



N^o 25. Thursday, March 29.

——— *Ægrefcitque medendo.*

Virg.

THE following Letter will explain it self, and needs no Apology.

S I R,

I Am one of that sickly Tribe who are commonly known by the Name of *Valetudinarians*; and do confess to you, that I first contracted this ill Habit of Body, or rather of Mind, by the Study of Physick. I no sooner began to peruse Books of this Nature, but I found my Pulse was irregular; and scarce ever read the Account of any Disease that I did not fancy my self afflicted with. Doctor Sydenham's learned Treatise of Fevers threw me into a lingering Hæctick, which hung upon me all the while I was reading that excellent Piece. I then applied my self to the Study of several Authors, who have written upon Phthifical Distempers, and by that means fell into a Consumption; till at length, growing very fat, I was in a manner shamed out of that Imagination. Not long after this I found in my self all the Symptoms of the Gout, except Pain; but was cured of it by a Treatise upon the Gravel, written by a very Ingenious Author, who (as it is usual for Physicians to convert one Distemper into another) eased me of the Gout by giving me the Stone. I at length studied my self into a Complication of Distempers; but, accidentally taking into my Hand that Ingenious Discourse written by *Sanctorius*, I was resolved to direct my self by a Scheme of Rules, which I had collected from his Observations. The Learned World are very well acquainted with that Gentleman's Invention; who, for the better carrying on of his Experiments, contrived a certain Mathematical Chair, which was so Artificially hung upon Springs, that it would weigh

‘ weigh any thing as well as a Pair of Scales. By this
‘ means he discovered how many Ounces of his Food
‘ pass’d by Perspiration, what Quantity of it was turned
‘ into Nourishment, and how much went away by the
‘ other Channels and Distributions of Nature.

‘ HAVING provided my self with this Chair, I us’d
‘ to Study, Eat, Drink, and Sleep in it; Infomuch that I
‘ may be said for these three last Years, to have lived in
‘ a Pair of Scales. I compute my self, when I am in full
‘ Health, to be precisely Two hundred Weight, falling
‘ short of it about a Pound after a Day’s Fast, and exceed-
‘ ing it as much after a very full Meal; so that it is my
‘ continual Employment, to trim the Balance between
‘ these two Volatile Pounds in my Constitution. In my
‘ ordinary Meals I fetch my self up to two hundred Weight
‘ and half a Pound; and if after having dined I find my
‘ self fall short of it, I drink just so much Small Beer, or
‘ eat such a Quantity of Bread, as is sufficient to make me
‘ weight. In my greatest Excesses I do not transgress
‘ more than the other-half Pound; which, for my Health’s
‘ sake, I do the first *Monday* in every Month. As soon
‘ as I find my self duly poised after Dinner, I walk
‘ till I have perspired five Ounces and four Scruples;
‘ and when I discover, by my Chair, that I am so far
‘ reduced, I fall to my Books, and study away three
‘ Ounces more. As for the remaining Parts of the
‘ Pound, I keep no account of them. I do not dine and
‘ sup by the Clock, but by my Chair; for when that in-
‘ forms me my Pound of Food is exhausted, I conclude
‘ my self to be hungry, and lay in another with all
‘ Diligence. In my Days of Abstinence I lose a Pound
‘ and an half, and on solemn Fasts am two Pound
‘ lighter than on other Days in the Year.

‘ I allow my self one Night with another, a Quarter
‘ of a Pound of Sleep within a few Grains more or less;
‘ and if upon my rising I find that I have not consumed
‘ my whole Quantity, I take out the rest in my Chair.
‘ Upon an exact Calculation of what I expended and
‘ received the last Year, which I always register in a
‘ Book, I find the Medium to be Two hundred Weight,
‘ so that I cannot discover that I am impaired one
‘ Ounce in my Health during a whole Twelvemonth.

‘ And yet, Sir, notwithstanding this my great Care to
 ‘ ballast my self equally every Day, and to keep my
 ‘ Body in its proper Poise, so it is that I find my self
 ‘ in a sick and languishing Condition. My Complexion
 ‘ is grown very fallow, my Pulse low, and my Body
 ‘ Hydropical. Let me therefore beg you, Sir, to con-
 ‘ sider me as your Patient, and to give me more cer-
 ‘ tain Rules to walk by than those I have already ob-
 ‘ served, and you will very much oblige

Your humble Servant.

THIS Letter puts me in mind of an *Italian* Epitaph written on the Monument of a *Valetudinarian*; *Stavoben, ma per star Meglio, sto qui*: Which it is impossible to translate. The Fear of Death often proves Mortal, and sets People on Methods to save their Lives, which infallibly destroy them. This is a Reflexion made by some Historians, upon observing that there are many more thousands killed in a Flight than in a Battle; and may be applied to those Multitudes of imaginary Sick Persons that break their Constitutions by Physick, and throw themselves into the Arms of Death, by endeavouring to escape it. This Method is not only dangerous, but below the Practice of a Reasonable Creature. To consult the Preservation of Life, as the only End of it, To make our Health our Business, To engage in no Action that is not part of a Regimen, or course of Physick; are Purposes so abject, so mean, so unworthy humane Nature, that a generous Soul would rather die than submit to them. Besides, that a continual Anxiety for Life vitiates all the Relishes of it, and casts a Gloom over the whole Face of Nature; as it is impossible we should take Delight in any thing that we are every Moment afraid of losing.

I do not mean, by what I have here said, that I think any one to blame for taking due Care of their Health. On the contrary, as Chearfulness of Mind, and Capacity for Business, are in a great measure the Effects of a well-temper’d Constitution, a Man cannot be at too much Pains to cultivate and preserve it. But this Care, which we are prompted to, not only by common Sense, but by Duty and Instinct, should never engage us in groundless Fears, melancholy Apprehensions, and imaginary Distem-

Distempers, which are natural to every Man who is more anxious to Live than How to live. In short, the Preservation of Life should be only a secondary Concern, and the Direction of it our Principal. If we have this Frame of Mind, we shall take the best Means to preserve Life, without being over-solicitous about the Event; and shall arrive at that Point of Felicity which *Martial* has mentioned as the Perfection of Happiness, of neither fearing nor wishing for Death.

IN answer to the Gentleman, who tempers his Health by Ounces and by Scruples, and, instead of complying with those natural Solicitations of Hunger and Thirst, Drowsiness or Love of Exercise, governs himself by the Prescriptions of his Chair, I shall tell him a short Fable. *Jupiter*, says the Mythologist, to reward the Piety of a certain Countryman, promised to give him whatever he would ask: The Countryman desired that he might have the Management of the Weather in his own Estate: He obtained his Request, and immediately distributed Rain, Snow, and Sunshine among his several Fields, as he thought the Nature of the Soil required. At the end of the Year, when he expected to see a more than ordinary Crop, his Harvest fell infinitely short of that of his Neighbours: Upon which (says the Fable) he desired *Jupiter* to take the Weather again into his own Hands, or that otherwise he should utterly ruin himself. C

N^o 26.

Friday, March 30.

*Pallida mors a quo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque tures, O beate Sexti.*

*Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam,
Jam te premet nox, fabulæque manes,
Et domus exilis Plutonia* ———

Hor.

WHEN I am in a serious Humour, I very often walk by my self in *Westminster-Abby*; where the Gloominess of the Place; and the Use to which it is applied, with the Solemnity of the Building, and

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