

NUMB. 62. SATURDAY, OCT. 20, 1750.

*Nunc ego Triptolemi cuperem conscendere currus,
 Misit in ignotam qui rude semen humum :
 Nunc ego Medæ vellem frænare dracones,
 Quos habuit fugiens arva, Corinthe, tua ;
 Nunc ego jactandas optarem sumere pennas,
 Sive tuas, Perseu ; Dædale, sive tuas.*

OVID.

To the RAMBLER.

SIR,

I AM a young woman of a very large fortune, which, if my parents would have been persuaded to comply with the rules and customs of the polite part of mankind, might long since have raised me to the highest honours of the female world ; but so strangely have they hitherto contrived to waste my life, that I am now on the borders of twenty, without having ever danced but at our monthly assembly, or been toasted but among a few gentlemen of the neighbourhood, or seen any company in which it was worth a wish to be distinguished.

My father having impaired his patrimony^d in soliciting a place at court, at last grew wise enough to cease his pursuit, and, to repair the consequences of expensive attendance and negligence of his affairs, married a lady much older than himself, who had lived in the fashionable world till she was considered as an encumbrance upon parties of pleasure, and, as I can collect from incidental informations, retired from gay assemblies just time enough to escape the mortification of universal neglect.

SHE was, however, still rich, and not yet wrinkled ; my father was too distressfully embarrassed by the difficulty of his circumstances to think much on any thing but the means of extrication, and though it is not likely that he wanted the delicacy which polite conversation will always produce in understandings not remarkably defective, yet he was contented with a match, by which he might be set free from inconveniencies, that would have destroyed all the pleasures of imagination, and taken from softness and beauty the power of delighting.

As they were both somewhat disgusted with their treatment in the world, and married, though without any dislike of each other, yet principally for the sake of setting themselves free from dependance on caprice or fashion, they soon retired into the country, and devoted their lives to rural business and diversions.

THEY had, indeed, not much reason to regret the change of their situation; for their vanity, which had so long been tormented by neglect and disappointment, was here gratified with every honour that could with propriety be paid them. Their long familiarity with publick life made them the oracles of all those who aspired to intelligence, or politeness. My father dictated politicks, my mother prescribed the mode, and it was sufficient to entitle any family to some consideration, that they were known to visit at Mrs Courtly's.

IN this state they were, to speak in the style of novellists, made happy by the stile of novelists, made happy by the birth of your correspondent. My parents had no other child, I was therefore not brow-beaten by a saucy brother, or lost in a multitude of coheiresses,

whose fortunes being equal would probably have conferred equal merit, and procured equal regard ; and as my mother was now too old to dread a rival in her daughter, my understanding, and my person, had fair play, my enquiries were not check'd, my advances towards importance were not repressed, and I was soon suffered to tell my own opinions, and early accustomed to hear my own praises.

By these accidental advantages I was so much exalted above the young ladies with whom I conversed, and was treated by them with so much deference, that I had all the gratifications which pride can demand. I saw none who did not seem to confess my superiority, and to be held in awe by the splendour of my appearance ; for the fondness of my father made himself pleased to see me dressed, and my mother had no vanity nor expences to hinder her from concurring with his inclinations.

Thus, Mr Rambler, I lived without much desire after any thing beyond the circle of our visits ; and here I should have quietly continued to portion out my time among my books, and my needle, and my company, had not my curiosity been every moment excited by the
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the conversation of my parents, who whenever they sit down to familiar prattle, and endeavour the entertainment of each other, immediately transport themselves to London, and relate some adventure in a hackney coach, some frolick at a masquerade, some conversation in the park, or some quarrel at an assembly, display the magnificence of a birth-night, relate the conquests of maids of honour, or give a history of diversions, shows, and entertainments, which I had never known but from their accounts.

I AM so well versed in the history of the gay world, that I can relate, with great punctuality, the lives of all the last race of wits and beauties; can enumerate, with exact chronology, the whole succession of celebrated singers, musicians, tragedians, comedians, and harlequins; can tell to the last twenty years all the changes of fashions; and am, indeed, a complete antiquary with respect to head-dresses, dances, and operas.

You will easily imagine, Mr Rambler, that I could not hear these narratives, for sixteen years together, without suffering some impression, and wishing myself nearer to those scenes
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of perpetual novelty, to places where every hour brings some new pleasure, and life is diversified with an unexhausted succession of felicity.

I INDEED often asked my mother why she left a place which she recollected with so much delight, and why she did not visit London once a year, like some other ladies, and initiate me in the world by showing me its amusements, its grandeur, and its variety. But she always told me that the days which she had seen were such as will never come again, that all diversion is now degenerated, that the conversation of the present age is insipid, that their fashions are unbecoming, their customs absurd, and their morals corrupt; that there is no ray left of the genius which enlightened the times that she remembers; that no one who had seen, or heard, the ancient performers, would be able to bear the bunglers of this despicable age, and that there is now neither politeness, nor pleasure, nor virtue, in the world. She therefore assures me that she consults my happiness by keeping me at home, for I should now find nothing but vexation and disgust, and she
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should be ashamed to see me pleased with such fopperies and trifles, as take up the thoughts of the present set of young people.

WITH this answer I was kept quiet for several years, and thought it no great inconvenience to be confined to the country, till last summer a young gentleman and his sister came down to pass a few months with one of our neighbours. They had generally no great regard for the country ladies, but distinguished me by particular complaisance, and, as we grew intimate, gave me such a detail of the elegance, the splendour, the mirth, the happiness of the town, that I am resolved to be no longer buried in ignorance and obscurity, but to share with other wits the joy of being admired, and divide with other beauties the empire of the world.

I do not find, Mr Rambler, upon a deliberate and impartial comparison, that I am excelled by Belinda in beauty, in wit, in judgment, in knowledge, or in any thing, but a kind of gay, lively familiarity, by which she mingles with strangers as with persons long acquainted, and which enables her to display her powers without any obstruction, hesitation,

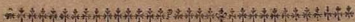
on, or confusion. Yet she can relate a thousand civilities paid to her in publick, can produce, from a hundred lovers, letters filled with praises, protestations, extasies and despair ; has been handed by dukes to her chair ; has been the occasion of innumerable quarrels ; has paid twenty visits in an afternoon ; been invited to sixballs in an evening, and been forced to retire to lodgings in the country from the importunity of courtship, and the fatigue of pleasure.

I TELL you, Mr Rambler, I will stay here no longer. I have at last prevailed upon my mother to send me to town, and shall set out in three weeks on the grand expedition. I intend to live in publick, and to croud into the winter every pleasure which money can purchase, and every honour which beauty can obtain.

BUT this tedious interval how shall I endure ? Cannot you alleviate the misery of delay by some pleasing description of the entertainments of the town ? I can read, I can talk, I can think of nothing else ; and if you will not sooth my impatience, heighten my ideas, and animate my hopes, you may write for those
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who have more leisure, but are not to expect any longer the honour of being read by those eyes which are now intent only on conquest and destruction.

RHODOCLIA.



NUMB. 63. TUESDAY, October 22, 1750.

— *Habebat sæpe ducentos,
Sæpe decem servos; modò reges atque tetrarchas,
Omnia magna loquens : modò, sit mihi mensa
tripes, et
Concha salis puri, et toga, quæ defendere
frigus,
Quamvis crassa, queat.*

HOR.

IT has been remarked, perhaps, by every writer, who has left behind him observations upon life, that no man is pleased with his present state, which proves equally unsatisfactory, says Horace, whether fallen upon by chance, or chosen with deliberation; we are always disgusted with some circumstance or other of our situation, and imagine the condition of others more abundant in blessings, or less exposed to calamities.

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