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*Indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia crasse
Compositum, illepideve putetur, sed quia nuper.* Hor.

THERE is nothing which more denotes a great mind, than the abhorrence of envy and detraction. This passion reigns more among bad Poets, than among any other set of men.

As there are none more ambitious of fame, than those who are conversant in Poetry, it is very natural for such as have not succeeded in it, to depreciate the works of those who have. For since they cannot raise themselves to the reputation of their fellow-writers, they must endeavour to sink it to their own pitch, if they would still keep themselves upon a level with them.

The greatest wits that ever were produced in one age, lived together in so good an understanding, and celebrated one another with so much generosity, that each of them receives an additional lustre from his contemporaries, and is more famous for having lived with men of so extraordinary a genius, than if he had himself been the sole wonder of the age. I need not tell my Reader, that I here point at the reign of *Augustus*, and I believe he will be of my opinion, that neither *Virgil* nor *Horace* would have gained so great a reputation in the world, had they not been the friends and admirers of each other. Indeed all the great writers of that age, for whom singly we have so great an esteem, stand up together as vouchers for one another's reputation. But at the same time that *Virgil* was celebrated by *Gallus*, *Propertius*, *Horace*, *Varius*, *Tucca* and *Ovid*, we know that *Bavius* and *Mævius* were his declared foes and calumniators.

In our own country a man seldom sets up for a Poet, without attacking the reputation of all his brothers in the art. The ignorance of the moderns, the scriblers of the age, the decay of Poetry, are the topicks

of detraction, with which he makes his entrance into the world: But how much more noble is the fame that is built on candour and ingenuity, according to those beautiful lines of Sir *John Denham*, in his poem on *Fletcher's* works!

*But whither am I straid? I need not raise
Trophies to thee from other mens dispraise;
Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,
Nor needs thy juster title the foul guilt
Of eastern Kings, who to secure their reign
Must have their brothers, sons, and kindred slain.*

I am sorry to find that an Author, who is very justly esteemed among the best judges, has admitted some strokes of this nature into a very fine poem, I mean *The Art of Criticism*, which was published some months since, and is a Master-piece in its kind. The observations follow one another like those in *Horace's Art of Poetry*, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a Prose author. They are some of them uncommon, but such as the Reader must assent to, when he sees them explained with that elegance and perspicuity in which they are delivered. As for those which are the most known, and the most received, they are placed in so beautiful a light, and illustrated with such apt allusions, that they have in them all the graces of novelty, and make the Reader, who was before acquainted with them, still more convinced of their truth and solidity. And here give me leave to mention what Monsieur *Boileau* has so very well enlarged upon in the preface to his works, that wit and fine writing doth not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving things that are known an agreeable turn. It is impossible for us, who live in the latter Ages of the world, to make observations in criticism, morality, or in any art or science, which have not been touched upon by others. We have little else left us, but to represent the common sense of mankind in more strong, more beautiful, or more uncommon lights. If a Reader examines *Horace's Art of Poetry*, he will find but very few precepts in it, which he may not meet with in *Aristotle*, and which were not commonly known by all the Poets of the *Augustan* Age. His way of expressing and applying them, not his invention of them, is what we are chiefly to admire.

For this reason I think there is nothing in the world so tiresome as the works of those Critics, who write in a positive dogmatic way, without either language, genius or imagination. If the Reader would see
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how the best of the *Latin* Critics writ, he may find their manner very beautifully described in the characters of *Horace*, *Petronius*, *Quintilian* and *Longinus*, as they are drawn in the Essay of which I am now speaking.

Since I have mentioned *Longinus*, who in his Reflections has given us the same kind of sublime, which he observes in the several passages that occasioned them; I cannot but take notice, that our *English* Author has after the same manner exemplified several of his precepts in the very precepts themselves. I shall produce two or three instances of this kind. Speaking of the insipid smoothness which some Readers are so much in love with, he has the following verses.

*These equal syllables alone require,
Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire,
While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line.*

The gaping of the vowels in the second line, the expletive *do* in the third, and the ten monosyllables in the fourth, give such a beauty to this passage, as would have been very much admired in an ancient Poet. The Reader may observe the following lines in the same view.

*A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along.*

And afterwards,

*'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.
Soft is the strain when Zephir gently blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother number flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar.
When Ajax strives, some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labours, and the words move slow:
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.*

The beautiful Distich upon *Ajax* in the foregoing lines, puts me in mind of a description in *Homer's* *Odyssey*. It is where *Sisyphus* is represented lifting his stone up the hill, which is no sooner carried to the top of it, but it immediately tumbles to the bottom. This double motion

of.

of the stone is admirably described in the numbers of these verses; as in the four first it is heaved up by several *Spondees* intermixed with proper breathing-places, and at last trundles down in a continued line of *Dactyls*.

Καὶ μὴν Σίσυρον εἰσείδον, κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα,
 Λᾶαν βασάζοντα πελώριον ἀμφοτέρωσιν.
 *Ἦτοι δ' ἄλλ', σκηρὸν ἐπὶ χερσίν τε ποσσίν τε,
 Λᾶαν ἀνω ἄθεσκε ποτὶ λόρον. ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι
 *Ἀκρον ὑπερβαλεῖν, τίτ' ἀποσρέψασκε κραταῖς
 Ἀδύτις, ἔπειτα πῶδ' ὀνδε κυλινδέσσι λᾶας ἀναυδής.

It would be endless to quote verses out of *Virgil* which have this particular kind of beauty in the numbers; but I may take an occasion in a future paper to shew several of them which have escaped the observation of others.

I cannot conclude this paper without taking notice, that we have three poems in our tongue, which are of the same nature, and each of them a master-piece in its kind; the Essay on translated verse, the Essay on the art of poetry, and the Essay upon criticism.

N^o 255. Saturday, December 22.

*Laudis amore tumes? sunt certa piacula quæ te
 Ter pure lecto poterunt recreare libello.*

Hor.

THE Soul, considered abstractedly from its passions, is of a remiss and sedentary nature, slow in its resolves, and languishing in its executions. The use therefore of the passions is to stir it up, and put it upon action, to awaken the understanding, to enforce the will, and to make the whole man more vigorous and attentive in the prosecution of his designs. As this is the end of the passions in general, so it is particularly of Ambition, which pushes the soul to such actions as are apt to procure honour and reputation to the Actor. But if we carry our reflections higher, we may discover further ends of Providence in implanting this passion in mankind. It