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CH O H E L E T H,

OR

The Royal Preacher.

C H O H E L E T H,

O R

The Royal Preacher,

A

P O E M.

Most humbly inscribed to the KING.

L O N D O N,

Printed for the AUTHOR,

And sold by W. JOHNSTON, in *Ludgate Street*.

MDCCLXVIII.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 350

LECTURE 10

LECTURE 10

LECTURE 10

LECTURE 10

P R E F A C E.

WHAT first induced me to attempt the present Work, was the sight of a Poem, which accidentally fell into my hands, published in the year 1691, with this title, *The Design of part of the Book of Ecclesiastes, or, The Unreasonableness of Men's restless Contentions for present Enjoyments.* The anonymous Author, whoever he was, appears to have been a man of learning and piety; but as to Poetry, it was none of his talent, as he truly observes himself; and, indeed, the specimen he has given us, is so very indifferent, that, were it our design to make the Reader smile, we might quote a great number of passages. Moreover, though he seems to have taken the original plan for his guide, so far as he goes, yet the method he has pursued, is far from judicious, and many of his excursions, not only exceeding tedious, but some quite foreign to the subject; having so managed the matter, as to have spun out a fourth part of this book, (that is, the three first chapters, which is all he undertakes to versify,) to a much greater length than we have done the entire piece: Nor is it easy to conceive, why he should entitle his Poem the design of *Part* of Ecclesiastes, when the same design so evidently runs through the whole Book. This Gentleman, at the close of a long introductory Preface, expresses his regret at having fettered himself with Rhyme; and, indeed, it must be owned, that Poetry, which has nothing else to recommend it, but a mere jingle of

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words,

words, and this, for the most part, extremely harsh and dissonant, is but a dull entertainment. In this particular we have followed his advice, and, at the same time, must do him the justice to acknowledge, that there are about six or eight lines spirited enough, which we have made some use of, as also of two or three of his notes, which are the most valuable part of the work, to clear up some obscurities in the text.

As the principal design I had in view, was, to give a just idea of this venerable monument of antiquity, whose exquisite beauties and admirable constructure are so little understood or observed by cursory readers, and, at the same time, to set the whole piece in the most agreeable light I could, without deviating from its original plan, I was tempted to read over again Prior's *Solomon*, which I had not looked into, since I was capable of forming any judgment of such kind of performances. This admired Poem is thus prefaced: "The noble images and reflections, the profound reasonings upon human actions, and excellent maxims for the government of life, which are found in the *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and other Books*, commonly attributed to Solomon, afford subjects for finer Poems than have, I think, yet appeared in Greek or Latin, or any modern language.— Out of this great treasure, which lies heaped up together in a *confused magnificence*, I had a mind to collect and digest such observations and apothegms as might naturally tend to the proof of that great assertion laid down in the beginning of *Ecclesiastes, All is vanity*.—But as precepts, however true in themselves, or useful in practice, would be but dry and tedious in verse, especially if the recital be long, I found it necessary to form some Story, and give a kind of body to the Poem."

I must confess, I was not a little surprized at such an introduction. Every one, but moderately acquainted with the sacred volumes, well knows, that there are but three Books now extant, attributed to Solomon, viz. *The Canticles, or, Song of Songs*, generally

generally supposed to have been written by him in his youth; the Book of *Proverbs*, in his riper age; and *Ecclesiastes*, in the decline of life. As to the first, which is of the pastoral kind, though to be understood in a spiritual sense, notwithstanding the attempts of some late Writers to prove the contrary, it is, without all dispute, a most regular and perfect composition, far exceeding any thing of the same nature among the antients, and from whence, it has been conjectured, with the highest probability, that *Theocritus* borrowed some of the finest passages in his *Idylliums*, which he might easily do, by help of the Greek Version published at Alexandria. But nothing, as I apprehend, can be extracted from this piece, that has any relation to Prior's subject. The second Book, indeed, contains many independent apothegms concerning life and manners, from some of which, most excellent hints, political, moral, and divine, might have been drawn, and gracefully enough interspersed in the body of his Poem, though little conducing to the main subject. With regard to the last Book, which chiefly answered his purpose, it is so far from deserving the character he gives to Solomon's works in general, viz. that of *confusedly magnificent*, that nothing was ever built on a more beautiful and regular plan.

It is ominous, they say, to stumble at the threshold. However, as I concluded, notwithstanding Prior's false supposition, that this Book was not a continued and well-connected discourse, that he must unavoidably have made great use of it, in a Poem which bears the title of *Solomon, or, The vanity of the World*; I perused the whole piece, in hopes at least of finding some new lights struck out from such copious matter, by one of his fertile genius; but must confess, that the beauty of his Poetry made me no amends for the disappointment. He has not only passed over the most striking passages, which would have greatly embellished his Poem, even on its present plan, but given to others a sense so low and grovelling, and so widely different from that of the sublime original, as would scarce be pardoned in the most ordinary

ordinary Writer. We shall produce but one instance, out of many, taken from that noble description of Old Age in the last chapter, where Solomon, after having enumerated the various infirmities attending old men, till they drop into the grave, mentions the last symptom, immediately forerunning death, viz. the total stagnation of the blood in the heart, under the emblem of a *Pitcher shattered in pieces at the Fountain*. This allegorical expression is thus turned by Prior,

——— “ Unhonour'd from the board,
 “ The chrystal Urn, when broken, is thrown by,
 “ And apter Utenfils their place supply.”

The plain English of which is, that a Urinal is substituted instead of a drinking Cup. A very odd circumstance, indeed, to be taken notice of, on so solemn an occasion as the separation of soul and body.

We do not intend what we have here said, as a reflection on that justly admired Writer's poetical talents, but only to express our regret at his not having followed the model set him by so great a Master; and may venture to add, that, had he taken but half as much pains in studying and copying the beauties of this sacred Book, as he has done with those of the Classics, particularly his favourite Horace, we should probably have had a much finer Poem, beyond all comparison, than we have at present: For as to the reason he has given for so strangely indulging the flights of his own imagination, judicious readers, I believe, will be as much surprized, and as little satisfied, as Monsieur Le Blanc seems to have been, in his criticism on our English Poets, at Solomon's being made to expatiate so largely on the glories of Great Britain, and the wonderful success of our arms in Flanders under Queen Anne. The story, which our Poet has formed, was, no doubt, intended to enliven his piece, which, he thinks, would have appeared too dry and tedious, as it came from the inspired Author's hand; but few, as I apprehend, who
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examine it with due attention, will agree with him in this particular. For, to say nothing of the narrative part, wherein the Preacher gives so affecting a detail of the various methods he pursued to spend his days in the most pleasing manner, and how little they answered his expectations; what reader of taste could have been tired with the gravity of the precepts, considering the uncommon strain in which they are delivered, the amazing variety of subjects treated of, in so narrow a compass, the rapid and almost imperceptible transition from one thing to another, and yet the exquisite symmetry and coherence of every part, the whole illustrated and enlivened with the aptest similes, most significant allusions, loftiness of style, and dignity of sentiment?

With regard to the admired performance above spoken of, this may be said of it in general, without depreciating its merit, that we see too much of *Prior* in it, and too little of *Solomon*. The lines, it is true, are, for the most part, both harmonious and sentimental; but as to the *body* he has given to his Poem, although it is dressed up very handsomely, yet still it wants one of the principal graces that distinguishes the original from all other compositions of the same nature, of which we shall presently take notice; and, in short, though it breaths so much of the spirit of Poetry, it seems to have but little of that soul in it which animated the Royal Preacher. However, before we take our leave of this celebrated Writer, it may be prudent just to intimate, lest we should be charged with plagiarism, especially from one, on whom we have taken the liberty of criticizing, that we have made some use of about three or four of his lines.

As I knew of no others, who have attempted any thing of this kind, either in our own or any other language, I judged it the best and shortest course to recur to the fountain-head, that is, to the Original Hebrew. This I did with great application, consulting, at the same time, both antient and modern Versions, with the most judicious Commentators I could conveniently meet with;

with; all which assistances are little enough towards coming at the genuine sense of a Book, confessed to be the most difficult and obscure of the metrical parts of Scripture, if not of all the Sacred Writings. When, by these helps, I had made myself, as I apprehended, a tolerable master of the subject, I set about the work, which, after all, proved a far more laborious task than I at first imagined, not only from the phraseology peculiar to this Book, which, in many places, is dark enough in itself, and rendered still darker from the prodigious variety of arbitrary interpretations, but sometimes also from the difficulty of finding out the true connexion of the several parts, which, on a cursory view, seem to have no dependence on each other. It ought likewise to be noted, that the injudicious division of the chapters and verses, which appears in almost all the modern editions and translations of the Bible, very often embarrasses the sense, and adds not a little to its obscurity, especially in the Book now before us.

Those, who are apt to judge of the facility of a Work from its shortness, will scarce believe what pains the present undertaking cost me; and, indeed, had I foreseen the whole fatigue, it is probable, I should have been discouraged from attempting it. But as, in the continued researches I made, so many new beauties occurred, which I had no idea of before, the very fatigue gave me pleasure; and this encouraged me to proceed, till the task was accomplished. Not that I am so vain as to flatter myself, that I may not have been sometimes mistaken in the explanation of a Book, wherein so many passages occur, which have perplexed men of much greater learning and sagacity than I can pretend to. This, however, I may venture to say, that, as I have spared no pains to come at the genuine sense and scope of the Original, so have I not passed over a single passage in the whole piece, (as the anonymous Author, first mentioned, has frequently done, in the specimen he has given us of only a part,) nor inserted any thing of my own, but what seemed naturally

rally to arise from the subject: in which respect I have been so scrupulous as to have marked every verse in the margin, agreeable to the division in our common English Translation; that the reader, should his curiosity lead him so far, may, with the greater ease, compare this Essay with the Text.

Having premised thus much, it may not be impertinent to say something of the Royal Author, and his motive for writing this inimitable Piece, with a brief account subjoined of its exquisite structure and useful tendency.

As the history of Solomon is so well known, we shall only touch on one particular, which, we are persuaded, will appear in the same extraordinary light to the generality of our readers, as it does to us. Certain foreign Divines, judging of the Almighty from their own sour and gloomy dispositions, have not only mistaken the design of *Ecclesiastes*, but are filled with such indignation at the Author, as even to call his salvation in question. It appears, say they, from sacred history, that, notwithstanding he had been twice favoured with divine illuminations in so stupendous a manner, he most shamefully apostatized, and this almost at the close of life, when he ought to have had the most serious reflections; that, besides his other enormous excesses, the crime he committed, was in contempt of the true Religion, by erecting public monuments of Impiety, to the infinite scandal of good men, and the perdition of such as followed his example; that there is no instance on record of his having ever repented; but, on the contrary, that it may be inferred, from the division of the Kingdom, which happened soon after his decease, that God did not pardon his offence.

It must be acknowledged, indeed, that the apostacy of this great Prince was attended with very aggravating circumstances, and brought down most grievous calamities both on his Family and Kingdom. Yet this instance, glaring as it is, gives no man a right to pry into the secret judgments of Heaven, and much

less to pass sentence, in a matter which does not fall under human cognizance. There is sufficient reason to believe, that Solomon had a just sense of his errors, and heartily repented his past follies : nor can there, I think, be a stronger proof of this, than the Book now before us, which appears, from a variety of striking circumstances, applicable to none but him, to have been written in his old age, and wherein he lays open, in the most pathetic terms, the source both of his crimes and misfortunes. For what can that expression mean, *of his having found Woman more bitter than Death*, to whose allurements his apostacy was undoubtedly owing, but the most pungent sorrow for his own wilful blindness? Moreover, it is well worthy of remark, that, after having begun his Poem with this solemn exclamation, *O vanity of vanities!* (for so the words ought to be turned,) when he speaks of himself, he never mentions, either here, or on any other occasion, the name of Solomon, once so glorious, and dear to his people, but only assumes that of the Preacher. And, what is still more observable, when he has laid down his general proposition, of the vanity of all things under the Sun, in order to give the greater weight to his discourse, we are informed that this same Preacher, who now makes so little account of the grandeur and pleasures of the world, *was King of Israel*, though he then actually sat on the Throne.

A modern Critic, indeed, has inferred, from this expression, that we are to look on the whole discourse as a Sermon preached by Solomon, long after his decease, or, in other words, published for the people's instruction, many years after he was laid in his grave. The soul of that Prince, now in its separate state, is here preaching to the world, which, the very title of the Book, as well as that expression so frequently repeated, *under the Sun*, plainly import, as this Gentleman supposes. It is observable, says he, that Solomon speaks of himself, as one who formerly existed, and reigned in Jerusalem. The very expression, *I the Preacher was King*, cannot, with any propriety, be

be understood of one still living. But how much soever this Criticism may weigh with some, we must beg leave to dissent from it, as we think, a far more natural interpretation may be drawn from the present expression. Solomon had, no doubt, once reigned as became a King, but now, being conscious of the abuse of his Royal Dignity, and ashamed of the scandal his excesses had occasioned, would intimate, by these words, that he had rendered himself unworthy of that title, as, without all dispute, every King does, whose subjects are perverted to vice and impiety by his evil example. The only atonement he could now make, was to point out the rock on which he had split, to the end that future Princes might take warning by his example. He, therefore, thought it a duty incumbent on him, to make his Repentance as public as his crimes, and to leave an eternal monument to posterity, that the wisest of men, when left to their own conduct, are liable to the greatest failings; that a contempt of Religion, especially when Princes set the example, always introduces a general corruption of manners, and that those in the most exalted stations, no less than those in the meanest, have occasions enough to be reminded of their duty; in a word, that the welfare or ruin of a Nation depends, in great measure, on the virtuous or vicious deportment of those who hold the reins of government. When this discourse, which is both moral and philosophical, is seen in this light, it may well be said, with the learned Critic abovementioned, though not in the sense he seems to understand the words, that Solomon, *being dead, yet speaketh*.

Not to perplex our readers with the various expositions of the word, *Chobeletb*, the title of this Book in the Original; (for, in truth, we can find none better nor more significant than that commonly received, viz. *Ecclesiastes, or, the Preacher*.) let us now come to the merits of the Book itself. Nothing can be more interesting than the subject it treats of, to wit, *the chief, or sovereign Good*, which Man, as a rational and accountable Being,

should here propose to himself. Every human creature, it is certain, naturally aims at Happiness; but though all apply themselves with equal ardor to this desirable end, yet such is the violence of passion, and want of reflection in the generality of mankind, that the means they use for obtaining it, instead of conducting to the safe and direct road, only serve to mislead and bewilder them in dark and intricate labyrinths, where it is impossible to find what they seek for. Now as it was absolutely necessary to convince such men of the vanity of their pursuits, in order to induce them to turn back into the right way, Solomon shews, in the first place, what is *not* Happiness, and then what it really is. Like a skilful Physician, he searches deeply into the latent cause of the malady, and then prescribes a radical cure.

In the former disquisition, he enumerates all those particulars which mankind are most apt to fix their hearts upon, and shews, from his own dear-bought experience, and the transient and unsatisfactory nature of the things themselves, that no such thing as solid Felicity is to be found in any of them. What he asserts on this head, carries with it the greater weight, as no man upon earth was ever better qualified to speak decisively on such a subject, considering the opportunities he had of enjoying to the utmost, all that this world affords. After having thus cleared away the obstacles to Happiness, he enters on the main point, which is to direct us, how and where it may be found. This, he affirms, at the conclusion of the Book, where he recapitulates the sum and substance of the whole Sermon, as some not improperly have styled it, consists in a religious and virtuous life, with which, as he frequently intimates, a man, in the lowest circumstances, may be happy, and without which, one in the highest must be miserable. As the whole Book tends to this single point, so in discussing thereof, many excellent observations are interspersed, relating to the various duties of life, from the highest to the lowest station, the advantages resulting even from

from Poverty, the genuine use of Riches, and extreme folly of abusing them, the unequal dispensations of divine Providence, the immortality of the human soul, and great day of final Retribution. All these noble and important subjects are treated of, in such a style and manner, as nothing among the Ancients can parallel.

We have here given the genuine character of this inestimable piece. Yet such has been the ignorance, inattention, or depravity of some persons, that it would be hard to find an instance of any thing written on so serious and interesting a subject, which has been so grossly misrepresented. How often has an handle been taken from certain passages, ill understood and worse applied, to patronize Libertinism, by such as pretend to judge of the whole from a single sentence, independent of the rest, without paying the least regard to the general scope and design? According to which rule, the most pious discourse that ever was written, may be perverted to Atheism, and the great Apostle of the Gentiles himself produced as an advocate for riot and debauchery: *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* It has been well observed by a Commentator on this Book, with respect to these perverted passages, that the picture therein drawn by the Preacher, purely to expose vice and folly, is mistaken by such as willingly deceive themselves, for the genuine features and complexion of Wisdom itself.

Some Fanatics have fallen into the contrary extreme; for, on reading that all here below was vanity, they have been so wrong-headed, as to condemn every thing as evil in itself. This world, according to them, cannot be too bitterly inveighed against, and Man has nothing else to do in it, but to spend his days in sighing and mourning. But it is evident that nothing could be farther from the Preacher's intention: for notwithstanding he speaks so feelingly of the instability and unsatisfactory nature of all sublunary things, and the vanity of human cares, schemes, and contrivances, yet, lest any one should mis-
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take his meaning, he advises every man, at the same time, to reap the fruit of his honest labours, and take the comfort of what he possesses, with a sober freedom and cheerful spirit, not to harass and disturb his mind with anxious cares and restless sollicitudes about future events, but to pass the short space which Heaven has allotted him here, as pleasantly as his station will admit, with a quiet conscience. He does not condemn the things themselves, such as Science, Prudence, Mirth, Riches, Honours, &c. but only their abuse, that is, the useless studies, unreasonable pursuits, and immoderate desires of those who pervert God's blessings to their own destruction.

On this head Solomon gives his sentiments, not only as a Divine and Philosopher, but like one thoroughly acquainted with the foibles of the human heart. It was not his design to drive people out of the world, nor to make them live wretchedly in it, but only that they should think and act like rational creatures, or, in other words, be induced to consult their own happiness. This, without dispute, is what we are to understand on our being exhorted *to fly from, or hate the world*; for what can this expression mean, either in the Scripture style, or, indeed, in the style of common sense, but that we should keep our passions within due restraint, and not expect from the world more than it can possibly afford us? As it was made for man's use, so it cannot be enjoyed without cheerfulness, which, we are told, is so far from being inconsistent with Piety, that it is the natural consequence of it. This point, a mistake in which would be extremely pernicious, if not destructive to Society, is frequently touched on, insomuch, that when he is discoursing on the most serious and alarming topics, such as Death and a future Judgment, he forgets not to remind us, at the same time, that Religion does not consist in gloominess and melancholy, nor require any one to deprive himself of the common recreations of life. Among the many remarkable instances of this kind, nothing can be more striking than that beautiful passage
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in the ninth chapter, where, after having most emphatically described the land of darkness, where all things are forgotten, in order to remove the doleful impression which so sad a subject must naturally raise, he breaks out, all on a sudden, into such a strain of gayety, as can scarce escape the most cursory reader's observation.

From every one of these passages, particularly the last, it appears, that, though Solomon looked on human life as a scene of vanity at best, yet still he thought, that a well-disposed mind might support its burdens, not only with ease but comfort, and therefore so frequently points out the singular advantages which result even here, from a pious, sober, and regular deportment, and how we may acquire that inward peace and tranquillity, which alone can render life desirable, and make us have a true relish of its enjoyments. There are, without doubt, calamities enough in the world to wean us from an over fondness to it, in so much, that no wise man would chuse to stay always in it; yet still it has a sufficient store of blessings to enable us to pass through it with tolerable cheerfulness, would we learn to make a proper use of them. This great Connoisseur of human nature would not have us to be always laughing, with *Democritus*, nor always weeping, with *Heraclitus*; but as, on some occasions, to be very serious, so, on others, to indulge social Mirth with more than ordinary freedom, provided we keep within the bounds of reason and moderation. This, as we before hinted, is the peculiar characteristic of the book of Ecclesiastes, whereby it is distinguished from all other moral discourses; and this, it must be granted, is a far more effectual method of promoting Religion, than drawing so hideous and shocking a picture of it, as some have done.

There is nothing in the whole body of Pagan Philosophy so elevated and magnificent, as what some have written on the important subject of this Poem; but we find their opinions so various, and contradictory, and the most plausible so blended
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with errors, (even those of the *Divine Plato* not excepted,) that their sublimest sentiments on the *Sovereign Good*, or ultimate happiness of Man, when compared with those of the Royal Preacher, not only appear cold and languid, but always leave the mind unsatisfied and restless. We are lost in a pompous flow of words, and dazzled, but not illuminated. One Sect, by confining Happiness to sensual pleasures, so greatly slackened the Cord, as to render it wholly useless: Another, by their too austere and rigid maxims, stretched it so tight, that it snapt asunder; tho' the experience of all ages has evinced, that these latter imposed both on themselves and the world, when they taught, that Virtue, however afflicted here, was its own reward, and sufficient, of itself, to render a man completely happy, even in the brazen Bull of *Perillus*. Truth will cry out from the Rack, against such fallacious Teachers, and prove them Lyars. The extravagant figments, therefore, of the *Stoical Apatby*, no less than those of the *voluptuous Epicurean*, both equally vanish at the splendor of the divine Truths delivered by Solomon. He alone decides the great question, in such a manner, that the soul is instantly convinced, it need seek no farther. For, after all that can be said by Divines and Moralists on the subject, it amounts to no more than this, that, since the pursuit of Pleasure is implanted in our Nature, the main point is to seek it in the right channel, and not to be so far blinded with prejudice and passion, as to mistake its empty shadow for the solid substance; in a word, that, so long as we live in this world, we should endeavour to make the road as smooth and pleasant as we can, and yet never to forget, that it is but a passage to another.

To prevent all misapprehensions, which a slight and cursory reading of this Book is apt to raise in many persons, it will be requisite to observe two cautions, to wit, that Solomon, who tells us, that he applied his heart, not only to the search of Wisdom and Knowledge, but also of Folly and Madness, frequently

quently speaks, not according to his own sentiments, though he proposes the thing in a naked and simple manner, designedly making use of such terms as might set the picture in a fuller and clearer light; so that we often meet with certain expressions, which, unless we search into their true design, seem to have a quite different force and meaning from what the Author really intended. We must, therefore, take particular care to distinguish the doubts and objections of others, from Solomon's answers; the want of attending to which, has made this Book much more obscure than otherwise it would appear. Secondly, we should not judge of the entire discourse from some parts of it, since many things are pertinently said, according to the present subject, which, in themselves, and strictly taken, are far from true. In order to come at the genuine sense, we should form our opinion from the different circumstances of the matter treated of, comparing the antecedent with the consequent passages, and always considering the Preacher's real scope and design. By carefully attending to these two cautions, this Book will be seen in a very different light from what it now appears in, to the generality of Readers.

Yet, although the rules here prescribed, are allowed to be not only reasonable, but absolutely necessary, in judging of all other pieces, whether antient or modern; yet such has been the fate of this noble system of Ethics and Divinity, and, indeed, of the Holy Scripture in general, that, as no writings have been so severely criticized, so none have been treated with so little candor and ingenuity. Some there are, of no small repute in the Learned World, who could perceive nothing in them worthy of their notice, much less of their admiration. With what disdain do they pass over an infinite number of expressions, which, had the same appeared in a Pagan Author, would have made them burst out into raptures! Among these wretched Critics, we shall single out the famous *Angelus Politianus*,

tianus, no less distinguished for the purity of his Latin Style, than the impurity of his Morals, who, though he bore the name of a Christian, held the Bible in the utmost contempt, on account of the simplicity, or, as he is pleased to term it, the barbarity of its diction. This man, it seems, valued no Book, however important the subject, but for the harmonious cadence of its periods: Consequently, as he had never read any thing of the Scripture, except in the Roman Version, commonly called the Vulgate, which is far from exact or elegant, and, in some places, scarce intelligible, it is not much to be wondered at, that one of his depraved turn of mind should be extremely disgusted with it. Though even in this Version, (for whose uncouthness the Original, however, is not at all accountable,) he might have discovered matter enough for the highest admiration, had he attended more to the sense than the sound, and his heart had any relish for the divine truths therein contained.

But as this may be thought a digression from the present subject, let us confine our remarks to Ecclesiastes. This Book, besides the figurative and proverbial expressions, to be found in no other part of Scripture, is undoubtedly metrical, and consequently, the grammatication, in many places, not a little perplexed, from the frequent ellipses, abbreviations, transposition of words, and other poetic licences, allowed in all languages, to say nothing of the carelessness or ignorance of Transcribers, as appears from the variety of readings. Yet, notwithstanding we are so little acquainted with the nature of the Hebrew Metre, and the propriety of certain words and phrases, which, at this vast distance of time, in a language that has been dead upwards of two thousand years, must unavoidably occasion the same difficulties and obscurities as occur in works of far less antiquity, and in languages more generally studied and better understood; notwithstanding this, I say, a diligent and attentive
examiner

examiner will always find enough to recompence his trouble, and, if he has any taste, cannot avoid being struck with the exquisite beauties and regularity of the plan. For although, as we before observed, some have looked on part of this Book at least, like that of Proverbs, as so many independent sentences, and therefore have only attempted, like mere Grammarians or Lexicographers, to explain each verse separately, or rather, to give us the literal meaning of each particular word in it, yet others, of far more extensive views, have discovered, that a certain chain of reasoning runs through the whole piece, and that the several parts are linked together with so masterly an hand, such exact symmetry and delicate proportions, that the very order and method, which some men, of more learning than sagacity, have chiefly objected to, are, in reality, its principal recommendations, even looking on the performance in no other light than as a mere human composition. For as to what the minute Critics above mentioned have surmised, to wit, that many verses inserted in this Book, have no visible connection with the subject, and, therefore, may be presumed to have been added to it, by the persons employed by King Hezekiah to collect the wise Sayings of Solomon, purely to preserve them from being lost; it may be answered, that these Sayings, supposing them to have no relation to the subject, might have been full as well preserved, and would have stood with a much better grace, in a miscellany wholly consisting of a variety of independent matters, than in a Book which is allowed, on all hands, to consist, for the most part, of one well connected discourse.

The most judicious Commentators have remarked on this Book, that we have here a conspicuous example of that form of disputing, which was so justly admired in the soundest of the Pagan Philosophers, particularly in Socrates, who, whilst others were taken up with abstruse speculations about the nature of things, and investigating the number, motions, distance, and magnitude

magnitude of the Stars, brought down Philosophy from the upper regions, and fixed its abode on earth; that is, by teaching such precepts as served for the regulation of life and manners, by far the usefulest of all Sciences, as being most conducive to the welfare of Society, and the general benefit of mankind. Of this we have a noble specimen in the *Memoirs* of that antient Moralift collected by Xenophon. It is, I think, beyond all contradiction, that no one ever made deeper researches into Nature, or had made so great a progress in every branch of Science, both speculative and experimental, as our Royal Philosopher. But what, after all, was the result of his enquiries? A thorough conviction of the inutility of such studies, and how little they conduce towards the obtaining that peace and tranquillity of mind, wherein true Happiness consists. He applied himself, therefore, to that study which might produce a real and lasting advantage, namely, to render men wise to some purpose, that is, truly virtuous. The manner of his treating this important subject, bears some resemblance to that of the celebrated Greek Moralift. He does not give us a long roll of dry formal precepts, with which the mind is soon tired; but, to confirm the truth of every thing he says, appeals not only to his own experience, but the general sense of unbiassed Reason: At the same time, he sets before us, in the liveliest colours, the sad effects of Vice and Folly, and makes use of every incentive to engage the heart to be enamoured with Virtue, and pursue its own interest. Whatever he intends to inculcate, is first barely proposed, and then more accurately explained and illustrated, though by gentle and almost imperceptible transitions; with this peculiarity, that there is always much more implied than expressed; insomuch that the reader, from a slight hint given him, is left to draw such inferences as his own reflection must naturally suggest. Every thing, in short, is drawn in this admirable composition, with equal simplicity and elegance, and hath as distinguished a superiority to whatever the best

best Pagan Philosophers have given us on the same subject, as the borrowed light of the Moon is surpassed by that of the Sun in his full meridian lustre ; or, to use a still stronger comparison, as Solomon's knowledge of the one true God, excelled the idle notion of their fictitious Deities.

To point out every beautiful passage, would swell the Preface to an immoderate length, which some may think too prolix already : And this, indeed, may seem the less necessary, as we have, in some measure, endeavoured to do it, in the Notes subjoined to the Text, which are not inserted, to make a useless parade of Learning, or to perplex the reader with grammatical niceties and verbal criticisms, which, as we apprehend, would be of little benefit or edification to those for whom the present work is chiefly intended ; but merely to explain such dark passages as have hitherto greatly embarrassed the sense, and set others in a clearer light ; to account for our having so widely deviated, in certain places, from the generally received interpretation, and more especially, to shew, how exactly the rule laid down by Horace, is observed through the whole piece,

Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

Finally, that the style and sentiments always rise in proportion to the dignity and importance of the subject.

The truth of this latter remark is more particularly observable towards the close of the Poem, where the deepest impressions ought to be made. We have, therefore, dwelt somewhat more minutely in our remarks on the two last chapters, especially the first six verses of the twelfth ; the ænigmatical style of which most required it ; and believe, it will be allowed, by real Connoisseurs, that so striking and natural a picture of Old Age was never drawn by any of the Greek or Latin Poets. This may with justice be affirmed of the description in general, that what is comprized in these six short verses, far exceeds, both
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for style and matter, whatever is to be met with in the most voluminous Authors on the same subject. We must, however, ingenuously confess, that the last of these verses gave us more embarrassment than any other in the whole Book; not so much from the difficulty of finding out the Preacher's meaning, as how to express it in a proper manner. To have entered into a minute detail of the parts of the body, which the symbols there made use of, were intended to represent, tho' it might have done very well in a treatise of Anatomy, would have been inconsistent with a work of this nature. On the contrary, to have mentioned the bare symbols, without adding some kind of explication, would have left the generality of readers in the dark. We have therefore taken a middle course, that is, by retaining the original terms, which could not be altered without diminishing the beauty of the description, and at the same time endeavouring to render them intelligible, in as few words as possible. For as to the Text itself, it is so ænigmatical, that, were we not apprized before hand, what the words relate to, it would be morally impossible to find out their meaning.

Innumerable have been the interpretations of this verse, and some extremely impertinent, not to say, ridiculous. The Exposition we have given, is not only authorized by the best Commentators, but the subject itself sufficiently evinces, that it must have been Solomon's meaning; as we find, that, after having enumerated the various disorders both of body and mind, which are continually making their progress, he mentions, last of all, those that drive the soul out of its crazy mansion, that is, such as occasion their immediate separation. And what can these be, but such as affect the two nobler parts of our corporeal frame, the *Brain* and *Heart*, which are the springs of sense, life, and motion? How far, indeed, the symbols exactly agree with the parts represented by them, must be left to Anatomists. We shall only observe by the way, what others have done before us,
that,

that, in all comparisons and allusions, it is sufficient that there be a general resemblance. We are not to enter into a too nice and minute examen of every circumstance; for, by this rule, the most admired Similes among the Heathen Poets will appear extremely deficient, which we are far from thinking to be the present case.

An objection, perhaps, may be started, to our having applied the last clause in the sixth verse, *Or the Wheel broken at the Cistern*, to the Circulation of the Blood. But if it be granted that these emblems allude to the internal and nobler parts of the body, which is now disputed by no man of judgment, it may, I think, be inferred with the highest probability, both from the expression itself, (the propriety of which we have shewn in our note on that passage,) and from the well-known character of the Writer, who was not only the most magnificent Prince of his age, but the greatest Philosopher who ever existed, that this must have been his real meaning. Nor can it seem strange, that one of his universal knowledge, boundless curiosity, and indefatigable researches into the secrets of Nature, should, in the course of his studies and experiments, have found out, so many ages ago, what is now looked upon as a modern discovery. So true is his remark on another occasion, that *there is nothing new under the Sun*.

Some, indeed, have thought, that this whole description (the single explication of which has filled a volume of no inconsiderable bulk) would have been more instructive, had such terms been made use of, as are adapted to the meanest capacity. But Solomon, it seems, was of a quite different opinion. The emblematical style was familiar to the oriental nations, and, as we may presume, intelligible enough to such as would take the pains to investigate its meaning. Among the Jews in particular, things were purposely wrapt up in figure and allegory, to excite curiosity, and exercise the mind; which feels a
peculiar

peculiar pleasure in discovering secrets. Solomon, no doubt, might have said, and so the most ignorant rustic might have said, that an old man's intellects are impaired, his hands shake, his legs totter under him, his teeth drop out, and eye-sight fails, that he loses his appetite, and is liable to preternatural obstructions or evacuations, that he is too deaf to be affected with the charms of music or conversation, grows peevish and low-spirited, a burden to himself and to every one about him, and at length, when Nature can no longer struggle under such a complication of disorders, the blood begins to stagnate in his veins, its circulation is stoppèd, and Death ensues. But such ordinary forms of speech would not only have deprived the Poem of one of its principal ornaments, and consequently made far less impressiion, but totally frustrated the Preacher's design, in making use of such expressions, which was to animate his piece with the finest strokes of his inimitable pencil, and at the same time to set the reasoning faculty at work.

We shall here beg leave to subjoin a few words, with respect to the Hebrew Poetry in general. Though nothing can be more nervous and expressive, yet the terms are so concise, and little tied down to the ordinary rules of Grammar, so frequent and unexpected its change both of tense and person, and so rapid its transitions from one thing to another, that it requires not only great skill in the language, but a very close attention to the scope of the subject, in order to judge of its structure and coherence. Yet, notwithstanding all its obscurity, for which the same allowances are to be made, as in other antient pieces, with respect to the idiom of the tongue, difference of customs, and peculiarity of the metre; yet still it has something so intrinsically grand and truly sublime in it, as cannot be entirely concealed, even in the baldest Prose-Translation. Witness our old Version of the Psalms, with several other parts of Scripture, especially in the Book of Job, and Prophecy of Isaiah, which

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he that can read without being affected, must have lost all sensibility. This, I am persuaded, is more than can be said of the most admired pieces among the Heathen Poets, which, were they literally rendered, and with the same scrupulous exactness, as those few we have still extant in the sacred records, would appear extremely uncouth, and often contemptible, as the greater part of their beauty consists in the harmonious arrangement of the words; all which would be lost; and God knows, the sense that remains, is of very little value. Let any one, divested of prejudice and passion, (and such alone are competent judges,) make a verbal translation of the finest Ode in Pindar, or Horace, and, after having compared it with many of the Psalms of David in our common English Version, coolly decide the difference. Certain it is, that, in the latter, the dignity and importance of the subject always conduce to mend the heart; whilst the former too often serve to corrupt it, and are at best, with few exceptions, but mere *Nugæ canoræ*. All the preference, therefore, which the Greek and Latin Poetry may seem to claim over that of the Hebrews, consists in nothing but the metre, that is, in the disposition and cadence of the words: Though even in this particular, we may presume, that the latter, which now sounds so harsh to our ears, is not without its harmony: As to the sentiments, which constitute the life and soul of Poetry, (for words are only its dress,) it has the advantage, beyond all comparison.

I shall add but a word more, with regard to the present performance. Though I never lost sight of the Text, yet am I too conscious, that, as in some of the most striking passages a great deal of their strength and elegance must unavoidably be lost in the best Translation, so much more in a Paraphrase, wherein, like essence poured out of a small phial into a large vessel, it frequently happens, that the spirit almost entirely evaporates. I wish this may not have been sometimes my own

case, though I have endeavoured to retain as much of the original as possible: And as I have been always more intent on setting the plan of this noble Work in the clearest point of view, and displaying its exquisite structure and contrivance, than about the harmony of the Poetry, this may plead somewhat in my excuse, should the lines, in several places, be found less smooth and polished than they ought to be.

Though many, I apprehend, may look on this Work as not well calculated to the taste of the present age, yet still there are some, I flatter myself, who may be induced to read it, in the form it now makes its appearance, who perhaps would not take the trouble of reading it in any other. The very novelty of the performance may be some kind of allurements, and possibly give some pleasure, at the same time that it raises serious reflections. In short, after all that can be said in favour of our vain amusements, it must be owned by every one, who has a right notion of Happiness, that peace and tranquillity of mind, which this world can never give, are the greatest of all pleasures, and consequently, none so sweet and lasting as those which make us serious. For my own part, I have not so ill an opinion of the times, as to suspect that this Work, with all its defects, will be rejected, merely on account of its seriousness, in case I have been so fortunate as not to have debased so noble a subject by my manner of handling it. For, notwithstanding the perpetual declamations we hear, of the horrid degeneracy, and false and trifling taste of the present age, yet we find, from some recent instances, that pieces of the most serious tendency, both in Prose and Verse, have met with so favourable a reception from the Public, as to have gone through several impressions, in a short space of time. From whence one might infer, as I think, in reason, we ought, that there is still a greater propensity to Piety and Virtue among us, than some persons seem willing to allow. For tho' it cannot be denied, that we have too many examples
of

of Vice and Irreligion, yet the same remark may justly be made now, which the wisest man upon earth has made, near three thousand years ago, in this very Poem, where he charges those with folly and ignorance, who are eternally complaining of the times they live in, and insisting that former ages were better and happier than the present. The truth is, we find, from the history of all nations, that Vice, with its inseparable attendant, Misery, have been the product of every age and every climate, and so are like to continue to the end of the world. It is every man's duty to endeavour, so far as lies in his power, to check the progress of both. What I have attempted, may at least claim the merit of having aimed at this salutary end: Whether it has any other kind of merit, must be left wholly to the judgment of the Public: It now lies at the mercy of every Reader, and, if it cannot make its way in the world; must dye in obscurity with its Author.

CHOHELETH;

ERRATA.

- Page 39. Line 6. *for will read wills.*
Page 56. Line 17. *for fitting read fleeing.*
Page 96. last Line but one, *for trailing read trav'ling.*

CH O H E L E T H ;

O R,

The ROYAL PREACHER.

B O O K I.

O Vain, deluding world! whose largest gifts C. i. v. 2.
Thine emptiness betray, like painted clouds,
Or watry bubbles: as the vapour flies,
Dispers'd by lightest blast, so fleet thy joys,
And leave no trace behind. This serious truth
The Royal Preacher loud proclaims, convinc'd
By sad experience; with a sigh, repeats
The mournful theme, that nothing here below
Can solid comfort yield: 'Tis all a scene

B

Of

Of vanity, beyond the pow'r of words
 T'express, or thought conceive. Let ev'ry man v. 3.
 Survey himself, then ask, What fruit remains
 Of all his fond pursuits? What has he gain'd,
 By toiling thus for more than Nature's wants
 Require? Why thus with endless projects rack'd
 His heated brain, and to the lab'ring mind
 Deny'd repose? Why such expence of time,
 That steals away so fast, and ne'er looks back?

Could man his wish obtain, how short the space v. 4.
 For its enjoyment! No less transient here
 The time of his duration, than the things
 Thus anxiously pursu'd. For as the mind,
 In search of Bliss, fix'd to no solid point,
 For ever fluctuates; so our brittle frames,
 In which we glory, haste to their decline,
 Nor stable place can find. The human race
 Drop like autumnal leaves, by Spring reviv'd:
 One generation from the stage of life
 Withdrawn, another comes, and this makes room,
 For that which follows. Mightiest realms decay,
 Sink by degrees, and, lo! new-form'd Estates
 Rise from their ruins. E'en the Earth itself,

Sole

Sole object of our pride, our hopes and fears,
Shall have its period, though to Man unknown*.

Behold ! the Sun his orient lustre sheds,
Awhile refulgent ; but how soon descends,

V. 5.

* V. 4. " *One generation passeth away, and another cometh, but the Earth abideth for ever.*" Thus the words run in our Translation ; and as some may be therefore greatly surprized, that we have given so different a turn to the latter part, we shall here transcribe the remark of an anonymous Commentator on this passage. " After all the various accounts, says he, of the word *עלם* here rendered *for ever*, it, in truth, signifies a duration of time, of which we either know not the beginning or end, or perhaps neither. Thus in Job, xxii. 15, it signifies time immemorial. The same term is applied to many of the Jewish Statutes, because they were to continue in force to that unknown period, when the Messiah should abolish them. With respect both to time past and future, Abraham, speaking of the Almighty, Gen. xxi. 23. uses the same word, *a God, of whose beginning or end he knew not* ; which, though in strictness it does not express eternity, might serve for it, in those simple and less philosophical ages ; or, however, in Abraham's judgment, was enough to distinguish him from the false Gods,

the host of Heaven, viz. the Sun, Moon, and Stars, of whose creation he could not be ignorant ; as also from those idols, whose beginning was known, or, at least, whose end might be known by an easy experiment. This signification I have pitched upon, because the place requires it ; nor is it true that the earth abideth for ever. It likewise appears, from the foregoing instances, that it may be exactly accommodated to all other places where the word occurs. Moreover, it removes that unsufferable uncertainty of signification, which Lexicographers have put upon this word, making it to denote both *infinite* and *finite* ; at which rate, if one and the same word may signify two contraries, Language serves not to inform, but confound us. Lastly, the word flows naturally from a root which signifies *to bide*." These reasons have induced me to turn the passage as I have done ; and, indeed, nothing seems farther from Solomon's intention, than to speak of the permanency, and much less, of the eternal duration of the Earth, where he is treating of the instability of all things under the Sun.

B 2

And

And leaves the face of Nature wrapt in gloom,
 Then hastes to bring the smiling Dawn again ;
 With swift career his crooked journey takes
 To Southern Climes ; there, restless, back revolves
 To cheer the frozen North*. See, how the winds V. 6.
 From ev'ry point are whirl'd, and still renew
 Their circuit. Rapid torrents rivers fill,
 And these their tribute to the Ocean pay,
 Whose vast abyfs ne'er overflows its bounds ; V. 7.
 For strait, in vapours, by the Sun exhal'd,
 Or through Earth's secret caverns, it restores
 All back again †. Thus, in perpetual rounds

* V. 5. ' *The Sun also ariseth, and the Sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place from whence it came.*' Our version here concludes the 5th verse, and applies the next entirely to the wind, the beginning of which is thus translated, *The Wind goeth towards the South, and turneth about unto the North.* Now the learned reader need not be informed, that the word *Wind* does not stand in the original, as placed in our Translation, but evidently begins the 6th verse, which runs thus, *The Wind is whirled about continually, and the Wind returneth again, according to its circuits.* This is all that was necessary to be said of the Wind ; for certainly it would have been

very improper to mention only the South and North, when every one knows, it blows from so many different quarters. The foregoing passage, therefore, is not to be applied to the Wind, but the Sun, whose two motions, diurnal and annual, Solomon, no doubt, there alludes to ; the former in the Ecliptic, from East to West ; from whence proceed the vicissitudes of day and night ; the latter in the Zodiac, from the Southern to the Northern Tropic, and so back again, which causeth the difference of seasons.

† Many forced constructions have been put upon the three preceding instances of the Sun, Wind, and Rivers ; but nothing, as I ap-

Of

Of hurry and difquiet, human life
 Is whirl'd, ftill in purfuit of Happinefs,
 With ceafelefs toil: For, after all our pains,
 What progrefs have we made? When near it feems,
 Th' illuding Phantom difappears, or mocks
 Our eager grasp. Though cheated, we purfue
 The frantic chafe, and, at our journey's end,
 Have ftill as far to feek. Should Heav'n allow v. 8.
 The frail Probationer a larger fpace
 Of life, what from the world could he obtain,
 Which nothing offers, nor, indeed, has aught
 To give, that Man's capacious foul can fill?
 No object long can charm the roving eye:
 And what can fatisfy the craving ear,
 Greedy of novelty? Chagrin'd and cloy'd
 E'en with our pleasures, every fcene difgufts;
 For ftill there's fomething wanting, which in vain
 We feek below. Why doft thou hope to find v. 9.
 That Blifs in earthly things, which mortal man
 Has never found? Shall future ages fee

prehend, can be clearer, than that they are here introduced, not to denote the conftancy and invariable regularity of their motions, as fome interpreters underftand them, which was contrary to Solomon's defign; but as emblems of man's perpetual hurry and reftleffnefs, which, after all, leave him juft where he was at his firft fetting out.

More

More than the past have seen? The same events, V. 10.
 The same pursuits, have ever been; and those,
 Who liv'd before us, made the same complaints,
 As those to come shall make. The sons of men
 Have nothing new to try: Though chang'd the scene,
 'Tis the same tiresome round of anxious cares
 And fruitless toils. Perhaps the flatt'ring thought,
 That sculptur'd marble, or th' historic page, V. 11.
 With lasting glory shall record thy name,
 Gives thee some transport. Vain, delusive hope!
 Where is that fancied immortality
 Of thousands, who once made such mighty noise,
 Distinguish'd for their wealth or dignity,
 For arts or arms renown'd? Are they not lost
 In dark oblivion's grave, perish'd their names,
 As they had never been? So that, which now
 Of vast importance seems, to future times
 Shall leave no record: these, alike forgot,
 Shall pass without memorial to the next*.
 Think not that passion's impulse, sudden start V. 12.
 Of zeal, blind prejudice, or fullen mood

* Solomon, having hitherto laid down the main proposition, in such general terms as comprehend every thing in this world, now proceeds to a particular proof of it, from his own example and experience.

The serious theme inspir'd : 'tis the result
 Of grey experience, and reflection deep.
 The lone Recluse, immur'd within his cell,
 This world despises, which he never knew :
 The wretched Mendicant, with bitter taunts,
 Inveighs, because he cannot taste its sweets :
 Some, like discarded Lovers, vent their rage,
 When it begins to frown, no more regards
 Their warm addresses, which had long been paid
 In softest smiles. Was this the Preacher's case ?
 Is there a man on earth, who better knew,
 Or more enjoy'd of what this world affords,
 And, were it worth his care, might still enjoy ?
 Witness, thou Sun, who saw my royal pomp
 Shining with rays diffusive as thy own ;
 Thou porch of Judgment, where I sat, and heard
 The dubious cause : Witness, ye chosen seed
 Of Abra'm, who my scepter'd hand obey'd ;
 Ye treasures, which from Ophir's wealthy coast
 My fleets transported ; and, to crown the scene
 Of Glory, witness that unrival'd Fame,
 Which from far distant regions Princes drew
 To hear my voice, with admiration fill'd :

Ev'n

Ev'n Eastern Sages came, and stood amaz'd*.

Thus with the choicest Gifts of Heav'n endow'd, V. 13.
 With ev'ry help that my exalted rank
 Could amply furnish, as became a King,
 (For once the Preacher was a King indeed)
 The search of Wisdom first employ'd my care † :

* V. 12. "*I, the Preacher, was King over Israel in Jerusalem.*" We refer the reader to what we have remarked on this verse in the Preface, and shall only repeat here, that, as the latter part of Solomon's reign was so inglorious, in comparison of the former, he seems to intimate in these words, that a King, who is distinguished by nothing but the title, and acts beneath his character, is but a mere shadow of Royalty. As to the doubt which some have started, whether he was the real author of this book, because his name is not expressly mentioned, it ought to be noted, that, besides the many striking passages, which can be applied to none but Solomon, there was no other Prince after David, who kept his Court at Jerusalem, and at the same time reigned over the ten tribes of Israel, which, on his decease, were torn from the kingdom, and never after united.

† Solomon, in his enquiry after Happiness, begins with that, which, of all other things, bids the fairest for it, namely, the acquisition of Wisdom and Knowledge, wherein

he had made such amazing progress, that, if any satisfaction was to be found in it, he must certainly have had it. Besides his own natural abilities, improved by indefatigable application, (to say nothing of his supernatural endowments,) he had the greatest advantages to make himself master of the whole circle of arts and sciences. Jerusalem, where he kept his Court, then deserved, much better than *Athens* ever did, to be called *the eye of the world*: His immense wealth put him in a capacity of making it the centre of Learning and Learned Men; of furnishing himself with the most valuable books; and either conversing or corresponding with the wisest part of mankind. So that it is not to be wondered at, that he should have so greatly surpassed all men then living, and, perhaps, ever since, in every branch of natural Philosophy, Politics, Ethics, &c. of which we have many extraordinary instances on record. And as to his exquisite taste in Poetry, the piece now before us, with the Song of Songs, are most admirable specimens.

More

More anxious none t' explore the hidden springs
 Of Nature's wondrous works; nor less intent,
 Though more abstruse the study, to trace out
 The mazy lab'rincths of the human heart,
 Its dark recesses, various and perplex'd
 Its motions, diff'rent passions and pursuits.
 Immense the labour, thorny was the road:
 Still I persisted with unwearied pains,
 'Till in my view, glitter'd the long sought gem
 With seeming lustre: Such the insatiate thirst
 Of Knowledge, toil and torment of the mind,
 To which the sons of men are justly doom'd
 By Heav'n, neglecting useful solid truths
 For empty dreams and speculations vain.

For when I stopp'd a moment to survey V. 14.
 The mighty acquisition, all appear'd
 But labour lost. How little do we know
 Of Nature's secrets! Less can we discern
 The dark mysterious ways of Providence.
 Condemn'd to earn corporeal food with sweat
 And toil incessant, far more pains we take
 The mental to procure, and oft are worse
 Repaid: the tir'd and hungry soul, depriv'd
 Of nourishment, fatigues itself in vain.

Our scanty Knowledge only serves t' inflate
 With airy notions, which delude our hopes,
 And like a worm corrode. How impotent
 Mere human Science to prevent or cure
 The grievances of life! Can it restore
 To its primeval rectitude the mind
 By vice perverted? How defective all
 Our boasted Wisdom, which, at ev'ry step,
 Betrays our ignorance, and swells our pride !

V. 15.

Lur'd with the flatt'ring prospect, I pursu'd
 The visionary scene, with my own heart
 Thus went to commune.—See the vast renown
 Thou hast acquir'd, still more for wisdom fam'd,
 Than grandeur. O enchanting rapt'rous thought!
 Who such consummate Prudence e'er could shew,
 In life's perplex'd affairs, so well decide,
 Or such researches make! In ev'ry branch
 Of Science deeply skill'd, my lustre shines

V. 16.

* V. 15. "*That which is crooked, cannot be made strait, and that which is wanting, cannot be numbered.*" We shall not trouble the reader with the various interpretations of this verse; the plain meaning appears to be, that mere human Learning (for of this alone Solomon here treats) is insufficient to correct men's

natural depravities; that the wisest men are instances of the weakness of human understanding, since that little knowledge they acquire, is very imperfect at best, and they will ever remain ignorant of infinitely more than what they are able to discover.

Beyond

Beyond compare. What glory to be deem'd
 Wisest among the wise! Nothing escap'd
 My piercing eye; for still the more I learnt,
 The more I grasp'd; from ev'ry object drew
 Something which might instruct or entertain;
 Each idle system, by learn'd Triflers form'd,
 I weigh'd, and their fallacious reasonings quick
 Discern'd: Ev'n Fools and madmen taught me rules
 Of use, in public or domestic cares,
 No less than hoary Wisdom's precepts grave.
 But, after all this toil, what fruit remain'd*?

Anxious for Knowledge, hard to be acquir'd,
 Useless, if not pernicious, to ourselves,
 And meeting oft reproaches or contempt,
 As some rich prize, well worth our care, we seek,
 Though sorrow close attend the vain pursuit:
 What serves the scanty portion here obtain'd,
 But to exhaust our spirits, to consume
 This brittle frame, and hasten its decay?

*V. 17. "And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly." It appears from these words, that Solomon did not confine himself to speculative Sciences, or the study of Nature, but employed much of his time in what merely

relates to life and manners. And as mankind have been much the same in all ages, we may presume, that there were, in his days, as erroneous systems, both of Moral and Natural Philosophy, as there are at present.

Happy for Man, were these the worst effects!
 From whence the deadly source of all our woes,
 But fond desire to know? By this impell'd,
 Our first deluded Parent, in conceit
 A God, would comprehend the Universe,
 But soon betray'd his nakedness of soul,
 And knew that he was wretched: all his Race
 Have done the same.---Stop here, nor hope to find
 What Heav'n denies: for could'st thou count the Stars,
 Describe their motions, sound the vast abyss,
 Pass to Earth's utmost verge, make ev'ry art
 And science thine, records of ancient times
 Familiar as thy own, each secret spring
 Of Nature, and the Moral World explore,
 Stripp'd of their veil, and naked to thy view,
 Still would'st thou be to seek for Happiness*.

Tir'd with the fruitless search, yet anxious still
 To find that inward peace, for which the soul

C. II. V.

* V. 18. "*For in much Wisdom, is much grief, and he that increaseth Knowledge, increaseth sorrow.*" Tho' Solomon, it is certain, was no enemy to human Learning, yet, I believe, his remark on it, has been ever since found true, to wit, that, as the greatest Scholars and deepest Politicians are not always the wisest

of men, so they are very far from being the happiest, and often the most wretched. There is something in the nature of all human Learning, which disappoints our expectations, and consequently disturbs that tranquillity of mind wherein true happiness consists.

Is ever panting, Nature's pow'rful voice
 Thus whisper'd,---From the rugged thorny road
 Of Wisdom, which so ill repays thy toil,
 Turn back, and enter Pleasure's flow'ry paths ;
 Go, take thy fill of joy, to passion give
 The reins, nor let one serious thought restrain
 What youth and affluence prompt. The charming sound
 Touch'd ev'ry fibre of my heart : I turn'd,
 And enter'd heedless, but how soon perceiv'd,
 'Twas all a cheat ! 'Midst the licentious train
 Of Dance and Song, Jestings with scandal mix'd,
 Buffoonry vile, Tales, whether true or false,
 Idle and vain, the loud tumultuous roar
 Of midnight revels, with contemptuous glance
 I look'd around indignant : (for mine eyes
 Disdain'd to dwell on such unmanly scenes.)
 I said to Laughter, Thou art surely mad*,
 And thine associates the contagion feel.

V. 2.

* V. 2. " *I said of Laughter, it is mad, and of Mirth, what doth it.*" Thus the words stand in our Translation, but may be rendered more elegantly and nearer to the original, *I said to Laughter, thou art mad, or, makest mad; and to Mirth, what is it doing?* Solomon is not speaking here of a sober enjoyment of the

things of this world, but of intemperate Pleasure, whose two Attendants, *Laughter and Mirth*, are introduced, by a beautiful *prosopopæia*, as two persons; and the contemptuous manner wherewith he treats them, has something remarkably striking. He tells the former to her face, that she is mad; but as

Strait

Strait haft'ning thence, What is that Mirth, I cry'd,
 Whose noise and frantic gestures thus enchant?
 What serves it, but t' intoxicate the mind,
 And banish cool reflection? What the fruit,
 But shame of time mispent, and sharp remorse?

Fly then the Sorc'refs, for she leaves a sting
 Behind, and, when indulg'd, brings certain death:
 False and deceitful are her smiles at best.
 How often lurks beneath the visage gay
 An aching heart, and loudest laughter ends
 In deepest sighs! To opposite extremes,
 In search of Happiness, we run, and still
 Repent the change.

Once more resolv'd to try V. 3.
 Wherein consists that sov'reign good, which Man,
 During this toilsome pilgrimage of life,
 Should to himself propose, a middle course
 I steer'd, not wholly wrapt in studious thought,
 Nor yet in joys of sense too deep immers'd,
 But such as smiling Chearfulness points out,
 With Prudence temper'd. At the Feast I sat

to the latter, he thinks her so much beneath his notice, that he only points at her, and instantly turns his back. This is a fine contraste, and very natural picture of Man's restless disposition, which runs from one extreme to another.

Jocund

Jocund, and freely quaff'd the sparkling bowl;
 Ev'n Folly enter'd there, and serv'd to smooth
 The wrinkled brow; at her approach, I seiz'd
 The wanton Trifler, ev'ry feature view'd,
 And sometimes sported with her, yet restrain'd
 From all excess, and master of myself:
 For Wisdom, still presiding o'er my heart,
 Its motions guided. Reason seem'd t' approve
 The choice, and with delight the plan pursu'd*.

What Fabrics I contriv'd, for public use,
 Or to display my skill or grandeur, far
 Exceed description. Cedar, Marble, Gold,

V. 4.

* V. 3. "I sought in mine heart to give myself to wine, (yet guiding my heart with wisdom,) and to lay hold on Folly, till I might see what was that Good for the sons of men." Solomon having dispatched, in few words, the former subject, as unworthy of farther consideration, now proceeds to what appears a more rational course of life, and therefore dwells more largely on it. The word, *Wine*, according to the Hebrew Idiom, implies a more cheerful and free manner of living, with all the usual gayeties of splendid entertainments, which he declares, from his own experience, is not incompatible with the wisdom here spoken of. There is a peculiar force and beauty in the expression, *to lay*

hold on Folly, to which I have given a turn somewhat like that of Horace, which seems to bear some faint resemblance to it, *Dulce est desipere in loco*. Folly, it may be observed, is here also introduced as a person, like Mirth and Laughter in the preceding verse, who, notwithstanding the familiarities she is admitted to, was so far from gaining the ascendant over Solomon, that he had her in his power, and consequently could get rid of her company, when he pleas'd. In the interim, he kept her under proper restrictions, and laid hold on her, like a wrestler, who seizes on his antagonist, and will not part with him, till he has try'd his strength, and seen what he is made of.

Were

Were the materials, with such wondrous art
 Dispos'd, that future times shall vainly strive
 To equal*. In the royal Seats I rais'd,
 United shone magnificence and taste ;
 With ev'ry precious thing within adorn'd,
 That wealth immense could furnish ; planted round
 With choicest vines, in beauteous order rank'd,
 Whose racy juice supply'd the sumptuous board,
 And cheer'd the heaviest heart. When tir'd with pomp V. 5.
 Of Court, and Solitude to rural scenes
 Invited, entertainment sweet I found
 In gardens, which with Eden might compare †.
 Here flow'rs profuse exhal'd their odours, more
 Reviving than Arabia's spicy gales ;

* V. 4. " *I made me great works, I builded me houses, &c.* The Fabrics, which Solomon erected, were, according to the sacred history, superlatively magnificent. A German Author has given us a fine plan of the Temple he rais'd, and shewn, by many probable arguments, in a treatise he wrote expressly on the subject, that the most admired pieces of architecture among the antient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, were taken from his models.

† V. 5. " *I made me gardens and orchards, and planted trees in them, of all kinds of fruit.*" The word, rendered, *orchards*, is, in the original, *Pardisim*, from whence the Greeks called a large and delicious enclosure, containing all sorts of trees, plants, and flowers, a *Paradise*. We may easily conceive, how delightful Solomon must have made his gardens, who was so well acquainted with the nature of Vegetables, that he wrote a treatise of their virtues and properties, from the Cedar to the Hyssop.

Nor could Aurora paint on clouds, nor bow
Of Heav'n, by solar beams reflected, shew
Colours so various, or of lovelier hue.

There lofty trees th' extended vista form'd,
Or shady grove. The most delicious fruits
Of ev'ry kind, so plenteous, that, beneath
Their weight, the branches sunk. Nor chrystal streams^{v. 6.}
Were wanting, which in pleasing torrents roll'd
From high cascades, or, in meanders flow,
Through artificial channels taught to glide,
Or rise in figur'd shapes from marble font.
Each tender plant the kindly moisture shar'd,
Nor felt the scorching rays. In this retreat
I pass'd my vacant hours, the cares of life
In sweet oblivion lost. For though my works ^{v. 7.}
Were great, and num'rous hands requir'd, the toil
On others fell; to me alone accru'd
Th' enjoyment. Thousands, when I gave the word,
To their respective stations flew, and all
Perform'd their tasks, to labour or inspect
Employ'd, or on my person to attend
With duteous care; yet still I purchas'd more.
For with my flocks and herds, the hills and dales
Were covered, far surpassing all the wealth

Of former times*. The splendor to maintain
 Of such a Court as mine, how vast th' expence!
 Yet still, the more I spent, the more increas'd
 My treasure: unexhausted was the store:
 Of Gold such heaps, of orient lustre gems,
 That silver vile appear'd: all that was rare
 Or exquisite, to regal Majesty
 Peculiar, brought from distant climes†. The charms
 Of Music highten'd ev'ry joy: each Sex
 Conspir'd with sweetest symphony of voice
 And ev'ry well-tun'd instrument, to seize
 The willing Captive's heart: such melting airs
 Were daily warbled, that my ravish'd soul
 Sat list'ning, all attention. To complete
 This scene of earthly blifs, how large a share
 Of that which most delights the sons of men

* V. 5. *"I had large possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were before me in Jerusalem."*
 We may learn from the first book of Kings, how exceeding numerous Solomon's Court was, and what a prodigious expence he was at to maintain it. We are there informed, that he consumed every day, for the use of his Household, no less than ten stall-fed oxen, and twenty from the pasture, with an hundred sheep, besides harts, roe-bucks, fallow

deer, fatted fowl, and all other kind of provision.

† V. 8. *I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of Kings and Provinces.* The Scripture informs us, that, in Solomon's time, silver was as plenty in Jerusalem as stones. We may judge of the prodigious quantity of gold he had heaped up, from what he employed only on the Temple and his Palaces.

Fell to my portion! What a lovely train
 Of blooming Beauties, by connubial ties,
 Or gift of neighb'ring Kings, or spoils of war,
 Or made by purchase mine*! Exalted thus

V. 9.

* V. 8. fin. "*I got me men-singers, and women-singers, and the delights of the Sons of Men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.*"

We need not inform the learned reader, that what most of the modern translations, as well as our own, have rendered, *musical instruments, and that of all sorts*, is expressed by only two words in the original, viz. *Siddah* and *Siddoth*, the true meaning of which, all interpreters honestly confess their ignorance of; so that this version is to be looked upon as quite arbitrary. Among the great variety of interpretations, therefore, we have chosen that which applies the words to Solomon's Wives and Concubines, as best adapted to the present subject, and having most probability to support it. For, in the first place, there is sufficient reason to believe, that, under the two preceding words, *men and women-singers*, is comprehended instrumental as well as vocal Music, and that they are not separately mentioned, so much to distinguish the difference of their sexes, as to denote the variety of their harmony: Nor can the least shadow of reason be assigned, why the preference should be given to the former, since

it is, I believe, universally allowed, that a fine melodious voice has something far more sweet and affecting than any instrument, tho' touched by the best hand. Moreover, it may be justly inferred from that remarkable expression, *the delights of the sons of men*, wherewith these two last words are introduced, that Solomon intended to speak of some new object of human felicity, of a quite different nature, and still more engaging than any thing he had hitherto mentioned. Now if we consult the history of this Prince's life, which informs us, what an amazing number of Wives and Concubines he had, (no less than 300 of the former, and 700 hundred of the latter,) and consider what influence they had over him, it will seem incredible, that one, who had been so excessively enamoured with the Sex, and is now giving so minute a detail of the variety of pleasures he enjoyed, and the methods he took to spend his life in the most agreeable manner, should pass over in silence what he then thought the most delightful part of it. For tho' he afterwards speaks of women, it is on a different occasion, and with the bitterest sarcasm.

On grandeur's loftiest pinnacle, my name
 Grew more illustrious, as my wealth increas'd.
 Full well I knew the world, how to extract
 The quintessence of all that it affords
 Delightful, and with poignant relish taste
 Its pleasures, as became my rank, with ease
 And dignity : For Wisdom held the reins ;
 Yet with such gentle hand, that whatsoe'er

V. 10.

There he speaks as a Penitent, bewailing his past follies : Here he is all gaiety, and thinking of nothing but how to gratify his inclinations.

Bishop Patrick is of opinion, that the words signify most excellent compositions of Music, or most elegant verses set by a rare Master (among the Phœnicians, called *Sido*) to the most ravishing and melting notes ; which, says he, is a probable conjecture of *Bochart*, and therefore that he has taken no notice of their interpretation, who derive the word from a root, which signifies *Spoil*, alluding to female Captives taken in war ; or, from another root which signifies *paps* or *breasts*, because no small part of a Woman's beauty consists therein. But as that learned man's conjecture seems wholly founded on the similarity of sound ; and it does not appear that the Phœnicians in general, or the Sidonians in particular, were celebrated for their musical compositions, or to

be compared with the Jews in this respect ; nothing can be more improbable than that Solomon should have taken them from such a people. The Hebrew Music was no less admirable than their Poetry. What stronger proof could he have of the wonderful power of both, than in his Father David, whose poetical talents will not be disputed ? And as to his exquisite skill in Music, we need only instance the effects of his harp on King Saul ; from whence some have conjectured, that the story of Orpheus drew its origin. It is therefore more reasonable to suppose, in case these controverted words have any reference to the Phœnicians, that, as Solomon's Seraglio was so well stored with the finest women from all the neighbouring countries, he might have had some of extraordinary beauty from that people, who are here distinguished by name from the rest. And perhaps he might purposely

Could charm the eye, and ev'ry sense regale,
 No sooner crav'd but granted. Take thy rest,
 My soul exulting cry'd, and reap the fruit
 Of all thy pleasing cares. Sweet was the toil,
 And sweeter the fruition; for mine heart
 O'erflow'd with joy, and lasting Bliss propos'd,
 To crown my fondest hopes. But soon, alas!
 The gay enchanting prospect disappear'd,

V. 11.

purposely have made use of these foreign terms, to denote *strange women* in general, that is, in the Scripture style, such as had tempted him to idolatry.

As to the objection to the first interpretation, namely, that Solomon had no wars, till towards the latter end of his reign, when he was rather worsted than victorious, and consequently had no captives to take, 'tis of little weight, since he might have easily got them, either as presents or by purchase, from the neighbouring nations, who, tho' making frequent depredations on each other, all courted his friendship, when he was in the height of his glory, the time he is now speaking of. In short, whatsoever the words may have originally meant, or whence-soever derived, they cannot be so properly applied to musical instruments as to women; to which interpretation we are so naturally led by the introductory words. The most savage nations, who have no

taste for Music, are passionately fond of the sex. Some Rabbins will have the words to signify *Chariots*; but as Solomon is evidently speaking of something within his palace, this needs no confutation. Others render them, *cups and flaggons for drinking and pouring out of wine*; in which sense they are taken by the LXX. and Vulgate. Now as both the words are of the feminine gender, and, for aught we know to the contrary, may signify persons as well as things, why may they not allude to those young females who, for their beauty and gracefulness, were destined to wait at their Prince's table, as cup-bearers; which then made, and still makes, part of the Eastern magnificence? These reasons, I must confess, have some weight with me, how light soever they may appear to others, and sufficiently justify the present interpretation, which, amidst such a variety of conjectures, carries with it the greatest probability.

And

And low'ring clouds ensu'd. When I survey'd,
 With stricter scrutiny, the glaring pomp
 And splendor of my Court, the dubious feast,
 And servile flatt'ring train, no more it seem'd
 Than the remembrance of an idle dream:
 Ev'n those stupendous works, which so engag'd
 My lab'ring thoughts, and promis'd, when atchiev'd,
 Some lasting solid pleasure, left the mind
 Unsatisfy'd and restless, still to seek
 For what they could not give, Content and Peace.
 The transport o'er, by expectation rais'd,
 Regret took place, and with contempt I look'd
 On that which once so charm'd. How infinite
 The diff'rence 'twixt divine and human Plans!
 When, by th' Almighty form'd, this beauteous frame
 From non-existence rose, pleas'd he review'd
 His works; for all, in their respective kinds,
 Were good, subservient to the ends design'd,
 And answer'd his idea. But when Man
 His labours with impartial eye surveys,
 How disappointed! oft his noblest works
 But monuments of pride and vanity,
 Rais'd with immense fatigue, preserv'd awhile
 With vast expence and care, to accidents

Expos'd,

Expos'd, which ev'ry moment interrupt
 Their short enjoyment, transient as the wind,
 And, weigh'd in Reason's ballance, lighter found.
 Such the reward attending human toils!

Sick of the World, no less surpriz'd than griev'd V. 12.
 To find its offers all mere outward shew,
 But no intrinsic worth, penfive I turn'd,
 And with attentive eye again survey'd
 That Wisdom which engag'd my first pursuit,
 Whose wholesome precepts in due bounds restrain
 Our vague desires, and teach us how to shun
 The snares by Folly spread. Resolv'd to fix
 On something where the wand'ring soul might rest,
 This the sole object worth my care appear'd.
 (For who with more discernment can pretend
 To judge, or sentence more decisive pass
 Than such a King? Hereafter who shall find
 More in the world than He, on trial, found?)

Strait I perceiv'd, that Folly's blind pursuits V. 13.
 No less by those of Wisdom are excell'd,
 Than gloomy night by the Sun's radiant beams.
 The Wise are circumspect, maturely weigh
 The consequence of what they undertake, V. 14.
 Good ends propose, and fittest means apply

T' ac-

T' accomplish their designs. But fools, depriv'd
 Of Reason's guidance, or in darkness grope,
 Or unreflecting, like a frantic man,
 Who, on the brink of some steep precipice,
 Attempts to run a race, with heedless steps,
 Rush to their own perdition*. ---- Yet, alas!
 Though wide the diff'rence, what has human pride
 To boast? Ev'n I myself too plainly saw,
 That one event to both alike befalls,
 To various accidents of life expos'd,

* Some look on the parallel here drawn between Wisdom and Folly, as a mere digression, and abrupt breaking off the thread of the discourse: But the connection is so evident, and the remark so pertinent and seasonable, that, had it been omitted, the book would have lost one of its greatest beauties. Solomon having been disappointed in his pursuit of Knowledge, turns to that of Pleasure. This he found less satisfactory than the former, and therefore tried what they both would do together. Being here also disappointed, he returns to his first and noblest pursuit, and gives it the preference, as it deserves. There was an absolute necessity of settling this point, which he had left undecided, lest some should be induced to think, that he made no

distinction between a sagacious foresight and prudent management of our affairs, and a blind and heedless precipitancy; for it is evident, that he now confines himself to this useful branch of Philosophy. He therefore gives to the former its due encomium, by shewing from its effects, that, tho' it be sometimes mistaken, it is beyond comparison, more estimable than the latter. Notwithstanding all he has said of the vanity of human Wisdom, he would not have us mistake his meaning, as if he intended to amuse us with a paradox, like *Erasmus*, who wrote a treatise in praise of Folly. These are the sports of a luxuriant imagination. All that Solomon writes, is grave and serious, and founded in truth and nature.

Without

Without distinction ; nor can Wisdom skreen
From dangers, disappointment, grief, and pain.

This sad reflection forc'd a sigh --- Why then V. 15.
Have I thus labour'd to excell ? Where lies
Th' advantage, if the same to me befalls,
To me, with such superior gifts endow'd,
As to the thoughtless Fool ? What have I gain'd
From all my deep researches, but to know,
That ev'n our surest guide, Prudence itself,
Tinctur'd with vanity, is oft deceiv'd * ?

For as to that immortal Fame, to which V. 16.
The Fool has no pretence, and Wisdom claims
As its just due, Oblivion's dusky shade
Makes no distinction : all-consuming Time
Will sweep away th' illustrious and the vile

* V. 15. *Then said I, as it happeneth to the Fool, so shall it happen to me, even to me.*" Thus the words run in the original, and there is a peculiar beauty and emphasis, as the reader will easily perceive, in the repetition of *me*. Having pointed out the advantages that wisdom hath over folly, he takes this opportunity to remind us of the danger of trusting too much to it, by shewing, that it is equally subject to the calamities and common accidents of life, and therefore incapable of making us

completely happy. The experience of all ages has evinced the truth of his remark ; and this caution was the more necessary, as mankind are apt to flatter themselves, that, by their own foresight and sagacity, they can guard against contingencies. Having given his sentiments on this point, in general terms, he proceeds to those particular instances, wherein human Prudence chiefly exerts itself, and shews how egregiously it is deceived in every one of them.

In the same rapid flood. And, gloomy scene!
 How do the Wise and Foolish victims fall
 To the same stroke of Death! This doleful thought V. 17.
 Such deep impressions made, that all the works,
 Wherein my soul had taken such delight,
 Were grievous to mine eyes, the cheering Sun
 Grew irksome, life itself a tiresome load.
 For as the Pilgrim, with his journey faint,
 Dreams of some rich repaste, but waking feels
 The gripes of hunger sharper than before ;
 No less fantastic my pursuits appear'd
 To Reason's eye, nor less chagrin ensu'd
 From disappointed hopes. Still more abhorr'd V. 18.
 My goodly fabrics, once so dear, and rais'd
 My glory to perpetuate, now became,
 When this reflection, like a Scorpion, stung :
 How soon, alas ! must all be left behind
 To one I know not whom ! For what mine Heir V. 19.
 Will prove, or wise or foolish, who can tell ?
 Yet, of my substance Lord shall he remain,
 The whole at his disposal, to consume,
 Perhaps in brutal riot and excess,
 What I, with prudent care and ceaseless toil,
 Have spent my life in gath'ring. To prevent
 Such evils, or provide a cure, how vain

Is human foresight ! Therefore black despair
 Began to seize my heart : o'erwhelm'd with grief
 To find the Bliss propos'd so far beyond
 My reach, uncertain what th' event would prove
 Of plans so wisely form'd, my soul was fill'd
 With sad forebodings *. The same Lot, I sigh'd, V. 20.
 Which hath to others fall'n, may be my share.
 How oft have I observ'd th' industrious man,
 No less with probity and truth endow'd,
 Than judgment clear his int'rest to discern,
 Sagacious to promote : yet, lo ! his wealth
 To some lewd worthless Prodigal descends,
 Who never toil'd, nor spent a moment's thought,
 How much it cost to gain, too dull t' acquire
 A fortune ; when, without his care, possess'd,

* V. 20. As Solomon speaks so feelingly on this subject, it is probable, that he hints at his Son Rehoboam, in whose behaviour he had observed something that gave him great uneasiness. Certain it is, that this young Prince's conduct sufficiently confirmed all his Father's apprehensions ; since we find from the sacred records, immediately on his accession to the throne, what calamities his folly and rashness brought on the kingdom. Nothing seems to lay so heavy at Solomon's heart as this sad reflection, that his Successor might have it in his power to dissipate the fruit of so many years prosperity, and totally frustrate the wise plans he had formed. He speaks here, both as a King and a Father, and pursues the subject in the three following verses, in the same melancholy strain. Undoubtedly there is nothing that so deeply affects a wise and good Prince, as the thought that his Successor will prove foolish and vicious.

Too indolent and vicious to preserve.
 If this be not a glaring proof, how vain
 Our best-laid schemes, where shall we fix the name?
 Such cares are vanity indeed, fore plague V. 22.
 And torment of the mind! What other fruit
 Do all our labours yield? This the reward
 Of all our toilsome days and sleepless nights! V. 23.
 That Prudence, which should teach us how t' enjoy
 These fleeting goods below, serves to no end
 But to increase our woes, imbitter life,
 And far more wretched makethan Heav'n design'd.

For these disorders would'st thou find a cure, V. 24.
 Such cure as human frailty will admit,
 Drive from thee anxious cares, let Reason curb
 Thy passions, and with cheerful heart enjoy
 That little which the world affords: for here
 Tho' vain the hopes of perfect happiness,
 Yet still the road of life, rugged at best,
 Is not without its comforts. Let thy soul
 Rejoice in what thou hast, and reap the fruit
 Of present blessings, unsollicitous
 Of what's to come: nor, whence deriv'd, forget,
 Would'st thou their sweetness taste: Look up to Heav'n,
 And praise th' all-bounteous Donor, who bestows
 The pow'r to use aright: (For who can taste V. 25.

The

The joys of life, without his gracious aid ?*)
 This blessing sole reserv'd for those, whose hearts,
 With awe religious, make his will their guide ;
 To such he gives true wisdom to direct
 Their steps, amidst the world's tempestuous sea,
 A mind serene : Whilst those, who disregard
 His righteous laws, nor tremble at his name,
 To their own vague desires and restless cares,
 The cruellest tormentors, left a prey,

V. 26.

* V. 25. " *For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto more than I?* These words, as they stand in our translation, have always appeared to me extremely embarrassing. The latter part of the verse is rendered by St. Jerome, *Who can abound in delights*, by others, *Who can enjoy himself more than I?* But neither of these versions clears up the obscurity which arises from the two last words, the original reading whereof seems to have been *הרוץ ממני*, and not, as the ordinary copies, *ממני*. So that these words, instead of being translated, as they are in most of the modern versions, as well as the antient Vulgate, *more than I*, should have been rendered *without him*, i. e. without God, just before mentioned; According to which construction, the meaning is, that no one can have a true relish of the comforts of life, without the divine blessing. For first, the sense

can be made out, no other way, so coherent and proper. Secondly, because I perceive the LXX. the oldest version now extant, read it so, and other translations also follow the same reading. But if any one, who allows this reading, should demand, how these words come to signify *without him*; I answer, that indeed I do not remember to have met with this phrase in any other part of Scripture, and therefore it admits of nothing but conjecture: But that the sense I have put upon it, is most probable, as suiting best with the design of this place, and the use of the word *הרוץ* in other places, which generally signifies *abroad*, or *at a distance*. Thus Dan. xxiii. 12. *Thou shalt have a place abroad*, at a distance from, or without, *the Camp*: So here, *Who can eat, &c. abroad*, at a distance from; i. e. as I apprehend, without him.

With

With toil incessant raise a vast estate,
 Which, by Heav'n's just decree, at length becomes
 His portion, who of transitory goods
 Knows the full worth, and how to make the most.
 Behold! that Treasure, useless to yourselves,
 For which your souls were strangers to repose,
 Is now some comfort to the virtuous man,
 For whom the smallest part ye ne'er design'd*.

Learn then, ye men of Prudence, learn from hence, c. iii. v. 1.
 How vain your schemes, deceitful your fond hopes.
 For as th' unerring hand of God has fix'd
 The course of Nature, so to all events
 Are certain bounds prescrib'd, which human skill

* C. ii. V. 26. Solomon, having dwelt so largely, in this chapter, on a very melancholy subject, prescribes, in the three last verses, a cure against despondency, which he repeats at proper intervals, lest some should be too much affected with such serious discourse. It was far from his intention to throw people into despair, but rather to convince them, that the best remedy against the vanity of this world, was to leave futurity to the sovereign Disposer of events, and cheerfully to enjoy what his providence has bestowed upon us. This he affirms to be the peculiar gift of God, to those that fear him; and indeed it may be generally observed, that the truly Religious

are the most cheerful of all men. As nothing therefore can be more impious than to pervert the Preacher's words, as some have done, by making him an advocate for licentiousness, so nothing can be more absurd and impertinent than the interpretation of others, to wit, that the enjoyment of temporal goods is a judgment of God for the punishment of our sins; since it is only the abuse that renders them pernicious: And those, who teach the contrary, shew, by their own example, that they do not believe what they inculcate to others. Without all dispute, there is a certain complacency which may be lawfully taken in the things of this world; and nothing is more to be detested

In vain attempts to pass. Life's various scenes
 Are, like the Seasons, orderly dispos'd;
 And since we cannot change their settled course
 True Wisdom teaches calmly to submit;
 T' embrace th' occasions offer'd, nor let slip
 The precious moments which may ne'er return,
 And then impute to Heav'n our own neglect;
 T' enjoy these earthly goods, whilst in our pow'r,
 Yet still reflect, how soon they may be lost:
 That Life hath its vicissitudes of pain
 And pleasure, nothing stable here below.

As in its Mother's womb the Embrio lies
 A space determin'd; to full growth arriv'd,

V. 2.

detested than the hypocrisy of those, *Qui Curios simulant, et Bacchanalia vivunt.* Tho' this world is but a road to another; yet it is both natural and reasonable to procure as many conveniences as we honestly can in the passage. Solomon is so far from condemning the innocent pleasures and enjoyments of life, that Mirth itself, which in the beginning of this chapter, he had ranked with Folly and Madness, on account of the excesses it is apt to lead us into, is here put on a level with Wisdom and Knowledge, and made peculiar to good men: For it is to be observed, that Solomon makes use of the very same word in both places. Notwithstanding

the vanity he ascribes to human Prudence, no one knew it's real value better than himself, how useful it is in all our actions, even to regulate our pleasures, and that to pay no regard to its dictates, would have the same effect on the moral world, as to remove the Sun out of the natural. As Prudence, in short, directs us to make our lives as comfortable as we can, so the good of Society requires, that we should endeavour to improve our estates, let who will inherit them. The houses we build, and the trees we plant, will be useful to the next generation, let who will dwell in them, or eat the fruit.

From

From its dark prison bursts, and sees the light;
 So is the period fix'd, when man shall drop
 Into the grave. A time there is to plant
 And sow, another time to pluck and reap.
 Ev'n Nations have their destin'd rise and fall;
 Awhile they flourish, for destruction ripe
 When grown, are rooted up, like wither'd plants.

The Healing Art, when out of season us'd,
 Pernicious proves, and serves to hasten death;
 But timely Med'cines drooping Nature raise,
 And health restore.---Now Justice weilds her sword
 With wholesome rigor, nor th' offender spares;
 But Mercy now is more expedient found.

V. 3.

On crazy fabrics ill-tim'd cost bestow'd,
 No purpose answers, when Discretion bids
 To pull them down, and wait a season fit
 To build anew.----When private griefs affect
 The heart, our tears with decent sorrow flow;
 Nor less becoming, when the Public mourns,
 To vent the deepest sighs. But all around
 When things a smiling aspect bear, our souls
 May well exult; 'tis then a time for joy.

V. 4.

One while domestic cares abortive prove,
 And then successful.---Nature now invites
 Connubial pleasures, but, when languid grown,

V. 5.

Regards

Regards no more. — Commerce produces wealth, v. 6.
 Whilst time of gaining lasts; from ev'ry point
 Blow prosp'rous gales: now Heav'n begins to low'r,
 And all our hopes are blasted. — Prudence bids
 One while our treasure to reserve, and then
 With lib'ral hand to scatter wide. How oft,

In raging storms, the Owner wisely casts
 Into the deep his precious Merchandize,
 To save the found'ring Bark! — Intestine broils v. 7.
 And faction rend a State: at length the breach
 Is heal'd, and calm ensues.* — Wisdom restrains
 The tongue, when words are lost: but now 'tis time
 To speak, and Silence would be criminal.

Love turns to hatred; int'rest or caprice v. 8.
 Dissolves the firmest knot by Friendship ty'd. —
 Contending Nations with revenge inflam'd,
 Or lust of pow'r, fell Discord shakes awhile
 Her baleful torch. Now smiling Peace returns.

Why cheat we then ourselves with flatt'ring hopes v. 9.
 Of Bliss that's never found, or quickly lost?

* V. 7. "*A time to rent, and a time to sew.*" These words are commonly supposed to allude to the Jewish Custom of renting their garments, on hearing the name of God blasphemed, or at the news of any grievous and national calamity. But as the 4th verse seems to include both public and private distresses, we have rather chosen to follow St. Jerome's opinion, who applies the passage to the great rent or schism, which Solomon foresaw, was near at hand, both in Church and State, and not to be closed, till the coming of the Messiah.

Say, what avail thy restless toils and cares
 For things below? Can'st thou their nature change?
 Or Heaven's immutable decrees reverse?
 Man's utmost efforts will no more succeed,
 Beyond the time by Providence ordain'd,
 Than blooming Spring the fruits of Autumn yield*.

God to the sons of men this world hath giv'n, V. 10.
 Not for a place of rest, but exercise,
 To try their patience, and submission learn
 To his disposal, who hath all things rank'd V. 11.
 In beauteous order, tho' to us, confus'd
 Their motions seem, because the wondrous plan
 Is hid from human eyes. Can mortals judge
 From partial views, which now so intricate,
 Involv'd appear, how Nature's sov'reign Lord
 Will close the dark perplexing scene, at length
 Wind up the whole, to answer his great ends? †

* V. 9. Solomon would teach us, by the preceding instances, that all events, particularly those relating to human affairs, depend on the disposition of things, which include an infinite variety of circumstances, wherein man's will hath very little share, and often none at all; that every thing is arranged in its due order, by an over-ruling Providence, and hath its determined seasons, which he, who

would attempt to anticipate, or pass, might as well expect to reap corn, before it has sprung out of the ground.

† V. 11. "*He hath made every thing beautiful in his time; also he hath set the world in their hearts, so that no man can find out the work that God doth, from the beginning to the end.*" This expression אֵת הָעֵלָם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם, rendered in our English translation, *also he hath*

Since things are therefore thus dispos'd, no more V. 12.
 Let cares disturb thy mind: whate'er this world,
 Vain as it is, affords, with chearful heart
 Enjoy; and, blest thyself, let others share
 The transient blessing: † 'tis the gift of God; V. 13.
 Thankful its sweetness taste, whilst in thy pow'r,
 Nor fret with impious murmurs, when resum'd:
 For whatsoe'er befalls, is the result V. 14.
 Of his unerring wisdom: all events,
 Link'd to each other, by eternal laws
 Are fix'd; and who can break the golden chain?
 His providential care, as best beseems,
 Or gives or takes; to grieve the fons of men

bath set the world in their heart, has perplexed interpreters with as little reason as success. For take the words as they lie, in their common acceptation, and they make an elegant proper sense—*He hath given, or placed, an hidden duration in the midst of them*, or, *in them*, i. e. in every thing mentioned in the preceding sentence. Thus all know that נתן is used: thus I have shewed, in the note on v. 4. c. i. that העלם is generally to be understood: thus, according to the Hebrew Idiom, בלב is frequently taken: and thus the plural affix joined to it, by a *synthesis* common to all languages, may relate to that collective noun הכל in the former

part of the verse. So that the plain and natural sense of these words, which have so greatly embarrassed Commentators, is, that tho' God has disposed all events with infinite wisdom, yet we cannot discover the regularity of the whole plan, because their periods, vicissitudes, and admirable connexions are hid from us. It must be owned, that this construction, which the original will bear, is best adapted to the scope of the discourse.

* V. 12. "The council, which Solomon here gives, from his own observation and experience, is not unlike that of the antient heathen Moralists, *Bene agere et letari*.

Delighteth not, but only to withdraw
 From vain pursuits, that they may learn to seek
 Substantial Good; amidst the storms of life,
 As the sure anchor of their souls, to trust
 In him alone, and, as the worst of ills,
 To dread his anger. By no other laws
 He governs now, than such as sway'd the world
 From its creation, and will ever sway
 To its last period. Nature still pursues
 The same unvaried course, and Providence,
 In all its dispensations, still the same.

Ver. 15.

But what enjoyment can our labours yield,
 When ev'n the remedy prescrib'd by Heav'n
 To cure disorders, proves our deadliest bane?
 When God's Vicegerents, destin'd to protect
 The weak from insolence of Pow'r, to guard
 Their lives and fortunes, impious robbers turn,
 And, or by force or fraud, deprive of both?

Ver. 16.

Too long indeed the Commonwealth has groan'd
 Beneath this heavy scourge. With deep regret
 How oft have I observ'd those Courts, which bear
 The rev'rend name of Justice, thus abus'd!
 To what asylum shall the injur'd fly
 From her tribunal, where perverted Law

Acquits

Acquits the guilty, innocence condemns?*

Yet let not Virtue deem it self by Heav'n

V. 17.

Abandon'd and forgot, tho' here oppress'd:

For sure a time will come, when God shall plead

Its cause: before his awful throne, the Judge

Himself shall then be judg'd, to strict account

Be brought, and hear the righteous doom pronounc'd.

Such grievances, which sore infest a State,

V. 18.

Hard to redress the best of Princes find.

This sad reflection forc'd me thus to sigh, —

Oh! that th' Almighty would dispell the mists

Which blind the Great, by pride and passion rais'd,

Lay open to themselves their own defects,

And teach them to discern, that mighty men,

Tho' for their dignity to Gods compar'd,

Are like the beasts that perish. † — Man was born

V. 19.

* V. 16. " *And moreover, I saw under the Sun the place of Judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.*" Solomon here enters on a new topic of Vanity, to wit, the abuse of Power. It appears from hence, that he had observed many iniquitous practices, even in the Courts of Justice, which were so artfully carried on, as to elude all his vigilance, insomuch that he was forced to leave those wicked Magistrates to the judgment of Heaven.

† V. 18. " *I said in my heart, concerning the state of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see, that they themselves are beasts.*" Thus the words stand in our Translation, and have always appeared to me so obscure, that I was extremely embarrassed about their true meaning, 'till I perceived, on consulting the original, that, by turning the affirmative into an earnest wish, or passionate exclamation, as the sense evidently requires, they are not only rendered more elegant, but become

To die, nor aught exceeds, in this respect
 The vilest Brute: Both, transient, frail, and vain,
 Draw the same breath, alike grow old, decay, V. 20.
 And then expire: both to one grave descend,
 There blended lie, to native dust resolv'd.

The nobler part of Man, 'tis true, survives V. 21.
 This frail corporeal frame; but who regards
 The diff'rence? Those, who live like beasts, as such
 Would die, and be no more, if their own fate
 Depended on themselves. Who once reflects,
 Amidst his revels, that the human soul,
 Of origin celestial, mounts aloft,
 Whilst that of Brutes to earth shall downward go,
 And its existence lose? * — Since therefore thus V. 22.

become perfectly clear and intelligible. "I said in my heart, reflecting on the state of the sons of men, Oh! that God would enlighten them, and make them see, that even they themselves are like beasts." The judicious Reader will instantly perceive, that the whole difficulty and obscurity are removed by this slight alteration. Various are the interpretations of this verse; but nothing, I think, can be clearer than that the words are to be referred to those in authority, who abused their power, particularly to the corrupt Magistrates, just before spoken of. The latter part of the verse I have turned, in conformity to the

Vulgate, *Et ostenderet similes esse bestias*, as the scope of Solomon's reasoning plainly requires. It ought to be farther observed here, that from the present comparison of great wicked men to beasts, Solomon takes occasion to enforce the subject, by mentioning the state of mankind in general, with respect to the mortality of their bodies, and then, by an easy transition, touches, in the next verse, on the great point, which is of such infinite consequence to Religion.

* V. 21. "Who knoweth the spirit of Man that goeth upwards, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downwards to the earth?" Most modern

Disorders reign, and here so short our stay,
 The Preacher, by experience taught, has found
 That 'tis by far the wisest course to make
 The most of what this world affords, and taste
 Its fleeting joys, with mind serene and calm,
 As reason will: for 'tis our portion here,
 And all that from the world we can expect.
 How, or to whom thy wealth shall be dispos'd,
 Or of thy toils and cares what the result,
 When thou art gone, is no concern of thine:
 For who shall bring thee back to see th' event
 Of things, o'er which in mercy Heav'n has thrown
 A veil too dark for mortal eye to pierce?

modern Versions, following the Vulgate, make this question to be proposed by way of doubt, as if man could have no certain knowledge, whether there is any real difference between the human soul and that of brutes. But here we have followed our own Translation, as nearer to the original,

which evidently implies, that there is a most essential distinction, tho' wicked men seldom reflect on it, and when they do, wish that both were on a level. The two first words are rendered by Junius and Tremellius, *quis animadvertit*, which exactly comes up to the sense we have given them.

 B O O K II.

AS when the weary Trav'ler, having past
 Some lonely dismal Waste, in hopes to find
 An easier road, sees mountains steep arise,
 And craggy rocks impending o'er his head;
 Or hears th' impetuous torrent fiercely roar,
 Whilst night approaching spreads her sable wings,
 And adds new horrors to the dreary scene:
 So when I turn'd indignant from the seat
 Of Judgment with corruption stain'd, and took
 A more extensive view, gloomier appear'd
 The prospect. Ev'ry rank of men I saw,
 The methods vile by each pursu'd, t' increase
 The weight of human woes. On ev'ry side,
 Th' effects of force, or fraud, or calumny,
 Spread universal mourning. All dissolv'd
 In tears, th' oppress'd sent up their sighs to Heav'n,
 But no relief could find. Who dar'd resist
 Th' Oppressor arm'd with pow'r? Not one presum'd

To

To shew ev'n pity to the fore-distress'd.*

Struck with the deepest grief, How blest, I cry'd, v. 3.
 Are those, who from Life's stormy sea have 'scap'd,
 And rest within the grave! Still happier those
 Who never liv'd at all, nor knew the plagues
 That flesh is heir to! Prone the sons of men
 Each other to torment, how widely spreads
 The dire contagion, both in Small and Great
 Alike malignant! Ev'n the meanest Wretch
 Has pow'r to hurt, nor skill nor rancour wants
 To wring his neighbour's heart. When just applause
 The dextrous Artist, to perfection brought
 His honest labour, claims, how vain his hope!
 For tho' from great Oppressors he escape,
 Yet Equals or Inferiors oft combine
 To murder his repose: by Envy mov'd,
 That canker of the soul, which, like a worm,
 Preys on the fairest fruit, at his success

v. 4.

* V. 1. "So I returned, and considered all the Oppressions that are done under the Sun; and behold! the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had none to comfort them; and, on the part of their Oppressors was power, but there was no Comforter."

The word, *Oppressions*, comprehends all kinds of injuries done

either to the person, estate, or reputation of any one; it is taken in the latter sense by the LXX and Vulgate; and, as appears from the subsequent verses, is so chiefly applied by Solomon. Undoubtedly, there cannot be a more grievous oppression than robbing a man of his good name.

G

They

They pine, his worth depreciate, blast his name.*

With folded arms the lazy Caitiff sits,
 And, grip'd by penury, gnaws his own flesh;
 Pleads in excuse, that ease, with scantiest fare,
 Is sweeter far than affluence gain'd with toil
 And cares incessant. Specious is the plea,
 But ill-apply'd by Sloth, whose wretched state,
 Tho' none will envy, justly draws contempt. †

Again reflecting, I perceiv'd, how oft
 Industry, which, apply'd to useful ends,
 Is wont t'invigorate the mind, betrays
 To foul extremes, fordid as Sloth itself.
 See there a man, whose soul is so engross'd

V. 5.

V. 6.

V. 7.

V. 8.

* V. 4. "Again I considered all travel, and every right, or successful work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit." Solomon intimates here, what every one may find by his own experience, to wit, that the great variety of distresses we see in the world, is not entirely owing to the pride, cruelty, and injustice of the Great and Wealthy, but, in good measure, to the malignant disposition of the lower rank of people towards each other.

† V. 5. "The Fool foldeth his hands, and eateth his own flesh. V. 6. Better is one handful with quietness, than both the hands full

with travel and vexation of spirit."

In the former of these verses we have a striking picture of Sloth and Envy, which are generally inseparable companions. Some will have the latter verse to contain the Fool's or envious man's excuse for his indolence, as the Vulgate understand it. Others look on the words as Solomon's own reflection, on the happiness of a middling station and moderate competency. We have taken them in both senses, as equally applicable to the subject. It may be observed, from the six preceding verses, that Solomon had a very tender compassion for the miserable part of mankind, in what manner soever injured.

By

By Avarice, that, tho' in him expires
 His race, yet still he toils with endless care
 To swell the glitt'ring heap that feeds his eyes ;
 Nor once reflects, For whom do I thus toil,
 Of ev'ry comfort thus my soul bereave ;
 Thus wretched live, and unlamented die ?
 No Child, no Relative, to share my wealth,
 No Friend to shed a tear, when I'm no more ?

How diff'rent this from Nature's law, which bids v. 9.
 The human race in mutual commerce join,
 To bear each other's burdens, that the weight
 May lighter fit ! For what is Man alone ?
 Forlorn indeed the man who hath no friend
 To pity his distress, relieve his wants,
 And raise his drooping spirits ! When he falls,
 In vain he sighs for help.—But what so sweet
 As the Connubial State, ordain'd by Heav'n,
 Source of domestic joys, where souls unite
 In mutual love ! Did not th' all-bounteous Lord,
 Who knows our frailties and our wants, foresee,
 That man, amidst ev'n Paradise itself,
 Still wanted something to complete his bliss,
 And therefore gave an Helpmate, who might share
 His toils, with soft endearments sooth his cares,
 If cares he had, and double all his joys ?

Such are the fruits of social life! And such
 Ev'n now the marriage-state attend! Two souls,
 When join'd in one, must feel each other's wrongs,
 And with united force repel th' assault:
 Th' indignant offspring fly, as duty calls,
 To aid their injur'd Parent; ev'ry Friend
 Extends his hand: And as a three-fold cord
 Is hardly broken, no less hard the task
 Will malice find to break thro' such a fence.

V. 12.

Perhaps thou'lt cry, Since man was not design'd
 For solitude, 'tis best to live in crouds:
 Behold a Prince! With what obsequious air
 Courtiers attend, and num'rous guards furround!
 Alas! A Throne, with all its glaring pomp,
 What is it, if with wisdom unadorn'd,
 But a disgrace to Royalty? The wise
 And virtuous Youth, tho' sprung of humble race,
 And poor of fortune's gifts, by far excells
 The mightiest Monarch, hoary grown in vice,
 Slave to his passions, obstinate and proud,
 And deaf to wholesome councils. Such a Youth,
 Tho' much abas'd*, shall bravely force his way

V. 13.

V. 14.

* V. 14. The Youth here spoken of is said to come out of prison, literally, *from the house of chains*, or *house of bondage*, which is explained, in the next note.

To dignity supreme and lasting fame ;
 Whilst he, who sat aloft in regal state,
 And boasted a long line of Ancestors
 Illustrious for their virtues, shall descend
 Beneath the meanest Slave, by Folly stript
 Of all his glory, poor, despis'd, forgot,
 Or, if remember'd, only to his shame.

Yet still another scene remains, to grieve V. 15.
 The aged Monarch's heart.—What is't that moves
 Yon giddy people thus in crouds to throng,
 And rend with acclamations loud the air ?
 Lo ! their young Prince, destin'd to mount the throne, V. 16.
 Appears.—See, with what raptures on him gaze,
 And, as the rising Sun, all ranks adore !
 Vain human grandeur ! How precarious thine
 Existence, which depends on vulgar breath
 So prone to change ! Ev'n thus the hoary King
 Was once carefs'd : thus ev'ry tongue conspir'd
 To sound his praise, and ev'ry knee was bent
 In duteous homage. Thus the blooming Heir
 Shall feel the sad reverse, honour'd awhile,
 Then, like his Sire, contemn'd, abhorr'd, forgot.*

* V. 16. Every circumstance that vanity is no less conspicuous evinces, that Solomon, in the four in the highest than the lowest station. Having been perverted to preceding verses, alludes to himself, as a melancholy instance, idolatry in his old-age, and, in all proba-

Since all things thus our fondest hopes elude,
 And, like a lonely Pilgrim, the tir'd foul
 Still wanders on, thro' devious paths, in search
 Of what it ne'er can find; where shall we fly
 For solid comfort?—Turn, ye sons of men,
 And hearken to the Preacher's voice, who points
 The road that leads to Happiness: in this
 Alone, your journey will successful prove.

When to the sacred Temple ye direct
 Your steps, be fill'd with reverential awe
 At God's all-piercing eye, and cleanse your hearts
 From foul affections. Would ye offer up
 Such sacrifice as his acceptance claims,
 Hope not with fragrant incense to atone

probability, paying no regard to the remonstrances of some good men who dared to tell him the truth, he might well style himself *an old and foolish King, who would not be admonished*. About this time, as the sacred history informs us, God stirred up several enemies against him, the principal of which was *Jeroboam*, an obscure young man, who, having distinguished himself for his virtue or courage, and thereby raised the jealousy of Solomon, was forced to fly into Egypt, which in Scripture is emphatically called *the house of bondage*, from whence he returned,

after that Prince's decease, and seized on the greater part of the kingdom. There is sufficient reason to believe, that this is what he glances at, in the two former verses, as foreseeing the consequences of his own mismanagement. In the two latter, he plainly hints at his son *Rehoboam*, and has therein drawn a very natural picture of the fickleness of the people, as well as ingratitude of Courtiers, who are wont to despise their King, when he is in the decline of life, and to turn their eyes towards his Successor, who seldom continues long in their favour.

His

His wrath, nor ev'n with costly hecatombs
 To bribe his gracious presence. What avail
 External rites, when inward sanctity
 Is wanting? Thoughtless Fools! ye cheat yourselves
 With vain expence, and Heav'n mocks at your pray'rs.*

When ye approach his altar, on your lips V. 2.
 Set strictest guard, and let your thoughts be pure,
 Fervent, and recollected: thus prepar'd,
 Send up the silent breathings of your souls
 Submissive to his will: for he looks down
 From Heav'n, and with paternal care prevents
 Our real wants, before we ask; nor heeds V. 3.
 Long empty babblings, which proceed from want
 Of due attention, no less vain, absurd,
 And incoherent, than those idle Dreams
 Which daily cares produce, when Reason yeilds
 The reins to sportive Fancy's wild career.

Perhaps some deep distress, or fit of zeal V. 4.
 Has rais'd a transient glow within thy breast,
 And prompts the solemn vow. Beware, my Son,

* V. 1. Solomon, having before intimated, tho' very briefly, that the only cure against human vanity, is a due sense of Religion, now enters more largely on this important subject, and gives some excellent directions with regard to the right performance of divine service, the nature of vocal and mental prayer, the danger of rash vows, &c.

Of self-deceit; maturely weigh thy strength,
 Nor rashly trifle with Omnipotence:
 But when th' irrevocable word hath past
 Thy lips, seek no pretences for delay:
 Perform it instantly; for thou art bound
 By sacred ties; 'tis a just debt thou ow'st
 To the tremendous Majesty of Heav'n,
 And plac'd to thine account: Heav'n will require
 Full payment, and, on failure, sure avenge
 The impious mockery. Let not thy words,
 Thus rashly utter'd, draw upon thine head
 The guilt of Sacrilege; nor hope t' excuse
 That crime, which th' unseen messengers of Heav'n,
 Who watch o'er human actions, strict observe,*
 That crime, which, in eternal registers,
 Recorded stands, by pleading ignorance,
 Or want of due reflection. Why such pleas,
 False and deceitful as thy broken vows,
 Which aggravate their guilt, and God provoke

V. 5.

V. 6.

* V. 6. *Nor say before the Angel, that it was an error, &c.*" Amidst the variety of interpretations given of this verse, particularly of the word, *Angel*, we have followed the opinion of those Commentators, who think that Solomon here al-

ludes to those glorified creatures, styled ministring Spirits who are supposed, both by Jews and Christians, to watch over mankind, to inspect, with more than ordinary attention, their deportment in places dedicated to divine worship.

To

To blast thy fairest hopes? For as in dreams
 Fantastic scenes are form'd, which instant fade ;
 So all thy schemes shall vanish into air
 Baseless and vain. Say, what hast thou to dread,
 If Heav'n approve thy works, or what to hope,
 If Heav'n is wrath? Fear him alone, who guides
 The course of Nature. — Unreflecting men
 Are apt to be alarm'd, and ev'n to doubt
 His providential care of things below,
 When they behold Virtue depress'd, and Vice
 Triumphant. 'Tis a gloomy scene, indeed,
 And shocking: but the prospect soon will end,
 And set all right. Tremble, ye mighty ones,
 Who thus your pow'r abuse; for he, that sits
 On high, the Judge supreme, is mightier far :
 He, from his Throne sublime, with piercing eye,
 The dark recesses of each human heart
 Observes, and ev'ry action strictly weighs
 In his impartial ballance. Marvel not,
 Ye Righteous, if his dispensations here
 Unequal seem. What tho' disorders reign?
 He still presides, and with unerring hand
 Directs the vast machine: his Widom can
 From discord harmony produce, and make

V. 7.

V. 8.

H

Ev'n

Ev'n Vice itself subservient to his ends,
As when from Chaos rude, he form'd the World.

Nor here below, in this disorder'd state, V. 9.
Is Heav'n so partial, as ungrateful Man
Complains. How little Nature satisfies,
Let th' Earth, indulgent Mother, tell, whose fruits
Supply the real wants of all : ev'n Kings
Were Tillers once, nor rural toils disdain'd,
And still subsist on what her culture yields.

Why then do we thus murmur at the want V. 10.
Of useless wealth ? Why from her bowels tear,
And hoard the shining ore, which only serves,
Like pining Atrophy, t' augment the rage
Of hunger, but no sustenance affords ?

Why join we house to house, and field to field, V. 11.
If this increase our cares, enlarge th' expence,
And make us slaves to those who still consume
The product ? To the haughty Lord remains
What but mere empty shew, a vain parade,

To feed his eyes ? — Ev'n Poverty itself, V. 12.
Tho' deem'd by some the heaviest curse, is not
Without its blessings : See the man, who toils
For daily bread, with scanty fare content :
How sweet his sleep ! Whilst tiresome indolence
And luxury, attendants of the Great,

Drive slumber from their couch. — Still other plagues, V. 13.

A gaffly train, frequent on wealth attend.

Have I not seen the hoarded treasure prove

Destructive to its Owner, stript of all,

Perhaps of life itself, by Ruffian fly?

Should he escape this danger, yet how oft,

V. 14.

By fatal accidents, are blasted all

His hopes! like melting snow before the Sun,

Behold, his large possessions waste away,

Nor has he aught to leave th' expecting Heir.

But whatsoe'er th' event, fix in thy mind

Ver. 15.

This serious Truth. — Tho' he retain his wealth,

And hug the darling idol of his soul

To his last breath, yet shall he carry nought

Away, but naked to his Mother's womb,

Ver. 16.

Just as he came from thence, return. Say, then,

What has he gain'd, by lab'ring thus to grasp

Mere smoak and wind? How wretched his estate!

V. 17.

Stranger to ev'ry joy of life, and torn

With most tormenting passions, at th' approach

Of Death: for tho' his wealth was of no use

Or to himself or others, yet the thought,

The racking thought of leaving it behind,

Fills him with rage and madness: not more sad

And doleful is the last adieu 'twixt soul

And body ; sharp as death itself the pangs,
 And bitter is the parting.* — Should'st thou ask, V. 18.
 What then the use of riches ? To what end
 Were they bestow'd ? Let me repeat once more
 That precept, which, by long experience taught,
 I counsel thee to practice. What thou hast,
 With chearfulness enjoy, and as becomes
 Thy station : reap the fruit, whilst Heav'n permits,
 Of all thy honest labours ; and, since Life
 Is but a span, let not superfluous cares,
 Or gloomy thoughts contract its narrow space ;
 For 'tis thy portion here. † This sage advice
 Reason and Nature dictate. Learn from hence, V. 19.
 That Riches unenjoy'd, or misapply'd,
 Are fatal snares, and oft as curses sent :
 The greatest blessing is a mind dispos'd
 To use them right : 'Tis God's peculiar gift,

* V. 17. It may be gathered from the preceding verses, as well as from other passages on the same subject, that Avarice was Solomon's peculiar aversion, and it must be owned, he has painted it in very strong and lively colours. This odious Vice, it seems, was no less frequent in his days, among the Jews, than it is at present. Perhaps there is not a people on

earth, so much addicted to the scraping up of money, by right or wrong, and so little reaping the benefit of it.

† V. 18. This advice to live chearfully, as we before observed, is repeated at proper intervals ; and the reader can scarce avoid-taking notice how judiciously it always comes in, after some sad and melancholy subject.

Bestow'd

Bestow'd on few, and doubly blest the man
 By Heav'n thus favour'd: no corroding thoughts
 Disturb his mind; safe on the strand, he views
 The foaming Deep, and hears the billows roar,
 Calm and serene: The road of Life to him,
 Or long or short, rugged or smooth, with thorns
 O'erspread, or gay with flow'rs, is but a road:
 Such fare as offers, grateful he accepts,
 And smiling to his native Home proceeds.

V. 20.

But here below, how rarely to be seen
 Is this delightful prospect! All around
 The hideous contraste strikes mine eyes, and shews
 How frequent those, who, though in worldly goods
 Abounding, have not pow'r to taste their sweets.
 God, in his heavy wrath, such ample wealth
 Has show'r'd, that no enjoyment wanting seems
 To their souls' largest wishes, but deny'd
 A well-dispos'd mind, of greater price
 Than all the gold of Ophir. Hence, like Slaves
 Condemn'd to mines, who for their Masters dig
 The precious metal, they, with plenty curst,
 Incessant toil t' enrich they know not whom,
 Wretched and poor themselves. How glaring this
 A proof, that Wealth alone to Happiness
 Will not conduce! But in a stronger light

C. VI. V. 1.

V. 2.

V. 3.

The

The picture let us place. Suppose a man
 Of this unhappy turn, (for such there are)
 Who hath a num'rous offspring, and his years
 Prolong'd. What then? If he ne'er knew the joys
 Of life, and wants, when dead a sepulchre,
 Or monumental stone,* to tell the world,
 That once he was; happier by far I deem V. 4.
 Th' untimely Birth, which to no purpose came,
 Departs unnotic'd, in eternal shades
 Of darkness lost; yea, still more blest in this, V. 5.
 That if its eyes ne'er saw the cheering Sun,
 It likewise never knew the plagues and cares
 To man allotted. Some, too fond of Life, V. 6.
 May think, perhaps, because the one lives long,
 The other not at all, that this man's state
 Is far to be preferr'd. O vain surmise!
 I tell thee, self-deceiver, tho' his years
 Surpass'd the antient Patriarch's age twice told,
 They would but multiply his woes: and sure,

† V. 3. "If his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial." Some understand these words, as if the rich Miser, here spoken of, were of so sordid a temper as to begrudge himself the expence of a decent funeral. The most common interpretation is,

that his heirs have so little regard for him, as to give themselves no concern at all about his interment, or at least, erect no monument to his memory, which was looked upon as a great misfortune both among Jews and Pagans.

Life,

Life, on such terms, is worse than not to be.
 His years, at length expir'd, no more appear
 Than as a moment past. What then avail
 His toils and cares, or ev'n his hoarded wealth?
 Will riches then exempt him from the grave,
 The same dark mansion, where th' Abortive sleeps? *

What pains do mankind take to render life V. 7.
 Gloomy and wretched, when, with so much ease
 They might be happy! If we sought no more
 Than simple Nature craves; and what she craves
 How easily supply'd, content with food
 And raiment!) all our wants would be confin'd
 To narrow Bounds: but Pride and Avarice
 Enlarge them, 'till they swell to infinite,
 And therefore never satisfy'd. For what V. 8.
 Of real use, can all our toils produce,
 But mere subsistence? What advantage have
 The Wise, in this respect, o'er Fools? Or what

* V. 6. It appears from this striking instance, that Solomon has placed Avarice in the only light wherein it may seem to plead some excuse, and shewn the folly of it. Undoubtedly, nothing can be more preposterous than to deprive ourselves of all the comforts of life, for the sake of heaping up vast riches for our children, who too often make an ill use of them, and think no more of us, when we are gone. It may be gathered from this and other passages, that as no one took more care than Solomon to make a plentiful provision for his Family, so he was naturally inclined to cheerfulness, and enjoying himself the fruit of his labour.

The

The Wealthy o'er the Poor? To fix our hearts
 On that which Heaven's immediate Bounty gives,
 Is to enjoy this World, as Heav'n design'd:
 Whilst vague desires for what may never come,
 Or granted, would pernicious prove, distract
 The mind, imbitter life with endless cares,
 And late convince, how vain our fond pursuits.

What is this busy, restless creature, then, V. 10.
 Who forms such mighty schemes, such wondrous plans
 T' immortalize his glory, and would grasp
 The Universe? 'Tis Man: his very name
 Declares him frail and mortal, made of dust;*
 And yet so arrogant, he would reverse
 Heaven's firm decrees. How feeble such an arm
 Contending with th' Almighty! Learn to know V. 11.
 Thyself: for since this world was not design'd
 For thine abode, and flitting as the wind,
 Are all its offers; since these earthly things,
 The more pursu'd, betray their emptiness,
 Elude our hopes, and add to our chagrin;
 What gain we, at the journey's end, but shame
 Of time mispent, and bitterness of soul?

* Solomon here alludes to the word, *Adam*, which, in the original, signifies earth or dust.

Suppose

Suppose thy ardent wish accomplish'd, still
 How wide a gulph 'twixt thee and Happiness!
 That things are vain and transient, all agree:
 The point in question, is, what state the most
 For Man's advantage, during this short life,
 Which, like a shadow, swift, but unperceiv'd,
 Hasteth to its decline? In this great point
 The fatal error lies. For who but God
 Can tell th' event? Since that, which seem'd the mark
 Of his displeasure, oft a blessing proves;
 And fondest expectations gratify'd,
 Are dearly purchas'd with our certain bane.

Yet still, amidst these transitory scenes,
 Something there is, well worth a wise man's care,
 And scorn'd by none but Fools. — A spotless name,
 By virtuous deeds acquir'd, is sweeter far
 Than fragrant Balms, whose odours, round diffus'd,
 Regale th' invited guests: It cheers the heart,
 Like some rich cordial, gives the Owner joy
 Whilst here, and, when no more, with lasting praise
 His memory embalms. Well may such men
 Rejoice at Death's approach, and bless the hour
 That ends their toilsome pilgrimage, assur'd,
 That, 'till the race of life is finish'd, none
 Can be completely blest. — Stop here, ye sons

C. VII. V. 1.

V. 2.

Of Pleasure ; hearken to the Preacher's voice,
 Whose sage advice, harsh as it seems, will guide
 Your wandring steps, and to that calm Retreat,
 So vainly fought in Folly's mazy paths,
 At length conduct your souls. 'Tis sad, indeed,
 To enter into Mourning's sable room,
 Where lies the pale extended corpse, and sighs
 Deep-fetch'd bewail the dear departed Friend :
 Yet let not this deter. Here may'st thou learn
 Into thyself to enter, here reflect
 On thy own frail condition, and how soon.
 Others may mourn for thee. Such serious thoughts v. 3.
 May o'er thy visage cast a pensive air,
 And force the trickling tear ; but they collect
 The dissipated mind, restrain th' excess
 Of our tumultuous passions, and amend
 The heart. Such wisdom thou canst never learn
 From noisy Mirth, which at the Feast presides, v. 4.
 And stifles cool reflection. Oft the Wise
 Retir'd, in sadly-pleasing solitude
 And silent contemplation, meditate
 On Man's frail nature : thus familiar grown
 With Death, they wait undaunted his approach :
 Whilst Fools, who in continu'd revels waste
 Their fleeting moments, drive away such thoughts
 'Till

'Till sudden the grim Messenger appears,
 And stares them in the face. Oh! let my words V. 5.
 Sink deep into thy soul: for such rebukes,
 Like pow'rful med'cines, bitter to the taste,
 Tho' harsh, proclaim the Friend; whilst Flatt'ry soft
 And smiling, offers thee her golden cup
 With deadly poison fraught. At length thou'lt find
 That all the mighty expectations rais'd
 By Pleasure, sweet Enchantress, with her train
 Of Laughter, Jest, and Song, the sumptuous Feast,
 Full-flowing Bowl, and midnight Roar, will end V. 6.
 Like crackling Thorns, beneath a cauldron plac'd,
 Which blaze awhile, but soon reduc'd to smoak.

Methinks, I hear thee cry, Is Wisdom, then, V. 7.
 Which gives such sage advice, always exempt
 From Vanity's assaults? Alas! 'tis true,
 That ev'n the Wise, when robb'd by slanderous tongues,
 Of their good name that jewel of the soul,
 Or much oppress'd by lawless pow'r, are apt
 To vent indecent murmurs, unrestrain'd
 By Reason's sober guidance:—And too oft,
 The clearest judgment tempting bribes pervert,
 And soundest heart corrupt.—Wilt thou, for this,
 Justice divine arraign, and rashly charge
 Eternal Rectitude? Presumptuous Man!

V. 8.

Wait

Wait the result ; nor ask, with frantic rage,
 Why God permits such things : his ways, tho' now
 Involv'd in clouds and darkness, will appear
 All right, when from thine eyes the mist is clear'd :
 'Till then, to learn submission to his will,
 More wisdom shews, than vainly thus t' attempt
 Exploring what thou canst not comprehend,
 And God, for wisest ends, thinks fit to hide.

Therefore when impious men bear sway, and scourge v. 9.
 The world with iron rod, look up to Heav'n ;
 Let not thine indignation swell too high,
 Nor passion's hasty impulse thee transport
 Beyond the bounds of Reason: ftrait repress
 The rising motions of thine heart with calm
 Reflection ; for such Anger blinds the soul,
 And resteth only in the breast of Fools.

Nor say, as Fools are wont, Why liv'd I not v. 10.
 In happier days of old ? Why was I thrown
 On such sad times as these ? Groundless complaint !
 By Pride suggested, and which Folly vents.
 The former ages like the present were,
 And Man the same ungrateful creature then
 As now, alike, in Eden's garden plac'd,
 As in the pathless Desert, murm'ring still
 At Heav'n. No age so blest, as not to feel

The dire effects of vice ; and none so curst,
 But might abound in blessings, would we learn
 To use them as we ought. Accuse not then
 The times, but blame thy own deceitful heart.

Yet thou reply'ft, Wisdom, when join'd to wealth, V. 11.
 Is surely best, and much to be preferr'd.

Well hast thou said ; for Wisdom not consists
 In scorning Riches, but in using right,
 And both united on our Virtues throw

A lustre, gain protection, and command
 Respect.* Yet still thou'lt find, that Wisdom sole V. 12.

Hath the pre-eminence : not all the Wealth

On earth, can give thee patience to support

Affliction's heavy load ; whilst she alone,

Superior to th' attacks of Fortune, smiles

Beneath her burden, and with cheering balm

Revives the drooping soul. Would'ft thou acquire V. 13.

This Wisdom, gift divine, reflect, how vain

Our efforts to obstruct the settled course

Of things ; and since, by God's unerring hand,

Directed for the best are all events,

* V. 11. "*Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and by it there is profit to them that are under the Sun.*" It appears from this, and the following verse, that Solomon was of a very different opinion from that wrong-headed Philosopher, who threw his money into the sea, as a useless incumbrance.

How impious to condemn what He approves.

Learn then, whate'er thy lot, to rest content.

V. 14.

If all around thee smiles, with grateful heart
 Enjoy the present blessing, nor forget
 How soon dark clouds may gather. When the sky
 Begins to low'r, despair not, but still hope
 For brighter days, assur'd that Nature's Lord
 Hath so exactly ballanc'd the returns
 Of prosp'rous and adverse, like those of night
 To day, and hoary winter's chilling frost
 To summer's genial heat, that none have cause
 To murmur at his ways. How gracious these
 Alternate scenes of good and ill! They teach
 The meanest never to despond, nor think
 Themselves th' out-casts of Heav'n; and those remind
 Who sit on glory's pinnacle, how soon
 Ev'n to the dust their pride may be abas'd.

To these grave precepts, well am I aware,

Ver. 15.

By long and sad experience taught to know

The various foibles of the human heart,

What scruples may be started. How, cry some,

If Goodness infinite preside, should those,

Entitled most to its protection, share

The smallest part, expos'd to ruin, shame,

And death itself; whilst harden'd Profligates

Whose

Whose crimes to Heav'n for vengeance cry aloud,
 Protract their days without remorse or fear,
 And to the grave descend in peace? Exclaim
 Not thus: Have I not told thee, God will judge
 The Righteous and the Wicked? This alone
 Should silence all thy clamors. Not to dwell
 On this great point, it ought to be observ'd,
 That ev'n the Righteous, thro' intemp'rate zeal V. 16.
 And indiscretion, oft bring on themselves
 Dangers which honest prudence might avoid.
 Why wilt thou, from an over-weening sense
 Of Virtue more than human, irritate,
 By sharp invectives, and ill-tim'd rebukes,
 The hand of Pow'r to crush thee, and then lay
 The blame on Providence? — As to the Wretch, V. 17.
 Who mocks at Virtue, thus the Preacher saith.
 Let not unpunish'd crimes tempt thee to run
 Enormous lengths, nor Folly blind so far,
 As to persuade, that thou shalt scape the sword
 Of human Justice, which the Public Good
 Oft draws, to rid the world of such a pest,
 E'er that of Heav'n shall ballance the account,
 Of which thou mak'st no reck'ning.* — This advice V. 18.

* V. 16. 17. " *Be not righteous self? Be not over much wicked, nei-
 over much, neither make thyself over ther be thou foolish. Why should'st
 wise. Why should'st thou destroy thy- thou die before thy time? The suf-
 ferings*

Lay hold on strictly, in thine heart retain,
 Nor let it e'er depart. True Piety,
 Which in an awful sense of God consists,
 Sedate and prudent, steers the golden mean
 'Twixt cold Indiff'rence and Temerity,
 Desirous always to reform the world,
 Yet cautious of offending. Such a Guide V. 19.
 Will safe conduct thee, through this vale of tears,
 And prove a stronger guard, when fears invade,
 And dangers threaten, than a mighty host
 In city station'd, to repell th' assaults
 Of fierce besiegers. But beware, my Son,
 Of trusting to thyself, and learn, how frail
 Thy nature, from the much-lamented fall
 Of those who once excell'd. The Judge supreme V. 20.

ferings of good men, and prosperity of the wicked, have afforded an handle to the atheistically inclined, in all ages, to question a divine Providence. To clear up this point, Solomon refers to the final day of retribution. But as too many are apt to grow impatient at so distant a prospect, he very seasonably reminds them, in these two verses, that even good men often bring misfortunes on themselves, by their own imprudence and indiscretion, which are unjustly charged on Providence. And as to great wicked

men, every age and country can produce instances enough, of Justice laying hold of them, and cutting them off, in the midst of their iniquities. In both these instances, God's over-ruling Providence is sufficiently justified, exclusive of the great argument of future rewards and punishments. In the next verse he carries the point still farther, with regard to good men, to wit, that God may justly afflict them here, since the very best on earth are not without sin.

May justly all the sons of men chastise,
 Since ev'n the best are not without their stains :
 For as the stars hide their diminish'd heads
 When his bright beams the radiant Sun displays,
 So our most shining virtues dare not stand
 The test of his all-piercing eye. This thought V. 21.
 Should make thee less severe to others' faults,
 So conscious of thy own ; to disregard
 Injurious words, nor, with suspicion mov'd,
 To seek to know what known would give thee pain.
 Perhaps, by list'ning to each idle tongue,
 Thy own Domestics scoffing thou may'st hear,
 Or bitterly reviling : Such the fate
 Frequent attending List'ners! Such the fame
 Of greatest men, which at the mercy lies
 Of the most abject! Art thou fir'd with rage V. 22.
 At such indecent freedoms? Think how oft
 Thy tongue has done the same, to those perhaps,
 Who less deserv'd it. — All these wholesome rules, V. 23.
 Not only studied with unwearied pains,
 But, on repeated trials, ever found
 The source of solid peace and lasting joy,
 Convinc'd me of their truth and excellence.
 Firm I resolv'd to practise what I teach,
 And never to forsake the heav'nly Guide :

K

But

But oh! how far, by headstrong passions driv'n,
 I stray'd from Virtue's paths, deaf to the calls
 Of Reason, let my follies past declare.
 No mortal e'er with keener eyes survey'd
 That vain deluding phantom, which appears
 In Wisdom's garb, and yet more eager none
 Embrac'd its cheating offers. Who can tell, V. 24.
 When once he sinks beneath himself, and sins
 Against the light implanted in his soul,
 How deep he may be plung'd? For what he seeks
 Is far beyond his reach, and too profound
 Th' abyss to fathom.*—Tir'd with fruitless search, V. 25.
 Yet anxious still to find the precious gem
 Whose worth intrinsic all our toil repays,
 Once more I turn'd, each flatt'ring object view'd,
 And my own heart, with scrutiny severe,
 By far the harder task, survey'd, intent

* V. 23. "*All this have I proved
 by wisdom: I said, I will be wise,
 but it was far from me.* V. 24.
*That which is far off, and exceeding
 deep, who can find it out?* We are
 persuaded, that the reader will not
 look on the paraphrase here given,
 and particularly on the censure
 which the Preacher passes on his
 own conduct, but as what naturally
 arises from the subject, and is fully
 supported by the four following

verses, wherein he shews, in the
 most pathetic terms, how wretch-
 edly he had been deceived in that
 very thing, from whence he pro-
 posed to himself the greatest happi-
 ness. Well might he say, that
 Wisdom, on this occasion, was far
 from him; for certainly there is not
 an instance on record, of so wise a
 man having been betrayed into such
 glaring follies, by the violence of
 his passions.

To

To trace that Wisdom which from Heav'n descends,
 Fountain of living waters, and t' explore
 The source of human Folly, whose foul streams
 Intoxicate and kill. What the result
 Of this enquiry? The remembrance strikes
 My soul with horror: not the pangs of death
 So bitter. Woman, false deluding Sex,
 I found the deadly source of all my woes;
 Woman, whose heart is fraud itself, well-skill'd
 T' insnare with crafty wiles th' uncautious Youth,
 And even hoary Wisdom to beguile,
 Both captives held in her inglorious chains;
 Her smiles enchanting, soft her blandishments,
 But cruel as the Grave. Curst be those arts,
 Which taught me to forget Heav'n's King supreme,
 And foreign Gods, vain idols, to adore.
 How are the Mighty fall'n! just vengeance due
 To perfidy and lust! none from such snares
 Shall 'scape, but he whose conduct Heav'n approves;
 Whilst th' impious man, to passions vile a slave,
 Left to himself, a wretched victim falls.*

V. 26.

* V. 26. " *And I found Woman more bitter than death, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands fetters. Who so pleaseth God shall escape from her, but the Sinner shall be taken by her.*" We need make

no apology for the words here put in Solomon's mouth; since every one, acquainted with his history, knows, that his apostacy was owing to the allurements of his Wives and Concubines.

At length this dear-bought Knowledge have I gain'd, Ver. 27.
 And warn thee of the danger. Long I sought
 With fruitless toil, still seek in vain, to count
 The sum of those allurements which betray
 Man's heart; but surely, 'midst the countless train,
 None steal so soft, none charm, like Female Arts,
 None so pernicious, nor so soon destroy. V. 28.
 One man, among a thousand, may perchance
 Be found: but Woman, faithful, undisguis'd,
 Of soul sincere, mine eyes have never seen. * V. 29.

In this sore plague, what balm can Reason bring
 To heal the rankling wound, or 'swage its smart?
 What haven offers, where the troubled soul,
 Thus with contending passions tost, may find
 Repose? Shall we the world's Creator charge
 With our disorders? Far be such surmise,

* V. 27, 28. "*Behold! this have I found, saith the Preacher, often have I sought, (or reckoned,) one by one, to find out the account, which my soul is still in search of, and I find not. One man among a thousand have I found; but a Woman among all these have I not found.*" The sense of these two verses is plain; but we think, both the pointing and construction, in the version of Junius and Tremellius, are much clearer than in our English Translation. It ought to be remarked here, that the severe

censure Solomon passes on Women, only relates to those by whom he had been perverted, and is not to be looked upon as a satyr on the whole sex, as some other passages in this very book sufficiently evince. Moreover, we find that in the book of Proverbs, he frequently points out the difference between a virtuous and a wicked woman, and gives a just encomium of the former. What a noble description is there, in the last chapter, of a faithful, discreet, and industrious Wife!

Far

Far from the Preacher's thought, of this alone
 Assur'd, that, as Nature's unerring Lord
 Made all things good, subservient to their ends,
 So Man, his noblest workmanship, he form'd
 With understanding clear to judge aright,
 Affections pure, and rectitude of will ;
 No other rules of life prescrib'd, but such
 As tend to Happiness, nor aught forbid
 But that which tends to ruin. Whence proceeds
 The rod of human woes? From passions fierce,
 By Reason unrestrain'd, and Liberty
 Abus'd. Hence Man perverse sought specious pleas
 To swerve from Duty's road, to give the reins
 To ev'ry craving appetite, and quench
 The spark divine that glow'd within his breast.
 'Midst our researches, speculations vain,
 Our self-deceptions, arrogant conceits,
 And blind pursuits, this one important Truth
 At length darts forth, through Error's misty cloud,
 Like that refulgent Star, whose friendly beams
 Point out a certain course in stormy night,
 To wand'ring Pilots, through the pathless Deep ;
 That all the good within us, we derive
 From God, and all that's evil, from ourselves.

Whom

Whom to the ONLY WISE shall we compare, * C. VIII. v. 1.
 So wondrous in his ways? What mortal eye
 Can pierce the dark mysterious labyrinth?
 How blest the Man, with wisdom from above
 Endow'd, and taught to practise what he knows!
 Such wisdom, through perplex'd affairs of life,
 Shall with distinguish'd lustre guide his steps,
 Make him rever'd, and yet abate his pride.

* C. viii. v. 1. "*Who is as the wise man? And who knoweth the interpretation (or solution) of a thing? A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the fierceness of his countenance shall be changed.*" These words, which are variously translated, and have a great variety of expositions, begin the eighth chapter, not only in our own version, but in most of the modern, as we have noted in the margin; being made an introduction to what immediately follows, concerning Kings and Government, and the whole applied to the wise man. But, with regard to the first clause, notwithstanding our Translation has inserted the word *man*, (which, however, is in Italics, to denote, that it is not in the original,) yet it seems to be much more applicable to God, who is emphatically styled in Scripture, *the only Wise*, and here more particularly so denominated, as knowing how to bring good out of so much evil, which human Wisdom is incapable of doing. We have therefore not only followed the Vulgate, which concludes the discourse with those words, but also the translation of Junius and Tremellius, who insert this whole verse at the end of the seventh chapter.

 B O O K III.

AS I have taught thee what thou ow'st to Heav'n, C. VIII. v. 2.
 And how thy pray'rs may God's acceptance find,
 So let me warn thee to discharge the debt
 To his Vicegerent due : for surely none
 Can rev'ence God, who honour not their King.
 If then to piety thou hast regard,
 To thy own safety, or the public weal,
 Be ever mindful of thy solemn oath,
 And his commands, whom Heav'n has o'er thee plac'd,
 With duteous care attend. Let nought induce V. 3.
 Rashly to quit his service, nor persist,
 When thou his just displeasure hast incurr'd,
 Obdurate in thy crime : for royal hands V. 4.
 Are arm'd with pow'r resistless, far can stretch,
 Nor hold the sword in vain. Who then shall dare
 To rise against his Sov'reign, or presume

To

To call him to account? * By these sage rules V. 5.
 He that his conduct steers, will sure escape
 Such storms as rashness overwhelm. The Wife
 With patience suffer what they can't amend,
 Judge candidly, and wait the season fit
 Such errors to rebuke, which oft disgrace
 Best-order'd States: but Fools disturb the world V. 6.
 With their intemp'rate zeal, raise civil broils,
 Discord foment, endless confusion breed,
 And thus themselves and others wretched make.
 Blind to the present, what can Fools discern V. 7.
 Of future? All events to them are wrapt

* V. 2. "I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment, and this, in regard of the oath of God. V. 3. Be not hasty to go out of his fight; stand not in an evil thing: for he doth whatsoever pleaseth him. V. 4. Where the word of a King is, there is power, and who may say unto him, What dost thou?" Though it may be gathered from these expressions, that Solomon had very high notions of Kingly Government, as all the Eastern Princes had, yet nothing can from hence be inferred, in favour of arbitrary power and Tyranny. For it ought to be observed, that the obedience he claimed, was no more than what the Jewish Policy allowed, and always built on the supposition, as the words themselves evidently imply, that he commanded nothing repugnant to the fundamental laws of the Country, or inconsistent with the laws of God; in which case, he had an undoubted right to the obedience of his subjects, who very probably, about this time, were forming conspiracies against him, and greatly disturbed the public tranquillity. There might indeed have been some grievances under his administration, as there ever will be under the best of Governments. But this is not so great an evil as Faction, Anarchy, and Rebellion, and therefore to be born with, 'till a seasonable opportunity of redress offers.

In

In thickest gloom : And who, tho' wise, can tell,
 What shall hereafter be ? — But let no Prince V. 3.
 Howe'er so mighty, uncontroul'd his sway,
 That pow'r abuse which Heav'n has lent, to right
 Th' oppress'd who to protection have just claim.
 Not guards nor spies can reach the lab'ring mind
 Of such as groan beneath his iron yoke,
 Nor curb their secret murmurs, which at length
 Burst out to rage, and overturn a throne.
 Tho' long he reign, yet when the fatal hour
 Is come, and vengeance, due to tyrants, near,
 What will avail his armies ? He alone
 Must, like the meanest of his vassals, stand
 The dreadful conflict; nor will force or fraud
 One moment from the King of Terrors shield
 The proud Oppressor. — Oft have I survey'd V. 9.
 The various scenes of life, all things observ'd
 With sharp attentive eye, and none have found
 More vain than lust of arbitrary sway.
 Behold Ambition's never-ceasing toil !
 When to the summit of its wish arriv'd,
 What has it gain'd ? Heart-gnawing care, distrust,
 The people's hate, and dread of sudden fall :
 Tott'ring at length, headlong it rushes down
 With its own weight, beneath the pond'rous load V. 10.

L

Crush'd

Crush'd and reduc'd to nothing. Nor mine eyes
 Have those unrighteous Ministers escap'd,
 Who, on the Judgment-seat exalted high,
 Were honour'd once as Gods. What fun'ral pomp
 Attends their obsequies! How soon forgot!
 Their glory with them to the grave descends
 There everlasting darkness blots their names,
 As they had never been: so vain a thing
 Is human grandeur! * Impious men are apt
 To scoff at such severe rebukes: but whence
 The root of their presumption? 'Tis because
 Th' Almighty does not instant hurl the bolt
 At their devoted heads: his vengeance, slow,
 But sure as fate, like a dark low'ring cloud,
 Hangs o'er 'em, big with ruin; fix'd their doom,
 And the irrevocable sentence pass'd,
 Tho' for a while deferr'd. From hence th' abuse
 Of Heav'n's forbearance: hence, without restraint,
 Fearless they still sin on, swell the black roll,

V. 11.

* V. 10. The three preceding verses, especially the last, are not without their obscurity, as appears from the different versions and variety of interpretations. Solomon, no doubt, would intimate, that Power is not so desirable a thing, as most men are apt to imagine, considering how much it is abused, and the danger

it exposes to. Having thus given his sentiments of tyrannical Princes and corrupt Ministers, he endeavours to comfort those who are oppressed by them, and from thence takes occasion to answer the objections against divine Providence, for permitting such grievances in the world.

And

And more outrageous grow. But let such men V. 12.
 Run e'er so long career, how oft foe'er
 Repeat their crimes, of this am I assur'd,
 That when the day of final reck'ning comes,
 (And come it surely will) the righteous man,
 Tho' fore afflicted here, beyond compare
 Shall happier be. At Heaven's tremendous bar, V. 13.
 Nought will the mighty Sinner then await
 But mighty torments equal to his guilt.
 What are his days on earth, which seem so long,
 But a mere fleeting shadow, in his sight,
 To whom a thousand years no more appear
 Than as a moment? Vain thy triumph then
 At length of days! For as the ev'ning shade,
 The more extended, shews approaching night;
 So life, the more prolong'd to impious men,
 Denotes the Sun of Mercy going down,
 And certain vengeance near: Ev'n in this world
 Justice how oft pursues! their days cut short,
 Or by the hands of others, or their own.*

* V. 12. "Tho' a Sinner do evil which are as a shadow, because he
an hundred times, and his days be feareth not before God." Little
*prolonged, yet surely I know, that Critics, who have neither taste for
 it shall be well with them that fear the noble simplicity of the Hebrew
 God, with them, I say, who trem- Poetry, nor judgment to discern its
 ble at his presence. V. 13. But it beauties, will find, perhaps, a con-
 shall not be well with the wicked, tradiction in these two verses, as,
 neither shall he prolong his days, in the former, the Sinner is sup-
 L 2 posed*

But such examples faintly strike, nor those,
 Who mock at Heav'n, deter, when they behold
 Virtue so ill rewarded, left a prey
 To fraud and rapine. Still I hear thee cry,
 If there's a Pow'r supreme that rules the world,
 Why so unequal in his ways? What more
 Repugnant to th' eternal laws of Right,
 Than thus t' inflict the sorrows due to Vice
 On Virtue, thus with partial Hand bestow
 Its choicest gifts on those that least deserve?
 Well may the Pious droop their heads and mourn,
 When thus their Persecutors, swoln with pride,
 In splendor, ease, and affluence pass their days,
 Nor heed the curses on their heads denounc'd.

V. 14.

To thoughtless men, who judge from outward shew, Ver. 15.
 Too oft Religion seems an empty name.
 This world, I've told thee, is at best a scene
 Of trouble, vain and transient all its joys;
 Yet, since we must pass through it, let us make
 The road as smooth and easy as we can.

posed to prolong his days, and in the latter, it is affirmed, that he shall not prolong them; but when we reflect, that Solomon compares his days to a shadow, we shall instantly perceive the propriety of the expressions; for let a

shadow be long or short, it is still no more than a shadow, that is, no reality or substance, a mere nothing. As to the turn I have given to the last verse, it will not, I flatter myself, be deemed wholly impertinent.

Whate'er

Whate'er thy lot, commit th' event to Heav'n;
 Its offer'd blessing thankfully accept,
 Chéerful enjoy: the present hour embrace,
 And make the most of life. What other fruit
 Will all thy labours yield? Or what beside,
 Can here be call'd our own? Rest satisfy'd
 In this; nor seek, with unavailing toil,
 To know why things are order'd thus. What pains
 Incessant have employ'd my thoughts, to found
 The vast abyss! (Such speculations deep
 Fatigue our souls by day, nor suffer sleep
 To close our eyes by night.) Yet what at last,
 Of certain knowledge have I gain'd? That God
 Directs the Universe: this all his works
 Aloud proclaim: but by what secret springs
 The various parts are mov'd, and so dispos'd
 That beauteous order from the whole result,
 And perfect harmony, to mortal man
 Is hid in gloomiest night. How weak th' attempts
 Of human Reason, whose profoundest search
 Such ignorance betrays! For, after all
 My endless wand'rings, still the more perplex'd,
 And lost in the inextricable maze,
 No other lesson have I learn'd but this,
 And of its truth convinc'd, to others teach,

V. 16.

V. 17.

C. IX. v. 1.

As

As the sole point on which our souls may rest.
 Doubt not, whate'er the Righteous here befall,
 That their concerns are God's peculiar care ;
 Tho' from his present dispensations none
 Can judge, who are the objects of his love
 Or hatred, so mysterious are his ways :
 For tho' to individuals he may shew
 Tokens of wrath or favour, as befits
 His wisdom, yet such instances are rare.
 No difference in the gen'ral course of things,
 And common accidents of life we find
 Between the Righteous and the Wicked : All
 Alike his blessings and his curses share.
 Does not the Sun to both arise, and cheer
 With equal light and heat ; from both withdraw
 Its kindly influence, wrapt in low'ring clouds ?
 Say, what distinction makes the deadly shaft,
 When war begins to rage, and thousands fall ?
 Do not they breathe the same infectious air,
 Both offer'd to wide-wasting Pestilence
 Promiscuous Victims ? Both alike deplore
 The loss of children, friends ; alike expos'd
 To storms, by the same shipwreck driv'n on rocks
 And quicksands, or by sweeping floods depriv'd
 Of all their substance. Does the virtuous man,

V. 2.

Of

Of morals uncorrupted, more partake
 Of Fortune's gifts than the lewd Profligate ?
 Or he, who constant adoration pays
 To Heav'n, with humble gesture, heart sincere,
 Than the vile hypocrite ? Nay, ev'n the wretch,
 Whose tongue breaks out in blasphemies, and dares
 Invoke th' Omniscient to attest a lye,
 No less enjoys the sweets of life, and thrives,
 Than he that trembles at the sacred Name.

Long has the world been grievously disturb'd
 At this disorder'd state of things below,
 Where all thus blended in confusion seem,
 As if th' Almighty look'd with equal eye
 On Vice and Virtue, disregarding both.

V. 3.

Reason is shock'd, ev'n Piety itself
 Too oft alarm'd. Hence unreflecting men,
 Licentious grown, to passion give the reins,
 And rush with frantic impulse to th' excess
 Of vice and folly, till the blind career
 Is sudden stopp'd by Death, when all their rage
 And madness end. — If things are thus dispos'd,
 Alas! thou cry'st, why should we labour then?
 Why thus submit to lawless pow'r, and bear
 Life's heavy load, when no reward attends
 Our toils and suff'rings ? In this doubtful strife,

V. 4.

What

What should a wise man choose, or how direct
 His steps? Is it not better to throw off
 The fretting burden, to sit down and dye?
 No. Thou'rt deceiv'd: for tho', as fiery sparks
 By nature upwards fly, so man was born
 To pain and sorrow: yet still human life
 Is not without its comforts. Still there's Hope,
 Reviving cordial to the languid soul,
 'Midst this dark scene of toils, and plagues, and cares,
 Whilst life remains.* The Sun, tho' clouded now,
 May shine again, and fill thine heart with joy.
 Time may correct those errors which have caus'd
 Thy woes, and peace restore. In this respect
 The meanest wretch that breathes on earth, may boast
 An happier lot than his who wore a crown,

* V. 4. "*For to him that is
 joined to all the living, there is Hope.*"
 These words have exceedingly perplexed
 Commentators, and with a
 good deal of reason, as they are
 commonly translated. Various in-
 terpretations are given of them;
 but that of *Melancthon* seems to
 come nearest the original meaning,
 and to agree best with the subject.
 He turns the words thus: *What
 therefore is to be chosen? In him that
 is living, there is Hope.* In answer
 to those who asked, What must
 we then do? Must we continue to
 labour, when we meet with no re-
 ward? Yes, by all means, says

Solomon; for whilst there is life,
 there is hope. Some have fancied
 that he contradicts here what he
 had said ch. iv. where he makes
 Death preferable to Life; but it
 ought to be observed, that he there
 speaks only of the miseries and ca-
 lamities of life, and here of its
 advantages and comforts. The
 Preacher, in short, seems to mean
 the same thing here, as the Hea-
 then Poets have intimated, in the
 Fable of *Pandora's Box*, wherein
Hope alone remained, after every
 thing else that was good in it, had
 taken its flight.

And

And is no more. Ev'n in a living Dog
Some use we find: but what's a Lion dead?

The living know, indeed, that they shall dye, v. 5.
And therefore for their exit may prepare:
'Till then, as Reason dictates, let them learn
To use with sober freedom what this world
Affords: What farther part remains to act?
What fruit of earthly toils, when from Life's stage
Withdrawn? Are they not strangers then to all
That passeth here, their very names forgot
By the survivors? Nor imports it whom v. 6.
They lov'd or hated, since none court their smiles,
Or dread their frowns; this busy world to them,
They to its joys and griefs, for ever lost.

Go then, whilst Heav'n permits, and taste the sweets v. 7.
Of life: Vex not thy soul with anxious cares
And terrors vain; nor from the world expect
More than it can afford, or God design'd;
And if thy works are such as he approves,
With cheerful heart enjoy what he bestows.

Put on the festal robe, with fragrant balm v. 8.
Thy locks bedew, and crown thine head with flow'rs:
Let social mirth, with prudence temper'd, smooth
The wrinkled brow, and, as becomes thy state,
Such honest pleasures as relax the mind,

Regale thyself and friends, alike remote
From sordid av'rice, and profusion vain.*

But chiefly let the chaste endearing Wife,
Best, sweetest gift of Heav'n, delight thy soul,
Nor ever from her part : to her alone
Let thy affections be confin'd, nor seek
Th' adult'rous paths of lewdness, which will lead
To the dark chambers of the grave. † What fruit
Beside, here can'st thou reap, but to rejoice
In that which Providence divine has giv'n
In pity to our frailties ? — This short space
Is the sole time for action ; therefore make
The most of such occasions as present,

Ver. 9.

V. 10.

* V. 7, 8. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy work. Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment." No reader of taste can avoid being struck with the sudden air of cheerfulness, that Solomon discovers on this occasion ; which method, as we before observed, he pursues through the whole Poem. From hence we may infer, that well-regulated Mirth is not inconsistent with Piety, and that a very good man may not only enjoy all the innocent gayeties of life, but, on some occasions, indulge himself in more than ordinary freedoms.

† V. 9. "Live joyfully with the Wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity, which God hath given thee under the Sun." These words, I think, are a sufficient proof, that the bitter sarcasm Solomon had before cast on Women, was not intended as a satyr on the whole sex. It appears from hence, that he thought a good Wife was to be found, and that a man might live joyfully with her. It may likewise be inferred, with great probability, that he here glances at his own folly, in dividing his affection among such a prodigious number of women, not one of whom, as he complains, had any of those qualities which render the sex truly amiable.

And

And snatch the fleeting moments, e'er they fly
 Beyond thy reach. Whate'er thou hast to do,
 Whate'er to learn (and much thou hast of both,
 Tho' short the space for such important work,)
 Strait do, and learn it now: with all thy might,
 Intense exert each faculty, whilst Day
 Appears: nor loiter till the Night comes on:
 'Tis then too late: the work of Life is o'er:
 For in the grave, to which at ev'ry step
 Thou nearer draw'st, that opportunity
 Offer'd by Heav'n, which here thou might'st have seiz'd,
 Is fled; 'tis irrecoverably lost.

But hope not here for lasting Blifs, nor let
 Self-confidence delude: for tho' 'tis fit
 That Man should use the best adapted means,
 And ev'ry nerve of industry apply,
 T' obtain his end; yet the success depends
 On God, nor always answers to the plan
 By Reason form'd. How oft the prize we see
 By swiftest Racer lost? What mighty Hosts,
 Whose marshal'd ranks sure victory denounc'd,
 Routed by slender force? Behold the Learn'd
 And Wise: their minds, on science deeply fix'd,
 Life's vain amusements shun, studious t' improve
 The head, and mend the heart. What their reward?

V. 11.

To want, perhaps, e'en bread. Should not the Man,
 Well-skill'd in council, by experience taught,
 And deep reflection, to direct aright
 Affairs of public weal, adorn a Court,
 And shine among the Great? How small a share
 Of wealth and honour to his portion falls,
 So ill bestow'd on Fools! Nor useful Arts
 That favour and protection always meet,
 Which merit claims. Hence may we learn, how weak
 Our own endeavours, frail our present state;
 What accidents may start, our best-laid schemes
 To frustrate, far beyond the utmost strength
 Of human Prudence to foresee, much less
 Prevent th' effects. Yet still we cheat ourselves
 With hopes ill-grounded, nor reflect how soon
 The charming prospect fond desire has form'd,
 In sadness ends. For as the finny Brood,
 Whilst in pursuit of prey, or wanton sport,
 Rush on th' insidious hook, nor heed the net
 For their destruction spread; or, as on trees
 The feather'd Race sit warbling, nor perceive
 The fatal snare, till caught: so heedless Man
 Thinks not of his precarious state, deceiv'd
 With flatt'ring hopes; nor from his golden dream
 Awakes, till rouz'd by the impending storm

That sudden overwhelms him.* — But events
 Tho' not in Man's disposal, yet such means
 As Prudence dictates, still we ought to use,
 When dangers threat, to extricate ourselves;
 Remembering always, that, as deepest schemes
 Of Politicians oft abortive prove,
 So Heav'n, by meanest instruments, can bring
 Wondrous events to pass. This have I seen;
 And howsoever of light account to some
 Such wisdom may appear; 'tis in mine eyes
 Above the price of rubies. — Let me give
 One striking instance. Was there not a Town
 Of narrow circuit, feeble in itself,
 And feebler still, from the few tim'rous hands
 To guard its walls? A potent Monarch came
 With num'rous forces, close besieg'd it round,
 And batt'ries rais'd. Th' affrighted Citizens
 Gave all for lost, unable to resist,
 Hopeless of succour; nor expedient found
 To ward th' impending blow. In this distress,

V. 13.

V. 14.

V. 15.

* V. 12. "For man also knoweth not his time. As the Fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the Birds that are caught in the snare, so are the Sons of men snared in an evil hour, which falleth suddenly upon them." Nothing can exceed the force and

beauty of these two comparisons, which so naturally describe the situation of those, who are unexpectedly cut off, in the height of their favourite projects and fondest pleasures and amusements.

When

When Courage droop'd its head, and Council fail'd,
 Up rose a man, of humble station, poor,
 Yet blest with prudence, and with honest zeal
 Inspir'd, by whose advice the Town was sav'd.
 But on the Patriot what reward conferr'd
 For such important service? He was left
 In poverty obscure; his gen'rous cares,
 O foul ingratitude! ev'n in the place
 He had preserv'd from ruin, quite forgot.

Yet let not such example thee deter,
 When Duty and thy Country's danger call,
 Nor slack in pointing out what may promote
 The public weal: for 'tis a maxim sure,
 That prudent councils over brutal force,
 Calm Reason o'er tumultuous noise prevail.

V. 16.

How then befalls it, that the Poor; tho' wife,
 Are disregarded, to their wholesome words
 None pay attention? — Wisdom loseth nought
 Of its intrinsic worth, how light foe'er
 Esteem'd; and tho' by insolence of wealth
 Too oft despis'd; yet when Distress, which clears
 The dimmest eyes and softens hardest hearts,
 Hath seiz'd a People wanton grown with ease,
 The wise and virtuous Patriot, tho' array'd
 In homeliest garb, is heard: his words well-weigh'd,
 But

V. 17.

But few, pronounc'd with modest diffidence
 And gentle tone, far more attention gain
 Than all th' unmeaning, loud, verbose harangues,
 And frothy eloquence of Fools in pow'r.*

This wisdom safety brings, when shields and spears, v. 18.
 With all th' alarming instruments of war,
 Yield no defence. Such blessings may produce
 One wise and virtuous man! But what dire plagues
 One pow'rful Sinner on a State draws down,
 Let those, who of his rashness feel th' effects,

* V. 16, 17. "*Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of the Wise are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among Fools.*" Solomon, as I apprehend, does not speak here of the same poor man just before mentioned, but only takes occasion from that remarkable instance, which, in all probability, was a case in fact, to give us, by an easy transition, the character of true Wisdom, whose power and effects he compares with those of mere strength and vain confidence. The reason which induces me to apply this passage to any poor wise man in general, is, that in the former instance, the poor man's words must have been heard and attended to, since otherwise how could the City have been saved by his advice? Whereas it is

said, in the sixteenth verse, *that his words are not heard.* In order to remove the obscurity and seeming contradiction, it ought to be noted, that, after Solomon had given a just encomium of Wisdom, in the former part of the verse, the next words are to be considered as an objection to the instance just produced. Certain it is, that St. Jerome thus understood these words, and has therefore rendered them interrogatively, *Quomodo ergo Sapientia pauperis contempta est, & ejus verba non audita sunt?* To which objection Solomon answers: Tho' this be too often the case, yet experience evinces, that the modest speech of a poor wise man, is not only always more worthy to be heard, but is frequently attended to, and proves far more efficacious, than the most clamorous and imperious language of rich and powerful Fools.

Declare ;

Declare ; the more exalted, still the more
 Pernicious. Children yet unborn may rue
 That weak or wicked Prince, who, in a day,
 Ruins the work of ages.* He that shines
 With gifts superior to the vulgar rank,
 Should on his conduct set the strictest guard:
 For what is harder gain'd, or easier lost,
 Than reputation? Envious eyes observe,

C. X. v. 1.

* V. 18. "*Wisdom is better than weapons of war ; but one Sinner destroyeth much good.*" As no Prince was ever endowed with finer qualities than Solomon, so none ever fell into greater follies and excesses. It may therefore be presumed, that, as he had before stigmatized himself, under the character of *an old and foolish King*, so here he particularly reflects on his own misconduct, under the opprobrious name of a *Sinner* ; which appellation he had given too just an handle for, both on account of the unbridled indulgence of his passions, and his idolatrous practices ; and not improbably he alludes to the fatal consequences thence resulting to his people. For though, for some considerable time after his accession to the throne, he conducted himself with such exquisite prudence, that the people were happy under his administration, and the government seemed so firmly established, that nothing could shake it ; yet we find how sadly they

were disappointed, towards the latter part of his reign, and what unspeakable calamities fell on the kingdom, soon after his decease. No doubt, the happiness or misery of a Nation depends in great measure on their Prince's conduct : so true is the Poet's trite remark, *Quicquid delirant Reges, plebuntur Achivi*. We shall just note here, that, in some versions, the three following verses, which commonly begin the tenth chapter, are, in others, made the conclusion of the ninth. This latter arrangement seems most judicious, as the words appear to have a connection with the preceding subject, and may not improperly be applied, especially the first verse, to Solomon himself, who, having taken occasion from the subject, to draw another general comparison between Wisdom and Folly, gives some useful instructions, as to our deportment, when we have lost our Prince's favour.

With

With piercing ray watch ev'ry step, and seek
 Occasions, which the slightest fault affords,
 To tarnish all his glory. For as Flies
 Envenom'd make the precious unguent lose
 Its fragrance, and t' exhale a fetid smell ;
 So the least indiscretion, in the Man
 Conspicuous for his dignity, and fam'd
 For wisdom, renders vile. 'Tis hard, indeed, V. 2.
 Ev'n for the Wise so strict to guard their steps
 As never to offend ; yet still, in this
 Are they distinguish'd from the herd of Fools :
 They seldom err, nor fails in arduous tasks
 Their judgment, which the road direct pursues,
 And fittest means t' obtain the end propos'd
 Applies. But Fools always mistake their aim, V. 3.
 No less bewilder'd in the smallest things
 Than greatest : Ev'ry word and act betray
 Their folly, yet so proud, as with disdain
 To look on others. — Wisdom rarely meets V. 4.
 An harder trial than a Prince's frowns
 To bear with temper : Let me give, once more,
 Some useful lessons, when thou hast incurr'd
 His indignation, and perhaps he treats
 Too harsh. Let no resentment prompt to quit
 His service, nor, with passion hurried on,

The duty of a subject to forget ;
 Much less, from personal disgust, t' engage
 In Faction's dark retreat : for tho' incens'd,
 His wrath is not implacable ; nor aught
 So soon appeaseth, favour lost restores,
 As yielding to the present storm, express'd
 By gentle words, demeanour mild, and air
 Submissive.* — But suppose the Prince unjust,
 Sway'd by Caprice, to real merit blind,
 And loading Flatt'ers and vile Sycophants
 With honours not their due. — This have I seen
 With deep concern ; and 'tis, it must be own'd,
 A grievance, which the wise and good have long
 Bewail'd : nor can a forer plague befall
 The Public than abuse of Royal Pow'r,
 That raiseth to the highest dignities
 Such men whose vices would disgrace the least,

Ver. 5.

V. 6.

* V. 14. A late Commentator has introduced this and the three next verses with the following remark, which we think very pertinent : “ The scope, says he, of these verses is, to teach Subjects to be loyal and dutiful to the Government they live under. In Solomon's time, the people were very rich, and lived in great prosperity, which perhaps made them proud and petulant ; and when the Taxes

were high, though no more than they had enough to pay them, it is probable, many carried it insolently towards the Government, and threatened to rebel. To such persons Solomon gives some necessary cautions, and speaks for himself, and for every wise and good man, who is a Master or Magistrate, that he could easily forgive, upon their submission, those he had been very angry with.”

Weak

Weak heads, corrupted hearts: whilst those endow'd
 With ev'ry noble talent which adorns
 The Patriot and the Statesman, sit depress'd,
 Unnotic'd, mingled with the vulgar herd.

Who could with patience see the vilest Slave, V. 7.
 A wretch by Nature born for servitude,
 Riding in princely pomp, and looking down
 Contemptuous on the man, who, tho' no less
 Illustrious for his virtues than his birth,
 Is forc'd to walk on foot, perhaps to swell
 The upstart Courtier's train? — To gen'rous minds V. 8.
 'Tis hard, indeed; yet still let Subjects bear
 Such evils; nor a Prince forget, that Pow'r
 Abus'd exasperates, and danger brings.
 Let neither Prince nor People dare invade
 Each other's rights: fatal to both will prove
 Th' attempt. As Hunters dig for savage beasts
 A pit, and, heedless fall therein, become
 Themselves a prey; so those, who give or take
 Pernicious councils, are involv'd and lost
 In their own crafty wiles. He that breaks down
 Another's hedge, by lurking Serpent stung,
 Pays with his life the wrong. What gains the man V. 9.
 But curses and chastisement, who removes

His neighbour's land-mark? * Are not they who pull
 An house uncautious down, crush'd with the stones?
 Thus he, who fir'd with lust of Pow'r, or mov'd
 With discontent, would change establish'd forms,
 And break those wholesome laws, which long have fenc'd
 The Constitution, his own ruin seeks.

Who knotty wood attempts to cleave, how oft
 By splinters pierc'd, or wounded by his axe!
 If blunt the tool, nor pains the Workman takes
 Its edge to sharpen, he fatigues himself
 In vain, tho' striking with redoubled force.
 No less destructive to themselves, and vain
 Their toil, who would by violence reform
 A State corrupted, or exactly square
 Whate'er they find amiss or disapprove,
 To their own peevish humours. Kings themselves
 Are but frail Mortals, therefore should reflect
 That subjects are no more, and, when they err,
 Like froward children treat, but not enrage

* V. 9. "*Whoso removeth stones, shall be hurt therewith.*" These words, besides their application to illegal encroachments on the laws and constitution of a Country, may be literally understood of those who removed their neighbour's land-mark, on whom a curse is denounced, and probably, they were also liable to the punishment, so frequent among the Jews, viz. Stoning to death. We have taken the expression in both senses, not forgetting the other interpretation usually given, which is to the same purpose.

With

With ill-tim'd rigor. Subjects, tho' aggriev'd,
 Should gentlest methods try, nor hope t' obtain
 Redrefs by arms, or harsh indecent words
 Sharper than two-edg'd swords, which only serve
 T' inflame the fore. True wisdom both directs
 To bear each other's failings, fittest cure
 In each disorder to apply, and wait
 The season fix'd by Heav'n. This Rule is strait,
 A guide that ne'er deceives; from hence result
 Order and smiling Peace: all other Rules
 Are crooked and fallacious: what their end
 But anarchy and ruin? *— Yet, tho' storms,
 By prudent care, the watchful Pilot 'scape,
 What Monarch to the rage of slanderous tongues
 Is not expos'd, and feels the dire effect?

V. 11.

* V. 10. The three preceding verses contain so many proverbial expressions, the application of which was, no doubt, well known to the Jews, and, indeed, cannot be easily mistaken. The great difficulty lies in this tenth verse, which has been rendered still more obscure from the variety of translations and different constructions. In our version it runs thus; "*If the iron be blunt, and he (i. e. the workman) do not whet the edge, then must he put more strength; but Wisdom is profitable to direct*"; which seems to imply, that he, who

works with a blunt tool, and does not take pains to sharpen its edge, must redouble his efforts, and strike with greater force, in order to complete his work. — But this sense is utterly repugnant to the scope of the subject. We have therefore connected these words with the preceding, on which they evidently have a dependence, as the same allegory is still carried on, though set in a different light. We have, for this reason, followed that version, which Bishop Patrick confesses the original will bear, and is authorized by

Let none expect, howe'er so just and wise,
 Detraction's keen envenom'd darts t'elude:
 For as the deadly Serpent, foe to Man,
 Bites unperceiv'd, nor heeds the Charmer's voice;
 So Calumny, to Virtue foe declar'd,
 And stabbing in the dark, no charm can tame.
 The Statesman's honest zeal, unwearied pains,
 Are all traduc'd, and with pretences forg'd,
 The people's minds inflam'd: his virtuous deeds,
 Which claim immortal praise, or buried lie
 In dark oblivion's grave, or wrote in sand,
 Scatter'd by lightest blast; but ev'ry fault,
 If fault he has, (and who from faults is free?)
 Swoln up by foul-mouth'd Scandal's breath, to sive

by the Vulgate, viz. *If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, it will overcome all the force he can use, or, he will labour in vain.* This appears to be the genuine sense; for certainly he that works with an improper instrument, tires himself to no purpose. There is one more difficulty still remaining, with respect to the last words, wherein a new metaphor seems to be taken from the Rule or Square, an instrument used by Workmen to direct them in the exact measurement of any thing; by which it is intimated, that, as force and fraud are confounded in their own de-

vices; so, in all affairs of life, whether of a public or private nature, a certain address and dexterity are to be made use of; that Prudence will teach us how to apply the properest means, on all occasions, to obtain the end proposed, and that the soundest policy, both in Prince and People, is to square their actions by the rules of Justice and Honesty. We have, therefore, some reason to flatter ourselves, that the reflections, which such a subject so naturally offered, will not be thought foreign to the purpose.

Enormous,

Enormous, and, on brass or marble grav'd,
 Remains to lasting infamy consign'd.
 Hath not the Sun himself his dusky spots;
 Yet who attends to these, perhaps scarce seen
 Through optic tube, whilst the refulgent orb
 Its cheering influence sheds? Scandal alone,
 To Virtue's lustre blind, with sharpest eye
 Explores, and with malignant glee proclaims
 Whate'er the brightest character may stain.
 Thus the loath'd Scarabæus, insect vile,
 Flies buzzing o'er the flow'ry mead, nor stops
 To taste its fragrant sweets, but, lur'd at length
 By dung-hill steams that taint the ambient air,
 With eager joy down rushes, to regale
 On filth and ordure.* How remote from this

V. 12.

* V. II. " *Surely the Serpent will bite without enchantment, and the Babler is no better.*" These words are generally applied to the malignity of Slanderers and Backbiters. This interpretation is countenanced by St. Jerome's version, which thus renders the words: *If a Serpent bite in silence, no less pernicious is he, who secretly detraeth.* As Calumny is so odious a vice, and nothing so frequent, we have dwelt the longer on this verse, and endeavoured to draw its ugly picture in the strongest colours we

could, to excite a just horror at the original. In the four following verses, wherein Solomon draws a third comparison between Wisdom and Folly, he seems to allude chiefly to a set of men, not much unlike some modern Politicians, who were perpetually canvassing the weightiest affairs of State, and calling in question the conduct of their Superiors, of which they were no competent Judges. Such men, no less confident than ignorant, have done a great deal of mischief in every age.

Are

Are Wisdom's precepts, which the tongue restrain
 Within due bounds ! The Wise maturely weigh
 Their words, of ev'ry one with candor speak ;
 Thus they conciliate favour, win the heart,
 And profit those that hear. But Fools, with speech
 Rash and envenom'd, blast the fairest names :
 Their words, begun without reflection, shew V. 13.
 The weakness of their heads, and end in rage
 And madness, when appears in hideous light
 The blackness of their hearts : they scatter round
 Firebrands, and shafts, and death, and headlong plunge
 Themselves in mischief's gulph. Still, tho' rebuk'd, V. 14.
 The senseless Babbler prates and stabs, unwarn'd
 By past examples, nor perceives the sword
 Suspended o'er his head ; his whole discourse,
 Tho' fraught with malice, so absurd and vague,
 That where it tends, none can divine, nor tell
 What will from thence result. With self-conceit V. 15.
 Swoln up, more confident the less he knows,
 And rashly passing judgment in affairs
 Of weightiest moment, tho' in trivial things
 At loss, and groping in the noon-day Sun,
 Fatigu'd with fruitless toil he hurries on,
 Like one, who trailing home with heedless steps,
 The road direct forsakes, and still, the more

He

He mends his pace, in devious paths involv'd,
Is farther from his destin'd journey's end.

How wretched is the Country which abounds V. 16.
In tempers so perverse! But woe to Thee,
And doubly curs'd, O Land! how mild soe'er
Thy clime, fertile thy glebe, immense thy wealth,
When He that governs, tho' of age mature,
In understanding still remains a Child;
Of ev'ry talent which adorns a Throne,
Devoid, capricious, fond of change, averse
To serious bus'ness, easily deceiv'd,
And hard to be convinc'd; no less a slave
To his own headstrong passions than to those
Of wicked Counsellors, who sacrifice
To vain amusements and intemp'rate feast
Those hours which care of public weal demands.*

* V. 16. "*Woe to thee, O Land, when thy King is a Child, and thy Princes eat in the morning.*" Some are of opinion, that this and the next verse are introduced here in a very abrupt manner, as having little or no connection with the preceding subject; for which reason, they suppose, the Rabins have transferred them from their proper place, and that they would come in much better after the fifth verse. For my own part, I cannot see the least ground for such a supposition, or any manner of necessity for a trans-

position, as the words stand with much more propriety and elegance where they now are, than they would do in that place. Solomon, having compared the happy-effects of wisdom and candor with the ruinous consequences of folly and detraction, and severely censured those foolish Bablers, who, whatever government they live under, are always murmuring, and giving their sentiments, without the least caution or modesty, as to the management of public affairs, the springs and motives of which they

are

But oh! what mighty blessings wait the realm, V. 17.
 Whose King, train'd up in Wisdom's school, exerts
 Those virtues which add lustre to his birth!
 A King ennobled by himself, the Son
 Of his own princely actions, which proclaim

are utter strangers to, he takes occasion from hence to shew the difference between a wise and virtuous, and a foolish and wicked Administration; by the latter, he perhaps glances at himself, and those who acted under him; and, indeed, considering the many excesses he had fallen into, it can scarce be doubted that riotous and unseasonable Feasting was one of them, and that his own disorderly course of life had a very pernicious influence on his Courtiers and Ministers, who, following the evil example of their Sovereign, neglected the duty of their stations, and spent that time, which should have been appropriated to the public service, in frivolous amusements and luxurious entertainments, implied by *eating in the morning*. Solomon, therefore, though now far advanced in years, might well call himself a Child, according to the trite expression common to all languages, applied to old men, when they fall into less dotages than he did. Certain it is, that mere childhood in a Prince is not always a misfortune to a Nation, as there are instances of the government being wisely administered during his minority; and

Solomon himself is a most illustrious proof, that a very young Prince may prove a great blessing; for when he was but a mere Child, with respect to his age, no nation upon earth was happier. He might, indeed, as we before remarked, have perceived something, which gave him melancholy apprehensions, in the irregular deportment of his son Rehoboam, who remained a Child all the days of his life. This, I say, might perhaps have forced from him so passionate an exclamation; and the Chaldee Paraphrase assures us, that he not only foresaw the revolt of the ten Tribes, owing to his Son's imprudence, but the total destruction of his family and kingdom. In fine, we have too much reason to believe, considering the great corruptions which reigned in his Court, that he had not taken so much care of his Son's morals and education, as he ought to have done; and from hence may learn, how much the future happiness of a Nation depends on the strictest care taken of a Prince in his youth, and rooting in his mind the principles of true Piety and solid Virtue.

How

How worthy of a Throne, ev'n tho' not born
 To Royalty ! His presence none approach,
 But men who, deeply skill'd in council sage,
 Upright and vigilant, shun all excess,
 Nor recreation seek, but to relax
 The wearied mind, which, for a while unbent,
 Resumes its charge important, more alert
 And vig'rous.* Those, who steer the helm of State, v. 13.
 Should ever watchful stand, lest sleep invade
 The drowsy eye, when storms begin to rise :
 Abandon'd then to sport of winds and waves,
 The found'ring Bark is lost. In all affairs,
 Private or public, ruin waits on Sloth.
 For as, through want of timely care, an House
 Decays ; the shatter'd roof left unrepair'd
 To dropping rain gives entrance, which soon rots
 The well-compacted beams, and saps at length

* V. 17. " *Blessed art thou, O Land, when thy King is the Son of Nobles, and thy Princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness.*" The turn I have given to the expression, *Son of Nobles*, in allusion to the significant Spanish Proverb, *Cada uno es hijo de sus obras*, i. e. Every one is the Son of his own actions, (in which sense both the Vulgate and Junius and Tremellius seem to understand

it,) will not, I flatter myself, be thought foreign to the subject. Indeed this appears to be the most natural and genuine interpretation : for what extraordinary happiness is it to be governed by one of royal descent, exclusive of the qualifications requisite to so important a trust ? How many glaring instances are there of Princes of this character upon record, who have proved the heaviest curse to their people ?

The firm supporters, when with sudden crash
 The crazy Building falls: So mightiest Realms
 Are by degrees to desolation brought,
 When, sunk in ease, no care their Guardians take
 The first disorders to prevent, or cure
 Apply immediate. — Much to be deplor'd
 That Prince, whose Ministers corrupt, intent
 On trifles, but in weighty points remis,
 Neglect their Country's welfare, to indulge
 Excess of riot: If they labour aught,
 'Tis only Gold t' acquire, which may support
 Their pleasures: (for 'tis Gold alone supplies
 Whate'er man's craving appetite demands.)
 For this, the wealth of Nations they consume,
 Then squeeze the people with oppressive loads,
 To fill th' exhausted store, alike profuse
 And avaricious. Should not this suffice,
 Honours to merit due, Justice itself
 Expos'd to sale, increase the glitt'ring heap. *

V. 19.

* V. 19. "*A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry; but money answereth all things.*" Thus the words run in our Translation, but may be rendered more literally, as well as nearer to the sense, *They* (i. e. the indolent and dissolute) *prepare bread for laughter, and wine maketh their lives or houses merry.* Some think that this verse ought to be connected with the seventeenth, and that it denotes the happiness of a Nation, whose Prince takes care that his people want not provisions, (implied by the words, *bread and wine*, which, in the Hebrew Idiom, signify every necessary of life,) and especially that

Yet let not such disorders thee provoke
 To entertain disloyal thoughts, or curse
 The Lord's Anointed, who, with all his faults,
 Tho' stain'd his glory, and with years depress'd,
 Is still thy King : Nor treat his Delegates

that the money of the Country, with which all things are procured, be not exported. Bishop Patrick, in his annotation on this verse, seems to think, that the words may bear some such meaning; but we have rather chosen to follow his Paraphrase, wherein he has given the same turn to them as we have done: which appears to be the genuine sense, and is authorised by the Vulgate and other versions. As a farther confirmation, it ought to be observed, that Solomon, having most emphatically described the fatal effects of indolence in a Government, under the significant figure of a House, which, though it stands in need of immediate repair, is suffered to run to ruin, through the Owner's carelessness, very naturally proceeds in his censure of those Ministers, who are more concerned about the gratification of their pleasures than for the public service. In his panegyric on a wise Administration, the great men are described *as eating in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness*, the meaning of which is too obvious to need a comment; and as the Ministers of an opposite character, whose picture he had just

before drawn, are said *to eat in the morning*, that is, to indulge such unseasonable pleasures as indisposed them for the discharge of their duty, so in the verse now before us, he farther adds on the same subject, that they not only waste that precious time, of which those at the helm of affairs have very little to spare, but so far pervert the end of social mirth and recreations, which is to relax the mind, as to make pleasure their business, and to fall into the most luxurious excesses. The feasts they prepare, are not for strength, or to recruit the exhausted spirits, but for riot and drunkenness. *In risum faciunt panem, et vinum ut epulentur bibentes*, as St. Jerome renders the words. With regard to the last clause, *Money answereth all things*, which hath so much perplexed Commentators, no doubt, the Jews of those times knew the use of money as well as the present; and it may be presumed, that dissolute Ministers then, how indolent or remiss soever in the duty of their station, stuck at nothing to procure as much of it as they could, in order to maintain their excesses, which could not be otherwise supported.

With

With harsh opprobrious words, which, on pretext
 Of public grievance, oft from selfish views,
 Or private rancour flow. Such words take wing,
 And howsoe'er in secret utter'd, reach,
 By least suspected means, the royal ear :
 For Kings are Heav'n's peculiar charge : more swift
 Than airy flight of Birds, the Treason dark
 Transpires; and Vengeance, arm'd with thunder, waits.*

* V. 20. "*Curse not the King, no not in thought; and curse not the Rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings, shall tell the matter.*" Solomon here concludes his discourse concerning Government. It may be inferred from these words, compared with some of the preceding ones on the same subject, that though his conduct was, in some respects, justly censurable, as he himself seems more than once to acknowledge, yet he was still jealous of his authority, and sensible of the respect and deference due to the royal character. And as there have been always murmurings at the best as well as worst of Princes, it is not improbable, that many of the grievances complained of, under his

administration, were excessively aggravated by malcontents; and perhaps his wisest and faithfullest counsellors, and most salutary measures for the general benefit of his people, misrepresented and traduced by a set of Incendiaries, purely to render him odious and contemptible, and to serve their own selfish designs, which is no uncommon case. He therefore intimates to such men, that their most secret practices could not be long concealed from his notice, and warns them of the danger. Not to enter here into a disquisition of the meaning of the words, *bird of the air, and that which hath wings*, it may be sufficient to observe, that in all ages and countries, treasonable conspiracies have been detected in an unaccountable manner.

 B O O K IV.

INstructed thus how to deport thyself
 To those above thee, learn with tender eye
 To look on those beneath, and let them share
 Some portion of thy comforts. Alms, bestow'd
 On such as no return can make, perhaps
 Unworthy or ungrateful, yet if giv'n
 With heart benevolent, altho' they seem
 Quite lost, like seed cast in the rapid flood,
 Or sown on barren sand, Heav'n will requite,
 When least expected. Thou at length shalt find
 Thy scatter'd wealth far more securely kept
 Than Miser's hoarded treasure, and receive
 Ampler increase than he that plows the deep,
 And trusts his all to faithless winds, in hopes
 Of gain.* Howe'er so num'rous then, who crave

C. XI. v. 1.

V. 2.

* In this and the five following verses, we have a most noble exhortation to Charity, under a variety of figurative expressions, whose beauty and energy may be better conceived, on consulting the original,

Or need thy bounty, tho' asham'd to beg,
Let none go unreliev'd; and when Distress
With meagre face appears, rather exceed
Thy pow'r, than with too sparing hand bestow:
Nor say, Why should I waste my store? Who knows
The turns of life? What doleful times may come,
When I shall want myself? Desponding wretch!
This thought alone should melt thy frozen heart,
Excite compassion, and more anxious make
T' embrace th' occasions offer'd, which will yield
Comfort and succour, when thou stand'st in need
Of others' mercy. Lift thine eyes to Heav'n,
And imitate the Clouds: for these, when full,
Empty themselves in kindly show'rs of rain
On the parch'd glebe: So let thine Alms, diffus'd
With lib'ral hand, the drooping soul revive.
For as the Tree, torn from its roots by rage
Of storms, which way soe'er it chance to fall,
Or to the fervid South, or frozen North,
There must it lie; so will thy doom be fix'd,
And, on the use of Riches here, depend

v. 2

ginal, which is extremely concise, than explained in any modern language. Solomon says the same thing here, tho' in other words, which he had before said in the Book of Proverbs, *He that giveth* *to the poor, lendeth to the Lord;* which expression has more true sublimity and meaning in it, than all that has ever been said by the best Heathen Moralists on the same subject.

Thy

Thy laſting weal or woe.* Should ſcruples vain, V. 4.
 Diſtruſt of Providence, or ſuch pretexts
 As Man's deceitful heart is wont to ſeek,
 Protract the time, it then may be too late.
 For as the Ruſtic, who with anxious eye
 Is ſtill obſerving ev'ry blaſt of wind,
 And, till from the expected point it blows,
 His ſeed witholds, and lets the ſeed-time paſs;
 Or, ſcar'd with ev'ry low'ring cloud, forbears
 To reap, 'till Heav'n with cloudleſs front appears,
 And waiting ſees the golden harveſt loſt:
 So thoſe, who plead excuſes to defer
 The time of ſhewing mercy to the Poor,
 Or fitter ſeaſon wait, as they pretend,
 Will find themſelves deceiv'd. The ſeaſon paſt
 Of doing good, will never more return.

* V. 3. "*If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themſelves upon the earth. And if the tree falls towards the South, or towards the North, in the place where it falleth, there ſhall it lie.*" Both theſe expreſſions were, no doubt, proverbial: the application of the former is eaſy enough: as to the latter, of which there are many interpretations, the moſt probable is, that, in whatever diſpoſition any man dies, in that ſhall he remain for ever. If he has loſt the opportunity of doing good, whiſt here, he can do nothing after he is dead, and no more change his ſtate than a tree, torn from its roots, can bear fruit, or alter its poſition, in the place where it has fallen. This alluſion conveys a moſt important truth, and there is ſufficient reaſon to believe, that the Jews applied it to ſomething of this nature, from what immediately follows.

P

But

But some reply, Much have we giv'n, yet still Ver. 5.
 See no reward, no prospect that our Alms
 Shall e'er be recompens'd. — Wilt thou not trust
 Th' Almighty, tho' his ways to thee unknown?
 Can'st thou discern whence comes the Wind, or where
 It blows? What makes it rage, and then to cease?
 How thy own soul, of origin divine,
 Amazing union! join'd to brittle clay,
 Feels all its frailties? By what plastic pow'r,
 The Fœtus in its Mother's womb is form'd?
 If so mysterious Nature's works, and Man
 A stranger to himself, wilt thou attempt
 To comprehend the ways of Heav'n? Yet rest
 Assur'd, that as the Embryo, to full growth
 Arriv'd, from its dark prison instant breaks;
 So thou, at God's appointed time, shalt reap
 A plenteous harvest from the pious works
 Thou here hast sown: for wealth thus giv'n away,
 Yields vast increase, but hoarded up, is lost,
 And melts to nothing. Therefore, in the morn v. 6.
 Of life, some portion of that wealth reserve,
 The wretched to relieve, which Youth consumes
 In brutal pleasures and amusements vain:
 Nor in the ev'ning of Old Age withdraw
 Thine hand, tho' griping Av'rice loud reclaim:

For

For as the prudent Husbandman both late
 And early sows, nor, of his scatter'd seed,
 Knows which will prosper best; so, of thine Alms
 Thou know'st not which will most acceptance find
 With Heav'n, or those in dawn of life bestow'd,
 Or its decline; or whether both alike
 Will int'rest yield; of this alone assur'd,
 The more thy bounty feel, thou hast stor'd up
 A larger share of blessings for thyself.

With each delightful object round thee charm'd, v. 7.
 In ease and affluence sunk, How sweet, thou cry'st,
 To see the cheering Sun, and with full glee
 To taste the joys of life! 'Tis sweet, indeed,
 And well may'st thou exult: Yet still, amidst v. 8.
 Thy transports, recollect, that tho' man's years
 To green Old Age prolong'd, should constant flow
 In circling rounds of joy, all bright, serene,
 Exempt from disappointment, grief, and care;
 Thy Sun will surely set, and rise no more;
 For in the grave is all perpetual gloom.
 The days of darkness near approach, to which,
 Less than a moment, will the past appear.
 What comfort then will these gay scenes afford,
 Which are for ever fled? The night of Death

Will force thee to reflect, and late convince,
How vain and transient thy pursuits below.*

Perhaps thou'lt say, The only time for joy,
Is when the blood runs high, and every sense
With poignant relish tastes the sweets of life. —
Go then, fond, heedless Youth, whate'er thy soul
Desires, enjoy without restraint; indulge

V. 9.

* V. 7, 8. "*Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the Sun.—But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many: all that cometh is vanity.*" Some are of opinion, that the former of these verses contains the sentiments or exultation of one wholly enamoured with the charms of this present life. Be this as it will, we cannot, by any means, agree with those, who make the latter verse a continuation of the same person's sentiments, as if he had said, I am not insensible that I must certainly die, some time or other, and, when this Sun of life is set, that all these gay scenes around me will be lost in perpetual darkness: Since therefore it argues folly and vanity to disturb our minds about what we cannot prevent, let us live a merry life, so long as it lasts, and deny ourselves no gratification in our power. But neither the text, nor scope of the matter, will admit such an exposition. The latter verse

evidently contains the Preacher's reflection on the former. He makes, indeed, a reasonable concession, as to the sweetness of Life, and its present enjoyments; but from hence takes occasion, by way of check to the Libertine's transports, to mention Death, implied by *the days of darkness*, which, as he observes, will surely come, *tho' a man should live many years, and rejoice in them all*; which, however, is no more than a mere supposition of his, for argument's sake; since no man upon earth, ever did, or ever will do so. The happiest have but hours of joy for months of sorrow. The turn we have given to the last words, is agreeable to the sense of the Vulgate, which, though not a literal version, (as it seldom is, especially in the metrical parts of Scripture,) seems to come up to the true meaning. *Yet he ought to remember the dark time, and the days to come, which will shew the vanity of those things that are past.*

Each

Each craving appetite, and ev'ry sense
 With pleasing objects charm, as instant gust
 Of passion moves.* — Yet let this serious thought
 Check thy career, and, like a thunder clap,
 Rouse from th' enchanting dream. These precious hours,
 In childless follies spent, tho' here they seem
 To perish unobserv'd, are strictly charg'd
 To thine account: for God will surely bring
 Thy works and thee to his tremendous Bar,
 And Judgment pass on both. Does the harsh sound V. 10.
 Of future Reck'ning strike a sudden damp,
 And fill with sadness? Or art thou enrag'd
 At such rebukes? Would'st thou be happy, learn
 Those fierce tumultuous passions, which disturb
 Thy mind, with calm reflection to repress;
 And brutal Lust, that wars against the soul,
 Brings on, with hasty strides, decrepit Age,
 Reason dethrones, and plunges in a gulph

* V. 9. "*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy fond pursuits, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the light of thine eyes.* As the two words, which our Version renders in both places, *Youth*, are different in the original, the construction we have given the latter is countenanced by the Vulgate, which renders the same words, in

the very next verse, *Youth and Pleasure*. Some will have this passage to be a permission, or advice, of the Preacher's, like some others before taken notice of, which are undoubtedly so to be understood; but here the words are to be taken ironically, and by way of sarcasm, as the turn of the expression, with what follows, evidently evinces.

Whence

Whence none can save, far from thee to remove.
 For unexperienc'd Youth is but a scene
 Of vanity at best, and unrestrain'd
 By wholesome admonitions, soon betrays
 Itself, and headlong its own ruin seeks.

What powerful antidote shall we prescribe
 Against the foul contagion? How prevent
 Its dire effects?—Early, my Son, begin*
 To think of thy Creator: in the bloom
 Of life, with reverential awe reflect,
 That all the various blessings here bestow'd,
 And ev'n thy own existence, are deriv'd
 From his paternal love. Let this great Truth,
 Deep-rooted in thy soul, its influence shed,
 And guide thy wand'ring steps to Virtue's paths.
 That frame, in which thou gloriest, so robust
 And vig'rous, will not always last: Old Age

C. XII. v. 1.

* Solomon here begins a most admirable description of the infirmities of Old Age, which are set in contrast to the vigour and gaieties of Youth, that, on comparing both, we may learn this important Truth, that he, who neglects his duty to God, whilst in the prime of life, will be indisposed for it, when grown old and feeble, and sinking under a complication of distempers. The several disor-

ders incident to this state, which affect both the body and mind, are comprized in the five following verses, under a variety of emblems. Nothing can be more concise or expressive, inasmuch that the greater part of their force and beauty, if not entirely lost, must be considerably diminished, by a paraphrase, or circumlocution of words, which was almost unavoidable in a work of this nature.

Steals

Steals on apace, and, with its chilling frost,
 Will freeze th' impetuous current in thy blood,
 And ev'ry pleasure, which now charms, will lose
 Its relish. Wilt thou dedicate the dregs
 Of life to him? 'Till then, th' important work
 Defer, when feeble grown, with maladies
 O'erwhelm'd, a burthen to thy dearest friends,
 And weary of thyself? Remember this, Ver. 21
 E'er Reason's light be quench'd, and Mem'ry fail;
 E'er all thine intellectual pow'rs, decay'd,
 Or sunk in dotage, can no more exert
 Their wonted functions. In that doleful hour,
 To thee in vain the Sun will shine by day,
 The Moon and Stars by night; each beauteous scene
 Irksome or disregarded; all around
 Gloomy and sad. The harbingers of Death,
 With fierce attack on ev'ry side, scarce grant
 A moment's respite: for, as big-swol'n Clouds,
 Just emptied, strait begin to low'r again,
 And heavier show'rs pour down; so thy complaints
 In constant rounds of grief and pain succeed,
 And still increase.* Is this a season fit V. 3.

* V. 2. "*When the Sun, and the Light, and the Moon, and the Stars shall be darkened, and the Clouds return after the rain.* Some apply the former part of this verse to the dimness of sight incident to Old Age, but very injudiciously, as this circumstance is afterwards expressly taken notice of; and it can scarce be supposed, that, in so short a def-

Religious duties to commence, and raise
 Those hands to Heav'n, which, tho' by Nature form'd
 To guard thy brittle mansion and supply
 Its wants, with paralytic tremors seiz'd,
 Enervate hang? (1) When the firm Columns bend
 Beneath its weight, unable to support
 The tott'ring fabric? (2) When the Mill, worn out
 By all-consuming time, no more can grind,

a description, Solomon should mention the same thing twice. 'Tis far more agreeable to the Scripture Style, as well as to the present subject, to apply these words to the decay of the intellectual faculties, which are the luminaries of the Soul; as also to the sad and uncomfortable state that age reduces men to, insomuch that the most cheerful objects in nature grow irksome and distasteful. The Preacher therefore begins with the nobler part, and then proceeds to enumerate those disorders which chiefly affect the body, to which the words in the latter part of the verse are a fine introduction.

V. 3. (1) "*In the day when the keepers of the House shall tremble.*" We need not observe here, that Man, sinking under a load of age and infirmities, is most aptly compared to an old crazy House, whose inhabitant is unable to keep it in repair. The hands and arms are, no doubt, intended by the Keepers of this House, which being destined for its defence, and to provide it

with necessaries, are now so affected with paralytic disorders, as to be incapable of either.

(2) "*And the Strong shall bow themselves.*" Our Version has inserted in this clause the word *men*; but we think, that of Junius and Tremellius is to be preferred, who have rendered it *valentes robore*, i. e. the mighty ones, or those that excell in strength; not only as the word *man* does not appear in the original, but by this expression something is left to the reader's imagination, and thereby the allegory made more of a piece. Some understand by these *strong ones*, the back and shoulders; others the reins; but the most generally received exposition is, that the legs and thighs are here denoted, which, like two pillars, support the whole weight of the body. In whichsoever of these senses they be taken, the difference is not material, as those parts are undoubtedly intended, wherein man's principal strength consists.

Nor

Nor for the pining Inmate food prepare? (3)
 Ev'n those, who on the lofty watch-tow'r sat,
 And, through the windows of the foul, survey'd
 Far distant objects, now too dim are grown
 The nearest to discern. (4) Is this a time
 With Heav'n to gain acceptance, when thy plaints,
 Tiresome to thine associates, and abhorr'd
 Thine ailments, feeble, low, and tremulous
 Thy voice (tho' once so loud) that none can hear,
 From public intercourse exclude? Behold!
 Thy lips, the two-leav'd doors without, are clos'd,
 And each internal passage, or denies
 Admittance, or refuses to convey
 Such due supplies as languid Nature craves. (5)

V. 4.

(3) "*And the Grinders shall cease, because they are few.*" That by the grinders are meant the teeth, admits of no dispute; for these, being partly dropped out from their sockets, and the few that remain, loose or straggling, are of no more use to the mastication of food than a broken mill-stone to the grinding of corn.

(4) "*And those that look out of the Windows shall be darkened.*" It is universally agreed, that by this expression is meant the dimness of sight so remarkable in old men. As to the phrase, *Lookers out of the windows, or casements*, it hath a peculiar force and significancy, which none but those who are versed in

Optics, and acquainted with the wonderful structure of the eye, (through which organ the soul discerns all external objects painted on the Retina,) can have any idea of. And, indeed, it must be acknowledged, that notwithstanding the many ingenious tracts written on the theory of Vision, there is something so astonishing in its nature, as to be utterly inexplicable.

(5) "*And the Doors (or two leav'd portals) shall be shut in the streets, (or open passages,) when the sound of the Grinding is low.*" These words are not without their obscurity, as appears from the variety of arbitrary interpretations. Some expound them literally, as meaning

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no

Nor can the wretch, as he was wont, recruit
Himself with rest ; stranger to sleep, he starts
From his loath'd couch at earliest dawn, to change
The scene of woes ; and, whilst in softest notes
The feather'd choir begin t' express their joy,

no more than that old people are forced to keep within doors, their voice being so low and feeble, that none can hear what they say ; for which reason, they are excluded from public assemblies ; that their Lips are shut in eating, because they have lost their teeth, and therefore can only mumble their food. It must be owned, that old men are generally in the condition here described ; and I believe it is found, by daily experience, that, when they are grown tired of themselves, their most intimate acquaintance are no less tired of their company, and would willingly get rid of them. Bishop Patrick, in his paraphrase, seems to understand the words in this sense, which therefore we have partly followed ; tho' Critics, we apprehend, will not be thoroughly satisfied with it. As to Dr. Smith's comment on this obscure passage, which that learned Prelate allows to be very ingenious, though he thinks it too philosophical, it appears to us by far the most eligible. Solomon, according to the Doctor, by these words, intended that internal grinding in the stomach, and other parts,

wherein the food, having been first coarsely ground in the mouth, (which may properly be styled *the outward Mill*,) is, by a peculiar fermentation, ground over again, and reduced into the minutest particles, of a different colour and consistence, called *Chyle* : and that this same *Chyle*, in its continued progress through the other vessels destined for its reception, still receives farther alterations, till at length the finer and more volatile parts receive their utmost degree of perfection, being exalted into blood, and last of all, into animal spirits. From this supposition, which appears to be no less probable than ingenious, the Doctor infers, that, by *the low sound of the Grinding*, here mentioned, are denoted a total indigestion, with all those symptoms which indicate that Nature can no longer perform her ordinary functions. We have paid the more regard to this explication, as it carries on the metaphor of an Old House, whose passages to all the chambers and inward apartments, as well as the *Street-door*, the two-leaved portal (the Lips) are of no farther use.

Penfive and fad renews his plaints: (6) for now
 Mufic itfelf hath loft its charms ; no more
 The fweeteft voice, or tuneful inftrument,
 Affect the deafen'd ear. (7) Far now are fled V. 5.
 Each mild and tranquil paffion ; none remain
 But fuch as harrafs and torment the mind,

(6) “ *And he fhall rife up at the voice of the Bird.*” Some expound thefe words thus—He fhall be ftartled out of his fleep at the fmalleft noife, even at the chirping of a little bird. But this interpretation contradicts what immediately follows, which implies deafnefs. Others take the meaning to be, that his voice fhall be now fo low and feeble, as to rife to no higher a pitch than that of a Sparrow. Among many other expositions, that of Doctor Edwards is very fingular, to wit, that the old man, though he has loft his appetite, yet at the mention of fome nice delicate bit, fuch, for inftance, as a Partridge or Pheafant, will be tempted to rife and eat ; which is contrary to the tenor of the whole defcription, that fupposes him incapable of taking the leaft pleafure in any thing. We have followed the interpretation which is moft obvious and natural, to wit, that the wretched old man, being tired of his bed, where his complicated infirmities would not fuffer him to take any reft in the night, riles at break of day, when the Cock begins to

crow and the Birds to warble out their notes ; not that he is difturb-ed at the noife they make, which the very next words, as we before obferved, fuppose him incapable of hearing, but becaufe he cannot fleep, on account of his ailments. It is likewise to be noted here, that as, in the preceding inftances, the expreffions are evidently allegorical, alluding to the feveral parts of the Houfe, and the different offices of the Domesticks, if we may be allowed to ufe the term, fo in the paffage now before us, the words, which are plain and fimple, may be faid, with propriety enough, to denote the forlorn condition of the Mafter of the Houfe himfelf.

(7) “ *And all the daughters of Mufic fhall be brought low.*” Thefe words, according to the Hebrew Idiom, may fignify either thofe organs which modulate the voice, and produce Harmony, or thofe which receive it, and are affected by it. We have taken them in the latter fenfe, with St. Jerome, who thus renders this paffage ; *Et obfurdescunt omnes filiae Carminis.*

And shake its crazy mansion : Fear presides
 In chief, and, from his weakness, gathers strength ;
 Tho' nothing once could daunt, yet now alarm'd
 At ev'ry shadow, and with terrors seiz'd,
 And dark forebodings, where no danger threatens.
 With tott'ring pace he moves, and pants for breath
 At ev'ry step ; to him the smoothest path
 Seems rugged. (1) Thus enfeebled, not unlike
 To early blossoms of an Almond-Tree,
 The hoary honours of his head shall fall,
 And baldness leave. (2) The dull Grafshopper, late

(1) "*Also when he shall be afraid of that which is high, and terrors shall be in the way.*" The plain meaning of these words is, that, among all the uneasy and disquieting passions, to which old men are liable, such as Anger, Hatred, Grief, Impatience, &c. Fear, or Distrust, chiefly predominates. The same man, who, in his youth and vigour, was intimidated at nothing, when broken with age, is apt to be so dispirited and enfeebled, both in body and mind, as to be alarmed at every thing. In this condition, he is not only terrified *at that which is high*, (whether this expression is to be understood of eminence of place, as difficult of access to one who can scarce stand on his legs ; or of matters which require deep study and application of mind ; or of any great and hazardous undertaking ; for in all

these senses the words have been expounded,) but *Fears also shall be in the way* ; that is, the easiest things shall seem to be attended with insuperable difficulties : he shall be full of dreadful apprehensions, and starting mighty obstacles, where no danger or difficulty appears. This seems to be the most natural exposition, and therefore we shall trouble the reader with no other.

(2) "*And the Almond-Tree shall flourish.*" As we have given a turn to the last word so different from most Versions, it may be necessary to give our reasons for this deviation. It is agreed on all hands, that under the emblem of an Almond-Tree, is denoted the hoary head of an Old Man : But then, why is this Tree said *to flourish*, which naturally implies joy and gladness ? Does not such an expression convey an idea totally repugnant to all the preceding

So active, gay, and sprightly, to itself
 A pond'rous burden grown, wrinkled its skin,
 Of ugly hue, distorted limbs, its flesh
 Worn to the bones, which far protrude, it crawls,
 And drags with pain its weight. (3) The sensual flame,

preceding and subsequent ones, whether allegorical or literal, which imply nothing but what is defective, sad, gloomy, and melancholy? With regard to an old man, as here described, quite broken with infirmities, and just dropping into the grave, every one knows, that his hair, instead of growing or flourishing, is apt to fall off, and leave the head entirely bald. Is it not therefore reasonable to conclude, that this emblematical Almond-Tree, in order to make the emblem to answer the thing represented, and that the whole description might be of a piece, instead of being said to flourish, should rather be stripped of its white blossoms? For tho' Solomon, on other occasions, when he speaks of the reverence due to old age, calls the hoary head, *its crown, its glory, and ornament*; yet nothing could be farther from his intention here, than to render such a state desirable: on the contrary, he endeavours to set it in the most wretched and contemptible light that his exalted imagination could suggest. How then shall we clear up the matter? Another interpretation is to be sought for, of the word פִּנְיָ, commonly rendered, *shall flourish*, which, as some ob-

serve, must, according to the radical letters, be derived from פִּנְיָ, which has never signified to flourish, nor any thing like it, but quite the reverse, viz. *to cast away, dissipate, tread under foot*; and tho' to this derivation it has been objected, that the word in dispute is the future from פִּנְיָ, yet others reply, that this is to force a sense on the word, which it will by no means bear, as there is no example of an נ, inserted in the middle of an Hebrew word, between the two radicals. Some indeed insist, that this letter is redundant, standing in the room of ו, and, to support their assertion, derive the word from another root. We shall trouble the reader with no more of these grammatical niceties, the discussion of which we leave to those who are better versed in the original; and have only to add, that, whatever may be thought of the present Criticism, we flatter ourselves, we shall be easily pardoned the liberty we have taken, as it does not affect the essential beauties of this ancient Poem, and what we have here attempted, was never designed as a formal Comment.

(3) “ *And the Grasskeeper shall be a burden.*” The common exposition

That flame which glow'd so fierce within the breast,
 Entirely quench'd, cold, impotent, and dead
 To Beauties charms. (4) How short an interval

position of these words, is, that Man shall be so weakened by the infirmities of age, as to be unable to support the lightest weight, even that of so small a creature as a Locust, or Grasshopper. But it appears from the grammatical construction of the words, that, whatever is denoted by this emblem, the burden ascribed to it, evidently relates to the thing itself. There is the same ambiguity in our Version, as in the Latin Phrase, *oneri erit*, which signifies either to be burdensome to another, or to be burdened one's self; in which latter sense the present passage must necessarily be taken. Now what can be meant by this burthened Grasshopper? Undoubtedly Man, who is the subject of the whole description. The several resemblances between this insect in its declining state, and a decrepit old man, have been minutely pointed out by Commentators; and it must be owned, that some of them, of which we have taken notice, are so striking, that an apter emblem could not be easily thought of. But the comparison, as we apprehend, chiefly holds, with respect to the dulness and sluggishness of that insect, which, tho' at first so exceeding sprightly in its motions, yet, when the season of its youth and ravages is over, is so changed,

that it can scarce crawl on the earth. It is not improbable, as an ingenious Commentator has observed on the present passage, that the Ancients were no strangers to the propriety of this emblem, and that the fable of *Tithonus*, who is said by the Poets to have been so extremely emaciated with age, that at length he was turned into a Grasshopper, from hence took its origin. Be this as it will, it cannot be wondered at, that so noble a creature as Man should, on this occasion, be represented by so despicable an insect, when we find him compared, in other places of Scripture, to a wild Ass's Colt, nay, even to the vilest Reptile. What can be more sublime, and, at the same time, more mortifying, than that expression of Job? *I said to Corruption, Thou art my Father, and to the Worm, Thou art my Mother and my Sister.*

(4) "*And Desire shall fail.*" Some understand nothing else by these words, but the weakness of the stomach, which now loaths all kind of food: but as this symptom has been already mentioned, we must recur to the original word, here translated *Desire*, which, according to the LXX, means the fruit of the Caper-shrub, and from the known property of this vegetable, in not only exciting the languid appetite,

but

Betwixt this tranſient ſtate, and that long Home (5)
 Allotted to the ſons of men! Ev'n now
 Thy mourning friends the fun'ral rites prepare,

but as a provocative to venereal pleaſures, is here transferred from its primary ſignification, and chiefly, if not ſolely, applied in the latter ſenſe. The old man, drawing near his end, and almoſt at the laſt gasp, is quite cold and dead to thoſe ſenſual enjoyments wherewith he was once ſo tranſported. Not only the organs themſelves, which adminiſtered to thoſe pleaſures, as ſome underſtand the word, are totally enervated; but the very flame of *Concupiſcence*, as it is well rendered in our antient Engliſh Tranſlation, extinguished. Solomon undoubtedly wrote this Poem when he was grown old himſelf, and therefore could ſpeak more feelingly on the ſubject; and, in all probability, the infirmities of age, which he ſo pathetically deſcribes, came the faſter upon him, from the immoderate indulgence of his paſſion for women. There is reaſon to believe, that he hints at the pernicious conſequences of this exceſs, in the laſt verſe of the preceding chapter, where he adviſes young men *to put away evil from their fleſh*, being convinced, from his own experience, that as Luſt naturally enervates the mind, and clouds the underſtanding, ſo nothing more debilitates the body, nor ſooner haſtens its decay.

(5) “*For Man goeth to his long Home, and the Mourners go about*

the ſtreets.” Theſe words, being a plain and eaſy tranſition from the various ſymptoms attending man's declining ſtate, to thoſe which immediately precede his diſſolution, need no explanation. However, it may not be wholly impertinent juſt to obſerve, with reſpect to the word *עלם* (of which we have already taken notice in the firſt chap.) here rendered *long*, that it has three ſignifications in Scripture, every one of which are ſtrictly applicable to the preſent ſubject. The firſt, which ſeems to be its original meaning, as we before remarked, is *ſecret, hidden, unknown*; in which ſenſe it is undoubtedly uſed in the laſt verſe of this chapter. Now the Grave, that Home to which the ſons of men are perpetually travelling, is the hiding-place, or ſecret receptacle of the whole human race, where they are no more ſeen; and beſides the impenetrable ſecrecy and obſcurity of the place itſelf, which, for this reaſon, is emphatically ſtyled the Land of Darkneſs, who can tell how long he ſhall remain in it? The Preacher has told us, that the days we muſt ſpend there, are *many*; but what man can aſcertain their number? Secondly, the word ſignifies an indefinite ſpace of time, commensurate to the thing or perſon ſpoken of; in which ſenſe, the term *for ever*, ſo frequently occurring in Scripture,

Will soon bear out the breathless coarſe, and pay
The tribute of their ſorrows o'er thy grave:
For warmeſt Friendſhip then can do no more.

Poor unreflecting Wretch! 'Tis now too late V. 6.
To think of thy Creator, when thou haſt
Forgot thyſelf, and like an Harp unſtrung,
Which to obey the ſkillful Artiſt's touch
Refuſes, ev'ry organ of the ſoul
Is grown quite uſeleſs; when the Silver Cord,
Which held the frail machine in ſtrict embrace,
And, ſwift as thought, to ev'ry nerve convey'd
The ſubtil animating flame, relax'd,
Hangs like a ſlacken'd Bow-ſtring, which no more
The pointed ſhaft can ſend. (6) Well may the ſtreams

Scripture, may here alſo be taken, ſince every man muſt continue under the dominion of Death, till that final period when the grave ſhall give up its dead. Finally, it ſignifies an endless duration; in which ſenſe it is taken by St. Jerome, who renders this paſſage, *in domum æternitatis ſuæ*; forasmuch as the ſtate, which Death puts a man into, is abſolutely irrevocable and eternal. We ſhall add no more on this head than juſt to hint, that the phraſe, *long Home*, uſed in our own Verſion, is an Angliſm, and not without its peculiar beauty, and, as it comes up, at leaſt, as near to the original as any of the other conſtructions, could not be changed for a better.

(6) “ *Or ever the Silver Cord be looſed.*” The moſt judicious Commentators are now univerſally agreed, that by the Silver Cord is meant the Spinal Marrow, with the various nerves thence derived, whoſe ramifications, although innumerable, are here expreſſed in the ſingular number, becauſe they have all the ſame origin, ſerve to the ſame uſe, and have a mutual connection with each other. They are called *ſilver*, on account of their white ſhining colour, remarkable even in a dead-body. And every one, who knows the dreadful effects of Nervous Diſorders, will eaſily comprehend what is meant by this Cord being relaxed, or loſing its due tone.

And

And riv'lets cease to flow, when ev'n the Spring
 Of sense and motion fails; for now, alas!
 The precious Golden Bowl itself, of frame
 Stupendous, or shrunk up, or overstretch'd,
 No longer can, with fresh recruit, supply
 Th' exhausted spirits. (7) Gasping Nature sighs
 In vain for succour. At the Fountain-head,
 The shatter'd Pitcher can no more receive
 The vital Fluid; (8) nor the circling Wheel
 Raise from its Reservoir, and swift repell

(7) "*Or the Golden Bowl be broken.*" As the Silver Cord denotes the whole nervous system, which serves to convey the animal spirits, as in so many channels and rivulets, to every part of the body, so by the Golden Bowl we are to understand the Brain, which is the Spring of sense and motion, the origin of all the nerves, and from whence they continually receive, in a state of health, a due supply of animal spirits. It is denominated *Golden*, not only from the colour of the inner and finer membrane wherein it is enwrapped, which somewhat inclines to yellow, but from the noble purposes it serves, herein excelling all other membranes, as gold excels other metals. When this Golden Bowl is *broken*, or rather, shrunk into itself, or (as others render it) *when the golden Orb moves eccentrical, and out of its regular course*, it must in-

stantly put the whole animal œconomy into disorder, and end in incurable apoplexy.

(8) "*Or the Pitcher be shattered in pieces at the Fountain.*" By the Pitcher is to be understood the *Vena Cava*, or rather the Veins in general, which are the proper receptacle of the Blood, containing it as in a vessel, and whose peculiar office it is to carry it, for a fresh supply, to the right ventricle of the Heart, which is therefore fitly denominated *the Fountain*. This Pitcher may well be said to be shattered, or rendered useless, when the veins have so far lost their action, as to be incapable of carrying to the heart the vital fluid they contained, and receiving from thence a fresh impregnation. Consequently the Blood must now grow cold, languid, and spiritless.

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The purple Current thence to parts remote. (9).

Long had the King of Terrors laid close siege v. 7.
 And ev'ry outwork seiz'd: now rushing in,
 With merc'less rage he storms the Fort of Life.
 Tho' indispos'd for mutual help, yet loth
 To part, the dear Associates now are torn
 Reluctant from their cold embrace: the House
 Is fall'n, nor to its Inmate can afford
 A moment's shelter; all around it lies
 An heap of ruins. To its native dust
 This earthly frame returns: the heav'nly spark,
 That glow'd within, kindled by breath divine,
 Instant returns to God. (1) What phrenzy, then, v. 8.

(9) "*Or the Wheel broken at the Cistern.*" By the Wheel is here denoted the great Artery, with its branches; and consequently, by the Cistern, the left ventricle of the heart, from whence the blood is impelled, as from a reservoir, and, in a state of health and vigour, circulated to the remotest parts, by a perpetual rotation, as may be easily perceived on the slightest touch. This hieroglyphical Wheel alludes to those, which served to draw up water from wells and deep cisterns, to be conveyed to distant parts, as occasion required, (a custom still used in many countries,) and may be said to be broken, or rendered unserviceable, when the arteries have lost their impulsive fa-

culty, the consequence of which is, a total stagnation of the blood, and instant Death, as follows in the next verse.

(1) "*Then shall the Dust return to the Earth, as it was, and the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*" With regard to the nature of the human and brutal Soul, tho' Solomon had before pointed out the difference, by saying that the former *goeth upward*, and the latter *downwards to the earth*; yet as these words are supposed by some to come from the mouth of a Sceptic, and therefore may seem to leave the matter undecided, in order to obviate all objections, he here asserts, in the most clear and positive terms, such as will admit of no ambiguity, that

To let this world, which fleeteth like a shade,
Engage our cares, and no provision make
For that which ever lasts? Ye thoughtless, hear
My words, and let the Preacher's voice incline
Your hearts to wisdom. — Who hath tasted more
Of what this world affords? who emptier found
Its pleasures, than the Royal Penitent?
By sad experience taught, as he began
The serious theme, How false, deceitful, vain
Our fondest hopes, and all things here below;
So, of his precepts grave the last result
Is still the same, That life is but a dream,
Where Man pursues imaginary joys,
And wakes to real woes. (2) — Perhaps, misled V. 9.

that though the body of man is composed of the same materials with that of brutes, and equally subject to dissolution, yet that the principles of their souls are totally distinct. If the Preacher did not here intend to inform us, that the human Soul exists after its separation from the body, why should he thus vary the expression, and not rather tell us, in one word, either that both return to Dust, or that both return to God, who certainly made the one as well as the other? But the striking expression he makes use of, evidently implies some extraordinary distinction, not only the human soul's future existence,

but (which is still more alarming to some persons) the strict account it must give of its actions. For it ought to be particularly noted, that this returning to God comprehends the wicked as well as the Righteous. The one returns to be rewarded, and the other to be punished.

(2) “*Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher, all is Vanity.*” Solomon here concludes all that he had been saying, with respect to the false ways which men pursue to obtain Happiness, repeating the same solemn exclamation he began with. Nor could there be a more proper introduction to what immediately

By passion, prejudice, or self-conceit,
 These wholesome lessons thou may'st disregard,
 And hope to find some easier way to Bliss.
 Where wilt thou meet a safer Guide, more skill'd
 To judge aright, or to direct thy steps
 With friendlier hand? Was not the Preacher fill'd
 With wisdom from above, and taught himself
 By Heav'n, like Heav'n dispos'd, with heart benign
 The blessing to dispense? Stranger to sloth
 Or envy, has he not, with ceaseless toil,
 The precepts utter'd by each hoary Sage,
 Like hidden treasure sought; the more he knew,
 Still more intent to learn? Wilt thou not find
 Sententious maxims, which in few comprize
 Deep sense, collected here, in order rank'd,
 Fitted to ev'ry state: such certain rules
 Of life, as to the paths of peace conduct,
 And will to future ages useful prove? *

mediately follows, which is to point out, in the clearest manner, the only sure and infallible way to it. Like a skilful Physician, he first lays open the sore, and probes it deeply, and then prescribes a radical cure.

* V. 9. " *And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in*

order many Proverbs." Some look on this, and the two next verses, as a digression; inserted by those who settled the sacred Canon long after Solomon's decease. The reasons they bring to persuade us, that these cannot be the Preacher's own words, are, his being mentioned in the third person, and because the encomium here given of him, would be indecent from his own mouth.

But

So frail is Man, that he must be allur'd V. 10.
 To his own Happiness; therefore, with pains
 Unwearied, has the Preacher sought to join
 Int'rest with duty, profit with delight,
 And render lovely Virtue's native charms :
 Yet tho', in decent ornamental dress
 Array'd, her beauties more engage the heart ;
 What precept has he giv'n, but such, as built
 On Truth's firm basis, ne'er can lead astray ;
 Such as the sacred Oracles contain,
 And sober Reason dictates? * — The same force V. 11.
 Have words, concise but nervous, to rouse up
 And stimulate the drowsy soul, as goads
 To drive the sluggish ox: like nails, well driv'n
 By arm robust, which fast retain the beam ;

But to the first it may be answered, that it is more agreeable to the Hebrew, as well as to the oriental style in general, to speak in the third than the first person; and as to the latter, nothing could come with a better grace, nor more to the purpose; for certainly no man was ever so well qualified as Solomon, to give instructions with regard to the conduct of life, nor took more pains to prevent his people from falling into the same excesses he had done himself. It is probable, that he not only hints here at the Ecclesiastes, but also at

the book of Proverbs, and some other pieces of the same serious tendency, now lost.

* V. 10. "*The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of Truth.*" The plain meaning of which is, that he endeavoured to mix the *utile* and the *dulce* together; that is, to put whatever he delivered, either from his own or other's observations, in the most pleasing dress, yet not in false or deceitful colourings, but always with the strictest regard to Truth.

They

They both collect, and fix our wand'ring thoughts
To one great point, and deep impressions make.

Those who thus labour Wisdom to promote,
And lead the Flock entrusted to their charge,
In Virtue's paths, are sure by Heav'n inspir'd,
And from the Sov'reign Pastor all their gifts
Derive: for what can Man alone perform? *

Oh! hearken then, my Son, or whoso'er V. 12.
Thou art, whose welfare as my own I seek;
To these instructions bend thine ear, content
With useful Knowledge, which will make thee wise.
Indeed: Would'st thou be happy, learn from hence
Thy duty; 'tis a science soon obtain'd.
For all that Heav'n thought fit for man to know,
Whate'er best suited to his frail estate,
And most conducive to his Happiness,

* V. 11. Tho' the grammatical construction of this verse is not a little embarrassing, yet, as the sense is clear enough, we shall just take notice, that, as Solomon had given, in the preceding verses, a just encomium of himself, so here he commends those who were employed in the same noble work, that is, of conveying useful instructions to others. He shews by the two significant comparisons of *Goads* and *Nails*, that short apo-

thegms of wise men (for which the Antients were celebrated) make quicker and deeper impressions, than more prolix and elaborate discourses; and concludes with this important remark, that, whatever benefit may from thence result to the world, no man is to arrogate the glory to himself, but ascribe it all to the goodness of God, the *one great Shepherd*, who superintends and directs the inferior Pastor.

In

In narrow compass lies. Here may'st thou rest
 Secure, and here more real Wisdom gain
 Than num'rous bulky Volumes can afford,
 Which darken clearest truths with style verbose,
 Distract the wav'ring mind with endless doubts,
 And curious speculations, no less vain
 Than tiresome and perplex'd, consume the flesh,
 And banish health and peace; and, after all
 The painful restless search, what fruit remains,
 But waste of time, and mighty labour lost
 To those that write or read? * — Here let us end V.13.

* V. 12. "*And farther, my Son, by these be admonished: of making many Books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* The former part of this verse is rendered by the Vulgate, *Enquire, my Son, after no more than these*, i. e. the words of the Wise, just before mentioned. In both Versions the sense is much the same, importing that what is comprized in such short instructions, may be easily learnt, and contains all that is necessary to be known. What Solomon here observes, with respect to many Books, is confirmed by experience; for certainly the greater part of that prodigious number of volumes wherewith our Libraries are crowded, conduce very little to the advancement of useful knowledge; still less to the practice of virtue, and consequently, nothing at all to

the attaining of solid Happiness. Were men to think more, and read less, they would grow wiser and better. Much Reading has the same effect on the mind, as a too large quantity of ill-digested food on the body, with this additional inconvenience, that it generally weakens and consumes the latter, without improving, and too often impairing the vigour of the former, which is thereby led into numberless errors and delusions. In a word, the great Science of life is to learn how to be virtuous; and in this, the most illiterate Rustic, with an honest heart, may make a much larger proficiency than the profoundest Philosopher. All human studies which, in any shape, conduce to this noble end, are so far truly-valuable; whilst those of a contrary tendency, (among which even

The great enquiry. — Since not Wealth nor Pow'r,
 Not Pleasure's tempting charms, nor even those
 Of Science, still more luring, better skill'd
 To flatter human pride; in fine, since nought
 Below the Sun, can solid Bliss afford,
 Where shall we find that SOV'REIGN GOOD, for which
 The soul is ever panting? Hear the sum
 Of our instructions. Whatso'er the Wise
 In ev'ry age have taught, is all compriz'd
 In one short precept: Let an awful sense
 Of God's almighty pow'r and boundless love
 Influence thy life, and keep his righteous laws;
 Thou need'st to seek no farther; this the soul
 And substance of Religion; all beside,
 An empty shadow. For this end alone
 Was Man created; his whole Happiness
 On this depends: 'Tis this alone restores
 To its primæval lustre Nature fall'n
 From innocence; hence Man is render'd all
 That Heav'n design'd, the noblest work of God:
 But left to his own conduct rash and blind,
 And deaf to Reason's dictates, tho' heav'n-born,

even useless studies may be ranked, natural depravity, and consequent-
 considering the inestimable value of ly mislead us in our search after
 time,) only serve to increase our Happiness.

His

His god-like origin degraded, low
 He falls; beneath the vilest brute he sinks:
 The Man is truly wretched, lost, and worse
 Than nothing.* Is not this short life the time
 Of thy probation? Shall the raging storms
 Of sharp Affliction, or the flatt'ring gales
 Of soft Temptation, thee from Duty's road
 Divert? Will not the Trial soon be o'er?
 Think, e'er too late, that thine eternal doom
 Will be determin'd, when th' impartial Judge,
 Whose ever-wakeful eye none can deceive,
 Whose justice none escape, to strict account
 Shall bring the sons of men, and justify
 His ways, tho' human Reason now exclaim.
 Then suff'ring Virtue, here obscure, despis'd,
 And known to none but Heav'n, shall brighter shine
 Than the meridian Sun, with glory crown'd
 Unfading. Those, who gave to vice the reins,

* V. 13. "Let us bear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his Commandments; for this is the whole duty of Man." The learned need not be reminded here, that the word *duty*, inserted in our Translation, is not in the Original, which should be rendered *the whole of Man*, or, more strictly and more emphatically, *the whole Man*; implying, that a due sense of God's omnipre-

sence, and obedience to his commandments, is the only thing that renders man the image of his Maker, preserves the original dignity of his nature, and distinguishes him from inferior creatures. This knowledge, when reduced to practice, will make us wise to Salvation; and without this, the whole circle of arts and sciences is mere folly and madness.

S

Tho'

Tho' here their crimes from mortal eye conceal'd,
 Shall at the Bar tremendous stand agast,
 Dragg'd from their dark retreats, to public scorn
 Expos'd, and meet with everlasting shame. *

* V. 14. Solomon here concludes his admirable discourse, the sum and substance of which, in few words, amounts to this, that man is a rational, and consequently an accountable creature; that as his only true happiness consists in a steady course of Piety and Virtue, without which, it will be impossible to pass his days here, with that inward peace and tranquillity which render the mind superior to the various accidents and vicissitudes of human life, so he has no reason to murmur at the seemingly unequal dispensations of divine Providence, during this transitory state, but rather to wait with patience the final result of things, which are all disposed by infinite Wisdom for the best; when every one shall be recompenced, according to his works. He that is firmly persuaded of the truth of this great fundamental principle of Religion, will always have sufficient motives to set the strictest guard on himself, with respect to his duty both to God and man; and always have enough to support his spirits in the most calamitous circumstances.

F I N I S.

To the KING.

THUS far the Royal Preacher, who, misled
By passion's impulse, in the devious paths
Of Vice and Folly stray'd; at length reclaim'd,
Hath here trac'd out the source of human woes,
And points with friendly hand the road to Bliss.
Princes from hence may learn, what fatal snares
The most exalted rank attend, when Pow'r
Is unrestrain'd by Virtue. No less hard
Will Sov'reigns find the task to govern well,
Than Subjects to obey; too apt are Both
Their duty to forget: Both stand in need
Of wholesome councils. — With superior gifts
Endow'd, how glorious shone the Hebrew King,

How lov'd, rever'd, when he began his reign,
 Let sacred records tell. In those blest days,
 Religion, root of solid Virtue, shed
 Its influence far and wide: then Holiness
 Appear'd in all its beauty. Pray'rs devout,
 With fragrant clouds of incense, rose to Heav'n ;
 Each solemn rite with rev'ence due perform'd:
 Anthems alternate round the hallow'd walls
 Echo'd melodious: People, Priest, and King,
 With pious zeal and mutual ardor join'd
 To praise the universal Lord. Hence flow'd
 Unutter'd blessings: Vice in dark retreats,
 Lay pale and trembling: pow'rful Sinners stood
 In awe of Justice, forc'd or to reform,
 Or to conceal their crimes. To such a Throne
 Who but the Wise and Virtuous dar'd approach?

Now see the sad reverse! To passions vile,
 The hoary Sage, by Female Arts ensnar'd,
 His Reason shamefully resign'd, and fell
 To brutal Lust a slave. How chang'd the scene!
 His heart perverted, far from Court was driv'n
 Religion, which at length no place could find,
 Ev'n in the Temple. Altars now were rais'd
 To Idols vain, and senseless Gods ador'd
 With impious rites. Strait Vice, uncurb'd by Law,

Its head erected, like the pestilence,
 Its baleful influence shed: no rank escap'd
 The deadly taint. Such, of a Court corrupt
 The dire effects! Vengeance divine pursu'd
 Th' ungrateful Sire in his ill-nurtur'd Son,
 Who liv'd to see his realm in pieces torn,
 And endless woes entail'd both on his Race
 And wretched People. — Hence let ev'ry Prince
 Be warn'd, how much the welfare of his State
 Depends on rev'rence to Religion due;
 That Piety, to public scorn expos'd,
 Or as a thing of trivial moment deem'd,
 Subverts all order, gives to Vice the reins,
 Prompts the licentious to contemn divine
 And human laws, and sure at length brings down
 Such curses on the best-establish'd realms,
 As Children yet unborn will rue th' effects.

That rock, on which Judea's King was lost,
 And grey experience should have taught to shun,
 The source of all his own and Country's woes,
 Thou in the prime of life hast 'scap'd, safe steer'd
 Through Passion's stormy sea, by watchful care
 Of Guardian-Angels, to the port secure,
 Where solid Bliss, if aught below the Sun
 Can solid Bliss afford, hath surely fix'd

Its

Its calm abode, and Eden's garden smiles;
 Th' uxorious Son of David fought in vain;
 Among a thousand of th' enchanting Sex,
 What thou hast found in One. They all, of form
 Beauteous, indeed, but soul deprav'd and false,
 Betray'd, and to the verge of ruin led
 The doating Monarch: by their blandishments,
 He saw his glory stain'd, abhorr'd at home,
 Despis'd abroad, the wrath of God provok'd:
 The poison'd cup they offer'd, to the taste
 Tho' sweet, prov'd bitter as the pangs of death.

But Royal CHARLOTTE, in whose aspect mild,
 Calm and serene as Heaven's unclouded face,
 Appears that inward peace of mind, which flows
 From conscious Virtue, form'd at once t' instruct
 And charm, will render the Connubial State
 A source of lasting joy, domestic sweets,
 And public blessings: 'midst the bloom of youth,
 Mature in Wisdom, hoary Age may learn
 Sublimest lessons from her lips: the rage
 Of Party ceases, Calumny itself
 Struck dumb at her approach: in ev'ry word,
 Each look and gesture, dignity and grace
 Proclaim her worthy of a Throne. — Exult,
 Ye Britons, in your Monarch's happy choice,

By

By Heav'n approv'd. Oh! may the genial Bed
 With many a smiling Offspring be adorn'd,
 And future GEORGES, like the present, reign

But would'st thou on the firmest basis fix
 The Throne, Religion thy peculiar care
 Demands: for tho' pretenders vile too oft
 Disgrace the venerable name, yet sure,
 Virtue itself, without Religion's aid,
 Is but an empty shadow. Would to Heav'n,
 That those beneath thy sway, had learn'd from Thee,
 To practise what she teaches! — But, alas!
 Not ev'n th' example of a Pious King,
 In youth undazzled with the pomp of Courts,
 And stranger to the luring charms of Vice,
 To our own happiness can move. We see
 The god-like pattern, much admire and praise,
 And yet the hideous contraste still pursue.

Oh! Britain, Queen of Isles, how vain thy boast
 Of mighty acquisitions, martial feats
 And triumphs! What avail thy wealth immense
 And wide-extended commerce, if thou feel'st
 Th' inveterate ills of Peace, more dreadful far
 Than all the rage of War? To what dire cause
 Shall we impute our crimes, but the contempt
 Of all that's sacred? This the bitter source

Of

Of our corrupted morals. — Vice, 'tis true,
 Hath its own sting, and Conscience, oft alarm'd,
 Lashes the guilty mind with whips of steel
 And rods of scorpions; yet, when callous grown,
 It sins without remorse, nor less defies
 Its own reproaches than the threats of Heav'n :
 The serious theme of momentary joys
 Purchas'd with everlasting grief, the day
 Of future Reck'ning, and tremendous Bar,
 At which the sons of men, ev'n Kings, shall stand,
 And hear their final doom, appear no more
 Than idle tales : That scheme of boundless Love,
 A World redeem'd by the incarnate God,
 Which ev'n th' Angelic Choir with trembling view,
 Struck with amazement, and in raptures lost,
 The subject made of ribaldry obscene,
 And vile burlesque. Preachers, with fruitless toil,
 Explain eternal Truths, and those invite
 To happiness, who glory in their shame.

Rouse, Heav'n's Vicegerent, and with wholesome Laws,
 Well-executed, let the impious feel
 Thou holdest not the sword in vain. The wretch
 Who at Religion mocks, whom no regard
 To reason, decency, or public good,
 No checks of conscience, nor th' infernal gulph

Hideous

Hideous with flames unquenchable, and worm
That gnaws and never dies, could e'er deter ;
Yet human Justice, with her brandish'd sword,
Will strike with instant terror. Thus a Dog,
Fit emblem of the lawless and profane,
Rushes within a Temple's hallow'd walls,
And ev'n th' Altar with his filth pollutes,
Regardless of th' indignant gazer's eye,
Nor heeds the sacred place ; but scar'd at length,
By lash of smarting whip, the shameless Brute
Flies howling to his kennel. — Hard, indeed,
The task, a wicked people to reform ;
More than heroic fortitude, and toil
Incessant it requires, and, after all,
May unsuccessful prove : yet still th' attempt
Is god-like ; not such glory, mightiest realms
In war subdu'd, not ev'n the conquer'd globe,
Can yield. Nor will the arduous work deter
A soul like thine, well-taught in Wisdom's school,
That Kings by Heav'n were destin'd to support
The weight of public cares ; to rest and ease
Few hours can spare, to vain amusements, none.
As Thou wert born to reign, so 'twas decreed,
That Thou should'st feel the burden of a Crown,

T

Which,

Which, tho' much envy'd, is at best a load
 That frets and gauls: To suffer, as becomes
 A King, and with unshaken patience bear
 Its weight, is truly Royal. — Thou hast learn'd,
 Ev'n in life's early dawn, what hoary Age
 Oft finds the hardest task, To know thyself;
 That Kings, tho' here to Gods compar'd, are still
 But Men, to the same frailties prone with those
 They govern; hence, to look with melting hearts
 On the distress'd and wretched, and to feel
 Their woes; nay, ev'n to sigh for such, whose crimes
 Enormous force th' avenging sword to strike
 Reluctant; ev'n for harden'd Profligates,
 Who, lost to Virtue, will not be reclaim'd.

Go on, great Prince, the course begun pursue:
 Long may'st thou reign, superior to th' assaults
 Of foul Detraction, and the soothing wiles
 Of Flatt'ry, which thy gen'rous soul disdains.
 Let Faction rage: Be thine the care to raise
 Dejected Merit, useful Arts promote,
 T' enforce the Laws, true Liberty maintain,
 And Constitution guard inviolate,
 By solemn oath entrusted to thy charge;
 Of Vice to stem the torrent, and avert

Th' impending storm, which our impieties,
 Uncheck'd, will surely from the hand of Heav'n
 Bring down. Thus shall thy name, exalted high
 In British Annals, be rever'd, and those
 Unborn, the Father of his Country bless :
 Thus shall thy Race, of their much-honour'd Sire
 Illustrious patterns, fill the British Throne,
 And o'er a great and virtuous people reign,
 'Till Nature fail, and Time shall be no more.

What human grandeur is, how vain a thing,
 Let him, who sat on David's Throne, admir'd
 By Eastern Sages, and for glory fam'd,
 Who long had try'd, and knew its worth, declare.
 How fleeting earthly joys, and that this world,
 Wherein thou hast so large and fair a part,
 Is but a passage to thy native home,
 A road, which oft more rough and thorny proves
 To best and wisest Princes, than to those
 In humblest stations, needs not here be told.

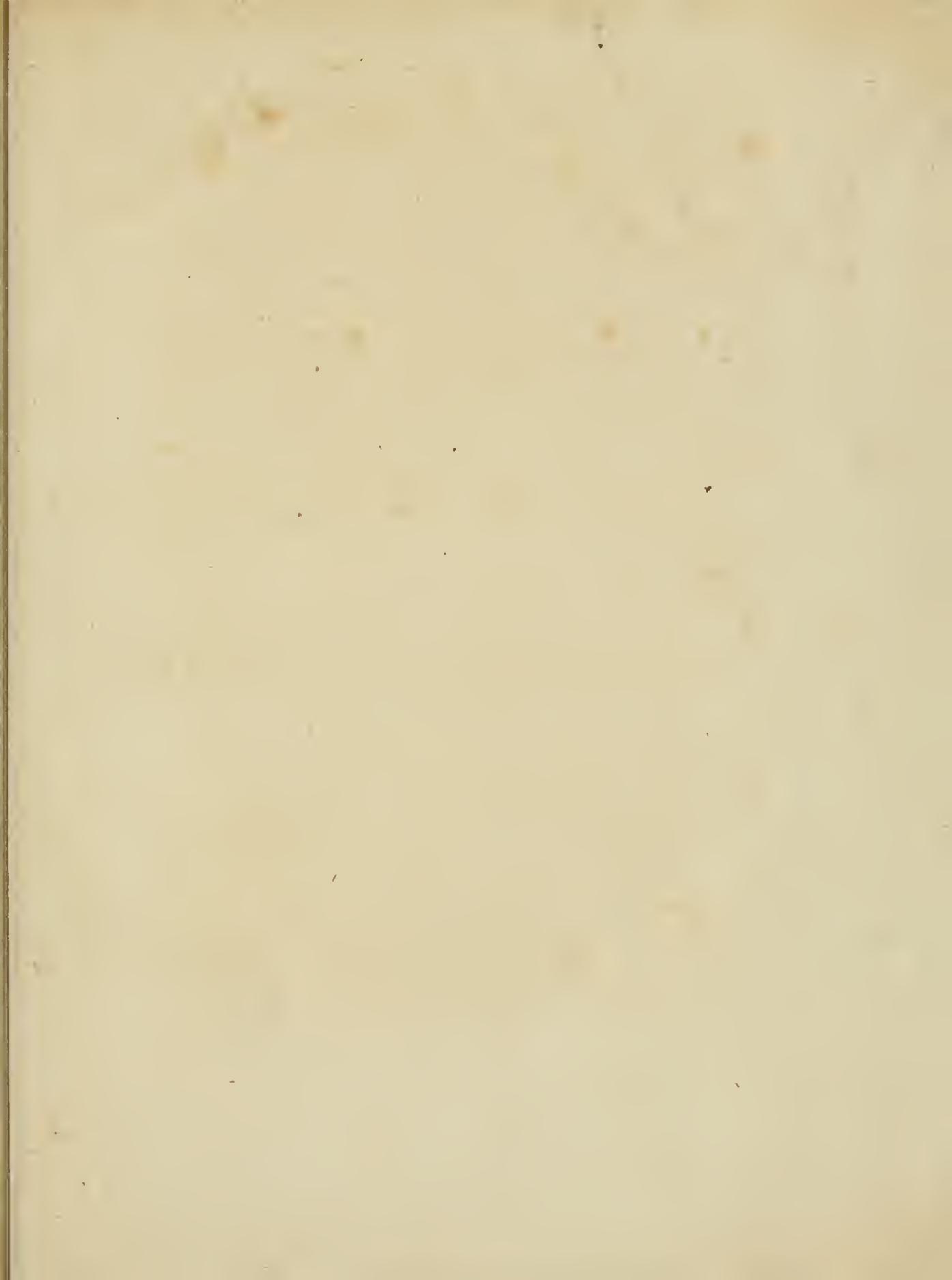
Nor will My Lord the King, tho' circled round
 With num'rous guards, approach'd with bended knee,
 And duteous awe, turn pale, or start, to hear,
 That Kings themselves must die. — Ev'n sacred GEORGE,
 Belov'd of God and man, for whom ascend

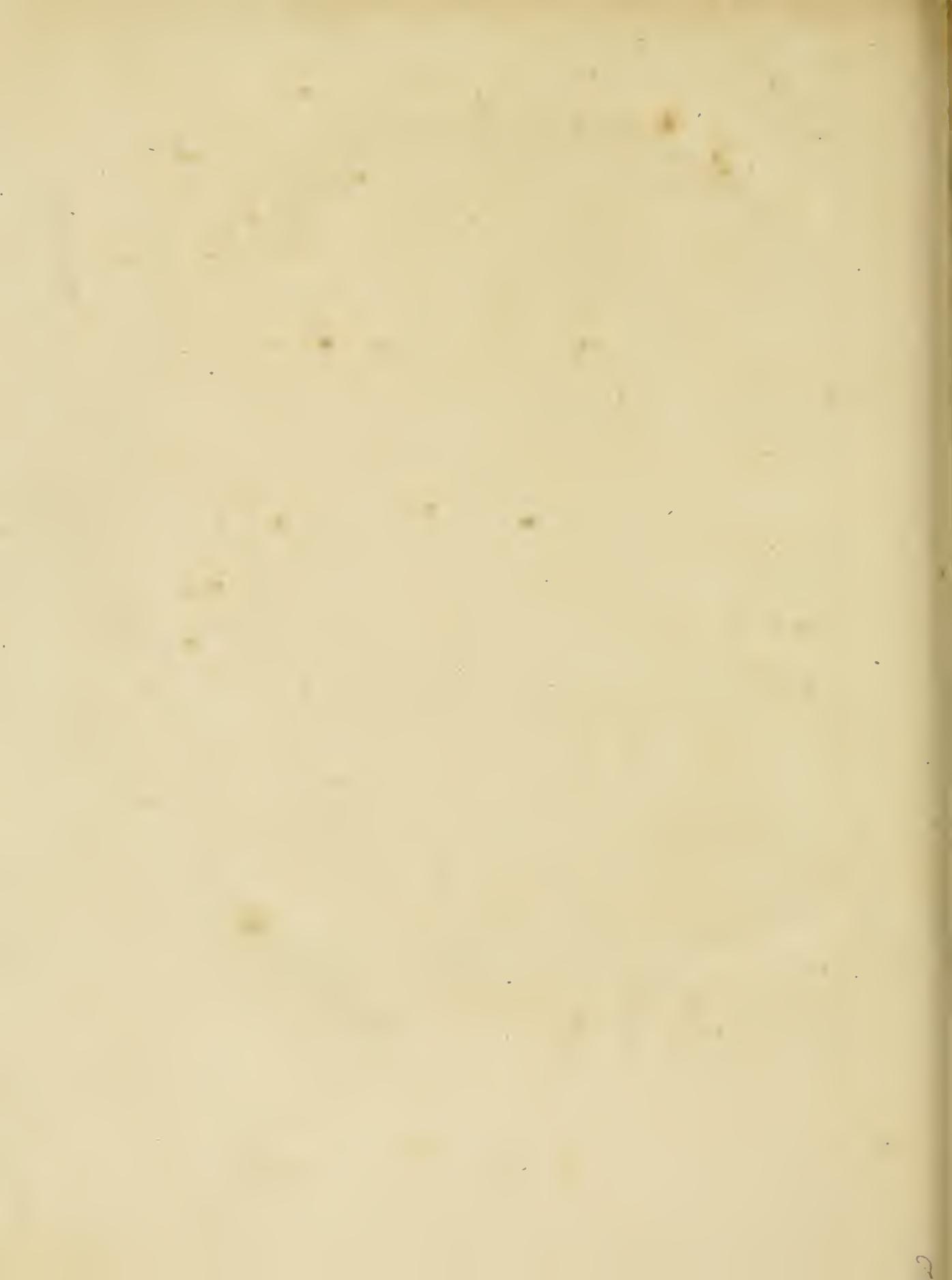
The ardent pray'rs of millions, offer'd up
 In daily sacrifice, must yield to Fate,
 And feel — But what hast thou to fear from Death?
 Let impious Princes tremble at the sound;
 For such have cause to fear: To such, indeed,
 Death is the King of Terrors. — When thy race
 Of life is o'er ('twill be a glorious race,
 So my prophetic soul forebodes, tho' long,
 Rugged, and toilsome) like the setting Sun,
 Thou with redoubled splendor shalt descend,
 Face the grim Tyrant, and his sting defy,
 With conscious virtue arm'd. Then o'er thy couch
 The messengers of Heav'n shall spread their wings,
 And tune their harps to such melodious airs
 As none but dying Saints can hear; such airs
 As ev'ry sad and gloomy thought dispel,
 And with extatic raptures fill the soul
 Departing from its frail abode, to seize
 Th' immortal prize in view. For Thee a seat
 In that blest mansion is prepar'd, where Kings
 Their glory shall transfer, if here below
 Of solid glory aught they have acquir'd:
 There Thou a far more radiant Diadem

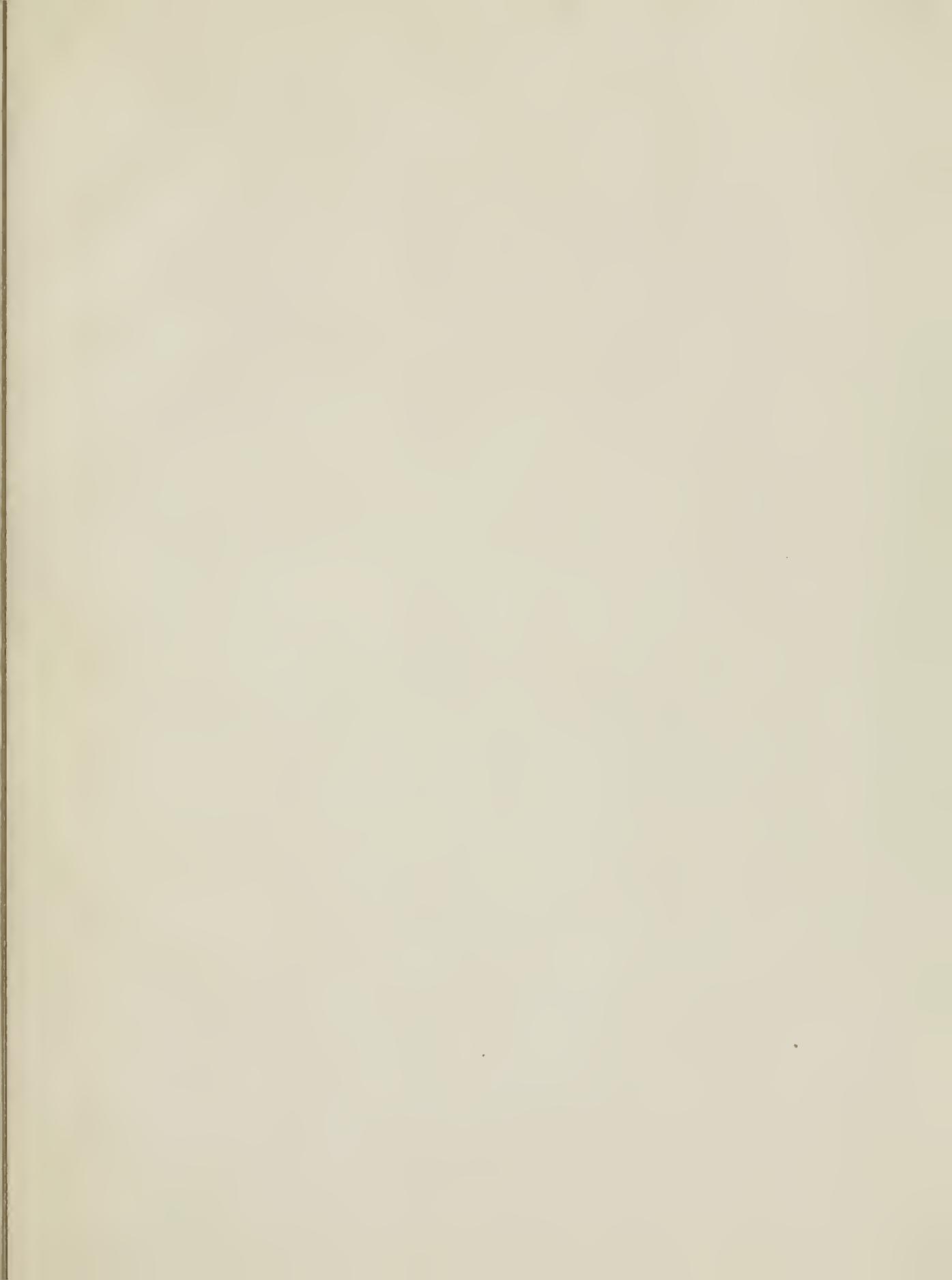
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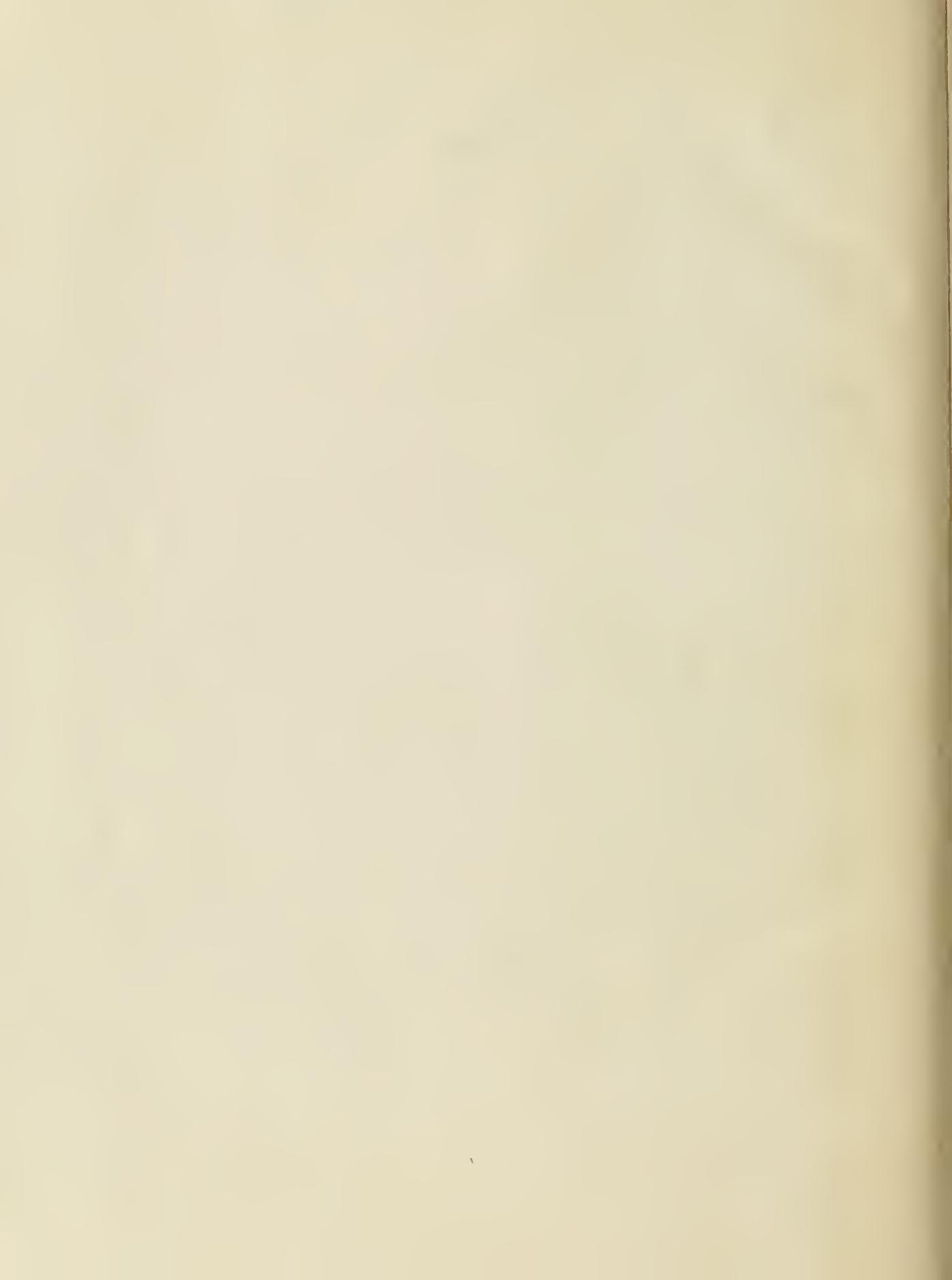
Shalt wear, and with distinguish'd glory shine
Among th' Illustrious Dead of ev'ry age.

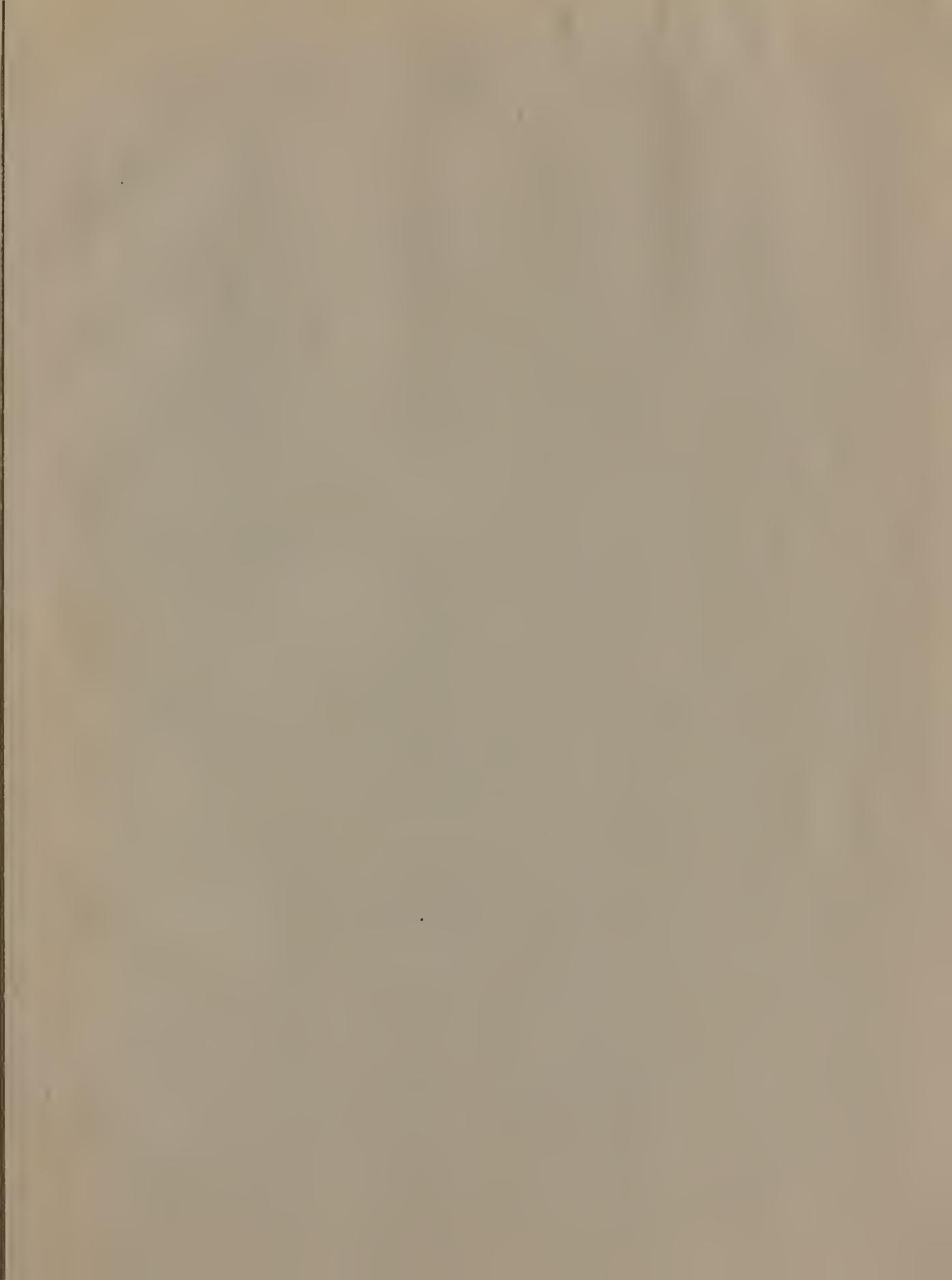
Oh! when th' Arch-angel's trump shall sound, and rouse
These moulder'd fabrics from the sleep of Death,
May I, the last and least among thy train,
In chorus full, the world's Redeemer shout,
Whilst, with Hosannas loud, the solemn pomp
Ascends to Regions of eternal Day.











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