

ned to pity a criminal, that there is likewise a pity due to the country." If there is a regard due to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth.

NUMB. 61. TUESDAY, Oct. 16. 1750.

*Falsus honor juvat, et mendax infamia terret
Quem nisi mendosum et mendacem?*

HOR.

To the R A M B L E R.

S I R,

IT is extremely vexatious to a man of eager and thirsty curiosity to be placed at a great distance from the fountain of intelligence, and not only never to receive the current of report till it has satiated the greatest part of the nation, but at last to find it mudded in its course, and corrupted with some taints or mixtures from every channel through which it flowed.

ONE of the chief pleasures of my life is to hear what passes in the world, to know what
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are the schemes of the poltick, the aims of the busy, and the hopes of the ambitious; what changes of publick measures are approaching; who is likely to be crushed in the collision of parties; who is climbing to the top of power, and who is tottering on the precipice of disgrace. But as it is very common for us to desire most what we are least qualified to obtain, I have suffered this appetite of news to outgrow all the gratifications which my present situation can afford it; for being placed in a remote country, I am condemned always to confound the future with the past, to form prognostications of events no longer doubtful, and to consider the expediency of schemes already executed or defeated. I am perplexed with a perpetual deception in my prospects, like a man pointing his telescope at a remote star, which before the light reaches his eye has forsaken the place from which it was emitted.

THE mortification of being thus always behind the active world in my reflexions and discoveries, is exceedingly aggravated by the petulance of those whose health, or business, or pleasure brings them hither from London.

For^s

For, without considering the insuperable disadvantages of my condition, and the unavoidable ignorance which absence must produce, they often treat me with the utmost superciliousness of contempt, for not knowing what no human sagacity can discover; and sometimes seem to consider me as a wretch scarcely worthy of human converse, when I happen to talk of the fortune of a bankrupt, or propose the healths of the dead, when I warn them of mischiefs already incurred, or wish for measures that have been lately taken. They seem to attribute to the superiority of their intellects what they only owe to the accident of their condition, and think themselves indisputably entitled to airs of insolence and authority, when they find another ignorant of facts, which because they echoed in the streets of London, they suppose equally publick in all other places, and known where they could neither be seen, related, nor conjectured.

To this haughtiness they are, indeed, too much encouraged by the respect which they receive amongst us, for no other reason than that they come from London. For no sooner is the arrival of one of these disseminators of

knowledge known in the country, than we croud about him from every quarter, and by innumerable enquiries flatter him into an opinion of his own importance. He sees himself surrounded by multitudes, who propose their doubts, and refer their controversies to him, as to a being descended from some nobler region, and he grows on a sudden oraculous and infallible, solves all difficulties, and sets all objections at defiance.

THERE is, in my opinion, great reason for suspecting, that they sometimes take advantage of this reverential modesty, and impose upon rustick understandings with a false show of universal intelligence; for I do not find that they are willing to own themselves ignorant of any thing, or that they dismiss any enquirer with a positive and decisive answer. The court, the city, the park, and exchange, are to those men of unbounded observation equally familiar, and they are alike ready to tell the hour at which stocks will rise, or the ministry be changed.

A SHORT residence at London entitles a man to knowledge, to wit, to politeness, and to a despotick and dictatorial power of prescribing

scribing to the rude multitude, whom he condescends to honour with a biennial visit; yet, I know not well upon what motives I have lately found myself inclined to cavil at this prescription, and to doubt whether it be not, on some occasions, proper to withhold our veneration, till we are more authentically convinced of the merits of the claimant.

It is well remember'd here, that, about seven years ago, one Frolick, a tall boy, with lank hair, remarkable for stealing eggs, and sucking them, was taken from the school in this parish, and sent up to London to study the law. As he had given amongst us no proofs of a genius, designed by nature for extraordinary performances, he was, from the time of his departure totally forgotten, nor was there any talk of his vices or virtues, his good or his ill fortune, till last summer a report burst upon us, that Mr Frolick was come down in the first post-chaise which this village had seen, having travelled with such rapidity that one of his postillions had broke his leg, and another narrowly escaped suffocation in a quicksand. But that Mr Frolick seem'd totally unconcerned, for such things were never heeded at London.

Mr FROLICK next day appeared among the gentlemen at their weekly meeting on the bowling-green, and now were seen the effects of a London education. His dress, his language, his ideas, were all new, and he did not much endeavour to conceal his contempt of every thing that differed from the opinions, or practice, of the modish world. He shewed us the deformity of our skirts and sleeves, informed us where hats of the proper size were to be sold, and recommended to us the reformation of a thousand absurdities in our cloaths, our cookery, and our conversation. When any of his phrases were unintelligible, he could not suppress the joy of confessed superiority, but frequently delayed the explanation that he might enjoy his triumph over our barbarity.

WHEN he is pleased to entertain us with a story, he takes care to croud into it names of streets, squares and buildings, with which he knows we are unacquainted. The favourite topicks of his discourse are the pranks of drunkards, and the tricks put upon country gentlemen by porters and link-boys. When he is with ladies he tells them of the innumerable

able pleasures to which he can introduce them; but never fails to hint, how much they will be deficient, at their first arrival, in the knowledge of the town. What it is *to know the town* he has not indeed hitherto informed us, tho' there is no phrase so frequent in his mouth, nor any science which he appears to think of so great value, or so difficult attainment.

BUT my curiosity has been most engaged by the recital of his own adventures and achievements. I have heard of the union of various characters in single persons, but never met with such a constellation of great qualities as this man's narrative affords. Whatever has distinguished the hero; whatever has elevated the wit; whatever has endeared the lover, are all concentrated in Mr Frolick, whose life has, for seven years, been a regular interchange of intrigues, dangers, and waggeries, and who has distinguished himself in every character that can be feared, envied, or admired.

I QUESTION whether all the officers of the royal navy can bring together, from all their journals, a collection of so many wonderful escapes as this man has known upon the Thames, on which he has been a thousand

and a thousand times on the point of perishing, sometimes by the terrors of foolish women in the same boat, sometimes by his own acknowledged imprudence in passing the river in the dark, and sometimes by shooting the bridge, under which he has rencountered mountainous waves, and dreadful cataracts.

NOR less has been his temerity by land, nor fewer his hazards. He has reeled with giddiness on the top of the monument; he has crossed the street amidst the rush of coaches; he has been furrounded by robbers without number; he has headed parties at the play-house, he has scaled the windows of every toast of whatever condition; he has been hunted for whole winters by his rivals; he has slept upon bulks, he has cut chairs, he has bilked coachmen; he has rescued his friends from the bailiffs, has knocked down the constable, has bullied the justice, and performed many other exploits, that have filled the town with wonder and with merriment.

BUT yet greater is the fame of his understanding than his bravery; for he informs us, that he is, at London, the established arbitrator of all points of honour, and the decisive judge

judge of all performance of genius; that no musical performer is in reputation till the opinion of Frolick has ratified his pretensions; that the theatres suspend their sentence till he begins the clap or hiss, in which all are proud to concur; that no publick entertainment has failed or succeeded, but because he opposed or favoured it; that all controversies at the gaming-table are referred to his determination; that he adjusts the ceremonial at every assembly, and prescribes every fashion of pleasure or of dress.

WITH every man whose name occurs in the papers of the day, he is intimately acquainted; and there are very few posts, either in the state or army, of which he has not more or less influenced the disposal. He has been very frequently consulted both upon war and peace; but the time is not yet come when the nation shall know how much it is indebted to the genius of Frolick.

YET, notwithstanding all these declarations, I cannot hitherto persuade myself to see that Mr Frolick has more wit, or knowledge, or courage, than the rest of mankind, or that any uncommon enlargement of his faculties

has happened in the time of his absence. For when he talks on subjects known to the rest of the company, he has no advantage over us, but by catches of interruption, briskness of interrogation, and pertness of contempt; and therefore if he has stunned the world with his name, and gained a place in the first ranks of humanity, I cannot but conclude, that either a little understanding confers eminence at London, or that Mr Frolick thinks us unworthy of the exertion of his powers, or that his faculties are benumbed by rural stupidity, as the magnetick needle loses its animation in the polar climes.

I WOULD not, however, like many hasty philosophers, search after the cause till I am certain of the effect; and, therefore, I desire to be informed, whether you have yet heard the great name of Mr Frolick. If he is celebrated by other tongues than his own, I shall willingly propagate his praise; but if he has swelled among us with empty boasts, and honours conferred only by himself, I shall treat him with rustick sincerity, and drive him as an impostor from this part of the kingdom to some region of more credulity.

I am, &c;

RURICOLA.

NUMB.