

NUMB. 44. SATURDAY, *August* 18, 1750.

Ὀνὰρ ἐκ Διὸς ἐστὶ.

HOMER.

To the RAMBLER.

S I R,

I Had lately a very remarkable dream, which made so strong an impression on me, that I remember it every word; and if you are not better employed, you may read the relation of it as follows.

METHOUGHT I was in the midst of a very entertaining set of company, and extremely delighted in attending to a lively conversation, when on a sudden I perceived one of the most shocking figures imagination can frame, advancing towards me. She was drest in black, her skin was contracted into a thousand wrinkles, her eyes deep sunk in her head, and her complexion pale and livid as the countenance of death. Her looks were filled with terror and unrelenting severity, and her hands armed with whips and scorpions. As soon as she came near, with a horrid frown, and a voice that chilled my very blood, she bid me follow

her. I obeyed, and she led me through rugged paths, beset with briars and thorns, into a deep solitary valley. Wherever she passed the fading verdure withered beneath her steps; her pestilential breath infected the air with malignant vapours, obscured the lustre of the sun, and involved the fair face of heaven in universal gloom. Dismal howlings resounded through the forest, from every baleful tree the night-raven uttered his dreadful note, and the prospect was filled with desolation and horror. In the midst of this tremendous scene my execrable guide addressed me in the following manner.

“RETIRE with me, O rash unthinking
 “ mortal, from the vain allurements of a de-
 “ ceitful world, and learn that pleasure was
 “ not designed the portion of human life.
 “ Man was born to mourn and to be wretch-
 “ ed; this is the condition of all below the
 “ stars, and whoever endeavours to oppose it
 “ acts in contradiction to the will of heaven.
 “ Fly then from the fatal enchantments of
 “ youth and social delight, and here conse-
 “ crate thy solitary hours to lamentation and
 “ woe. Misery is the duty of all sublunary
 “ beings, and every enjoyment is an offence
 “ to

“ to the deity, who is to be worshipped only
 “ by the mortification of every sense of plea-
 “ sure, and the everlasting exercise of sighs
 “ and tears.”

THIS melancholy picture of life quite sunk my spirits, and seemed to annihilate every principle of joy within me. I threw myself beneath a blasted yeugh, where the winds blew cold and dismal round my head, and dreadful apprehensions chilled my heart. Here I resolved to lie till the hand of death, which I impatiently invoked, should put an end to the miseries of a life so deplorably wretched. In this sad situation I spied on one hand of me a deep muddy river, whose heavy waves rolled on in flow sullen murmurs. Here I determined to plunge, and was just upon the brink, when I found myself suddenly drawn back. I turned about, and was surprised by the sight of the loveliest object I had ever beheld. The most engaging charms of youth and beauty appeared in all her form; effulgent glories sparkled in her eyes, and their awful splendours were softened by the gentlest looks of compassion and peace. At her approach, the frightful spectre, who had before tormented me, vanished away, and with her all the hor-

tors she had caused. The gloomy clouds brightened into chearful sun-shine, the groves recovered their verdure, and the whole region looked gay and blooming as the garden of Eden. I was quite transported at this unexpected change, and reviving pleasure began to glad my thoughts, when, with a look of inexpressible sweetness, my beauteous deliverer thus uttered her divine instructions.

“ My name is RELIGION. I am the off-
 “ spring of TRUTH and LOVE, and the pa-
 “ rent of BENEVOLENCE, HOPE and JOY.
 “ That monster from whose power I have
 “ freed you is called SUPERSTITION, she is
 “ the child of DISCONTENT, and her follow-
 “ ers are FEAR and SORROW. Thus different
 “ as we are, she has often the insolence to as-
 “ sume my name and character, and seduces
 “ unhappy mortals to think us the same, till
 “ she, at length, drives them to the borders of
 “ DESPAIR, that dreadful abyss into which
 “ you were just going to sink.

“ LOOK round and survey the various
 “ beauties of this globe, which heaven has
 “ destined for the seat of human race, and
 “ consider whether a world thus exquisitely
 framed

“ framed could be meant for the abode of
 “ misery and pain. For what end has the
 “ lavish hand of providence diffused such in-
 “ numerable objects of delight, but that all
 “ might rejoice in the privilege of existence,
 “ and be filled with gratitude to the beneficent
 “ author of it? Thus to enjoy the blessings
 “ he has sent, is virtue and obedience;
 “ and to reject them merely as means of plea-
 “ sure, is pitiable ignorance, or absurd per-
 “ verseness. Infinite goodness is the source
 “ of created existence; the proper tendency
 “ of every rational being, from the highest
 “ order of raptured seraphs, to the meanest
 “ rank of men, is to rise incessantly from
 “ lower degrees of happiness to higher. They
 “ have each faculties assigned them for vari-
 “ ous orders of delights.”

“ WHAT, cried I, is this the language of
 “ RELIGION? Does she lead her votaries
 “ through flowery paths, and bid them pass
 “ an unlaborious life? Where are the painful
 “ toils of virtue, the mortifications of peni-
 “ tents, the self-denying exercises of saints and
 “ heroes?”

“ THE true enjoyments of a reasonable

“ being,” answered she mildly, “ do not
 “ consist in unbounded indulgence, or luxu-
 “ rious ease, in the tumult of passions, the
 “ languor of indolence, or the flutter of light
 “ amusements. Yielding to immoral plea-
 “ sure corrupts the mind, living to animal
 “ and trifling ones debases it; both in their
 “ degree disqualify it for its genuine good,
 “ and consign it over to wretchedness.
 “ Whoever would be really happy must make
 “ the diligent and regular exercise of his su-
 “ perior powers his chief attention, adoring
 “ the perfections of his maker, expressing
 “ good-will to his fellow creatures, cultiva-
 “ ting inward rectitude. To his lower fa-
 “ culties he must allow such gratifications as
 “ will, by refreshing him, invigorate his no-
 “ bler pursuits. In the regions inhabited by
 “ angelic natures, unmingled felicity for e-
 “ ver blooms, joy flows there with a perpetu-
 “ al and abundant stream, nor needs there
 “ any mound to check its course. Beings
 “ conscious of a frame of mind originally dis-
 “ eased, as all the human race has cause to
 “ be, must use the regimen of a stricter self-
 “ government. Whoever has been guilty of
 “ voluntary excesses must patiently submit
 “ both to the painful workings of nature,
 “ and

“ and needful severities of medicine in order
 “ to his cure. Still he is intitled to a mode-
 “ rate share of whatever alleviating accom-
 “ modations this fair mansion of his merci-
 “ ful parent affords, consistent with his reco-
 “ very. And in proportion as this recovery
 “ advances, the liveliest joy will spring from his
 “ secret sense of an amended and improving
 “ heart.—So far from the horrors of despair is
 “ the condition even of the guilty.—Shudder,
 “ poor mortal, at the thought of that gulph in-
 “ to which thou wast but now going to plunge.

“ WHILE the most faulty have every en-
 “ couragement to amend, the more innocent
 “ soul will be supported with still sweeter
 “ consolations under all its experience of hu-
 “ man infirmities ; supported by the gladden-
 “ ing assurances that every sincere endeavour
 “ to out-grow them, shall be assisted, accept-
 “ ed and rewarded. To such a one the low-
 “ liest self-abasement is but a deep-laid foun-
 “ dation for the most elevated hopes ; since
 “ they who faithfully examine and acknow-
 “ ledge what they are, shall be enabled under
 “ my conduct to become what they desire.
 “ The christian and the heroe are inseparable ;
 “ and to the aspirings of unassuming trust,

“ and filial confidence, are set no bounds. To
 “ him who is animated with a view of obtain-
 “ ing approbation from the sovereign of the
 “ universe, no difficulty is insurmountable:
 “ Secure in this pursuit of every needful aid,
 “ his conflict with the severest pains and tri-
 “ als, is little more than the vigorous exerci-
 “ ses of a mind in health. His patient de-
 “ pendence on that providence which looks
 “ through all eternity, his silent resignation,
 “ his ready accommodation of his thoughts
 “ and behaviour to its inscrutable ways, is at
 “ once the most excellent sort of self-denial,
 “ and a source of the most exalted transports.
 “ Society is the true sphere of human virtue.
 “ In social, active, life, difficulties will per-
 “ petually be met with; restraints of many
 “ kinds will be necessary; and studying to
 “ behave right in respect of these is a discipline
 “ of the human heart, useful to others, and
 “ improving to itself. Suffering is no duty
 “ but where it is necessary to avoid guilt, or
 “ to do good; nor pleasure a crime, but where
 “ it strengthens the influence of bad inclinati-
 “ ons, or lessens the generous activity of vir-
 “ tue. The happiness allotted to man in his
 “ present state, is indeed faint and low,
 “ compared with his immortal prospects, and
 noble

“ noble capacities ; but yet whatever portion
 “ of it the distributing hand of heaven offers
 “ to each individual, is a needful support
 “ and refreshment for the present moment,
 “ so far as it may not hinder the attaining his
 “ final destination.

“ RETURN then with me from continual
 “ misery to moderate enjoyment, and grate-
 “ ful alacrity. Return from the contracted
 “ views of solitude to the proper duties of a
 “ relative and dependent being. Religion is
 “ not confined to cells and closets, nor re-
 “ strained to sullen retirement. These are
 “ the gloomy doctrines of SUPERSTITION,
 “ by which she endeavours to break those
 “ chains of benevolence and social affection,
 “ that link the welfare of every particular
 “ with that of the whole. Remember that
 “ the greatest honour you can pay to the au-
 “ thor of your being is by such a chearful be-
 “ haviour, as discovers a mind satisfied with
 “ his dispensations.”

HERE my preceptress paused, and I was
 going to express my acknowledgments for
 her discourse, when a ring of bells from the
 neighbouring village, and a new-risen sun
 darting