

for the winter, and wishing to be delivered from themselves by company and diversion.

I am, S I R, Yours,

EUPHELIA.

NUMB. 43. TUESDAY, August 14, 1750.

*Flumine perpetuo torrens solet acrius ire,
Sed tamen hæc brevis est, illa perennis aqua.*
OVID.

IT is observed by those who have written on the constitution of the human body, and the original of those diseases by which it is afflicted, that every man comes into the world morbid, that there is no temperature so exactly regulated but that some humour is fatally predominant, and that we are generally impregnated, in our first entrance upon life, with the seeds of that malady, which, in time, shall bring us to the grave.

THIS remark has been extended by others to the intellectual faculties. Some that imagine themselves to have looked with more than common penetration into human nature, have endeavoured

endeavoured to persuade us, that each man is born with a mind formed peculiarly for certain purposes, and with desires unalterably determined to particular objects, from which the attention cannot be long diverted, and which alone, as they are well or ill persued, must produce the praise or blame, the happiness or misery, of his future life.

THIS position has not, indeed, been hitherto proved with strength proportionate to the assurance with which it has been advanced, and, perhaps, will never gain much prevalence by a close examination.

IF the doctrine of innate ideas be itself disputable, there seems to be little hope of establishing an opinion, which supposes that even complications of ideas have been given us at our birth, and that we are made by nature ambitious, or covetous, before we know the meaning of either power or money.

YET as every step in the progression of existence changes our position with respect to the things about us, so as to lay us open to new faults and particular dangers, and subjects us to inconveniences from which any other situation

ation is exempt ; as a publick or a private life, youth and age, wealth and poverty, have all some evil closely adherent, which cannot wholly be escaped but by quitting the state to which it is annexed, and submitting to the incumbrances of some other condition : so it cannot be denied that every difference in the structure of the mind has its advantages and its wants ; and that failures and defects being inseparable from humanity, however the powers of understanding be extended or contracted, there will on one side or the other always be an avenue to error and miscarriage.

There seem to be some souls suited to great, and others to little employments ; some formed to soar aloft, and take in wide views, and others to grovel on the ground, and confine their regard to a narrow sphere. Of these the one is always in danger of becoming useless by a daring negligence, the other by a scrupulous solicitude ; the one collects many ideas, but confused and indistinct ; the other is busied in minute accuracy, but without compass and without dignity.

THE general error of those who possess powerful and elevated understandings, is, that they

they form schemes of too great extent, and flatter themselves too hastily with success; they feel their own force to be great, and, by the complacency with which every man surveys himself, imagine it still greater: they therefore look out for undertakings worthy of their abilities, and engage in them with very little precaution, for they imagine that every obstruction will give way, and that, without any premeditated measures, they shall be able to find expedients in all difficulties. They are naturally apt to consider all prudential maxims as below their regard, to treat with contempt those securities and resources which others know themselves obliged to provide, and disdain to accomplish their purposes by established means, and common gradations.

THIS precipitation, which is incited by the pride of intellectual superiority, is very often fatal to great designs. The strength and resolution of the combat are seldom equal to the vehemence of the charge. He that meets with an opposition which he did not expect, very quickly loses his courage, and too soon considers the enterprize as desperate, only because he had before concluded it easy. The violence of his first onset is succeeded by a
lasting

lasting and unconquerable languor ; the miscarriage seizes his faculties ; his conviction of the unreasonable confidence, with which he had flattered his own desires, makes him fearful of giving way to new hopes ; the contemplation of an attempt, in which he has so far fallen below the expectations which he had indulged, is always painful and vexatious ; he therefore naturally turns his attention to more pleasing objects, and habituates his imagination to other entertainments, till, by slow degrees, he quits his first pursuit, and suffers some other project to take possession of his thoughts, in which the same ardour of mind promises him again certain success, and which disappointments of the same kind compel him to abandon.

THUS too much vigour in the beginning of an undertaking, often intercepts and prevents the steadiness and perseverance always necessary in the conduct of any complicated scheme, where many interests are to be connected, many movements to be adjusted, and the joint effort of distinct and independent powers to be directed to a single point. In all important events which have been suddenly brought to pass, chance has been the agent rather than reason ;

reason; and, therefore, however those, who seemed to preside in the transaction, may have been celebrated by such as loved or feared them, succeeding times have commonly considered them as fortunate rather than prudent. Every design in which the connexion is regularly traced from the first motion to the last, must be formed and executed by calm intrepidity, and requires not only courage which danger cannot turn aside, but constancy which fatigues cannot weary, and contrivance which impediments cannot exhaust.

ALL the performances of human art, at which we look with praise or wonder, are instances of the resistless force of perseverance: it is by this that the quarry becomes a pyramid, and that distant countries are united with canals. If a man was to compare the effect of a single stroke of the pick-ax, or of one impression of the spade, with the general design and last consequence, he would be overwhelmed by the sense of their disproportion; yet those petty operations, incessantly continued, in time surmount the greatest difficulties, and mountains are levelled, and oceans bounded, by the slender force of human beings.

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It is therefore of the utmost importance that those who have any intention of deviating from the beaten roads of life, and acquiring a reputation superior to the common names which are hourly sinking into oblivion, and swept away by time among the refuse of fame, should add to their reason, and their spirit, the power of persisting in their purposes; acquire the art of sapping what they cannot batter, and the habit of vanquishing obstinate resistance by obstinate attacks.

THE student who would build his knowledge on solid foundations, and proceed by just degrees to the pinacles of truth, is directed by the great philosopher of France to begin by doubting of his own existence. In like manner, whoever would complete any arduous and intricate enterprise should, as soon as his imagination can cool after the first blaze of hope, place before his own eyes every possible embarrassment that may retard or defeat him. He should first question the probability of success, and then endeavour to remove the objections that he has raised. It is proper, says old Markham, to exercise your horse on the more inconvenient side of the course, that if he

he should, in the race, be forced upon it, he may not be discouraged; and Horace advises his poetical friend to consider every day as the last which he shall enjoy, because that will always give pleasure which we receive beyond our hopes. If we alarm ourselves beforehand with more difficulties than we really find, we shall be animated by unexpected facility with double spirit; and if we find our cautions and fears justified by the consequence, there will however happen nothing against which provision has not been made, no sudden shock will be received, nor will the main scheme be disconcerted.

THERE is, indeed, some danger lest he that too scrupulously balances probabilities, and too perspicaciously foresees obstacles, should remain always in a state of inaction, without venturing upon attempts on which he will think it not unlikely that he may spend his labour without advantage. But previous despondence is not the fault of those for whom this essay is designed; they who require to be warned against precipitation, will not suffer more fear to intrude into their contemplations than is necessary to allay the effervescence of an agitated fancy. As *Des Cartes* has kindly

shew how a man may prove to himself his own existence, if once he can be prevailed upon to question it, so the ardent and adventurous will not be long without finding some plausible extenuation of the greatest difficulties; and, indeed, such is the uncertainty of all human affairs, that security and despair are equal follies, and as it is presumption and arrogance to anticipate triumphs, it is weakness and cowardice to prognosticate miscarriages. The numbers that have been stopped in their career of happiness are sufficient to shew the uncertainty of human foresight; but there are not wanting contrary instances of such success obtained against all appearances, as may warrant the boldest flights of genius, if they are supported by unshaken perseverance.