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THE TABLET.

No. LXXXIII.

"Delight is ever greatest at a distance; when we arrive at it, we destroy it; and our hopes, when they are gratified, are killed."

IN drawing a picture of human life, we are apt to exhibit too great a proportion of dark shades. The melancholy aspect, which is usually given to such a portrait, forms an image too gloomy for any resemblance in nature. Those who moralize on the evil vicissitudes of life, give so strong a coloring to their representations, as would lead us to imagine that bitter indeed is the portion of man.

One of the most fruitful to pics of complaint among moral declaimers, is the misery that results from disappointed hopes. This however is not more common than fallacious. If we examine the effects of hope, we shall find it, not only one of the most active springs of exertion, but a liberal source of happiness. Though the ardor and extravagance of this passion may cherish expectations, which can never be realized, yet the delight of such anticipations is incomparably greater than the pains of disappointment. There is no point discussed by moralists, in which they depart so widely from the truth, as in ranking disappointments so high in the catalogue of miseries.

The author of my motto, in saying that our hopes, when they are gratified, are killed, gives too severe a tone to his expressions. It is true that gratification, equally with disappointment, puts an end to hope, and perhaps convinces us that we had indulged too lively a prospect. That particular anticipation, to be sure, is extinguished; but probably a more pleasing, if not a more rational one springs from it. Or, upon the supposition that the matter ended here, there is still no ground of complaint. If the anticipation is so flattering as to promise more than can be realized by actual enjoyment, the deception atones for itself. If it yields too little happiness at the close of the pursuit, it is only because it yielded too much in the progress of it. Why should it be thought material in what stage of the affair we find ourselves happy, when happiness is confessed to be the mark at which we are aiming? Is the felicity of man any more incomplete because his delight is greatest at a distance; or because he takes more pleasure in pursuing than in overtaking his game? Can it be a matter of importance in what exact points happiness consists, so that we by any means attain large portions of it? The object we pursue may elude our grasp, or if we get possession, it may afford less satisfaction than we expected. But he must be a weak or an ill-natured man who feels or expresses much anxiety from such a cause. Every man who conceives himself aggrieved by disappointed hopes, should indemnify himself by the pleasure he derives in opening new scenes of hope.

I do not mean by such suggestions to recommend it to my readers to encourage an habit of forming prospects that are alluring and deceitful. Prudence rather directs that we estimate things justly, and govern our views and passions, as much as possible, by the dictates of truth and reason. It is hardly worth while to suffer ourselves to be deluded, merely for the pleasure that may be felt in the course of the delusion. Still however I can suppose a man of a vigorous imagination may perpetually amuse himself with false hopes, and yet be less unhappy and deserve less pity, than the canting moralist, who reproves the folly and grieves over the disappointment of such a self-deceiving mortal.

(To be continued.)

FOR THE GAZETTE OF THE UNITED STATES.

A REVERIE.

(Concluded.)

PERHAPS Providence never chastises the folly of men more justly than by granting the indulgence of their requests. Upon this occasion I observed their wishes were accomplished, and they were relieved from a tyranny of which they had so heavily complained. Upon an appointed day the Goddess of Love took her flight to the higher regions, from which she had descended; her influence was at once withdrawn, and all her enchantments were broken up. I thought nothing could equal the joy that was expressed upon this occasion. The air rung with acclamations, and every man was in haste to congratulate his neighbour on their deliverance from a thralldom, which had sunk the spirits and degraded the dignity of the human race. They seemed all to be lightened of a load, and to break forth with fresh viva-

city and spirit. Every one imagined he was entering upon quite a new career, and that the world was laid fresh open before him. I could not help feeling an inward delight in seeing my fellow creatures made at once so happy. At the same time I was anxious to know what would follow upon this new revolution; and particularly, whether it would answer the high expectations that were formed from it. Upon looking around I was a witness to appearances which filled me with melancholy and regret, a total change had taken place in the whole train of human affairs, and I observed, to my sorrow, the change was every where for the worse. It was melancholy now to enter into company, for instead of conversation enlivened by vivacity and wit, there was nothing heard of but a drowsy humming to the last degree tiresome and insipid. In the social intercourse of men, the heart had no place; pleasure, and the desire of pleasing, were equally unknown. Those that I had an opportunity of observing, I thought very much resembled the loungers and coxcombs of our day, who without any view of receiving pleasure, mingle in a crowd, and engage in conversation, not to enjoy time, but to kill it. I now sought in vain for those friendly meetings at which I had often been present, where every one, desirous of adding something to the pleasure of the world, drew forth the fairest ideas of his mind, and by the display of tender sentiments melted the heart, and soothed the imagination. With what regret did I recollect those conversation parties, in which my heart was wont to be full, and to pour itself forth, as we talked ourselves alternately into sadness and into joy.

I had an opportunity of correcting a mistake into which I had fallen in imagining that love reached only to courtship and marriage; I saw that it insensibly mingles with our most trifling actions, refining our thoughts and polishing our manners when we are the least aware of it. The men, had now entirely thrown aside that tenderness and gallantry which are the great ornaments of human nature, and are so peculiarly needful to temper and soften the rudeness of masculine strength. Men and women, are now placed quite upon a level, so that the harmonious softness of the female voice was drowned in turbulence and noise. The ear was filled, but the heart was left empty. Politeness was changed for a tame civility; wit for meriment; and sincerity for dulness. I began to think more highly than ever of the fair sex, and regarded them in a new light, as a beautiful mirror, lying in the fancy of a lover, for him to dress his thoughts by. People were every where falling a prey to dejection and complaining of the faintness of human enjoyments as might well be expected, when the influence of love was withdrawn from them, which by inspiring romantic hopes, and romantic fears, keeps the mind always in motion, and makes it run clear and bright. You may be sure, nothing could make a more ridiculous appearance than courtship at a time when women retained their vanity, after they had lost their charms. Such is the force of habit, that you might often see a pretty creature twirling her fan and playing off her little enchanting airs before her lover, who perhaps sat all that time perfectly insensible, and fingering his buttons or picking his teeth. Vanity I perceived is a kind of instinct in women, that made them employ the whole artillery of their charms, when they knew they could do no execution. Indeed their airs appeared so ridiculous now in the eyes of the men, that they had often much ado to refrain from laughter. The coquettes particularly, in their flutterings to and fro, made as odd a figure as fish who should be frozen around in the very act of swimming. Out of respect to the ladies however, I would compare them to the Grecian Chiefs, who according to the representations of the poets, carried with them so lively an impression of their former employments, that they would be marshaling their troops, and brandishing their swords, even in the shades below. However the fair sex were soon relieved from this sort of ridicule. They no longer took any pains to smooth their brow, to soften their features into a smile, or to light up the beam of brightness in their eye. Careless of offending where they knew they could not please, they became negligent in their persons, and vulgar in their air. I cannot express the regret I felt upon beholding the fairest and most beautiful part of the creation thus thrown into shade.

I thought, I perceived that the fine arts began to languish; the paintings, that made their appearance at this time, were neither so boldly or so brightly colored, as those I was wont to survey; they were chiefly confined to still life. I observed however, that the extinction of love affected poetry still more than painting.—It no longer regaled

the mind with descriptions of beauty, or softened it with tender distress. Its enchantments were entirely dissolved; that enchantment which will carry us from world to world without moving from our seats, will raise a visionary creation around us, will make us rejoice when there is nothing to rejoice in, and tremble when there is nothing to alarm us. These interesting situations, which awaken the attention, and enchain the mind in solemn surprise, till it breaks forth into agony or rapture; now no longer existed in nature, and were no longer described by the poet; he wrote rather from memory than feeling, for the breath of inspiration had ceased!

Upon this occasion I was not at all surpris'd at the decline of eloquence. I have often thought love the nurse of sensibility, and that if it were not cherished by this passion it would grow cold, and give way to a selfish indifference. My conjecture was now abundantly confirmed, for tho I saw many discourses compos'd at this time, that were well argued, elegant and correct; they all wanted those essential touches that give language its power of persuading.

One thing a good deal surpris'd me, and that was, to observe that even the profound parts of learning were less attended to than ever. I was well aware that few apply themselves closely to study, but with the hope of sometimes displaying their acquisitions to the public; and I had imagin'd fame was a sufficient recompence, for any toil human nature could sustain; but I was surpris'd to find that in all great and noble undertakings, the desire of appearing respectable in the eyes of a beloved object was of more consequence than the general admiration of mankind.

These, I thought, were not the only melancholy consequences that flow'd from the departure of love. It may be sufficient however to observe in general, that human nature was becalmed, and all its finest emotions frozen into torpid insensibility. The situation of mankind was truly pitiable. Strangers to the delicate pleasures of the heart, every thing round them look'd cheerless and barren. Calamity left them nothing to hope, and prosperity gave them nothing to enjoy.

I observed that they were now as desirous of bringing back the agency of love, as they had been before to exclude it. At length, I imagin'd, Jupiter was touch'd with compassion at their unhappy situation, and appointed a day in which Love was to revisit the abodes of men. An immense number of people of all orders and ranks; and of every age and condition; assembled themselves as you may suppose, to behold the descent of the Goddess, and to hail her approach. The Heavens I thought glow'd as she descended, and so many beautiful streaks of light glanced along the surface of the sky, that they divid'd it into separate tracts, brighten'd up every cloud within it, and turn'd the whole into an aerial landscape. The birds at the same time leaped among the branches, and warbling their sprightliest notes, fill'd the air with a confused melody of sounds, that was inexpressibly delightful. Every thing look'd brighter than before—every thing smell'd sweeter, and seem'd to offer up fresh incense to the Goddess. The face of nature was chang'd, and the creation seem'd to grow new again. My heart glow'd with delight. I rejoic'd in the renovation of nature, and was reviv'd through my inmost powers. There thrill'd through me a delightful sensation of freshness and novelty, similar to what a happy spirit may be supposed to feel, when he first enters a new state of existence, and opens his eyes on immortality.

I thought I had but a very confused idea of the person of the Goddess herself, for her raiment was so full of light and lustre, that I could scarcely take a steady view of her. I observ'd however that her complexion was rather too glowing, and the motions of her eye too piercing and fiery, for perfect feminine beauty. Her beauty, I thought, was too rais'd and had too much glory in it, to be entirely attractive. I was very much astonish'd to observe, that whoever she glanced her eye upon, immediately fell under the influence of the passion over which she presid'd. It was a very singular sight, to see a whole assembly, one after another falling into love; and I was much entertain'd in observing the change it occasion'd in the looks of each of them, according to their different temper and constitution. Some appear'd wild and piercing—others dejected and melancholy. The features of several glow'd with admiration, while others look'd down with a timid and bashful respect. A trait of affectation was plainly to be discern'd in all of them, as might well be expected from a passion, the very first effect of which, is to make one lose the possession of one's self. Several ladies in particular seemingly careless and gay, were whispering to those who