

Letter that was neither Fish, Flesh, not good Red-Herring. I wish, says he, the Captain may be *Compos Mentis*, he talks of a faucy Trumpet, and a Drum that carries Messages; then who is this *Charte Blanche*? He must either banter us or he is out of his Senses. The Father, who always looked upon the Curate as a learned Man, began to fret inwardly at his Son's Usage, and producing a Letter which he had written to him about three Posts before, You see here, says he, when he writes for Money he knows how to speak intelligibly enough; there is no Man in *England* can express himself clearer, when he wants a new Furniture for his Horse. In short, the old Man was so puzzled upon the Point, that it might have fared ill with his Son, had he not seen all the Prints about three Days after filled with the same Terms of Art, and that *Charles* only writ like other Men. L



N^o 166. Monday, September 10.

— *Quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignis
Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas.* Ovid.

ARISTOTLE tells us that the World is a Copy or Transcript of those Ideas which are in the Mind of the first Being, and that those Ideas which are in the Mind of Man, are a Transcript of the World: To this we may add, that Words are the Transcript of those Ideas which are in the Mind of Man, and that Writing or Printing are the Transcript of Words.

AS the Supreme Being has expressed, and as it were printed his Ideas in the Creation, Men express their Ideas in Books, which by this great Invention of these latter Ages may last as long as the Sun and Moon, and perish only in the general Wreck of Nature. Thus *Cowley* in his Poem on the Resurrection, mentioning the Destruction of the Universe, has those admirable Lines.

*Now all the wide extended Sky,
And all th' harmonious Worlds on high,
And Virgil's sacred Work shall die.*

THERE

THERE is no other Method of fixing those Thoughts which arise and disappear in the Mind of Man, and transmitting them to the last Periods of Time ; no other Method of giving a Permanency to our Ideas, and preserving the Knowledge of any particular Person, when his Body is mixed with the common Mass of Matter, and his Soul retired into the World of Spirits. Books are the Legacies that a great Genius leaves to Mankind, which are delivered down from Generation to Generation, as Presents to the Posterity of those who are yet unborn.

ALL other Arts of perpetuating our Ideas continue but a short time: Statues can last but a few Thousands of Years, Edifices fewer, and Colours still fewer than Edifices. *Michael Angelo, Fontana, and Raphael*, will hereafter be what *Phidias, Vitruvius, and Apelles* are at present ; the Names of great Statuaries, Architects and Painters, whose Works are lost. The several Arts are expressed in mouldering Materials : Nature sinks under them, and is not able to support the Ideas which are impress upon it.

THE Circumstance which gives Authors an Advantage above all these great Masters, is this, that they can multiply their Originals ; or rather can make Copies of their Works, to what Number they please, which shall be as valuable as the Originals themselves. This gives a great Author something like a Prospect of Eternity, but at the same time deprives him of those other Advantages which Artists meet with. The Artist finds greater Returns in Profit, as the Author in Fame. What an inestimable Price would a *Virgil* or a *Homer*, *Cicero* or an *Aristotle* bear, were their Works like a Statue, a Building, or a Picture, or to be confined only in one Place and made the Property of a single Person ?

IF Writings are thus durable, and may pass from Age to Age throughout the whole Course of Time, how careful should an Author be of committing any thing to Print that may corrupt Posterity, and poison the Minds of Men with Vice and Error ? Writers of great Talents, who employ their Parts in propagating Immorality, and seasoning vicious Sentiments with Wit and Humour, are to be looked upon as the Pests of Society, and the Enemies of Mankind : They leave Books behind them (as it is said of those who die in Distempers which breed an Ill-will to-

wards their own Species) to scatter Infection and destroy their Posterity. They act the Counterparts of a *Confusius* or a *Socrates*; and seem to have been sent into the World to deprave human Nature, and sink it into the Condition of Brutality.

I have seen some Roman-Catholick Authors, who tell us that vicious Writers continue in Purgatory so long as the Influence of their Writings continues upon Posterity: For Purgatory, say they, is nothing else but a cleansing us of our Sins, which cannot be said to be done away, so long as they continue to operate and corrupt Mankind. The vicious Author, say they, sins after Death, and so long as he continues to sin, so long must he expect to be punished. Tho' the Roman-Catholick Notion of Purgatory be indeed very ridiculous, one cannot but think that if the Soul after Death has any Knowledge of what passes in this World, that of an immoral Writer would receive much more Regret from the Sense of corrupting, than Satisfaction from the Thought of pleasing his surviving Admirers.

TO take off from the Severity of this Speculation, I shall conclude this Paper with a Story of an Atheistical Author, who at a time when he lay dangerously sick, and had desired the Assistance of a neighbouring Curate, confessed to him with great Contrition, that nothing sat more heavy at his Heart than the Sense of his having seduced the Age by his Writings, and that their evil Influence was likely to continue even after his Death. The Curate upon farther Examination finding the Penitent in the utmost Agonies of Despair, and being himself a Man of Learning, told him, that he hoped his Case was not so desperate as he apprehended, since he found that he was so very sensible of his Fault, and so sincerely repented of it. The Penitent still urged the evil Tendency of his Book to subvert all Religion, and the little Ground of Hope there could be for one whose Writings would continue to do Mischief when his Body was laid in Ashes. The Curate finding no other Way to comfort him, told him, that he did well in being afflicted for the evil Design with which he published his Book; but that he ought to be very thankful that there was no Danger of its doing any Hurt. That his Cause was so very bad, and his Arguments so weak, that he did not apprehend any ill Effects of it. In short, that he might rest
satisfied