

ORIGINALITY.

The TABLET.—No. II.

"In our progress from infancy, habits of acting are prior to habits of thinking. Manners have a most powerful controul over principles."

I WAS the other evening in company with two foreigners; who were in the humour of political discussion. They both discovered a strong curiosity to gain information; and were not averse, in their turn, to impart what they had acquired. It gave me pleasure to find that their minds were not very deeply tinged with prejudice. Some improper biases must be expected of men, who are remarking upon the affairs of a country, in so many respects, different from their own: they seem willing to give applause, where it was due; and spoke with delicacy and candour, on what could not be applauded. One of them, addressing himself to me, made this expressive remark; *the affairs of this country will operate favourably, when your people leave off disputing about words, and attend more to things.* The emphatic manner in which he communicated this idea, led me to suppose, he laid great stress upon it. I requested an exemplification.

"I have resided," said he, "eighteen months in America; and during this time, have frequently heard the lectures of clergymen, the debates of legislatures, and the conversation of private circles. The main scope of their observations rather aimed at teaching men, *how to think, than, what to practise.*"

"It is to be regretted, that the abilities of public preachers are so much employed in fixing theories and explaining words. Their discourses seem generally to agree in one point; that they have more concern with the *errors*, than with the *morals* of their hearers. There are however some exceptions to this mode of preaching; and there is reason to imagine that the Clergy will be more and more of the opinion, that if they can persuade men to *act right*, they will have less temptation to *believe wrong*. It must occur to every reflecting mind, that a *just and useful life* is one of the best guards against an erroneous belief. Whatever is commonly considered an article or doctrine of faith, does not, I imagine, often gain advocates by investigation.—The preacher will do less hurt to himself, and more good to his audience, by acting on the presumption that none of his hearers wish to dislodge him, from the platform, on which he stands. If he can engage the affections of people towards himself, his peculiar tenets will rest on a safer foundation, than metaphysics can afford. He will promote his own happiness, and the cause he professes to serve, more effectually, by gaining a true knowledge of the human character, than by any expertness in the refinements of logic."

"In your legislative assemblies, I find the debates wearing a similar complexion. To determine the meaning of expressions and the bounds of constitutional power takes up much of their deliberations. Many of your politicians seem not to have extended their views to the practical parts of government. They reason well upon principles, while they seem embarrassed how to adopt measures. Speculative men, either in public or private life, seldom give energy or success to their operations."

"The private circles I have attended, likewise shew a disposition to theorize. Forms, more than substances, occupy their attention. More men are expert in discussing personal rights and legislative powers, than in marking out plans that shall render the blessings of government something more than a *name*."

"I will mention an instance, which though not an uncommon one, will tolerably well illustrate the general object of my remarks. In a journey through a part of New-England, I passed a night at a small country village, or town as the inhabitants called it. On alighting from my horse, I obeyed several persons in and about the house where I was to lodge. Their appearance was decent, and their deportment not uncivil. My host furnished me with an apartment, which he meant I should have to myself through the evening.—However, I had not long been seated, before a man, whose appearance I did not dislike, came into the room and accosted me in the following words: "*Friend, you are a stranger to me, I hope you will take no exceptions, if I sit a while with you.*" I was in that state of mind, which preferred indifferent company to none at all, and therefore bid my companion take a seat. He immediately fell into a diversified conversation; in the course of which he informed me of all the noted law-contentions that had happened in his vicinity for several years; and also gave me a full account of some disputes that had taken place respecting the discipline of a neighbouring church; and in short did not leave me ignorant of any material transaction that had come within his knowledge for a considerable time. He had expressions at his tongue's end suitable for all these purposes; it occurred to me as probable, after he left the room, that he was some professional man, and I had no doubt that he sustained an excellent character in the neighbourhood. Indeed, I should have thought favourably of him to this day, had not the landlord undeceived me as he was lighting me to bed. "I hope," said he, "you will not have a bad

opinion of my house for having been so disturbed with that impertinent man, who intruded upon you this evening. There are in this neighbourhood a number of these talking, idle fellows, who put themselves in the way of all strangers that come to my house." I told my civil landlord to give himself no uneasiness, for my companion had afforded me much amusement; and I had concluded that he was a man of respectability, and asked if he was not a lawyer, or some officer of the church as he was well acquainted with legal processes and ecclesiastical discipline. The innkeeper with a look of indignant surprise assured me I was deceived, and that he was as lazy and worthless a fellow as could be "*found unhung*". He was a man of no profession and in no credit. His father left him some property, but he wasted it, in quarrels at law, and in stirring up strife among the neighbours. Is he not, replied I, a man of honour and integrity in his dealings? The landlord with a sarcastic sneer said, "Sir, if you put any property in his hands, you will have good luck ever to get any of it back again." But he certainly, continued I, must be a man of veracity. The innkeeper out of all patience with my queries, shook his head, and in a significant smile, replied, "my neighbour is rather apt to *shoot flying*." This character of my new acquaintance a little agitated me: as he had pledged himself to accompany me several miles in the morning, having assured me that business would lead him the direction I was going, and for the sake of my company, he would start earlier than he otherwise intended. In the morning, at the hour appointed, he called for me. I mentioned to him that I was exceedingly sorry to disappoint him, but that I had discovered my horse must be new shod, before he could perform his journey. We took leave of each other, and he assured me, that if ever I came that way again, he should be glad of a further acquaintance, and that if he should not happen to be at the inn when I arrived, the landlord would give him notice. The character of this man fully exhibits a specimen of one, who had been educated in habits of thinking and talking upon forms, to which no substantial meaning had been annexed, and from which no useful effects had been produced. It led me into a reflection that there must be a radical error in a system of education, which makes the actions of men so illy correspond with their conversation.

P L A N

OF THE

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A NATIONAL PAPER.

To be published at the SEAT of the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, and to comprise, as fully as possible, the following Objects, viz.

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Should something worthy the notice of the great farming interest of our country (the bulwark of freedom and equal laws) be exhibited from time to time, the editor HOPES for their patronage. Improvements in agriculture are of the first consequence to our young, our rising country; and the labours that tend to affect this desirable object, are the result of the purest patriotism, and should demand the constant attention of the Editors of periodical publication.

The Editor HOPES that the wealthy part of the community will become patrons of this publication, as it is but just to say, that every project, which has been obviously calculated for publick utility, has met with prompt and generous encouragement from those whom Providence has blessed with affluence; without their assistance, the noble plans now on foot for the promotion of MANUFACTURES, ARTS and SCIENCES, must have proved abortive; their liberal efforts on many recent occasions, have given a spring to the publick mind. Should the Gazette of the United States suggest improvable hints, or feasible projects, which must depend upon the PURSE for their maturity, it cannot fail of being countenanced by the RICH and public spirited.

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The EDITOR.

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