

Let him carry it to the post himself, and wait in silence for the event. If it is published and praised, he may then declare himself the author; if it be suppressed, he may wonder in private without much vexation; and if it be censured, he may join in the cry, and lament the dulness of the writing generation.

NUMB. 57. TUESDAY, October 2, 1750.

Non intelligunt homines quam magnum vestigal sit parsimonia. TULL.

To the RAMBLER.

S I R,

I AM always pleased when I see literature made useful, and scholars descending from that elevation, which, as it raises them above common life, must likewise hinder them from beholding the ways of men otherwise than in a cloud of bustle and confusion. Having lived a life of business, and remarked how seldom any occurrences emerge for which great qualities are required, I have learned the necessity of regarding little things, and though I do not pretend to give laws to the legislators

of mankind, or to limit the range of those powerful minds that carry light and heat through all the regions of knowledge, yet I have long thought, that the greatest part of those who lose themselves in studies, by which I have not found that they grow much wiser, might, with more advantage both to the publick and themselves, apply their understandings to domestick arts, and store their minds with axioms of humble prudence, and private economy.

YOUR late paper on frugality was very elegant and pleasing, but, in my opinion, not sufficiently adapted to common readers, who pay little regard to the musick of periods, the artifice of connection, or the arrangement of the flowers of rhetoric; but require a few plain and cogent instructions, which may sink into the mind by their own weight.

FRUGALITY is so necessary to the happiness of the world, so beneficial in its various forms to every rank of men, from the highest of human potentates, to the lowest labourer or artificer; and the miseries which the neglect of it produces are so numerous and so grievous, that it ought to be recommended
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with every variation of address, and adapted to every class of understanding.

WHETHER those who treat morals as a science will allow frugality to be numbered among the virtues, I have not thought it necessary to enquire. For I, who draw my opinions from a careful observation of the world, am satisfied with knowing, what is abundantly sufficient for practice, that if it be not a virtue, it is, at least, a quality which can seldom exist without some virtues, and without which few virtues can exist. Frugality may be termed the daughter of prudence, the sister of temperance, and the parent of liberty. He that is extravagant will quickly become poor, and poverty will enforce dependence, and invite corruption; it will almost always produce a passive compliance with the wickedness of others; and there are few who do not learn by degrees to practise those crimes which they cease to censure.

If there are any who do not dread poverty as dangerous to virtue, yet mankind seem unanimous enough in abhorring it as destructive to happiness; and all to whom want is terrible, upon whatever principle, ought to think

think themselves obliged to learn the sage maxims of our parsimonious ancestors, and attain the salutary arts of contracting expence; for without frugality none can be rich, and with it very few would be poor.

To most other acts of virtue or exertions of wisdom, a concurrence of many circumstances is necessary, some previous knowledge must be attained, some uncommon gifts of nature possessed, or some opportunity produced by an extraordinary combination of things; but the mere power of saving what is already in our hands, must be easy of acquisition to every mind; and as the example of Bacon may shew, that the highest intellect cannot safely neglect it, a thousand instances will every day prove, that the meanest may practise it with success.

RICHES cannot be within the reach of great numbers, because to be rich is to possess more than is commonly placed in a single hand; and, if many could obtain the sum which now makes a man wealthy, the name of wealth must then be transferred to still greater accumulations. But I am not certain that it is equally impossible to exempt the lower classes
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of mankind from poverty; because, though whatever be the wealth of the community, some will always have least, and he that has less than any other is comparatively poor; yet I do not see any coactive necessity that many should be without the indispensable conveniences of life; but am sometimes inclined to imagine, that, casual calamities excepted, there might, by universal prudence, be procured an universal exemption from want; and that he who should happen to have least, might notwithstanding have enough.

BUT without entering too far into speculations which I do not remember that any political calculator has attempted, and in which the most perspicacious reasoner may be easily bewildered, it is certain that they to whom providence has allotted no other care but of their own fortune and their own virtue, which make far the greater part of mankind, have sufficient incitements to personal frugality; since, whatever might be its general effect upon provinces or nations, by which it is never likely to be tried, it is certain that there is scarcely any individual entering the world, who, by prudent parsimony, may not reasonably

bly promise himself a chearful competence in the decline of life.

THE prospect of penury in age is so gloomy and terrifying, that every man who looks before him must resolve to avoid it; and it must be avoided generally by the science of sparing. For, though in every age there are some, who by bold adventures, or by favourable accidents rise suddenly to riches, yet it is dangerous to indulge hopes of such rare events: And the bulk of mankind must owe their affluence to small and gradual profits, below which their expence must be resolutely reduced.

You must not therefore think me sinking below the dignity of a practical philosopher, when I recommend to the consideration of your readers, from the statesman to the apprentice, a position replete with mercantile wisdom, *A penny saved is two-pence got*; which may, I think, be accommodated to all conditions, by observing that not only they who pursue any lucrative employment will save time when they forbear expence, and that the time may be employed to the encrease of profit; but they who are above such minute considerations,

siderations, will find, by every victory over appetite or passion, new strength added to the mind, will gain the power of refusing those solicitations by which the young and vivacious are hourly assaulted, and in time set themselves above the reach of extravagance and folly.

IT may, perhaps, be enquired by those who are willing rather to cavil than to learn, what is the just measure of frugality? and when expence, not absolutely necessary, degenerates into profusion? To such questions no general answer can be returned; since the liberty of spending, or necessity of parsimony, may be varied without end by different circumstances. It may, however, be laid down as a rule never to be broken, that *a man's voluntary expence should not exceed his revenue.* A maxim so obvious and incontrovertible, that the civil law ranks the prodigal with the madman, and debars them equally from the conduct of their own affairs. Another precept arising from the former, and indeed included in it, is yet necessary to be distinctly impressed upon the warm, the fanciful, and the brave; *Let no man anticipate uncertain profits.* Let no man presume to spend upon hopes, to trust upon his own abilities for means of deliverance

deliverance from penury, to give a loose to his present desires, and leave the reckoning to fortune or to virtue.

To these cautions which, I suppose, are, at least among the graver part of mankind, undisputed, I will add another, *Let no man squander against his inclination.* With this precept it may be, perhaps, imagined easy to comply; yet, if those whom profusion has buried in prisons, or driven into banishment, were examined, it would be found that very few were ruined by their own choice, or purchased pleasure with the loss of their estates; but that they suffered themselves to be born away by the violence of those with whom they conversed, and yielded reluctantly to a thousand prodigalities, either from a trivial emulation of wealth and spirit, or a mean fear of contempt and ridicule; an emulation for the prize of folly, or the dread of the laugh of fools.

I am, S I R,

Your Humble Servant,

SOPHRON.