

504
The SPECTATOR.

— — — *An me ludit amabilis
Insania? audire & videor pios
Errare per lucos, amænæ
Quos & aquæ subeunt & auræ.*

Saturday, September 6. 1712.

S I R,

HAVING lately read your Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination, I was so taken with your Thoughts upon some of our *English* Gardens, that I cannot forbear troubling you with a Letter upon that Subject. I am one, you must know, who am looked upon as an Humorist in Gardening. I have several Acres about my House, which I call my Garden, and which a Skillful Gardener would not know what to call. It is a Confusion of Kitchin and Parterre, Orchard and Flower Garden, which lie so mixt and interwoven with one another, that if a Foreigner, who had seen nothing of our Country, should be conveyed into my Garden at his first landing, he would look upon it as a natural Wilderness, and one of the uncultivated Parts of our Country. My Flowers grow up in several Parts of the Garden in the greatest Luxuriancy and Profusion. I am so far from being fond of any particular one, by reason of its Rarity, that if I meet with any one in a Field which pleases me, I give it a Place in my Garden. By this means, when a Stranger walks with me, he is surprized to see several large Spots of Ground covered with Ten thousand different Colours, and has often singled out Flowers that he might have met with under a common Hedge, in a Field, or in a Meadow, as some of the greatest Beauties of the Place. The only Method I observe in this Particular, is to range in the same Quarter the Products of the same Season, that they may make their Appearance together, and compose a Picture of the greatest Variety. There is the same Irregularity in my Plantations, which run into as great a Wildness as their Natures will permit. I take in none that do not naturally rejoice in the Soil, and am pleased when I am walking in a Labyrinth of my own raising, not to know whether the next Tree I shall meet with is an Apple or an Oak, an Elm or a Pear-tree. My Kitchin has likewise its particular Quarters assigned it; for besides the wholesome Luxury which that Place abounds with, I have always thought a Kitchin-garden a more pleasant Sight, than the finest Orangerie, or artificial Green-house. I love to see every thing in its Perfection, and am more pleased to survey my Rows of Coleworts and Cabbages, with a thousand nameless Pot-herbs, springing up in their full Frangency and Verdure, than to see the tender Plants of Foreign Countries kept alive by artificial Heats, or withering in an Air and Soil that are not adapted to them. I must not omit, that there is a Fountain rising in the upper Part of my Garden, which forms a little wandring Rill, and administers to the Pleasure as well as the Plenty of the Place. I have so conducted it, that it visits most of my Plantations, and have taken particular Care to let it run in the same manner as it would do in an open Field, so that it generally passes through Banks of Violets and Primroses, Plats of Willow, or other Plants, that seem to be of its own producing. There is another Circumstance, in which I am very particular, or, as my Neighbours call me, very whimsical: As my Garden invites into it all the Birds of the Country, by offering them the Conveniency of Springs and Shades, Solitude and Shelter, I do not suffer any one to destroy their Nests in the Spring, or drive them from their usual Haunts in Fruit time. I value my Garden more for being full of Blackbirds than Cherries, and very frankly give them Fruit for their Songs. By this means I have always the Musick of the Season in its Perfection, and am highly delighted to see the Jay or the Thrush hopping about my Walks, and shooting before my Eye across the several little Glades and Allies that I pass through. I think there are as many Kinds of Gardening, as of Poetry; Your Makers of Parterres and Flower-Gardens, are Epigrammatists and Sonneteers in this Art. Contrivers of Bowers and Grotto's, Treillages and

and Cascades, are Romance Writers. *Wife* and *London* are our Heroick Poets, and if, as a Critick, I may single out any Passage of their Works to commend, I shall take Notice of that Part in the upper Garden at *Kensington*, which was at first nothing but a Gravel-Pitt. It must have been a fine Genius for Gardening, that could have thought of forming such an unsightly Hollow into so beautiful an *Area*, and to have hit the Eye with so uncommon and agreeable a Scene, as that which it is now wrought into. To give this particular Spot of Ground the greater Effect, they have made a very pleasing Contrast; for as on one side of the Walk you see this hollow Basin, with its several little Plantations lying so conveniently under the Eye of the Beholder; on the other side of it there appears a seeming Mount, made up of Trees rising one higher than another, in Proportion as they approach the Center. A Spectator, who has not heard this Account of it, would think this Circular Mount was not only a real one, but that it had been actually scooped out of that hollow Space, which I have before mentioned. I never yet met with any one who had walked in this Garden, who was not struck with that Part of it which I have here mentioned. As for my self, you will find, by the Account which I have already given you, that my Compositions in Gardening are altogether after the *Pindarick* manner, and run into the beautiful Wildness of Nature, without affecting the nicer Elegancies of Art. What I am now going to mention will, perhaps, deserve your Attention more than any thing I have yet said. I find that in the Discourse which I spoke of at the beginning of my Letter, you are against filling an *English* Garden with Ever-Greens, and indeed I am so far of your Opinion, that I can by no means think the Verdure of an Ever-Green comparable to that which shoots out Annually, and cloaths our Trees in the Summer Season. But I have often wondered that those who are like my self, and love to live in Gardens, have never thought of contriving a *Winter Garden*, which should consist of such Trees only as never cast their Leaves. We have very often little Snatches of Sunshine, and Fair Weather, in the most uncomfortable Parts of the Year, and have frequently several Days in *November* and *January*, that are as agreeable as any in the finest Months. At such times, therefore, I think there could not be a greater Pleasure, than to walk in such a *Winter Garden* as I have proposed. In the Summer Season the whole Country blooms, and is a kind of Garden, for which reason we are not so sensible of those Beauties, that at this time may be every where met with; but when Nature is in her Desolation, and presents us with nothing but bleak and barren Prospects, there is something unspeakably cheerful in a Spot of Ground, which is covered with Trees that smile amidst all the Rigors of Winter, and give us a View of the most gay Season, in the midst of that which is the most dead and melancholy. I have so far indulged my self in this Thought, that I have set apart a whole

Acre of Ground for the executing of it. The Walls are covered with Ivy instead of Vines. The Laurel, the Hornbeam, and the Holly, with many other Trees and Plants of the same Nature, grow so thick in it, that you cannot imagine a more lively Scene. The glowing Redness of the Berries, with which they are hung at this time, vies with the Verdure of their Leaves, and are apt to inspire the Heart of the Beholder with that vernal Delight, which you have somewhere taken notice of in your former Papers. It is very pleasant, at the same time, to see the several Kinds of Birds retiring into this little Green Spot, and enjoying themselves among the Branches and Foliage, when my great Garden, which I have before mentioned to you, does not afford a single Leaf for their Shelter.

You must know, Sir, that I look upon the Pleasure which we take in a Garden, as one of the most innocent Delights in Humane Life. A Garden was the Habitation of our First Parents before the Fall. It is naturally apt to fill the Mind with Calmness and Tranquility, and to lay all its turbulent Passions at rest. It gives us a great Insight into the Contrivance and Wisdom of Providence, and suggests innumerable Subjects for Meditation. I cannot but think the very Complacency and Satisfaction which a Man takes in these Works of Nature, to be a laudable, if not a virtuous Habit of Mind. For all which Reasons, I hope you will pardon the Length of my present Letter.

I am,

J I R, &c.

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Spartam quam nactus est. hanc ornat.

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