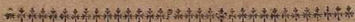


who have more leisure, but are not to expect any longer the honour of being read by those eyes which are now intent only on conquest and destruction.

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.

THIS

THIS universal discontent has been generally mentioned with great severity of censure, as unreasonable in itself, since of two, equally envious of each other, both cannot have the larger share of happiness, and as tending to darken life with unnatural and unnecessary gloom, by withdrawing our minds from the contemplation and enjoyment of that happiness which our state affords us, and fixing our attention upon foreign objects, which we only behold to depress ourselves, and increase our misery by injurious comparisons.

WHEN this opinion of the happiness of others predominates in the heart, so as to excite resolutions of obtaining, at whatever price, the condition to which such transcendent privileges are supposed to be annexed; when it bursts into action and produces fraud, violence, and injustice, it is, without doubt, to be pursued with all the rigour of legal punishments. But while it only operates upon the thoughts, and disturbs none but him who has happened to admit it, and, however it may interrupt content, makes no attack on piety or virtue, I cannot think it so far criminal
or

or ridiculous, but that it may deserve some pity, and admit some excuse.

THAT all are equally happy, or miserable I suppose none is sufficiently enthusiastical to maintain; because, though, as it has been often objected, we cannot judge of the condition of others, yet every man has found frequent vicissitudes in his own state, and must therefore be convinced that life is susceptible of more or less felicity. What then shall forbid us to endeavour the alteration of that which we find capable of being improved, and to grasp at augmentations of good, when we know it possible to be increased, and believe that any particular change of situation will increase it?

IF he that finds himself uneasy may reasonably make efforts to rid himself from vexation, all mankind have a sufficient plea for some degree of restlessness, and the fault seems to be little more than too much temerity of conclusion, in favour of something not yet experienced, and too much readiness to believe, that the misery which our own passions and appetites produce, is brought upon us by accidental causes, and external efficient.

It is, indeed, frequently discovered by us, that we have complained too hastily of peculiar hardships, and have imagined ourselves distinguished by embarrassments, with which other classes of men are equally entangled. We often change a lighter for a greater evil, and with ourselves restored again to the state from which we thought it desirable to be delivered. But this knowledge, though it is easily gained by the trial, is not always attainable any other way, and that error cannot justly be reproached, which reason could not obviate, nor prudence avoid.

To take a view at once distinct and comprehensive of human life, with all its intricacies of combination, and varieties of connexion, is beyond the power of mortal intelligences. Of the state with which practice has not acquainted us, we snatch a glimpse, we discern a point, and regulate the rest by passion, and by fancy. In this enquiry every favourite prejudice, every innate desire, is busy to deceive us. We are unhappy, at least less happy than our nature seems to admit; we necessarily desire the melioration of our lot; what we desire, we very reasonably seek, and
what

what we seeek we are naturally eager to believe that we have found. Our confidence is, indeed, often disappointed, but our reason is not convinced, and there is no man who does not hope for something which he has not, though, perhaps his wishes lie unactive, because he foresees the difficulty of attainment. As among the numerous students of Hermetick philosophy, not one appears to have desisted from the task of transmutation, from conviction of its impossibility, but from weariness of toil, or impatience of delay, a broken body, or exhausted fortune.

IRRESOLUTION and mutability are often the faults of men, whose views are wide, and whose imagination is vigorous and excursive, because they cannot confine their thoughts within their own boundaries of action, but are continually ranging over all the scenes of human existence, and, consequently, are often apt to conceive that they fall upon new regions of pleasure, and start new possibilities of happiness. Thus they are too often busied with a perpetual succession of schemes, and pass their lives in alternate elation and sorrow, for want of that calm and immoveable acquiescence in their condition, by which men of slower under-

understandings are fixed for ever to a certain point, or led on in the plain beaten track, which their fathers, and grandfathers, have trod before them.

OF two conditions of life equally inviting to the prospect, that will always have the disadvantage which we have already tried; because the evils which we have felt we cannot extenuate; and though we have, perhaps from nature, the power as well of aggravating the calamity which we fear, as of heightening the blessing we expect, yet in those meditations which we indulge by choice, and which are not forced upon the mind by necessity, we have always the art of fixing our regard upon the more pleasing images, and suffer hope to dispose the lights by which we look upon futurity.

THE good and ill of different modes of life are sometimes so equally opposed, that, perhaps no man ever yet made his choice between them upon a full conviction, and adequate knowledge; and therefore fluctuation of will is not more wonderful, when they are proposed to the election, than oscillations of a beam charged with equal weights. The mind no
 sooner

fooner imagines itself determined by some prevalent advantage, than some convenience of equal weight is discovered on the other side, and the resolutions which are suggested by the nicest examination, are often repented as soon as they are taken.

EUMENES, a young man of great abilities, inherited a very large estate from a father, who had been long eminent in the most conspicuous employments. His father, harrassed with frequent competitions, and perplexed with multiplicity of business, very earnestly recommended to him the quiet and security of a private station, and impressed his persuasions with so much force, that Eumenes for some years resisted every motion of ambitious wishes; but being once provoked by the sight of oppression and injustice, which he could not redress, he began to think it the duty of an honest man to enable himself to protect others, and gradually felt a desire of greatness, excited by a thousand projects of advantage to his country. His fortune immediately placed him in the senate, his knowledge and eloquence soon advanced him at court, and he possessed that authority and influence which he had resolved to exert for the happiness of mankind.

HE now became acquainted with the embarrassments of greatness, and was in a short time convinced, that in proportion as the power of doing well was enlarged, the temptations to do ill were multiplied and enforced. He felt himself every moment in danger of being either seduced or driven from his honest purposes. Sometimes a friend was to be gratified, and sometimes a rival to be crushed, by means which his conscience could not approve. Sometimes he was forced to comply with the prejudices of the publick, and sometimes with the schemes of the ministry. He was by degrees wearied with perpetual struggles to unite policy and virtue, and went back to retirement as the shelter of innocence, persuaded that he could only hope to benefit mankind by a blameless example of private virtue. Here he spent some years in tranquillity and beneficence; but finding that corruption increased, and false opinions in government prevailed, he thought himself again summoned to posts of publick trust, from which new evidence of his own weakness again determined him to retire.

THUS men may be made inconstant by
virtue

virtue and by vice, by too much or too little thought; yet inconstancy, however dignified by its motives, is always to be avoided, because life allows us but a small time for enquiry and experiment, and he that steadily endeavours at excellence, in whatever employment, will more benefit mankind than he that hesitates in choosing his part till he is called to the performance. The traveller that resolutely follows a rough and winding path, will sooner reach the end of his journey, than he that is always changing his direction, and wastes the hours of day-light in looking for smooother ground, and shorter passages.



NUMB. 64. SATURDAY, Oct. 27, 1750.

Idem velle, et idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est. SALUST.

WHEN Socrates was building himself a house at Athens, being asked by one that observed the littleness of the design, why a man so eminent would not have an abode more suitable to his dignity? he replied, that he should think himself sufficiently accommo-