has distinctly and separately

censured all the ancients, while he has ventured to commend the moderns in general only. He thought, perhaps, if he singled out some, he should draw upon himself the resentment of all the rest: for every declaimer among them modestly ranks himself, in his own fond opinion, before Cicero, though, indeed, after Gabinianus. But what Aper was not hardy enough to undertake, I will be bold to execute for him; and draw out his oratorical heroes in full view, that it may appear by what degrees the spirit and vigour of ancient eloquence was impaired and broken."

"Let me rather entreat you," said Maternus, interrupting him, "to enter, without any farther preface, upon the difficulty you first undertook to clear. That we are inferior to the ancients, in point of eloquence, I by no means want to have proved; being entirely of that opinion; but my present enquiry is how to account for our sinking so far below them? A question, it seems, you have examined, and which I am persuaded you would discuss with much calmness, if Aper's unmerciful attack upon your favourite orators had not a little discomposed you."

"I am nothing offended," returned Messalla, "with the sentiments which Aper has advanced; neither ought you, my friends, remembering always that it is an established law in debates of this kind, that every man may, with entire security, disclose his unreserved opinion."—"Proceed then, I beseech you," replied Maternus, "to the examination of this point concerning the ancients, with a freedom equal to theirs: from which I suspect, alas! we have more widely degenerated, than even from their eloquence."

"The cause," said Messalla, resuming his discourse, "does nor lie very remote: and, though you are pleased to call upon me to assign it, is well known, I doubt not, both to you and to the rest of this company. For is it not obvious that eloquence, together with the rest of the politer arts, has fallen from her ancient glory, not for want of admirers, but through the dissoluteness of our youth, the negligence of parents, the ignorance of preceptors, and the universal disregard of ancient manners?

evils which derived their source from Rome, and thence spread themselves through Italy, and over all the provinces; though the mischief, indeed, is most observable within our own walls. I shall take notice, therefore, of those vices to which the youth of this city are more peculiarly exposed; which rise upon them in number as they increase in years. But before I enter farther into this subject, let me premise an observation or two concerning the judicious method of discipline practised by our ancestors, in training up their children.

"In the first place, then, the virtuous matrons of those wiser ages did not abandon their infants to the mean hovels of mercenary nurses, but tenderly reared them up at their own breasts; esteeming the careful regulation of their children, and domestic concerns, as the highest point of female merit. It was customary with them, likewise, to choose out some elderly female relation, of approved conduct, with whom the family in general entrusted the care of their respective children, during their infant years. This venerable person strictly regulated, not only their more serious pursuits, but even their very amusements; restraining them, by her respected presence, from saying or acting any thing contrary to decency and good manners. In this manner, we are informed, Cornelia, the mother of the two Gracchi, as also Aurelia and Attia, to whom Julius and Augustus Cæsar owed their respective births, undertook this office of family education, and trained up those several noble youths to whom they were related. This method of discipline was attended with one very singular advantage: the minds of young men were conducted sound and untainted to the study of the noble arts. Accordingly, whatever profession they determined upon, whether that of arms, eloquence, or law, they entirely devoted themselves to that single pursuit, and, with undissipated application, possessed the whole compass of their chosen science.

"But, in the present age, the little boy is delegated to the care of some paltry Greek chamber-maid, in conjunction with two or three other servants, (and even those generally of the worst kind) who are absolutely unfit for

every rational and serious office. From the idle tales and gross absurdities of these worthless people, the tender and uninstructed mind is suffered to receive its earliest impressions. It cannot, indeed, be supposed, that any caution should be observed among the domestics; since the parents themselves are so far from training their young families to virtue and modesty, that they set them the first examples of luxury and licentiousness. Thus our youth gradually acquire a confirmed habit of impudence, and a total disregard of that reverence they owe both to themselves and to others. To say truth, it seems as if a fondness for horses, actors, and gladiators, the peculiar and distinguishing folly of this our city, was impressed upon them even in the womb: and when once a passion of this contemptible sort has seized and engaged the mind, what opening is there left for the noble arts?

"All conversation in general is infected with topics of this kind; as they are the constant subjects of discourse, not only amongst our youth, in their academies, but even of their tutors themselves. For it is not by establishing a strict discipline, or by giving proofs of their genius, that this order of men gain pupils: it is by the meanest compliances and most servile flattery. Not to mention how ill-instructed our youth are in the very elements of literature, sufficient pains are by no means taken in bringing them acquainted with the best authors, or in giving them a proper notion of history, together with a knowledge of men and things. The whole that seems to be considered in their education, is to find out a person for them called a rhetorician. I shall take occasion, immediately, to give you some account of the rise and progress of this profession in Rome, and shew you with what contempt it was received by our ancestors. But it will be necessary to lay before you a previous view of that scheme of discipline which the ancient orators practised; of whose amazing industry, and unwearied application to every branch of the polite arts, we meet with many remarkable accounts in their own writings.

"I need not inform you, that Cicero, in the latter end of his treatise intituled "Brutus," (the former part of which

is employed in commemorating the ancient orators) gives a sketch of the several progressive steps by which he formed his eloquence. He there acquaints us, that he studied the civil law under Q. Mucius; that he was instructed in the several branches of philosophy by Philo the academic, and Diodorus the stoic; that, not satisfied with attending the lectures of those eminent masters, of which there were, at that time, great numbers in Rome, he made a voyage into Greece and Asia, in order to enlarge his knowledge, and embrace the whole circle of sciences. Accordingly he appears, by his writings, to have been master of logic, ethics, astronomy, and natural philosophy, besides, being well versed in geometry, music, grammar, and, in short, in every one of the fine arts.—For thus it is, my worthy friends, from deep learning and the united confluence of the arts and sciences, the resistless torrent of that amazing eloquence derived its strength and rapidity.

"The faculties of the orator are not exercised, indeed, as in other sciences, within certain precise and determinate limits: on the contrary, eloquence is the most comprehensive of the whole circle of arts. Thus, he alone, can justly be deemed an orator, who knows how to employ the most persuasive arguments upon every question, who can express himself suitably to the dignity of his subject with all the powers of grace and harmony; in a word, who can penetrate into every minute circumstance, and manage the whole train of incidents to the greatest advantage of his cause. Such, at least, was the high idea which the ancients formed of this illustrious character.—In order, however, to attain this eminent qualification, they did not think it necessary to declaim in the schools, and idly waste their breath upon feigned or frivolous controversies. It was their wiser method to apply themselves to the study of such useful arts as concern life and manners, as treat of moral good and evil, of justice and injustice, of the decent and the unbecoming in actions. And, indeed, it is upon points of this nature that the business of the orator principally turns. For example, in the judiciary kind, it relates to matters of equity; as in

the deliberate it is employed in determining the fit and the expedient: still, however, these two branches are not so absolutely distinct, but that they are frequently blended with each other. Now it is impossible, when questions of this kind fall under the consideration of an orator, to enlarge upon them in all the elegant and enlivening spirit of an efficacious eloquence, unless he is perfectly well acquainted with human nature; unless he understands the power and extent of moral duties, and can distinguish those actions which do not partake either of vice or virtue.

"From the same source, likewise, he must derive his influence over the passions. For if he is skilled, for instance, in the nature of indignation, he will be so much the more capable of soothing or enflaming the breasts of his judges: if he knows wherein compassion consists, and by what workings of the heart it is moved, he will the more easily raise that tender affection of the soul. An orator trained up in this discipline, and practised in these arts, will have full command over the breasts of his audience, in whatever disposition it may be his chance to find them: and thus furnished with all the numberless powers of persuasion, will judiciously vary and accommodate his eloquence, as particular circumstances and conjunctures shall require. There are some, we find, who are most struck with that manner of elocution, where the arguments are drawn up in a short and close style: upon such an occasion, the orator will experience the great advantage of being conversant in logic. Others, on the contrary, admire flowing and diffusive periods, where the illustrations are borrowed from the ordinary and familiar images of common observation: here the Peripatetic writers will give him some assistance; as, indeed, they will, in general, supply him with many useful hints in all the different methods of popular address. The Academics will inspire him with a becoming warmth: Plato with sublimity of sentiments, and Xenophon with an easy and elegant diction. Even the exclamatory manner of Epicurus, or Metrodorus, may be found, in some circumstances, not altogether unserviceable. In a word, what

the stoics pretend of their wise men, ought to be verified in our orator, and he should actually possess all human knowledge. Accordingly, the ancients who applied themselves to eloquence, not only studied the civil laws, but also grammar, poetry, music, and geometry. Indeed, there are few causes (perhaps I might justly say there are none) wherein a skill in the first is not absolutely necessary; as there are many in which an acquaintance with the last mentioned sciences is highly requisite.

"If it should be objected, that 'eloquence is the single 'science requisite for the orator; as an occasional re-'course to the others will be sufficient for all his pur-'poses," I answer: in the first place, there will always be a remarkable difference in the manner of applying what we take up, as it were, upon loan, and what we properly possess; so that it will ever be manifest, whether the orator is indebted to others for what he produces, or derives it from his own unborrowed fund. And in the next, the sciences throw an inexpressible grace over our compositions, even where they are not immediately concerned; as their effects are discernible where we least expect to find them. This powerful charm is not only distinguished by the learned and the judicious, but strikes even the most common and popular class of auditors; insomuch that one may frequently hear them applauding a speaker of this improved kind, as a man of genuine erudition; as enriched with the whole treasures of eloquence; and, in one word, acknowledge the complete orator. But I will take the liberty to affirm, that no man ever did, nor, indeed, ever can, maintain that exalted character, unless he enters the forum supported by the full strength of the united arts. Accomplishments, however, of this sort, are now so totally neglected, that the pleadings of our orators are debased by the lowest expressions; as a general ignorance both of the laws of our country and the acts of the senate is visible throughout their performances. All knowledge of the rights and customs of Rome is professedly ridiculed, and philosophy seems at present to be considered as something that ought to be shunned and dreaded. Thus eloquence, like

a dethroned potentate, is banished her rightful dominions, and confined to barren points and low conceits: and she, who was once mistress of the whole circle of sciences, and charmed every beholder with the goodly appearance of her glorious train, is now stripped of all her attendants, (I had almost said of all her genius) and seems as one of the meanest of the mechanic arts. This, therefore, I consider as the first, and the principal reason of our having so greatly declined from the spirit of the ancients.

"If I were called upon to support my opinion by authorities, might I not justly name, among the Grecians, Demosthenes? who, we are informed, constantly attended the lectures of Plato: as, among our own countrymen, Cicero himself assures us, (and in these very words, if I rightly remember) that he owed whatever advances he had made in eloquence, not to the rhetoricians, but to the academic philosophers.

"Other, and very considerable reasons might be produced for the decay of eloquence. But I leave them, my friends, as it is proper I should, to be mentioned by you; having performed my share in the examination of this question: and with a freedom, which will give, I imagine, as usual, much offence. I am sure, at least, if certain of our contemporaries were to be informed of what I have here maintained, I should be told, that in laying it down as a maxim, that a knowledge both of law and philosophy are essential qualifications in an orator, I have been fondly pursuing a phantom of my own imagination."

"I am so far from thinking," replied Maternus, "you have completed the part you undertook, that I should rather imagine you had only given us the first general sketch of your design. You have marked out to us, indeed, those sciences wherein the ancient orators were instructed, and have placed in strong contrast their successful industry, with our unperforming ignorance. But something farther still remains; and, as you have shewn us the superior acquirements of the orators in those more improved ages of eloquence, as well as the remarkable deficiency of those in our own times, I should be glad you

would proceed to acquaint us with the particular exercises by which the youth of those earlier days were wont to strengthen and improve their geniuses. For I dare say you will not deny that oratory is acquired by practice far better than by precept: and our other two friends here seem willing, I perceive, to admit it."

To which, when Aper and Secundus had signified their assent, Messalla, resuming his discourse, continued as follows:

"Having, then, as it should seem, disclosed to your satisfaction the seeds and first principles of ancient eloquence, by specifying the several kinds of arts to which the ancient orators were trained, I shall now lay before you the method they pursued, in order to gain a facility in the exertion of eloquence. This, indeed, I have, in some measure, anticipated, by mentioning the preparatory arts to which they applied themselves: for it is impossible to make any progress in a compass so various and so abstruse, unless we not only strengthen our knowledge by reflection, but improve a general aptitude by frequent exercise. Thus it appears that the same steps must be pursued in exerting our oratory, as in attaining it. But if this truth should not be universally admitted; if any should think that eloquenee may be possessed without paying previous court to her attendant sciences; most certainly, at least, it will not be denied, that a mind duly impregnated with the polite arts, will enter with so much the more advantage upon those exercises peculiar to the oratorical circus.

"Accordingly, our ancestors, when they designed a young man for the profession of eloquence, having previously taken due care of his domestic education, and seasoned his mind with useful knowledge, introduced him to the most eminent orator in Rome. From that time, the youth commenced his constant follower, attending him upon all occasions, whether he appeared in the public assemblies of the people, or in the courts of civil judicature. Thus he learned, if I may use the expression, the arts of oratorical conflict in the very field of battle. The advantages which flowed from this method were consi-

derable: it animated the courage and quickened the judgment of youth, thus to receive their instructions in the eye of the world, and in the midst of affairs, when no man could advance an absurd or a weak argument, without being rejected by the bench, exposed by his adversary, and, in a word, despised by the whole audience.—By this method they imbibed the pure and uncorrupted streams of genuine eloquence. But though they chiefly attached shemselves to one particular orator, they heard, likewise, all the rest of their contemporary pleaders, in many of their respective debates. Hence, also, they had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the various sentiments of the people, and of observing what pleased or disgusted them most in the several orators of the forum. By this means they were supplied with an instructor of the best and most improving kind, exhibiting, not the feigned semblance of eloquence, but her real and lively manifestation: not a pretended, but a genuine adversary, armed in earnest for the combat; an audience, ever full and ever new, composed of foes as well as friends, and where not a single expression could fall uncensured or unapplauded. For you will agree with me, I am well persuaded, when I assert, that a solid and lasting reputation of eloquence must be acquired by the censure of our enemies, as well as by the applause of our friends; or rather, indeed, it is from the former that it derives its surest and most unquestioned strength and firmness. Accordingly, a youth thus formed to the bar, a frequent and attentive hearer of the most illustrious orators and debates, instructed by the experience of others, acquainted with the popular state, and daily conversant in the laws of his country, to whom the solemn presence of the judges, and the awful eyes of a full audience, were familiar, rose at once into affairs, and was equal to every cause. Hence it was that Crassus, at the age of nineteen, Cæsar at twenty-one, Pollio at twenty-two, and Calvus when he was but a few years older, pronounced those several speeches against Carbo, Dolabella, Cato, and Vatinius, which we read to this hour with admiration.

"On the other hand, our modern youth receive their education under certain declaimers, called rhetoricians: a set of men who made their first appearance in Rome, a little before the time of Cicero. And that they were by no means approved by our ancestors, plainly appears from their being enjoined, under the censorship of Crassus and Domitius, to shut up their schools of *impudence*, as Cicero expresses it.—But I was going to say, we are sent to certain academies, where it is hard to determine whether the place, the company, or the method of instruction is most likely to infect the minds of young people, and produce a wrong turn of thought. For nothing, certainly, can there be of an affecting solemnity in an audience, where all who compose it are of the same low degree of understanding; nor any advantage to be received from their fellow-students, where a parcel of boys and raw youths of unripe judgments, harangue before each other, without the least fear or danger of criticism. And as for their exercises, they are ridiculous in their very nature. They consist of two kinds, and are either declamatory or controversial. The first, as being easier and requiring less skill, is assigned to the younger lads: the other is the task of more mature years. But, good gods! with what incredible absurdity are they composed! The truth is, the style of their declamations is as false and contemptible, as the subjects are useless and fictitious. Thus, being taught to harangue, in a most pompous diction, on the rewards due to tyrannicides, on the election to be made by deflowered virgins,* on the licentiousness of married women, on the ceremonies to be observed in times of pestilence, with other topics of the same unconcerning kind, which are daily debated in the schools, and scarce ever at the bar; 'they appear absolute novices in 'the affairs of the world, and are by much too elevated 'for common life.'"

'† Here Messalla paused: when Secundus, taking his

*It was one of the questions usually debated in these rhetoric schools, whether the party who had been ravished should choose to marry the violator of her chastity, or rather have him put to death.

† The latter part of Messalla's discourse, together with what immediately followed it in the original, is lost: the chasm, however, does not

'turn in the conversation, began with observing, that' the true and lofty spirit of genuine eloquence, like that of a clear and vigorous flame, is nourished by proper fuel, excited by agitation, and still brightens as it burns. "It was in this manner," said he, "that the oratory of our ancestors was kindled and spread itself. The moderns have as much merit of this kind, perhaps, as can be acquired under a settled and peaceable government: but far inferior, no doubt, to that which shone out in the times of licentiousness and confusion, when he was deemed the ablest orator, who had most influence over a restless and ungoverned multitude. To this situation of public affairs was owing those continual debates concerning the Agrarian laws, and the popularity consequent thereupon; those long harangues of the magistrates, those impeachments of the great, those factions of the nobles, those hereditary enmities in particular families; and, in fine, those incessant struggles between the senate and the commons; which, though each of them prejudicial to the state, yet most certainly contributed to produce and encourage that rich vein of eloquence which discovered itself in those tempestuous days. The way to dignities lay directly through the paths of Eloquence. The more a man signalized himself by his abilities in this art, so much the more easily he opened his road to preferment, and maintained an ascendant over his colleagues, at the same time that it heightened his interest with the nobles, his authority with the senate, and his reputation with the people in general. The patronage of these admired orators was courted even by foreign nations; as the several magistrates of our own endeavoured to recommend themselves to their favour and protection, by shewing them the highest marks of honour whenever they set out for the administration of their respective provinces, and by studiously cultivating a friendship with them at their return. They were called upon, without any solicitation on their own part, to fill up the supreme dignities of the state. Nor were they even in a private station without great power, as, by means of the persuasive arts, they had a very considerable influence over both the senate and the people. The truth is, it was an established maxim in those days, that, without the oratorical talents, no man could either acquire or maintain any high post in the government. And, no wonder, indeed, that such notions should universally prevail; since it was impossible for any person, endued with this commanding art, to pass his life in obscurity, how much soever it might be agreeable to his own inclinations; since it was not sufficient merely to vote in the senate, without supporting that vote with good sense and eloquence; since, in all public impeachments or civil causes, the accused was obliged to answer to the charge in his own person; since written depositions were not admitted in judicial matters, but the witnesses were called upon to deliver their evidence in open court. Thus our ancestors were eloquent, as much by necessity as by encouragements. To be possessed of the persuasive talents, was esteemed the highest glory; as the contrary character was held in the utmost contempt. In a word, they were incited to the pursuit of oratory, by a principle of honour, as well as by a view of interest. They dreaded the disgrace of being considered rather as clients than patrons; of losing those dependents which their ancestors had transmitted to them, and seeing them mix in the train of others; in short, of being looked upon as men of mean abilities, and consequently either passed over in the disposal of high offices, or despised in the administration of them.

"I know not whether those ancient historical pieces, which were lately collected and published by Mucianus, from the old libraries where they have hitherto been preserved, have yet fallen into your hands. This collection

seem to be so great as some of the commentators suspect. The translator, therefore, has ventured to fill it up in his own way, with those lines which are distinguished by inverted commas. He has, likewise, given the next subsequent part of the conversation to Secundus; though it does not appear in the original to whom it belongs. It would be of no great importance to the English reader to justify this last article: though, perhaps, it would not be very difficult, if it were necessary.

To save the reader the trouble of turning to a second note upon a like occasion, it is proper to observe in this place, that he will find the same inverted commas in page 234. The words included between them are also an addition of the translator's; and for the same reason as that just now mentioned.

consists of eleven volumes of the public journals, and three of epistles; by which it appears that Pompey and Crassus gained as much advantage from their eloquence, as their arms; that Lucullus, Metellus, Lentulus, Curio, and the rest of those distinguished chiefs, devoted themselves with great application to this insinuating art; in a word, that not a single person, in those times, rose to any considerable degree of power, without the assistance of the rhetorical talents.

"To these considerations may be farther added, that the dignity and importance of the debates in which the ancients were engaged, contributed greatly to advance their eloquence. Most certain, indeed, it is, that an orator must necessarily find great difference with respect to his powers, when he is to harangue only upon some trifling robbery, or a little paltry form of pleading; and when the faculties of his mind are warmed and enlivened by such interesting and animating topics as bribery at elections, as the oppression of our allies, or the massacre of our fellow-citizens. Evils these, which, beyond all peradventure, it were better should never happen; and we have reason to rejoice that we live under a government where we are strangers to such terrible calamities; still it must be acknowledged, that wherever they did happen, they were wonderful incentives to eloquence. For the orator's genius rises and expands itself in proportion to the dignity of the occasion upon which it is exerted; and I will lay it down as a maxim, that it is impossible to shine out in all the powerful lustre of genuine eloquence, without being inflamed by a suitable importance of subject. Thus the speech of Demosthenes against his guardians, scarcely, I imagine, established his character; as it was not the defence of Archias, or Quinctius, that acquired Cicero the reputation of a consummate orator. It was Catiline, and Milo, and Verres, and Mark Anthony, that warmed him with that noble glow of eloquence, which gave the finishing brightness to his unequalled fame. Far am I from insinuating, that such infamous characters deserve to be tolerated in a state, in order to supply convenient matter of oratory:

All I contend for is, that this art flourishes to most advantage in turbulent times. Peace, no doubt, is infinitely preferable to war; but it is the latter only that forms the soldier. It is just the same with Eloquence: the oftener she enters, if I may so say, the field of battle, the more wounds she gives and receives; the more powerful the adversary with which she contends, so much the more ennobled she appears in the eye of mankind. For it is the disposition of human nature always to admire what we see is attended with danger and difficulty in others, how much soever we may choose ease and security for ourselves.

"Another advantage which the ancient orators had over the moderns, is, that they were not confined in their pleadings, as we are, to a few hours. On the contrary, they were at liberty to adjourn as often as they thought proper: they were unlimited as to the number of days or of counsel, and every orator might extend his speech to the length most agreeable to himself. Pompey, in his third consulship, was the first who curbed the spirit of eloquence: still, however, permitting all causes to be heard, agreeably to the laws, in the forum and before the prætors. How much more considerable the business of those magistrates was, than that of the centumvirs, who, at present, determinh all causes is evident, from this circumstance, that not a single oration of Cicero, Cæsar, or Brutus, or, in short, of any one celebrated orator, was spoken before these last, excepting only those of Pollio in favour of the heirs of Urbinia. But then it must be remembered, that these were delivered about the middle of the reign of Augustus, when a long and uninterrupted peace abroad, a perfect tranquillity at home, together with the general good couduct of that wise prince, had damped the flames of eloquence as well as those of sedition.

"You will smile, perhaps, at what I am going to say, and I mention it for that purpose; but is there not something in the present confined garb of our orators, that has an ill effect even upon their elocution, and makes it appear low and contemptible? May we not suppose, likewise, that much of the spirit of oratory is sunk, by that

close and despicable scene wherein many of our causes are now debated? For the orator, like a generous steed, requires a free and open space wherein to expatiate; otherwise, the force of his powers is broken, and half the energy of his talents is checked in their career. There is another circumstance also exceedingly prejudicial to the interest of eloquence, as it prevents a due attention to style: we are now obliged to enter upon our speech whenever the judge calls upon us; not to mention the frequent interruptions which arise by the examination of witnesses. Besides, the courts of judicature are, at present, so unfrequented, that the orator seems to stand alone, and talk to bare walls. But eloquence rejoices in the clamour of loud applause, and exults in a full audience, such as used to press round the ancient orators, when the forum stood thronged with nobles; when a numerous retinue of clients, when foreign ambassadors, and whole cities assisted at the debate; and when even Rome herself was concerned in the event. The very appearance of that prodigious concourse of people, which attended the trials of Bestia, Cornelius, Scaurus, Milo, and Vatinius, must have inflamed the breast of the coldest orator. Accordingly, we find, that of all the ancient orations now extant, there are none which have more eminently distinguished their authors, than those which were pronounced under such favourable circumstances. To these advantages we may farther add, likewise, the frequent general assemblies of the people, the privilege of arraigning the most considerable personages, and the popularity of such impeachments; when the sons of oratory spared not even Scipio, Sylla, or Pompey; and when, in consequence of such acceptable attacks upon suspected power, they were sure of being heard by the people with the utmost attention and regard. How must these united causes contribute to raise the genius, and inspire the eloquence of the ancients!

'Maternus, who, you will remember, was in the midst 'of his harangue in favour of poetry, when Messalla first 'entered into the room, finding Secundus was now silent, 'took that opportunity of resuming his invective against 'the exercise of the oratorical arts in general.' "That

species of eloquence," said he, "wherein poetry is concerned, is calm and peaceable, moderate and virtuous: whereas, that other supreme kind which my two friends here have been describing, is the offspring of licentiousness (by fools miscalled liberty) and the companion of sedition; bold, obstinate, and haughty, unknowing how to yield, or how to obey, an encourager of a lawless populace, and a stranger in all well-regulated communities. Who ever heard of an orator in Lacedæmon or Crete? cities which exercised the severest discipline, and were governed by the strictest laws. We have no account of Persian or Macedonian eloquence, or, indeed, of that of any other state which submitted to a regular administration of government. Whereas, Rhodes and Athens (places of popular rule, where all things lay open to all men) swarmed with orators innumerable. In the same manner, Rome, whilst she was under no settled policy; while she was torn with parties, dissentions, and factions; while there was no peace in the forum, no harmony in the senate, no moderation in the judges; while there was neither reverence paid to superiors, nor bounds prescribed to magistrates—Rome, under these circumstances, produced, beyond all dispute, a stronger and brighter vein of eloquence? as some valuable plants will flourish even in the wildest soil. But the tongue of the Gracchi did nothing compensate the republic for their seditious laws; nor the superior eloquence of Cicero make him any amends for his sad catastrophe.

"The truth is, the forum (that single remain which now survives of ancient oratory) is, even in its present situation, an evident proof that all things amongst us are not conducted in that well-ordered manner one could wish. For, tell me, is it not the guilty or the miserable alone, that fly to us for assistance? When any community implores our protection, is it not because it either is insulted by some neighbouring state, or torn by domestic feuds? And what province ever seeks our patronage, till she has been plundered or oppressed? But far better it surely is, never to have been injured, than, at last, to be redressed. If there was a government in the world free from commotions and disturbances, the profession of

oratory would there be as useless, as that of medicine to the sound: and, as the physician would have little practice or profit among the healthy and the strong, so neither would the orator have much business or honour where obedience and good manners universally prevail. To what purpose are studied speeches in a senate, where the better and the major part of the assembly are already of one mind? What the expediency of haranguing the populace, where public affairs are not determined by the voice of an ignorant and giddy multitude, but by the steady wisdom of a single person? To what end voluntary informations, where crimes are unfrequent and inconsiderable? or of laboured and invidious defences, where the clemency of the judge is ever on the side of the accused? Believe me, then, my worthy (and, as far as the circumstances of the age require, my eloquent) friends, had the gods reversed the date of your existence, and placed *you* in the times of those ancients we so much admire, and *them* in yours: *you* would not have fallen short of that glorious spirit which distinguished their oratory, nor would *they* have been destitute of a proper temperature of moderation. But, since a high reputation for eloquence is not consistent with great repose in the public, let every age enjoy its own peculiar advantages, without derogating from those of a former."

Maternus having ended, Messalla observed, that there were some points which his friend had laid down, that were not perfectly agreeable to his sentiments: as there were others, which he wished to hear explained more at large: "but the time is now," said he, "too far advanced." —"If I have maintained any thing," replied Maternus, "which requires to be opened more explicitly, I shall be ready to clear it up in some future conference:" at the same time, rising from his seat and embracing Aper: "Messalla and I," continud he, smiling, "shall arraign you, be well assured, before the poets and admirers of the ancients."—"And I, both of you," returned Aper, "before the rhetoricians." Thus we parted in mutual good-humour.

THE END.

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