

NUMB. 69. TUESDAY, November 13, 1750.

*Flet quoque, ut in speculo rugas adspexit aniles,
Tyndaris; et secum, cur sit bis rapta, re-
quirit.*

*Tempus edax rerum, tuque invidiosa vetustas
Omnia destruitis: vitiataque dentibus ævi
Paulatim lentâ consumitis omnia morte. OVID.*

AN old Greek epigrammatist, intending to shew the miseries that attend the last stage of man, imprecates upon those who are so foolish as to wish for long life, the calamity of continuing to grow old from century to century. He thought that no adventitious or foreign pain was requisite, that decrepitude itself was an epitome of all that is dreadful, and that nothing could be added to the curse of age, but that it should be extended beyond its natural limits.

THE most indifferent or negligent spectator can indeed scarcely retire, without heaviness of heart, from a view of the last scenes of the tragedy of life, in which he finds those who in the former parts of the drama were distinguish-

distinguished by opposition of conduct, contrariety of designs, and dissimilitude of personal qualities, all involved in one common distress, and all struggling with affliction which they cannot hope to overcome.

ALL the other miseries, which way-lay our passage through the world, wisdom may escape, and fortitude may conquer: by caution and circumspection we may steal along with very little to obstruct or incommode us; by spirit and vigour we may force a way, and reward the vexation of contest by the pleasures of victory. But a time must come when all our policy and our bravery shall be equally useless; when we shall all sink into helplessness and sadness, without any power of receiving solace from the pleasures that have formerly delighted us, or any prospect of emerging into a second possession of the blessings that we have lost.

THE industry of man has, indeed, not been wanting in endeavours to procure comforts for these hours of dejection and melancholy, and to gild the dreadful gloom with artificial light. The most usual support of old age is wealth. He whose possessions are
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large, and whose chests are full, imagines himself always fortified against invasions on his authority, and secure, at least from open insult, and apparent contempt. If he has lost all other means of government, if his strength and his reason fail him, he can at least alter his will; and therefore all that have hopes must likewise have fears, and he may still continue to give laws to such as have not ceased to regard their own interest.

THIS is, indeed, too frequently the citadel of the dotard, the last fortress to which age retires, and in which he makes the stand against the upstart race, that is perpetually seizing his domains, disputing his commands, and cancelling his prescriptions. But here, though there may be safety, there is no pleasure; and what remains is but a proof that more was once possessed.

NOTHING seems to have been more universally dreaded by the ancients than orbity, or want of children; and indeed, to a man who has survived all the companions of his youth, all who have participated his pleasures and his cares, have been engaged in the same events, and filled their minds with the same

conceptions, this full peopled world is a dismal solitude. He stands forlorn and silent, neglected or insulted, in the midst of multitudes, animated with hopes which he cannot share, and employed in business which he is no longer able to forward or retard; nor can he find any to whom his life or his death are of importance, unless he has secured some domestic gratifications, some tender employments, and endeared himself to some whose interest and gratitude may unite them to him.

So different are the colours of life, as we look forward to the future, or backward to the past; and so different the opinions and sentiments which this contrariety of appearance naturally produces, that the conversation of the old and young ends generally with contempt or pity on either side. To a young man entering the world, with fulness of hope, and ardor of pursuit, nothing is so unpleasing as the cold caution, the faint expectations, the scrupulous diffidence which experience and disappointments certainly infuse; and the old man wonders in his turn that the world never can grow wiser, that neither precepts, nor testimonies, can cure boys of their credulity and sufficiency; and that not one can be con-

vinced.

vinced that snares are laid for him, till he finds himself entangled.

THUS one generation is always the scorn and wonder of the other, and the notions of the old and young are like liquors of different gravity and texture which never can unite. The spirits of youth, sublimed by health, and volatilis'd by passion, soon leave behind them the phlegmatic sediment of wariness and deliberation, and burst out in temerity and enterprise. The tenderness therefore which nature infuses, and which long habits of beneficence confirm, is necessary to reconcile such opposition; and an old man must be a father to bear with patience those follies and absurdities, which he will perpetually imagine himself to find in the schemes and expectations, the pleasures and the sorrows, of those who have not yet been hardened by time, and chilled by frustration.

YET it may be doubted, whether the pleasure of seeing children ripening into strength and importance, be not overbalanced by the pain of seeing some fall in the blossom, and others blasted in their growth; some shaken down by storms, some tainted with cankers
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and some shrivelled in the shade; and whether he that extends his care beyond himself, does not multiply his anxieties more than his pleasures, and weary himself to no purpose by superintending what he cannot regulate.

BUT though age be to every order of human being sufficiently terrible, it is particularly to be dreaded by fine ladies, who have had no other end or ambition, than to fill up the day and the night, with dress, diversions and flattery, and who having made no acquaintance with knowledge, or with business, have constantly caught all their ideas from the current prattle of the hour, and been indebted for all their happiness to compliments and treats. With these ladies, age begins early, and very often lasts long; it begins when their beauty fades, when their mirth loses its sprightliness, and their motion its ease. From that time all that gave them joy vanishes from about them; they hear the praises bestowed on others, which used to swell their bosoms with exultation. They visit the seats of felicity, and endeavour to continue the habit of being delighted. But pleasure is only received when we believe that we give it in return; and neglect and petulance soon inform them that their power

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and their value are past ; and what then remains but a tedious and comfortless uniformity of time, without any motion of the heart, or exercise of the reason ?

YET, however age may discourage us by its appearance from considering it in prospect, we shall all by degrees certainly be old ; and therefore we ought to enquire, what provision can be made against that time of distress ? what happiness can be stored up against the winter of life ? and how we may pass our latter years with serenity and cheerfulness ?

IF it has been found by the experience of mankind, that no season of life is able to supply itself with sufficient gratifications, without anticipating uncertain felicities, it cannot surely be supposed, that old age, worn with labours, harrassed with anxieties, and tortured with diseases, should have any gladness of its own, or feel any satisfaction from the contemplation of the present. All the comfort that can now be expected must be recalled from the past, or borrowed from the future ; the past is too often very soon exhausted, all the events or actions of which the memory can afford pleasure are quickly recollected ; and the

the future lies beyond the grave, where it can be reached only by virtue and devotion.

PIETY, then, is the only proper and adequate relief of decaying man, since this world can give him no further prospects. He, therefore, that grows old without religious hopes, as he declines into imbecillity, and feels pains and sorrows incessantly crowding upon him, falls into a gulph of bottomless misery, in which every reflection must plunge him deeper, and where he finds only new gradations of anguish, and precipices of horror.

NUMB. 70. SATURDAY, *Novemb. 17, 1750.*

————— *Argentea proles,
Aurò deterior, fulvo pretiosior ære.* OVID.

HESIOD, in his celebrated distribution of mankind, divides them into three orders of intellect. “The first place, says he, belongs to him that can by his own powers discern what is right and fit, and penetrate to the remoter motives of action. The second is claimed by him [that is] willing
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