

NUMB. 46. SATURDAY, August 25, 1750.

—*Genus, et proavos, et quæ non fecimus ipsi,  
Vix ea nostra voco.* OVID.

To the RAMBLER.

S I R,

SINCE I find that you have paid so much regard to my complaints, as to publish them, I am inclined by vanity, or gratitude, to continue our correspondence; and, indeed, without either of these motives, I am, at present, glad of an opportunity to write, for I am not much accustomed to keep in any thing that swells my heart, and have here none with whom I can very freely converse; and while I am thus employed, some of those tedious hours, which I have condemned myself to pass in this place, will slip away. When I return to my usual amusement of watching the clock, I shall find that I have disburdened myself of part of the day, and that the time of my return from exile is less remote.

YOU

You perceive that I do not pretend to claim any great merit from my regard to your performances, or to write with much consideration of any thing but my own convenience; and, not to conceal from you my real sentiments, the little time which I have here spent, against my will, in solitary meditation, has not much contributed to my veneration for authors. I have now sufficient reason to suspect that, with all your splendid professions of wisdom, and seeming regard for truth and virtue, you have very little sincerity; that you either write what you do not think, and willingly impose upon mankind, or that you take no care to think right, but while you set up yourself as a guide in the labyrinth of life, mislead your followers by credulity, or negligence; that you take the liberty of producing to the publick whatever notions you can speciously maintain, or elegantly express, without enquiring whether they are just; and that you are apt to think yourself qualified by books to treat on subjects which are only to be understood by observation and experience, and transcribe hereditary falsehoods from old authors, perhaps as ignorant and careless as yourself.

You

You may, perhaps, wonder that I express myself with so much acrimony on a question in which women are supposed to have very little interest; and you are likely enough, for I have seen many instances of the sauciness of scholars, to tell me that I am more properly employed in playing with my kittens, than in giving myself airs of criticism, and censuring the learned. But you are mistaken if you imagine that I am to be intimidated by your contempt, or silenced by your reproofs. As I read, I have a right to judge, as I am injured, I have a right to complain; and these privileges, which I have purchased at so dear a rate. I shall not easily be persuaded to resign.

To read has, indeed, never been my business; but as there are hours of leisure in the most active life, I have passed the superfluities of time, which the diversions of the town left upon my hands, in turning over a large collection of tragedies and romances, which chance threw early in my way, where, amongst other sentiments, common to all authors of this class, I have found almost every page filled with the charms and happiness of a country life; that life to which every statesman in

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in the highest elevation of his prosperity is contriving to retire; that life to which every tragick heroine in some scene or other wishes to have been born, and which is always represented as a certain refuge from folly and anxiety, from passion, and from guilt.

It was impossible to read so many passionate exclamations, and soothing descriptions, without feeling some desire to enjoy the state in which all this felicity was to be enjoyed; and therefore I received with raptures the invitation of my good aunt, and expected that by some unknown influence I should find all hopes and fears, all jealousies and competitions vanish from my heart upon my first arrival at the seats of innocence and tranquillity; that I should sleep in halcyon bowers, and wander in elysian gardens, where I should meet with nothing but the softness of benevolence, the candour of simplicity, and the chearfulness of content; where I should see reason exerting her sovereignty over life, without any interruption from envy, avarice, or ambition, and every day passing in such a manner as the severest wisdom should approve.

THIS, Mr RAMBLER, I tell you I expect-  
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ed, and this I had by an hundred authors been taught to expect. By this expectation I was led hither, and here I live in a state of perpetual uneasiness, without any other comfort than that of hoping to return to London. Having, since I wrote my former letter, been driven, by the mere necessity of escaping from absolute inactivity, to make myself more acquainted with the affairs and inhabitants of this place, I am now no longer an absolute stranger to rural conversation and employments, but am very far from discovering in them more innocence or wisdom, than in the sentiments or conduct of those with whom I have passed more chearful and more fashionable hours.

It is common to reproach the tea-table, and the park, with giving opportunities and encouragement to scandal. I cannot, indeed, wholly clear them from the charge; but must, however, observe in favour of the modish prattlers, that, if not by principle, we are at least by accident less guilty of defamation than the country ladies. For having greater numbers to observe and censure, we are commonly content to charge them only with their own faults or follies, and seldom give way to malevolence,

levolence, but such as arises from some injury or affront, real or imaginary, offered to ourselves. But in these distant provinces, where the same families inhabit the same houses from age to age, they transmit and recount the faults of a whole succession. I have been informed how every estate in the neighbourhood was originally got, and find, if I may credit the accounts given me, that there is not a single acre in the hands of the right owner. I have been told of intrigues between beaux and toasts that have been now three centuries in their quiet graves, and am often entertained with traditionary scandal on persons of whose names there would have been no remembrance, had they not committed somewhat that might disgrace their descendents.

IN one of my visits I happened to commend the air and dignity of a young lady, who had just left the company; upon which two grave matrons looked with great sines at each other, and then the older of them asked whether I had ever seen the picture of Henry the eighth. You may imagine that I did not immediately perceive the propriety of the question, but after having waited a while for information, I was told that the lady's grandmother had a great

great great grandmother that was maid of honour to Anna Bullen, and supposed to have been too great a favourite of the king.

If once there happens a quarrel between the principal persons of two families, the malignity is continued without end, and it is common for two old maids to fall out about some election, in which their grandfathers were competitors; the heart-burnings of the civil war are not yet extinguished; there are two families in the neighbourhood who have destroyed each others game from the time of Philip and Mary; and when an account came of an inundation, which had injured the plantations of a worthy gentleman, one of the hearers remarked, with exultation, that he might now have some notion of the ravages committed by his ancestors in their retreat from Bosworth.

THUS malice and hatred descend here with an inheritance, and it is necessary to be well versed in history, that the various factions of this county may be understood. You cannot expect to be on good terms with two families, who are resolved to love nothing in common; and, in selecting your intimates, you are perhaps  
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to consider which party you most favour in the barons wars. I have often lost the good opinion of my aunt's visitants by confounding the interests of York and Lancaster, and was once censured for sitting silent when William Rufus was called a tyrant. I have, however, now thrown aside all pretences to circumspection, for I find it impossible in less than seven years to learn all the requisite cautions. At London, if you know your company, and their parents, you are safe; but you are here suspected of alluding to the slips of great grandmothers, and of reviving contests which were decided in armour by the redoubted knights of ancient times. I hope therefore that you will not condemn my impatience, if I am weary of attending where nothing can be learned, and of quarrelling where there is nothing to contest, and that you will contribute to divert me while I stay here by some facetious performance.

*I am, S I R,*

EUPHELIA.