



N^o 38. Friday, April 13.

— *Cupias non placuisse nimis.*

Mart.

A Late Conversation which I fell into, gave me an Opportunity of observing a great deal of Beauty in a very handsom Woman, and as much Wit in an ingenious Man, turned into Deformity in the one, and Absurdity in the other, by the meer Force of Affectation. The Fair One had something in her Person upon which her Thoughts were fixed, that she attempted to shew to Advantage in every Look, Word, and Gesture. The Gentleman was as diligent to do Justice to his fine Parts, as the Lady to her beauteous Form: You might see his Imagination on the Stretch to find out something uncommon, and what they call bright, to entertain her; while she writhed her self into as many different Postures to engage him. When she laughed, her Lips were to sever at a greater Distance than ordinary to shew her Teeth; Her Fan was to point to somewhat at a Distance, that in the Reach she may discover the Roundness of her Arm; then she is utterly mistaken in what she saw, falls back, smiles at her own Folly, and is so wholly discomposed, that her Tucker is to be adjusted, her Bosom exposed, and the whole Woman put into new Airs and Graces. While she was doing all this, the Gallant had Time to think of something very pleasant to say next to her, or make some unkind Observation on some other Lady to feed her Vanity. These unhappy Effects of Affectation, naturally led me to look into that strange State of Mind which so generally discolours the Behaviour of most People we meet with.

THE learned Dr. Burnet, in his Theory of the Earth, takes the Occasion to observe, That every Thought is attended with Consciousness and Representativeness; the Mind has nothing presented to it, but what is immediately

diately follow'd by a Reflexion or Conscience, which tells you whether that which was so presented is graceful or unbecoming. This Act of the Mind discovers it self in the Gesture, by a proper Behaviour in those whose Consciousness goes no further than to direct them in the just Progress of their present Thought or Action; but betrays an Interruption in every second Thought, when the Consciousness is employed in too fondly approving a Man's own Conceptions; which sort of Consciousness is what we call Affectation.

AS the Love of Praise is implanted in our Bosoms as a strong Incentive to worthy Actions, it is a very difficult Task to get above a Desire of it for things that should be wholly indifferent. Women, whose Hearts are fixed upon the Pleasure they have in the Consciousness that they are the Objects of Love and Admiration, are ever changing the Air of their Countenances, and altering the Attitude of their Bodies, to strike the Hearts of their Beholders with new Sense of their Beauty. The dressing Part of our Sex, whose Minds are the same with the sillier Part of the other, are exactly in the like uneasy Condition to be regarded for a well-tied Cravat, an Hat cocked with an unusual Briskness, a very well-chosen Coat, or other Instances of Merit, which they are impatient to see unobserved.

BUT this apparent Affectation, arising from an ill-governed Consciousness, is not so much to be wondered at in such loose and trivial Minds as these: But when you see it reign in Characters of Worth and Distinction, it is what you cannot but lament, not without some Indignation. It creeps into the Heart of the wise Man as well as that of the Coxcomb. When you see a Man of Sense look about for Applause, and discover an itching Inclination to be commended; lay Traps for a little Incense, even from those whose Opinion he values in nothing but his own Favour; Who is safe against this Weakness? or who knows whether he is guilty of it or not? The best Way to get clear of such a light Fondness for Applause, is to take all possible Care to throw off the Love of it upon Occasions that are not in themselves laudable; but, as it appears, we hope for no Praise from them. Of this Nature are all Graces in Mens Persons, Dress, and bodily

Deportment; which will naturally be winning and attractive if we think not of them, but lose their Force in proportion to our Endeavour to make them such.

WHEN our Consciousness turns upon the main Design of Life, and our Thoughts are employed upon the chief Purpose either in Business or Pleasure, we shall never betray an Affectation, for we cannot be guilty of it: But when we give the Passion for Praise an unbridled Liberty, our Pleasure in little Perfections robs us of what is due to us for great Virtues and worthy Qualities. How many excellent Speeches and honest Actions are lost, for want of being indifferent where we ought? Men are oppressed with regard to their Way of speaking and acting, instead of having their Thoughts bent upon what they should do or say; and by that Means bury a Capacity for great things, by their fear of failing in indifferent things. This, perhaps, cannot be called Affectation; but it has some Tincture of it, at least so far, as that their Fear of erring in a thing of no Consequence, argues they would be too much pleased in performing it.

IT is only from a thorough Disregard to himself in such Particulars, that a Man can act with a laudable Sufficiency: His Heart is fixed upon one point in view; and he commits no Errors, because he thinks nothing an Error but what deviates from that Intention.

THE wild Havock Affectation makes in that Part of the World which should be most polite, is visible where-ever we turn our Eyes: It pushes Men not only into Impertinencies in Conversation, but also in their premeditated Speeches. At the Bar it torments the Bench, whose Business it is to cut off all Superfluities in what is spoken before it by the Practitioner; as well as several little Pieces of Injustice which arise from the Law it self. I have seen it make a Man run from the Purpose before a Judge, who was, when at the Bar himself, so close and logical a Pleader, that with all the Pomp of Eloquence in his Power, he never spoke a Word too much.

IT might be born even here, but it often ascends the Pulpit it self; and the Declaimer, in that sacred Place, is frequently so impertinently witty, speaks of
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the last Day it self with so many quaint Phrases, that there is no Man who understands Raillery, but must resolve to sin no more: Nay, you may behold him sometimes in Prayer, for a proper Delivery of the great Truths he is to utter, humble himself with so very well-turned Phrase, and mention his own Unworthiness in a Way so very becoming, that the Air of the pretty Gentleman is preserved, under the Lowliness of the Preacher.

I shall end this with a short Letter I writ the other Day to a very witty Man, over-run with the Fault I am speaking of.

Dear S I R,

I Spent some Time with you the other Day, and must take the Liberty of a Friend to tell you of the unsufferable Affectation you are guilty of in all you say and do. When I gave you an Hint of it, you asked me whether a Man is to be cold to what his Friends think of him? No; but Praise is not to be the Entertainment of every Moment: He that hopes for it must be able to suspend the Possession of it till proper Periods of Life, or Death it self. If you would not rather be commended than be Praiseworthy, condemn little Merits; and allow no Man to be so free with you, as to praise you to your Face. Your Vanity by this Means will want its Food. At the same time Your Passion for Esteem will be more fully gratified; Men will praise you in their Actions: Where you now receive one Compliment, you will then receive twenty Civilities. Till then you will never have of either, further than,

S I R,

Your humble Servant.

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