

N^o 399. *Saturday, June 7.*

Ut nemo in sese tentat descendere! ——— Perf.

HYPOCRISY at the fashionable End of the Town, is very different from Hypocrisy in the City. The modish Hypocrite endeavours to appear more vicious than he really is, the other kind of Hypocrite more virtuous. The former is afraid of every thing that has the Shew of Religion in it, and would be thought engaged in many Criminal Gallantries and Amours, which he is not guilty of. The latter assumes a Face of Sanctity, and covers a Multitude of Vices under a seeming Religious Department.

BUT there is another kind of Hypocrisy, which differs from both these, and which I intend to make the Subject of this Paper: I mean that Hypocrisy, by which a Man does not only deceive the World, but very often imposes on himself; That Hypocrisy which conceals his own Heart from him, and makes him believe he is more virtuous than he really is, and either not attend to his Vices, or mistake even his Vices for Virtues. It is this fatal Hypocrisy and Self-deceit, which is taken notice of in those Words, *Who can understand his Errors? cleanse thou me from secret Faults.*

IF the open Professors of Impiety deserve the utmost Application and Endeavours of Moral Writers to recover them from Vice and Folly, how much more may those lay a Claim to their Care and Compassion, who are walking in the Paths of Death, while they fancy themselves engaged in a Course of Virtue! I shall endeavour, therefore, to lay down some Rules for the Discovery of those Vices that lurk in the secret Corners of the Soul, and to shew my Reader those Methods by which he may arrive at a true and impartial Knowledge of himself. The usual Means prescribed for this Purpose, are to examine our selves by the Rules which are laid down for our Direction

rection in Sacred Writ, and to compare our Lives with the Life of that Person who acted up to the Perfection of Human Nature, and is the standing Example, as well as the great Guide and Instructor, of those who receive his Doctrines. Though these two Heads cannot be too much insisted upon, I shall but just mention them, since they have been handled by many Great and Eminent Writers.

I would therefore propose the following Methods to the Consideration of such as would find out their secret Faults, and make a true Estimate of themselves.

IN the first Place, let them consider well what are the Characters which they bear among their Enemies. Our Friends very often flatter us, as much as our own Hearts. They either do not see our Faults, or conceal them from us, or soften them by their Representations, after such a manner, that we think them too trivial to be taken notice of. An Adversary, on the contrary, makes a stricter Search into us, discovers every Flaw and Imperfection in our Tempers, and though his Malice may set them in too strong a Light, it has generally some Ground for what it advances. A Friend exaggerates a Man's Virtues, an Enemy inflames his Crimes. A wise Man should give a just Attention to both of them, so far as they may tend to the Improvement of one, and the Diminution of the other. *Plutarch* has written an Essay on the Benefits which a Man may receive from his Enemies, and, among the good Fruits of Enmity, mentions this in particular, that by the Reproaches which it casts upon us we see the worst side of our selves, and open our Eyes to several Blemishes and Defects in our Lives and Conversations, which we should not have observed, without the Help of such ill-natured Monitors.

IN order likewise to come at a true Knowledge of our selves, we should consider on the other hand how far we may deserve the Praises and Approbations which the World bestow upon us: whether the Actions they celebrate proceed from laudable and worthy Motives; and how far we are really possessed of the Virtues which gain us Applause among those with whom we converse. Such a Reflexion is absolutely necessary, if we consider how apt we are either to value or condemn our selves by the Opini-

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ons of others, and to sacrifice the Report of our own Hearts to the Judgment of the World.

IN the next Place, that we may not deceive our selves in a Point of so much Importance, we should not lay too great a Strefs on any supposed Virtues we possess that are of a doubtful Nature: And such we may esteem all those in which Multitudes of Men dissent from us, who are as good and wise as our selves. We should always act with great Cautiousness and Circumspection in Points, where it is not impossible that we may be deceived. Intemperate Zeal, Bigotry and Persecution for any Party or Opinion, how praise-worthy soever they may appear to weak Men of our own Principles, produce infinite Calamities among Mankind, and are highly Criminal in their own Nature; and yet how many Persons eminent for Piety suffer such monstrous and absurd Principles of Action to take Root in their Minds under the Colour of Virtues? For my own part, I must own I never yet knew any Party so just and reasonable, that a Man could follow it in its Height and Violence, and at the same time be innocent.

WE should likewise be very apprehensive of those Actions which proceed from natural Constitution, favourite Passions, particular Education, or whatever promotes our worldly Interest or Advantage. In these and the like Cases, a Man's Judgment is easily perverted, and a wrong Bias hung upon his Mind. These are the Inlets of Prejudice, the unguarded Avenues of the Mind, by which a thousand Errors and secret Faults find Admission, without being observed or taken notice of. A wise Man will suspect those Actions to which he is directed by something besides Reason, and always apprehend some concealed Evil in every Resolution that is of a disputable Nature, when it is conformable to his particular Temper, his Age, or Way of Life, or when it favours his Pleasure or his Profit.

THERE is nothing of greater Importance to us than thus diligently to sift our Thoughts, and examine all these dark Recesses of the Mind, if we would establish our Souls in such a solid and substantial Virtue as will turn to Account in that great Day, when it must stand the Test of infinite Wisdom and Justice.