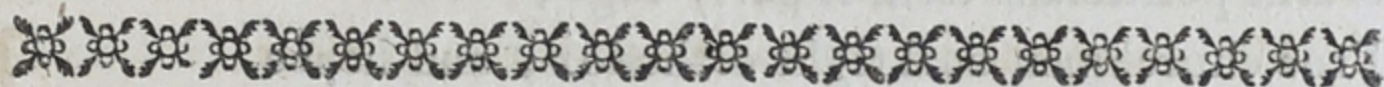


Too wretched to endure one lonely day,
 Too proud one friendly visit to repay,
 Too indolent to read, too criminal to pray.
 At length half dead, half mad, and quite confin'd,
 Shunning, and shunn'd by all of human kind,
 Ev'n robb'd of the last comfort of her life,
 Insulting the poor curate's callous wife,
 Pride, disappointed pride, now stops her breath,
 And with true scorpion rage she stings herself to death.



A N

E S S A Y on V I R T U E.

To the Honourable PHILIP YORKE, Esq;

By the Same.

Atque ipsa utilitas justı prope mater et æqui. HOR.

THOU, whom nor honours, wealth, nor youth can spoil
 With the least vice of each luxuriant foil,
 Say, YORKE, (for sure, if any, you can tell)
 What Virtue is, who practise it so well;
 Say, where inhabits this Sultana queen;
 Prais'd and ador'd by all, but rarely seen:
 By what sure marks her essence can we trace,
 When each religion, faction, age, and place

Sets up some fancy'd idol of its own,
 A vain pretender to her sacred throne ?
 In man, too oft a well-dissembled part,
 A self-denying pride in woman's heart,
 In synods faith, and in the fields of fame
 Valour usurps her honours, and her name.
 Whoe'er their sense of Virtue cou'd exprefs,
 'Tis still by something they themselves possess.
 Hence youth good-humour, frugal craft old age,
 Warm politicians term it party-rage ;
 True churchmen zeal right orthodox ; and hence
 Fools think it gravity, and wits pretence ;
 To constancy alone fond lovers join it,
 And maids unask'd to chastity confine it.

But have we then no law besides our will ?
 No just criterion fix'd to good and ill ?
 As well at noon we may obstruct our sight,
 Then doubt if such a thing exists as light ;
 For no less plain wou'd nature's law appear,
 As the meridian sun unchang'd, and clear,
 Wou'd we but search for what we were design'd,
 And for what end th' Almighty form'd mankind,
 A rule of life we then should plainly see,
 For to pursue that end must Virtue be.

Then what is that ? not want of power, or fame,
 Or worlds unnumber'd to applaud his name,
 But a desire his blessings to diffuse,
 And fear lest millions should existence lose ;

His

His goodness only could his pow'r employ,
And an eternal warmth to propagate his joy.

Hence soul, and sense diffus'd thro' ev'ry place,
Make happiness as infinite as space;
Thousands of suns beyond each other blaze,
Orbs roll o'er orbs, and glow with mutual rays;
Each is a world, where form'd with wond'rous art,
Unnumber'd species live thro' every part:
In ev'ry tract of ocean, earth, and skies
Myriads of creatures still successive rise;
Scarce buds a leaf, or springs the vilest weed,
But little flocks upon its verdure feed;
No fruit our palate courts, or flow'r our smell,
But on its fragrant bosom nations dwell,
All form'd with proper faculties to share
The daily bounties of their Maker's care;
The great Creator from his heav'nly throne,
Pleas'd, on the wide-expanded joy looks down,
And his eternal law is only this,
That all contribute to the general bliss.

Nature so plain this primal law displays,
Each living creature sees it, and obeys;
Each, form'd for all, promotes thro' private care
The publick good, and justly tastes its share.
All understand their great Creator's will,
Strive to be happy, and in that fulfill;
Mankind excepted; lord of all beside,
But only slave to folly, vice, and pride;

'Tis he that's deaf to this command alone,
 Deilghts in others' woe, and courts his own;
 Racks and destroys with tort'ring steel and flame,
 For lux'ry brutes, and man himself for fame:
 Sets Superstition high on Virtue's throne,
 Then thinks his Maker's temper like his own:
 Hence are his altars stain'd with reeking gore,
 As if he could atone for crimes by more:
 Hence whilst offended heav'n he strives in vain
 T' appease by fasts, and voluntary pain,
 Ev'n in repenting he provokes again. }

How easy is our yoke! how light our load!
 Did we not strive to mend the laws of God:
 For his own sake no duty he can ask,
 The common welfare is our only task;
 For this sole end his precepts, kind as just,
 Forbid intemp'rance, murder, theft, and lust,
 With ev'ry act injurious to our own
 Or others' good, for such are crimes alone:
 For this are peace, love, charity, enjoin'd,
 With all that can secure and blest mankind.
 Thus is the publick safety Virtue's cause,
 And happiness the end of all her laws;
 For such by nature is the human frame,
 Our duty and our int'rest are the same.

But hold, cries out some Puritan divine,
 Whose well-stuff'd cheeks with ease and plenty shine,

Is this to fast, to mortify, refrain,
 And work salvation out with fear and pain?
 We own, the rigid lessons of their schools
 Are widely diff'rent from these easy rules;
 Virtue, with them, is only to abstain
 From all that nature asks, and covet pain;
 Pleasure and vice are ever near a-kin,
 And, if we thirst, cold water is a sin:
 Heav'n's path is rough and intricate, they say,
 Yet all are damn'd that trip, or miss their way;
 God is a being cruel and severe,
 And man a wretch, by his command plac'd here,
 In sun-shine for awhile to take a turn,
 Only to dry and make him fit to burn.

Mistaken men, too piously severe!
 Thro' craft misleading, or misled by fear;
 How little they God's counsels comprehend,
 Our universal parent, guardian, friend!
 Who, forming by degrees to bliss mankind,
 This globe our sportive nursery assign'd,
 Where for awhile his fond paternal care
 Feasts us with ev'ry joy our state can bear:
 Each sense, touch, taste, and smell dispense delight,
 Musick our hearing, beauty charms our sight;
 Trees, herbs, and flow'rs to us their spoils resign,
 Its pearl the rock presents, its gold the mine;
 Beasts, fowl, and fish their daily tribute give
 Of food and cloaths, and die that we may live:

Seasons but change, new pleasures to produce,
 And elements contend to serve our use :
 Love's gentle shafts, ambition's tow'ring wings,
 The pomps of senates, churches, courts, and kings,
 All that our rev'rence, joy, or hope create,
 Are the gay play-things of this infant state.
 Scarcely an ill to human life belongs,
 But what our follies cause, or mutual wrongs ;
 Or if some stripes from Providence we feel,
 He strikes with pity, and but wounds to heal ;
 Kindly perhaps sometimes afflicts us here,
 To guide her views to a sublimer sphere,
 In more exalted joys to fix our taste,
 And wean us from delights that cannot last.
 Our present good the easy task is made,
 To earn superior bliss, when this shall fade ;
 For, soon as e'er these moral pleasures cloy,
 His hand shall lead us to sublimer joy ;
 Snatch us from all our little sorrows here,
 Calm every grief, and dry each childish tear ;
 Waft us to regions of eternal peace,
 Where bliss and virtue grow with like increase ;
 From strength to strength our souls for ever guide,
 Thro' wond'rous scenes of being yet untry'd,
 Where in each stage we shall more perfect grow,
 And new perfections, new delights bestow.

Oh ! would mankind but make these truths their guide,
 And force the helm from prejudice and pride,

Were

Were once these maxims fix'd, that God's our friend,
 Virtue our good, and happiness our end,
 How soon must reason o'er the world prevail,
 And error, fraud, and superstition fail!

None wou'd hereafter then with groundless fear
 Describe th' Almighty cruel and severe,
 Predestinating some without pretence
 To heav'n, and some to hell for no offence;
 Inflicting endless pains for transient crimes,
 And fav'ring sects or nations, men or times.
 To please him, none would foolishly forbear
 Or food, or rest, or itch in shirts of hair,
 Or deem it merit to believe, or teach,
 What reason contradicts, or cannot reach;
 None wou'd fierce zeal for piety mistake,
 Or malice for whatever tenet's sake,
 Or think salvation to one sect confin'd,
 And heav'n too narrow to contain mankind.

No more then nymphs, by long neglect grown nice,
 Wou'd in one female frailty sum up vice,
 And censure those, who, nearer to the right,
 Think Virtue is but to dispense delight.

No servile tenets wou'd admittance find,
 Destructive of the rights of human-kind;
 Of pow'r divine, hereditary right,
 And non-resistance to a tyrant's might:
 For sure that all shou'd thus for one be curs'd,
 Is but great nature's edict just revers'd.

No moralists then, righteous to excess,
 Wou'd show fair Virtue in so black a dress,
 That they, like boys, who some feign'd spright array,
 First from the spectre fly themselves away :
 No preachers in the terrible delight,
 But chuse to win by reason, not affright ;
 Not conjurers like, in fire and brimstone dwell,
 And draw each moving argument from hell.

No more our sage interpreters of laws,
 Wou'd fatten on obscurities, and flaws,
 But rather nobly careful of their trust,
 Strive to wipe off the long-contracted dust,
 And be, like HARDWICKE, guardians of the just. }

No more applause wou'd on ambition wait,
 And laying waste the world be counted great,
 But one good-natur'd act more praises gain,
 Than armies overthrown, and thousands slain ;
 No more wou'd brutal rage disturb our peace,
 But envy, hatred, war, and discord cease ;
 Our own and others' good each hour employ,
 And all things smile with universal joy ;
 Virtue with Happiness her consort join'd,
 Wou'd regulate and bless each human mind,
 And man be what his Maker first design'd. }