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In Five Volumes

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The W O R L D.

By ADAM FITZ-ADAM.

NUMB. XXVIII. *Thursday, July 12, 1753.*

—*Pauci dignoscere possunt
Vera bona, atque illis multum diversa.*— Juv.

IT is a common observation, that though happiness is every man's aim, and though it is generally pursued by a gratification of the predominant passion, yet few have acuteness enough to discover the points which would effectually procure the long-sought end. One cannot but wonder that such intense application as most of us bestow on the cultivation of our favourite desires, should yet leave us ignorant of the most essential objects of our study. For my part, I was so early convinced of the truth of what I have asserted, that instead of searching for what would contribute most to my own happiness, I have spent great part of my life in the study of what may extend the enjoyment of others. That knowledge I flatter myself I have discovered, and shall now disclose to the world. I beg to be attended to: I beg mankind will believe that I know better than any of them what will ascertain the felicity of their lives. I am not going to impart so great (though so often revealed) a secret, as that it is religion or virtue: few would believe me; fewer would try the recipe. In spite of the philosophy of the age, in spite of the gravity of my character, and of the decency which I hope I have hitherto most sanctimoniously observed, I must avow my persuasion, that the sensual pleasure of LOVE is the great cordial of life, and the only specific for removing the anxieties of our own passions, or for supporting the injuries and iniquities which we suffer from those of other men.

VOL. I.

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" Well!

“ Well ! (shall I be told) and is this your admirable discovery ? Is this the ARCANUM that has escaped the penetration of all enquirers in all ages ? What other doctrine has been taught by the most sensible philosophers ? Was not this the text of the sermons of EPICURUS ? Was not this the theory, and practice too, of the experienced ALCIBIADES ? What other were the tenets of the sage lord ROCHESTER, or of the missionary *Saint EVREMONT* ?” — It is very true ; and a thousand other founders of sects, nay of religious orders, have taught—or at least practised—the same doctrines. But I pretend to introduce such refinements into the system of sensuality, as shall vindicate the discovery to myself, and throw at a distance the minute philosophers, who (if they were my forerunners) only served to lead the world astray.

Hear then in one word the mysterious precept ! “ *Young women are not the proper objects of sensual love : it is the MATRON, the HOARY FAIR, who can give, communicate, insure happiness.*” I might enumerate a thousand reasons to enforce my doctrine, as the fickleness of youth, the caprices of beauty and its transient state, the jealousy from rivals, the distraction from having children, the important avocations of dress, and the infinite occupations of a pretty woman, which endanger or divide her sentiments from being always fixed on the faithful lover ; and none of which combat the affections of the grateful, tender, attentive MATRON. But as one example is worth a thousand reasons, I shall recommend my plan by pointing out the extreme happiness which has attended such discreet heroes as are commemorated in the annals of love for having offered up their hearts at ancient shrines ; and I shall clearly demonstrate by precedents, that several ladies *in the bloom of their wrinkles* have inspired more lasting and more fervent passions, than the greatest beauties who had scarce lost sight of their teens. The fair young creatures of the present hour will forgive a preference which is the result of deep meditation, great reading, and strict impartiality, when they reflect, that they can scarce contrive to be young above a dozen years, and may be old for fifty or sixty ; and they may believe me, that after forty they will value one lover more, than they do twenty now ; a sensation of happiness, which they will find increase as they advance in years. I cannot but observe with pleasure that the legislature itself seems to coincide * with my way of

* This alludes to the marriage-act passed at the conclusion of the preceding session.

thinking,

thinking, and has very prudently enacted that young ladies shall not enter so early into the bonds of love, when they are incapable of reflection, and of all the serious duties which belong to an union of hearts:—a sentiment, which indeed our laws seem always to have had in view; for, unless there was implanted in our natures a strong temptation towards the love of ELDERLY women, why should the very first prohibition in the table of consanguinity forbid a man to marry his GRAND-MOTHER?

The first heroine we read of, whose charms were proof against the injuries of time, was the accomplished SARAH: I think the most moderate computations make her to be ninety when that wanton monarch ABIMELECH would have undermined her virtue. But as doubtless the observance of that virtue had been the great foundation of the continuance of her beauty, and as the rigidity of it rather exempts her from, than exposes her as an object of my doctrine, I shall say no more of that lady: especially, as her being obliged to wear a sack to hide a big-belly at a very unseasonable age, clashes with one of my standing arguments for the love of ELDERLY WOMEN.

HELEN, the beautiful HELEN, if there is any trusting to classic parish-registers, was fourscore when PARIS stole her; and though the war lasted ten years after that on her account, monsieur Homer, who wrote their romance, does not give any hint of the gallant young prince having showed the least decay of passion or symptom of inconstancy: a fidelity, which in all probability was at least as much owing to the experience of the dame, and to her knowledge in the refinements of pleasure, as to her bright eyes, unfaded complexion, or the everlasting lilies and roses of her cheeks.

I am not clear that length of years, especially in heroic minds, does not increase rather than abate the sentimental flame. The great ELIZABETH, whose passion for the unfortunate earl of Essex is justly a favourite topic with all who delight in romantic history, was full sixty-eight when she condemned her lover to death for slighting her endearments. And, if I might instance in our own sex, the charming, the meritorious ANTONY was not far from seventy before he had so much taste as to sacrifice the meaner passion of ambition, nay the world itself, to love.

But it is France, that kingdom so exquisitely judicious in the affairs of love, from whence we may copy the arts of happiness, as well as their other

discoveries in pleasure. The monarchs of that nation have more than once taught the world by their example, that a fine woman, though past her grand climacteric, may be but just touching the meridian of her charms. HENRY the second and LOUIS the fourteenth will be for ever memorable for the passions they so long felt for the duchess of VALENTINOIS and madame de MAINTENON. The former, in the heat of youth and prospect of empire, became a slave to the respectable attractions of DIANA DE POITIERS, many years after his injudicious * father had quitted the possession of her, on the silly apprehension that she was growing old: and to the last moment of his life and reign, HENRY was a constant, jealous adorer of her still ripening charms. When the age was over-run with astrology, superstition, bigotry, and notions of necromancy, king HENRY still idolized a woman, who had not only married her † grand-daughter, then a celebrated beauty, but who, if any other prince had reigned, was ancient enough to have come within the description of forcery: so little do the vulgar distinguish between the ideas of an old witch and a fine woman. The passion of the other monarch was no less remarkable. That hero, who had gained so many battles by proxy, had presided in person at so many tournaments, had raised such water-works, and shed such streams of heretic blood, and, which was still more glorious, had enjoyed so many of the finest women in Europe, was at last captivated by an old governante, and sighed away whole years at the feet of his venerable mistress as she worked at her tent with spectacles. If LOUIS LE GRAND was not a judge of pleasure, who can pretend to be? If he was, in favour of what age did he give the golden apple?

I shall close my catalogue of ancient mistresses with the renowned NINON L'ENCLOS, a lady whose life alone is sufficient to inculcate my doctrine in its utmost force. I shall say nothing of her numerous conquests for the first half of her life: she had wit, youth, and beauty, three ingredients which will always attract silly admirers. It was not till her fifty-sixth year that her superior merit distinguished itself; and from that to her ninetieth she went on improving in the real arts and charms of love. How unfortunate am I, that she did not live a few years longer, that I might have had the opportunity of wearing her chains!—It was in her fifty-sixth year that the chevalier

* Francis the first. It is said that the father of Diana de Poitiers being condemned to death, his daughter obtained not only his pardon, but the affection of that prince. However, he quitted her for the duchesse d'Estampes.

† Mademoiselle de la Mark.

de VILLIERS, a natural son whom she had had by the comte de Gerzé, arrived at Paris from the provinces, where he had been educated without any knowledge of his real parents. He saw his mother; he fell in love with her. The increase, the vehemence of his passion gave the greatest disquiet to the affectionate matron. At last, when nothing but a discovery of the truth could put a stop, as she thought, to the impetuosity of his attempts, she carried him into her bed-chamber.—Here my readers will easily conceive the transports of a young lover, just on the brink of happiness with a charming mistress of near three-score!—As the adventurous youth would have pushed his enterprises, she checked him, and, pointing to a clock, said, “Rash boy, look there! At that hour, two-and-twenty years ago, I was delivered of you in this very bed!” It is a certain fact, that the unfortunate, abashed young man flew into the garden and fell upon his sword. This catastrophe had like to have deprived the age of the most accomplished mistress that ever adorned the Cytherean annals. It was above twenty years before the afflicted mother would listen to any addresses of a tender nature. At length the polite abbé de GEDOYN pressed and obtained an assignation. He came and found the enchanting NINON lying on a couch, like the grandmother of the Loves, in the most gallant dishabille; and, what was still more delightful, disposed to indulge his utmost wishes. After the most charming endearments, he asked her—but with the greatest respect—Why she had so long deferred the completion of his happiness? “Why,” replied she, “I must confess it proceeded from a remain of vanity: I did pique myself upon having a lover at past FOURSORE, and it was but yesterday that I was EIGHTY complete.”

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