

NUMB. 50. SATURDAY, Sept, 8, 1750.

*Credebant hoc grande nefas, et morte piandum,
 Si juvenis vetulo non assurrexerat, atque
 Barbato cuicumque puer, licet ipse videret
 Plura domi fraga, et majores glandis accervos.*

JUV.

I HAVE always thought it the business of those who turn their speculations upon the living world, to admire and commend the virtues, as well as to expose and censure the faults of their contemporaries, and to confute a false as well as to support a just accusation; not only because it is peculiarly the business of a monitor to keep his own reputation without taint, lest those who can once charge him with partiality, should indulge themselves afterwards in disbelieving him at pleasure; but because he may find real crimes sufficient to give full employment to caution or repentance, without distracting the mind by needless scruples and vain solitudes.

THERE are certain fixed and stated reproaches that one part of mankind has in all ages

thrown upon another, which are regularly transmitted through continued successions, and which he that has once suffered them is certain to use with the same undistinguishing vehemence, when he has changed his station, and gained the prescriptive right of imposing on others, what he had formerly endured himself.

To these hereditary imputations, of which no man sees the justice, till it becomes his interest to see it, very little regard is to be shewn; since it does not appear that they are produced by ratiocination or enquiry, but received implicitly, or caught by a kind of instantaneous contagion, and supported rather by willingness to credit, than ability to prove them.

It has been, in all ages of the world, the practice of those who are desirous to believe themselves made venerable by length of time, to censure the new comers into life, for want of respect to grey hairs and sage experience, for heady confidence in their own understandings, for hasty conclusions upon partial views, for a contemptuous disregard of those salutary counsels, which their fathers and grandfathers
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are always ready to afford them, and a rebellious impatience of that subordination to which youth is condemned by nature, as necessary to its security from those evils into which it would be otherwise inevitably precipitated, by the rashness of passion, and the blindness of ignorance.

EVERY old man complains of the growing depravity of the world, of the petulance and insolence of the rising generation. He recounts the decency and regularity of former times, and celebrates the discipline and sobriety of the age in which his youth was passed; a happy age which is now no more to be expected, since confusion has broke in upon the world, and thrown down all the boundaries of civility, reverence, and obedience.

IT is not always sufficiently considered how much he assumes, who dares to claim the privilege of complaining: for as every man has in his own opinion a full share of the miseries of life, he is inclined to consider all clamorous uneasiness, as a proof of impatience rather than of affliction, and to ask, What merit has this man to show, by which he has acquired a right to repine at the distributions of

nature? Or why does he imagine that exemptions should be granted him from the general condition of man? We find ourselves excited rather to captiousness than pity, and instead of being in haste to sooth his complaints by sympathy and tenderness, we enquire, whether the pain be proportionate to the lamentation, and whether, supposing his afflictions real, they are not the effect of vice and folly, rather than of calamity.

THE querulousness and indignation which is observed so often to disfigure the last scene of life, naturally leads us to enquiries like these. For surely it will be thought at the first view of things, that if age be thus contemned and ridiculed, insulted and neglected, the crime must at least be equal on either part; since they who have had so many opportunities of establishing their authority over minds ductile and unresisting, they who have been the protectors of helplessness, and the instructors of ignorance, and who yet retain in their own hands the power of wealth, and the dignity of command, must defeat their influence by their own misconduct, and make use of all these advantages with very little skill, if they cannot secure to themselves an appearance of respect,

spect, and ward off open mockery, and declared contempt.

THE general story of mankind will evince, that lawful and settled authority is very seldom resisted when it is well employed, and that gross corruption, or evident imbecillity is necessary to the conquest of that prepossession with which the majority of mankind look upon their governors, on those whom they see surrounded by splendor, and fortified by power: for tho' men are drawn by their passions into forgetfulness of invisible rewards and punishments, yet they are easily kept obedient to those who have temporal dominion in their hands, till their veneration is dissipated by such wickedness and folly as can neither be defended, palliated nor concealed.

It may, therefore, very reasonably be suspected that the old draw upon themselves the greatest part of those insults, which they so much lament, and that age is rarely despised but when it is contemptible. If men imagine that excess or debauchery can be made reverend by time, that knowledge is the consequence of long life however idly and thoughtlessly employed, that priority of birth will sup-

ply the want of steadiness or honesty, and that the regard will be paid to wrinkles, which is due only to wisdom, can it raise much wonder that their hopes are disappointed, and that they see their posterity rather willing to trust their own eyes in their progress into life, than enlist themselves under guides who have lost their way?

THERE are, indeed, many truths which time necessarily and certainly teaches, and which might, by those who have learned them from experience, be communicated to their successors at a cheaper rate: but dictates, though liberally enough bestowed, are generally without effect, because they are seldom recommended by sufficient authority; the teacher gains few proselytes by instruction which his own behaviour contradicts; young men miss the benefit of counsel, because they want the more powerful attraction of example, and are not very ready to believe that those who fall below them in practice, can much excel them in theory. Thus the progress of mankind in knowledge is retarded, the world is kept long in the same state, and every new race is to gain the prudence of their predecessors

predecessors by committing and redressing the same miscarriages.

To secure to the old that influence which they are willing to claim, and which might so much contribute to the improvement of the arts of life, it is absolutely necessary that they give themselves up to the duties of declining years ; and contentedly resign to youth its levity, its pleasures, its frolicks, and its fopperies. It is a lifeless endeavour to unite the contrarieties of spring and winter, and unjust to claim the privileges of age, and retain the play-things of childhood. Young men always form magnificent ideas of the wisdom and gravity of those, whom they consider as placed at a distance from them in the ranks of existence, and naturally look on those whom they find trifling with long beards, and luxurious and vain on the brink of the grave, with contempt and indignation, like that which women feel at the effeminacy of men. If dotards will contend with boys in those performances in which boys must always excel them ; if they will dress crippled limbs in embroidery, and endeavour at gayety with faltering voices ; if they will drag infirmity to the ball, and darken assemblies of pleasure with the ghastli-

ness of disease, they may well expect that those who find their diversions obstructed will hoot them away; and that if they descend to competition with youth, they must bear the insolence of successful rivals.

*Lusisti satis, edisti satis atque bibisti:
Tempus abire tibi est.*

ANOTHER vice of age, by which the rising generation may be alienated from it, is severity and censoriousness; a disposition of mind that gives no allowance to the failings of early life, that expects artfulness from childhood, and constancy from youth, that is peremptory in every command, and inexorable to every failure. There are many who live merely to hinder happiness, and whose descendants can only tell of long life, that it produces suspicion, malignity, peevishness and persecution: and yet even they can talk of the ingratitude of the age, curse their heirs for impatience, and wonder that young men cannot take pleasure in their fathers' company.

He that would pass the latter part of life with honour and decency, must, when he is young, consider that he shall one day be old; and

and lay up knowledge for his support, when his powers of acting shall forsake him; and remember when he is old that he has once been young, and forbear to animadvert with unnecessary rigour on faults which experience only can correct.



NUMB. 51. TUESDAY, Sept. 10, 1750.

—*Stultus labor est ineptiarum.*

MART^o

To the R A M B L E R.

S I R,

AS you have allowed a place in your paper to Euphelia's letters from the country, and appear to think no form of human life unworthy of your attention, I have resolved, after many struggles with idleness and diffidence, to give you some account of my entertainment in this sober season of universal retreat, and to describe to you the employments of those who look with contempt on the pleasures and diversions of polite life, and employ all their powers of censure and invective
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