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**The Works Of the late Right Honorable Henry St. John,
Lord Viscount Bolingbroke**

In Five Volumes, complete.

Bolingbroke, Henry St. John

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LIII.

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degrees of goodness; since neither of them consists so much in outward shew as it does in the inward sentiment: and yet, without being able to measure both, what faucy, what pragmatical presumption is it to pretend, in any sort, to judge of providential dispensations, even supposing them to be those of particular providences?

LIII.

WE will enter, if you please, first into some reflections on the general tendency of virtue and vice to promote happiness, and after that into a more particular detail. I think then, that health of body is pretty equally distributed to good men and bad, whether jews, christians, turk, or infidels. In this respect too the good are likely to have in themselves, and in their posterity, much the advantage. But, besides, if health and vigor of body were to be found more commonly among the wicked than the good, it might appear to be, like other instances of prosperity, the cause, it will never appear to be the effect, of vice.

TRANQUILITY of mind is the inseparable companion of virtue, that adds relish and favor to all the comforts, and takes off their bitter taste from all the misfortunes, of life. It is the health of the mind. Without this, no intellectual joy can be tasted, as without the other no corporeal pleasure. The virtuous man looks back with complacency, and feels the truth of that saying of TULLY: "a good conscience is the great theatre of virtue". The present satisfies him, and the future gives him no alarm. The second BRUTUS exclaimed, that virtue was an empty name. Stoical virtue was little better; nor his, in particular, any more than a mask that hid, under an appearance

appearance of apathy, the most violent and the vilest passions, like the sanctity of several antient and modern faints, who have imposed on the christian world. But true moral virtue is something very real. It is the cause of our happiness, it maintains the tranquillity of human life. If happiness be a series of agreeable sensations, the less this series is exposed to interruption, the more happy we are. But it must be exposed to perpetual interruptions, if that which causes, and maintains it, be not in our own power. Virtue is so: and thus virtue may be said, without any paradox, to be its own reward*. If it has no reward from without, it rewards itself by inward, and therefore independent tranquillity.

Good men may have commonly a less share in the advantages of fortune, as they are less likely to use the means of acquiring them, but then they want them less: and tho it be a false thought, which *SENECA* makes, the divinity employ, "that their happiness consists in wanting no happiness †", yet is it true, that their happiness is enhanced, as well as secured, by a great independence on every thing external; and the same *SENECA* says, somewhere else, most divinely well, that he placed the good things he enjoyed within his reach, and yet at such a distance that fortune might take, but could not tear, them from him. The good man slakes his thirst with a moderate draught of outward prosperity. The chalice of the wicked man is never sufficient, be it never so large: and to all his passions, as well as to his avarice, "nescio quid curtae" "semper abest rei." There is a fragment among *PLUTARCH*'s

* Hoc dabitur, ut opinor, si modo sit aliquid, esse beatum, id oportere totum poni in potestate sapientis. Nam si amitti vita beata potest, beata esse non potest. *TULL.* de fin. L. 2.

† Intus omne posui bonum. Non carere felicitate felicitas vestra est. De Provid.

Miscel-

Miscellanies, where fortune and vice are introduced like the contractors, who appear and make their offers, when any public work is to be let out. Fortune boasts, that she can take from men every outward good, and bring upon them every outward evil. Vice replies that this is true, but that it is not sufficient to make them miserable, unless she gives her assistance; whereas she is able to render them so without the assistance of fortune, and in spite of all her endeavors to make them happy.

THUS heathen philosophers taught mankind, and there was no need of defending the providence of God against ZENO, nor ARISTOTLE. The former held, that there was no real good but virtue. The latter, that health of body, and the external advantages of fortune, might be reckoned among the good things of life, but that they were such in a degree very far below those that result from virtue. Happiness, therefore, fell solely to the share of good men, according to the stoicians; or principally to them, according to the peripatetics*: and this was indeed a noble contest. Christians are far from having any such. If they do not assume that health, and the advantages of fortune, constitute happiness solely, they assume that it is constituted principally by these; since on the want which good men have sometimes of these they accuse God of injustice. They pretend to keep an account between God and man, to barter so much virtue, or so many acts of devotion, against so many degrees of honor, of power, of riches; and to have their piety purchased by the gratification of their pas-

* Pugnans stoici cum peripateticis. Alteri negant quidquam esse bonum nisi quod honestum sit. Alteri plurimum se, et longè longèque plurimum tribuere honestati; sed tamen et in corpore, et extra, esse quaedam bona. Certamen honestum, et disputatio splendida, TULL. de fin. L. 2.

fions. If God exacts the duty, he must pay the price. If he does not pay it in this life, he must pay it in another. Till that time, they give him credit: and if does not pay it then, he is an unjust and cruel being. I will crayon out a picture on this occasion in imitation of those *CLEANTHES* used to draw when he disputed against the partizans of voluptu. Let all good christians, to denote their goodness and the justice of God, be fat and jolly like canons in the *Lutrin*. Let them be seated on thrones with diadems on their heads, sceptres in their hands, and purple robes on their shoulders. Let the virtues, like so many cupids in *ALBANO*'s pictures, run about the landschape, busy in the service of their masters. Let justice lead the wicked like slaves with retorted arms, and down-cast eyes, to their footstools. Let temperance serve pyramids of ortolans and brimmers of tockay on their tables. Let moderation offer, and they receive, sacks filled with gold and silver, and baskets full of diamonds and rubies. In the midst, and front, of the piece let the great *LAMA* of the east be placed on an higher throne than the rest, if it be sent to some tartarian temple: his younger brother of the west, if it be sent to *St. PETER*'s church at Rome: his grace of *Canterbury*, or my lord of *London*, if it be sent to *St. PAUL*'s; and *LUTHER*, or *CALVIN*, if it be sent to any other religious assembly of christians in these parts of the world.

HAVING said thus much to shew the general tendency of virtue to promote the inward and real happiness of mankind, in opposition to divines, and atheists, who make it consist so much in outward enjoyments, that every diminution of these, in the circumstances of every reputed good man, is an instance brought in proof of the unjust dispensations of providenc; I proceed to take notice of some particular instances that have been so brought. They will serve, I think, to shew that God
is

is wife, and man a fool, and that, of all fools; the most presumptuous, and, at the same time, the most trifling, are metaphysical philosophers and divines.

I neither deny nor affirm, particular providences. The supposition of such has given occasion to much lying, to much flattery, to much uncharitableness, to much superstition, and enthusiasm. When the votive pictures of those who had escaped being drowned were shewn to *DIAGORAS* at *Samo-thracia*, he asked where the pictures were of those who had perished at sea? The atheist believed no providence, for he believed no God. The priests would not have been over-much concerned to convince him of a general providence, but they would have produced their legends as well as their relics to prove to him the particular providences by which their votaries had been saved. I enter here no further into the discussion of this point. But this I say, that the physical and moral systems have no need, like the bungling works and imperfect institutions of men, to be carried on by frequent interpositions and partial directions, that they may continue to answer the intent of the maker. The ordinary course of things, preserved and conducted by a general providence, confirms what the law of reason and of nature teaches us. The law is not only given, but executed. The authority of the lawgiver makes it our duty, the sanctions make it our interest to obey the law: and these sanctions have their effect so often, that they leave no doubt concerning them. They have their effect as often as it is necessary in *terrorem*. In imitation of providential government, human government goes no further: and yet there are a parcel of little tyrants who find fault with the former for going no further. God punishes to reform, as far as our nature, and his scheme, permit. They are angry that he is not as angry as they are, that every criminal is not

racked on the wheel, and that he does not punish to exterminate. Let us descend to particular instances that are urged against the justice of God, in order to prove it, and to confirm what has been said concerning good, and bad, happy, and unhappy, men.

LIV.

TULLY lies still open before me, and there I find many instances of this sort produced by COTTA with as much confidence as if they were decisive. Why did the two SCIPIOS fall in Spain, and MARCELLUS and PAULUS in Italy, making war against the Carthaginians? Why did MAXIMUS bury his son who was of consular dignity? Why was the Aemilian SCIPIO not safe in his own house? Why was RUTILIUS banished, DRUSUS assassinated, SCAEVOLA slain at the altar of VESTA, and CATULUS obliged to procure his own death? Why did MARIUS die in his bed, after a seventh consulship? Why were he, and CINNA, DIONYSIUS the elder, PISISTRATUS, PHALARIS, APPOLLODORUS, and even the assassin VARIUS, and the highway man HARPALUS, suffered so long to exercise, with impunity, their cruelties? The day would be too short, indeed, to enumerate instances of any kind in this declamatory, loose, and inconclusive manner*. It is not unlike the proceeding of certain great scholars, who crowd their text and their margin with a multitude of names, which stand as vouchers of the facts or opinions they advance, and impose often on the unwary who will not, and the ignorant who cannot, examine for themselves; whilst they, who will and can

* Dies deficiat si velim numerare quibus bonis malè evenerit; nec minus, si commemorem quibus improbis optimè.

examine,