

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 ^{are} 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 to

“ to hear instruction, and can perceive right
 “ and wrong when they are shewn him by
 “ another ; but he that has neither acuteness
 “ nor docility, who can neither find the
 “ way by himself, nor will be led by others,
 “ is a wretch without use or value.”

IF we survey the moral world, it will be
 found, that the same division may be made of
 men, with regard to their virtue. There are
 some whose principles are so firmly fixed,
 whose conviction is so constantly present to
 their minds, and who have raised in them-
 selves such ardent wishes for the approbation
 of God, and the happiness with which he has
 promised to reward obedience and perseve-
 rance, that they rise above all other cares and
 considerations, and uniformly examine every
 action and every desire, by comparing it with
 the divine commands. There are others in a
 kind of equipoise between good and ill ; who
 are moved on one part by riches or pleasure,
 by the gratifications of passion, and the de-
 lights of sense ; and, on the other, by laws
 of which they own the obligation, and rewards
 of which they believe the reality, and whom
 a very small addition of weight turns either
 way. The third class consists of beings im-
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mersed in pleasure, or abandoned to passion, without any desire of higher good, or any effort to extend their thoughts beyond immediate and gross satisfactions.

THE second class is so much more numerous than the first and last, that it may be considered as comprising the whole body of mankind. Those of the last are not very many, and of the first are very few; and neither the one nor the other fall much under the consideration of the moralist, whose precepts are intended chiefly for those who are endeavouring to go forward up the steep of virtue, not for those who have already reached the summit, or those who are resolved to stay for ever in their present situation.

To a man not versed in the living world, but accustomed to judge of every thing only by speculative reason, it is scarcely credible that any one should be in this state of indifference, or stand undetermined and unengaged, ready to follow the first call to either side. It seems certain, that a man either must believe that virtue will make him happy, and resolve therefore to be virtuous, or think that he may be happy without virtue, and there-

fore cast off all care but for his present interest. It seems impossible that conviction should be on one side, and practice on the other; and that he who has seen the right way, should voluntarily shut his eyes, that he may quit it with more tranquillity. Yet all these absurdities are every hour to be found; the wisest and best men deviate from known and acknowledged duties, by inadvertency or surprise; and most are good no longer than while temptation is away, than while their passions are without excitements, and their opinions are free from the counteraction of any other motive.

AMONG the sentiments which almost every man changes as he advances into years, is the expectation of uniformity of character. He that without acquaintance with the power of desire, the cogency of distress, the complications of affairs, or the force of particular influence, has filled his mind with the excellence of virtue; he who having never tried his resolution in any encounters with hope or fear, believes it able to stand firm whatever shall oppose it, will be always clamorous against the smallest failure, ready to exact the utmost punctualities of right, and to consider every

every man that fails in any part of his duty, as without conscience and without merit; unworthy of trust, or love, or pity, or regard; as an enemy whom all should join to drive out of society, as a pest which all should avoid, or as a weed which all should trample.

It is not but by experience, that we are taught the possibility of retaining some virtues, and rejecting others, or of being good or bad to a particular degree. For it is very easy to the solitary reasoner to prove that the same arguments by which the mind is fortified against one crime are of equal force against all, and the consequence very naturally follows, that he whom they fail to move on any occasion, has either never considered them, or has by some fallacy taught himself to evade their validity; and that, therefore, when a man is known to be guilty of one crime, no farther evidence is needful of his depravity and corruption.

YET such is the state of all mortal virtue, that it is always uncertain and variable, sometimes extending to the whole compass of duty, and sometimes shrinking into a narrow space, and fortifying only a few avenues of the

the heart, while all the rest is left open to the incursions of appetite, or given up to the dominion of wickedness. Nothing therefore is more unjust than to judge of man by too short an acquaintance, and too slight inspection; for it often happens, that in the loose, and thoughtless, and dissipated, there is a secret resource, which may shoot out by proper cultivation; that the spark of heaven, though dimmed and obstructed, is yet not extinguished, but may by the breath of counsel and exhortation be kindled into flame.

To imagine that every one who is not completely good is irrecoverably abandoned, is to suppose that all are capable of the same degrees of excellence; it is indeed to exact, from all, that perfection which none ever can attain. And since the purest virtue is consistent with some vice, and the virtue of the greatest number with almost an equal proportion of contrary qualities, let none too hastily conclude that all goodness is lost, though it may for a time be clouded and overwhelmed; for most minds are the slaves of external circumstances, and conform to any hand that undertakes to mould them, roll down any torrent of custom in which they happen to be

be caught, or bend to any importunity that bears hard against them.

It may be particularly observed of women, that they are for the most part good or bad, as they fall among those who practice vice or virtue; and that neither education nor reason gives them much security against the influence of example. Whether it be that they have less courage to stand against opposition, or that their desire of admiration makes them sacrifice their principles to the poor pleasure of worthless praise, it is certain, whatever be the cause, that female goodness seldom keeps its ground against laughter, flattery, or fashion.

For this reason, every one should consider himself as entrusted, not only with his own conduct, but with that of others; and as accountable, not only for the duties which he neglects, or the crimes that he commits, but for that negligence and irregularity which he may encourage or inculcate. Every man, in whatever station, has, or endeavours to have his followers, admirers, and imitators; has therefore the influence of his example to watch with care; he ought to avoid not only crimes but the appearance of crimes, and not
only

only to practise virtue, but to applaud, countenance, and support it. For it is possible that for want of attention we may teach others faults from which ourselves are free, or by a heedless negligence or cowardly desertion of a good cause, which we ourselves approve, may alienate those who fix their eyes upon us, and who, having no certain rule of their own to guide their course in the ocean of the world, are easily confounded by the aberrations of that example which they chuse for their direction.