



T H E
R A M B L E R.

NUMB. II.

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To be continued on TUESDAYS and SATURDAYS.

*Non Dindymene, non Adytis quatit
Mentem Sacerdotum Incola Pythius,
Non Liber æque, non acuta
Sic geminant Corybantes Æra,
Tristes ut Iræ. — — —*

HOR.



THE Maxim which *Periander* of *Corinth*, one of the seven Sages of *Greece*, left as a Memorial of his Knowledge and Benevolence was *χίλις κράτει*, *Be Master of thy Anger*. He considered Anger as the great Disturber of human Life, the chief Enemy both of publick Happiness, and private Tranquillity, and therefore thought that he could not lay on Posterity a stronger Obligation to reverence his Memory, than by leaving them a salutary Caution against this outrageous Passion.

To what Latitude *Periander* might extend the Word, the Brevity of his Precept will scarce allow us to conjecture.

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From Anger, in its full Import, protracted into Malevolence, and exerted in Revenge, arise, indeed, many of the Evils to which the Life of Man is expos'd. By Anger operating upon Power are produced the Subversion of Cities, the Desolation of Countries, the Massacre of Nations, and all those dreadful and astonishing Calamities which fill the Histories of the World, and which could not be read at any distant Point of Time, when the Passions stand neutral, and every Motive and Principle is left to its natural Force, without some doubt of the Veracity of the Relation, did we not see the same Causes still tending to the same Effects, and only acting with less Vigour for want of the same concurrent Opportunities.

BUT this gigantick and enormous Species of Anger falls not properly under the Animadversion of a Writer, whose chief End is the Regulation of common Life, and whose Precepts are to recommend themselves by their general Use. Nor is this Essay intended to expose the tragical or fatal Effects even of private Malignity. The Anger which I propose now for my Subject is such as makes those who indulge it more troublesome than formidable, and ranks them rather with Hornets and Wasps, than with Basilisks and Lions. I have, therefore, prefixed a Motto, which characterises this Passion, not so much by the Mischiefs that it causes, as by the Noise that it makes.

THERE is in the World a certain Class of Mortals, known, and contentedly known, by the Appellation of *passionate Men*, who imagine themselves entitled by that Distinction to be provoked on every slight Occasion, and to vent their Rage in vehement and fierce Vociferations, in furious Menaces and licentious Reproaches. Their Rage, indeed, for the most Part, fumes away in Outcries of Injury, and Protestations of Vengeance, and seldom proceeds to actual Violence, unless a Drawer, or Link-Boy, falls in their way; but they interrupt the Quiet of those that hap-

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pen to be within the Reach of their Clamours, disturb the Course of Conversation, and interrupt the Enjoyment of Society.

MEN of this kind are sometimes not without Understanding or Virtue sufficient to recommend them to Love and Regard, and are, therefore, not always treated with the Severity, which their Neglect of the Ease of all about them might justly provoke; they have obtained a kind of Prescription for their Folly, and being considered by their Companions as under a predominant Influence, that leaves them not Masters of their Conduct, or their Language, as acting without Thought, and rushing into Mischiefs with a Mist before their Eyes, they are, therefore, pitied rather than censured, and their Sallies are pass'd over as the involuntary Blows of a Man agitated by the Spasms of a Convulsion.

IT is surely not to be observed without Indignation, that Men are to be found of Minds mean enough to be satisfied with this Treatment; Wretches who are proud to obtain the Privilege of Madmen, and can, without Shame, and without Regret, consider themselves as receiving hourly Pardons from their Companions, and giving them continual Opportunities of exercising their Patience, and boasting their Clemency.

Pride is undoubtedly the Original of Anger; but Pride, like every other Passion, if it once breaks loose from Reason, counteracts its own Purposes. A passionate Man, upon the Review of his Day, will have very few Gratifications to offer to his Pride, when he has considered how his Outrages were caused, why they were born, and in what they are likely to end at last.

THOSE sudden Bursts of Rage generally break out upon small Occasions; for Life, unhappy as it is, cannot

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supply great Evils as frequently as the Man of Fire thinks fit to be enraged; and therefore the first Reflection upon his Violence must show him that he is mean enough to be driven from his Post by every petty Incident, that he is the mere Slave of trivial Chances, and that his Reason and his Virtue are in the Power of the Wind.

ONE Motive there is of these loud Extravagancies, which a Man is generally careful to conceal from others, and, perhaps, does not always discover to himself. He that finds his Knowledge narrow, and his Arguments weak, and, by consequence, his Suffrage not much regarded in Questions accurately examined, and seriously debated, is sometimes in hope of gaining that Attention by his Voice, which he cannot otherwise obtain, and is pleased with remembering that at least he made himself heard, that he had the Power to interrupt those whom he could not confute, and suspend the Decision which he could not guide.

OF this Kind is the Fury to which many Men give way among their Servants, and Domesticks; they feel their own Ignorance, they see their own Insignificance, and, therefore, they endeavour, by their Fury, to fright away Contempt from before them, when they know it must follow them behind, and think themselves eminently Masters, when they see one Folly tamely complied with only for fear left Refusal, or Delay, should provoke them to a greater.

THESE Temptations cannot but be owned to have some force, and it is so little pleasing to any Man to see himself wholly overlooked in the Mass of Things, that he may be allowed to try a few Expedients for procuring some kind of supplemental Dignity, and to endeavour to add Weight by the Ardour of his Temper, to the Lightness of his other Powers. But this has now been long practis'd, and found upon the most exact Estimate, not to produce Advantages equal to its Inconveniencies; for it has not appeared that
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a Man has by Uproar, and Tumult, and Bluster, altered any one's Opinion of his Understanding, or been able to gain any Influence except over those whom Fortune or Nature has made his Dependents. He may by a steady Perseverance in his Ferocity fright his Children, and harass his Servants, but all the Rest of the World will look on and laugh; and he will have the Comfort at last of thinking, that he lives only to raise Contempt and Hatred, Emotions to which Wisdom and Virtue would be always unwilling to give Occasion. He will find that he has contrived to make those fear him, whom every reasonable Being is endeavouring to endear by Kindness, and must content himself with the Pleasure of a Triumph obtained by trampling on those who could not resist him. He must perceive that the Apprehension which his Presence causes is not the Awe of his Virtue, but the Dread of his Brutality, and that he has given up the Felicity of being loved, without gaining the Honour of being revered.

BUT this is not the only ill Consequence of the frequent Indulgence of this blustering Passion, which a Man, by often calling to his Assistance, will teach, in a short Time, to intrude before the Summons, to rush upon him with resistless Violence, and without any previous Notice of its Approach. He will find himself liable to be inflamed at the first touch of Provocation, and unable to retain his Repentment, till he has a full Conviction of the Offence, to proportion his Anger to the Cause, or to regulate it by Prudence, or by Duty. When a Man has once suffered his Mind to be thus vitiated, he becomes one of the most hateful and unhappy Beings. He can give no Security to himself that he shall not, at the next Interview, alienate by some sudden Transport his dearest Friend; or break out, upon some slight Contradiction, into such Terms of Rudeness as can never be perfectly forgotten. Whoever converses with him lives with the Suspicion and Solicitude of a Man that plays with a tame Tiger, always under a
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Necessity of watching the Moment, in which the capricious Savage shall begin to growl.

IT is told by *Prior*, in a Panegyrick on Lord *Dorset*, that his Servants used to put themselves in his way when he was angry, because he was sure to recompense them for any Indignities which he made them suffer. This is the Round of a passionate Man's Life; he contracts Debts when he is furious, which his Virtue, if he has Virtue, obliges him to discharge at the Return of Reason. He spends his Time in Outrage and Acknowledgement, Injury and Reparation. Or, if there be any who hardens himself in Oppression, and justifies the Wrong, because he has done it, his Insensibility can make small part of his Praise, or his Happiness; he only adds deliberate to hasty Folly, aggravates Petulance by Contumacy, and destroys the only Plea that he can offer for the Tenderness and Patience of Mankind.

YET, even this degree of Depravity we may be content to pity, because it seldom wants a Punishment equal to its Guilt. Nothing is more despicable, or more miserable, than the old Age of a passionate Man. When the Vigour of Youth fails him, and his Amusements pall with frequent Repetition, his occasional Rage sinks, by decay of Strength, into Peevishness; that Peevishness, for want of Novelty and Variety, becomes habitual; the World falls off from around him, and he is left, as *Hömer* expresses it, *ἑμὸν ἑαυτὸν φάγει*, to devour his own Heart in Solitude and Contempt.

L O N D O N :

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