

# Remarks upon the Fable of the Bees.

Francis Hutcheson

1750

REMARKS

UPON

The FABLE of the BEES.

**To Hibernicus.**

*Nunquam aliud natura aliud sapientia decit.*

Juven.

SIR,

A Great part of your readers must have heard of a book entituled, Private Vices public Benefits. I do not intend any answer to that book; but rather hereafter to shew it to be unanswerable, notwithstanding the zealous attempts of some of the clergy. Yet it is to be hoped that that author's performance will not supersede the labours of others on the same subject, without design of answering what he has wrote.

It is not the interest of every writer to free his words from ambiguity. Private vices public benefits, may signify any one of these five distinct proposition: viz. "Private vices are themselves public benefits:" or, "private vices naturally tend, as the direct and necessary means, to produce public happiness:" or, private vices by dextrous management of governors may be made to tend to public happiness:" or "private vices natively and necessarily flow from public happiness:" or lastly, "private vices will probably flow from public prosperity through the present corruption of men." Were it proper to croud your margin with citations, you should have several passages of that book for each of these five sentences, as if it were the meaning of the title. Far be it therefore from a candid writer to charge upon him any one of these opinions more than another; for if we treat him fairly, and compare the several parts of his work together, we shall find no ground for such a charge.

What his own private happiness is, any one may know by reflecting upon the several sorts of pleasant perceptions he is capable of. We imagine our fellows capable of the same, and can in like manner conceive public happiness. They are happy who have what they desire, and are free from what occasions pain. He is in a sure state of happiness, who has a sure prospect that in all parts of his existence he shall have all things which he desires, or at least those which he most earnestly desires, without any considerable pains. He is miserable who is under grievous pain, or who wants what he most violently desires.

There is one old distinction of our desires, according as some of them are preceded naturally by a sense of pain, previously to any opinion of good to be found in the object; which is desired chiefly in order to remove the pain; whereas other desires arise only upon a previous opinion of good in the object, either to ourselves, or to those we love. These desires, though they do not presuppose any sense of pain previous to the opinion, yet may be attended with pain, when the object imagined to be good is uncertain. The former sort of desires are called appetites; the latter affections or passions. The pains of the appetites when they are not gratified are unavoidable. But the pains of many disappointed passions might have been prevented, by correcting the false opinions, or by breaking foolish associations of ideas, by which we imagine the most momentous good or evil to be in these objects or events, which really are of little or no consequence in themselves.

No reason or instruction will prevent sensible pain, or stop a craving appetite. Men must first be free from violent bodily pain, and have what will remove hunger and thirst, before they can be made happy. Thus much is absolutely necessary. If there be but small pleasure attending the enjoyment of the bare necessaries of life, yet there is violent pain in their absence. Whatever farther pleasures men enjoy, we may count so much positive happiness above necessity.

The world is so well provided for the support of mankind, that scarce any person in good health need be straitened in bare necessaries. But since men are capable of a great diversity of pleasures, they must be supposed to have a great variety of desires, even beyond the necessities of life. The commonest gratifications of the appetites do not satisfy them fully: they desire those objects, which give some more grateful sensations, as well as allly their pain; they have perceptions of beauty in external objects, and desire something more in dress, houses, furniture, than mere warmth or necessary use. There is no mortal without some love towards others, and desire of the happiness of

some other persons as well as his own. Men naturally perceive something amiable in observing the characters, affections and tempers of others, and are struck with a harmony in manners, some species of morality, as well as with a harmony of notes. They are fond of the approbation of each other, and desirous of whatever either directly procures approbation and esteem, or, by a confused association of ideas, is made an evidence of any valuable ability or kind disposition. Wealth and power are in like manner desired, as soon as we observe their usefulness to procure any kind of pleasures.

Since then our desires are so various, and all desire of an object, while it is uncertain, is accompanied with some uneasiness; to make a society happy, it must be necessary, either to gratify all desires, or to suppress, or at least to regulate them. The universal gratification is plainly impossible, and the universal suppressing or rooting them out as vain an attempt. What then remains, in order to public happiness after the necessary supply of all appetites, must be to study, as much as possible, to regulate our desires of every kind, by forming just opinions of the real value of their several objects, so as to have the strength of our desires proportioned to the real value of them, and their real moment to our happiness. Now all men of reflection, from the age of Socrates to that of Addison, have sufficiently proved that the truest, most constant, and lively pleasure, the happiest enjoyment of life, consists in kind affections to our fellow-creatures, gratitude and love to the deity, submission to his will, and trust in his providence, with a course of suitable actions. This is the true good in our power, which we can never too strongly desire. The pleasures of this kind are so great and durable, and so much above the power of fortune, so much strengthened by the probable hope of every other valuable pleasure of life, especially the esteem and love of our fellows, or at least of the better part of them, that other pleasures seem almost to vanish when separated from them; and even the greatest pains seem supportable if they do not exclude them. By this means we may be sure, if not of all the pleasures we can desire, yet of those which we most desire, and which may make our existence agreeable to ourselves in the absence of others.

This thorough correction of our opinions will not indeed extinguish our appetites, or prevent all pain; but it will keep our appetites unmixed with foreign ideas, so as to be satisfied with the plainest nourishing food, without being disturbed by imaginations of worth, dignity and merit, in a manner of living which is not in our power. We may in like manner break the foolish conjunction of moral ideas with the finer sort of habitation, dress, equipage, furniture, so as not to be dejected upon the unavoidable want of such things; we may learn to look upon them as they really are, without imagining them necessary to a happy and honourable life, however they may be some additional advantage to it.

Then we may observe, that though this correcting our opinions and imaginations will make the absence of the pleasures above necessary very tolerable to us, and cut off many vain anxieties, yet no person is thereby rendered insensible of any real pleasure which these objects do give. Though we shall not look upon them as the chief good in life, or preferable to the public interest, to our virtue, or our honour; yet, when they can be enjoyed consistently with superior pleasures, our sense of them may be as acute as that of others. An affectionate temper never stupified the palate; love of a country, a family, or friends, never spoiled a taste for architecture, painting, or sculpture; the knowledge of the true measures and harmony of life never vitiated an ear, or genius for the harmony of music or poetry. This certainly is the only way in our power of preserving the full relish for all the pleasures of life, and yet securing ourselves against its pains.

But if the fullest present enjoyment cannot make the human mind easy and fully satisfied; if we be disturbed by the uncertainty either of external objects, or of our own existence in this world; if any are subjected to such a cruel pain, that nothing can make them amends for them in this life; if no man can be sure but this may be his condition in the future part of his existence in this life; if the present seeming disorders and calamities, sometimes befalling the best of men, and the insolent prosperity of the worst, disturb an honest compassionate heart: the hope of a future state is the only universal support to all conditions of good men, which can make them fully satisfied with their existence of all adventures; especially if the means of obtaining this future happiness are no way opposite to their greatest present happiness.

It is too improbable, I own, that all men will ever thus correct their vain opinions and imaginations: but whoever do so in any measure are so much the happier; and if all did so, all would be as near happiness as our present state will allow. No trade, no manufacture, or ingenious art would be sunk by it, which produces any new pleasures to the senses, imagination, or understanding, without bringing along with it repollent evil.

It is obvious to all, that in a nation of any tolerable extent of ground, three fourths employed in

agriculture will furnish food to the whole. Were this land divided to all, except a few artificers to prepare instruments of husbandry, the whole nation must want all the pleasure arising from other arts, such as fine convenient habitations, beautiful dress, furniture, and handy utensils. There would be no knowledge of arts, no agreeable amusements or diversions; and they must all be idle one half of their time, since much of the husbandman's time is now spent in providing materials for more curious arts. Would it be advisable to any impartial mind, who regarded the good of the whole, to keep them in this state, and to prohibit all arts but husbandry, with what was absolutely necessary to it, confining them to their huts, and caves, and beasts skins, to secure them from cold; allowing them no farther compensation for the conveniences they might procure by industry, than the pleasure of idleness for half their lives? What other answer do we need to this question, than what every one will give for himself?

What man, who had only the absolute necessaries of meat and drink, and a cave or a beast's skin to cover him, would not, when he had leisure, labour for farther conveniences, or more grateful food? Would not every mortal do so, except some few pretended gentlemen, inured to sloth from their infancy, of weak bodies and weaker minds, who imagine the lower employments below their dignity? Does not the universal choice of mankind, in preferring to bear labour for the conveniences and elegancies of life, shew that their pleasures are greater than those of sloth, and that industry, notwithstanding its toils, does really increase the happiness of mankind? Hence it is that in every nation great numbers support themselves by mechanic arts not absolutely necessary; since the husbandman is always ready to purchase their manufactures by the fruits of his labours, without any constraint; which they would not do if the pleasures or happiness of idleness were greater. This may shew us how little justice there is in imagining an Arcadia, or unactive golden age, would ever suit with the present state of the world, or produce more happiness to men than a vigorous improvement of arts.

The comparative wealth of any country is plainly proportioned to the "quantity of the whole produce of husbandry, and other mechanic arts" which it can export. Upon the wealth of any country, when other circumstances are equal, does its strength depend, or its power in comparison with others. Now if any allege that the improvement of arts, by foreign trade, is at least pernicious to the public, by its occasioning many calamities to famines, and deaths in shipwrecks; that therefore the whole would have been happier without it; let us only consider, that in computing the good or evil consequences of any actions, we are not only to consider the bare quantities of good or evil, but the probabilities on both sides. Now had a country once as many inhabitants as would consume its natural wild product in their caves or thickets, it is plain that according to the usual increase of mankind in peace, the next generation could not subsist without labour, and vigorous agriculture. It is certain also that many diseases and deaths are occasioned by the labours of husbandry: is it therefore for the public good that a thousand should barely subsist as Hottentots without labour, rather than the double number by agriculture, though a final number should die by that means? When our minds are dejected with old age, or sudden apprehensions of death or its consequences, we may prefer a few days or hours to all things else; but what man of good understanding, in sound health, would not prefer a life of sixty or seventy years with good accommodation, and a numerous offspring, to eighty or ninety years as a Hottentot or worse? What man of common sense would refute to cross the channel for a considerable advantage to his channel for a considerable advantage to this family, though they had the bare necessaries? And yet even this voyage hazards life more than staying at home. If the agriculture of three fourths can support the whole, the other fourth, by applying themselves wholly to mechanic arts, will produce more conveniences or pleasures than could be hoped from a fourth of the labours of each man; since by confining their thoughts to a particular subject, the artificers acquire greater knowledge and dexterity in their work. Again, if navigation and foreign trade will support more men than domestic industry and barter, it may really tend to the good of the whole, though it endangers many lives. Five millions, subsisting any country by help of foreign trade, are a greater advantage in the whole than four millions without trade, though in each age twenty thousand should perish by shipwrecks. The rates of insurance will teach us that the losses at sea are not even in this proportion to the number supported by trade, many of whom go not abroad at all, and others escape when the goods are lost. Either then the propagation of mankind must be diminished, or men must endure even the hazardous labours of the sea. But how few are there in the world who would not, even without any constraint, hazard a voyage rather than die childless: nay, rather than want any conveniences and pleasures of life above necessity for themselves or families? The increase therefore of trade does plainly tend to the good of the whole, notwithstanding all its hazards, which we see men voluntarily submit to every day.

Now if any own that the increase of trade promotes the present happiness of human life in the whole, and yet maintain that it is vitious; the debate will turn upon the idea of vice. It is certain that almost all the heathen moralists agreed with him. "who spake as never man spake," that virtue consists in love, gratitude, and submission to the deity, and in kind affections towards our fellows, and study of their greatest good. All sects, except the Epicurcans, owned that kind affections were natural to men; and that consulting the greatest public good of the whole, as it was the surest way for each individual to be happy, so it was *vita secundum naturam*, or *secundum rectam rationim*. The Epicurcans of the better sort however, they denied any affection distinct from self-love, yet taught the same way to private happiness, by reasons like to those by Puffendorf, only without consideration of the providence of the deity, or a future state. If vice be the opposite to virtue, viz. those affections or actions which tend to the public detriment, or evidence ingratitude or contumacy towards the deity, we may easily conclude that the utmost improvement of arts, manufactures, or trade, is so far from being necessarily vicious, that it must rather argue good and virtuous dispositions; since it is certain that men of the best and most generous tempers would desire it for the public good.

But this subject will require farther consideration.

I am, Sir, yours, etc.

P.M.

### To Hibernicus.

*Cui non conveniet fua res, ut calceus alim,  
Si pede major eris, subvertet; si minor, uret.*

Hor.

Sir,

The only arguments brought to prove that vice tends to the public happiness of society in this world, are these; "That the power and grandeur of any nation depends much upon the numbers of people and their industry, which cannot be procured unless there be consumption of manufactures; now the intemperance, luxury, and pride, of men consume manufactures, and promote industry." In like manner it is asserted, "That in fact all wealthy and powerful states abound with these vices, and that their industry is owing to them."

But if it can be made appear that there may be an equal consumption of manufactures without these vices, and the evils which flow from them; that wealth and power do not naturally tend to vice, or necessarily produce it; then, though we allow that these vices do consume manufactures and encourage industry in the present corruption of manners, and that these vices often attend wealth and power, yet it will be unjust to conclude, either that "vices naturally tend to public prosperity, or are necessary to it; or that public happiness does necessarily occasion them."

Intemperance is that use of meat and drink which is pernicious to the health and vigour of any person in the discharge of the offices of life. Luxury is the using more curious and expensive habitation, dress, table, equipage, than the person's wealth will bear, so as to discharge his duty to his family, his friends, his country, or the indigent. Pride is having an opinion of our own virtues, abilities, or perfection of any kind, in comparison of others, as greater than what they really are; arrogating to ourselves either obedience, service, or external marks of honour, to which we have no right; and with this view desiring to equal those of higher stations in our whole manner of living. There is no sort of food, architecture, dress, or furniture, the use of which can be called evil or itself. Intemperance and luxury are plainly terms relative to the bodily constitution, and wealth of the person. Pride, as it affects our expences, is also relative to the station and fortune of the person; so that it is impossible to fix one invariable quantity of food, one fixed sum in expenses, the surpassing of which should be called intemperance, luxury, or pride. Every one's knowledge, and experience of his constitution and fortune, will suggest to him what is suitable to his own circumstances. It is ridiculous to say, "that using any thing above the bare necessaries of life is intemperance, pride, or luxury; and that no other universal boundaries can be fixed; because what in one station or fortune is bare study of decency, or conveniency, would be extravagance in another." As if temperance, frugality, or moderation, denoted fixed weights or measures or sums, which all were to observe, and not a proportion to mens circumstances. Great and little are relative to a species or kind. Those dimensions are great in a deer which are small in a horse; what is great in a house would be small in a mountain. Will any one thence argue, that there can be no adapting one form to another, so that it shall neither be too big nor little? Cannot a coat suit a middle stature, because the same dimensions would be too great for a dwarf, and too little for a giant? If then in each constitution,

station, or degree of wealth, a man of good sense may know how far he may go in eating and drinking, or any other expences, without impairing his health or fortune, or hindering any offices of religion or humanity, he has found the bounds of temperance, frugality, and moderation for himself; and any other, who keeps the same proportion, is equally temperate, though he eats and drinks, or spends more than the other.

That these are the ideas of temperance, frugality, and moderation, given by all moralists, antient and modern, except a few Cynics of old, and some popish Hermits, is plain to all who read them. All sects, as well as the Stoics, recommended the correction of our opinions and imaginations about the pleasures above necessity; and yet the use of them they all allow, when it is not inconsistent with the offices of life; in such circumstances they were always looked upon as preferable to their contraries. The Christian law suggests nothing contrary to this; it has set before us, beside the present pleasures of virtue, which it represents as superior to all others, the hopes of eternal happiness; yet it frequently recommends diligence and industry in providing for ourselves and families, and for a fund of good offices toward others: it no where condemns the rich or powerful for being so, or for desiring high stations, unless when these desires are so violent as to counteract our duty. The requiring some to part with their possessions, was only a candid forewarning of the first disciples, what their profession of Christianity would probably cost them in those days of perfection. A community of goods is no where commanded; though men who knew the approaching perfection did wisely sell their possessions, to turn them to the only valuable purpose then in their power, and conveyed them to persons who could possess them.

Since then intemperance, or pride, were scarce ever understood to denote all use of any thing above bare necessaries, all conveniency of life above Hottentots; why any one should affect to change their meaning, is not easily guessed, unless it be with this view. Luxury, intemperance, and pride, in their common meaning, are vices; but in this new meaning are often innocent, nay virtuous; and without them, in this new sense, there can be no consumption of manufactures. Common readers however will still imagine that these sounds denote vices; and finding that what they confusedly imagine as vicious is necessary to public good, they will lose their aversion to moral evil in general, and imagine it well compensated by some of its advantages.

But let us retain the common meaning of these words. It is certain, luxury, intemperance, and pride, tend to consume manufactures; but the luxurious, intemperate, or proud, are not a whit the less odious, or free from humanity and barbarity, in the neglect of families, friends, the indigent, or their country, since their whole intention is a poor selfish pleasure. The good arising to the public is no way owing to them, but to the industrious, who must supply all customers, and cannot examine whether their expences are proportioned to their fortunes or not. To illustrate this by an instance in the manner of that notable writer: "Suppose his Decio, or Aleander, or Jack, surfeited with beef, falls into some light distempler, and in hopes of attendance at low rates, sends for a neighbouring quack: the quack imagines no danger, but makes the patient believe it; he talks much in the usual cant of bilious temperaments and sanguine complexions, of the sinking of spirits, and the heart's feeling cold and condensed, and heavy as lead, of mists and confusion about his eyes; he promises, after some previous preparations, which the quack finds necessary to prolong the disorder, by some powerful medicines, to swell his spirits, restore them to their strength, elasticity, and due contexture, that they may fan the arterial blood again, and make him so light that he may tread on air. The patient grows worse, fears death, thinks on his past life, and sends for an honest parson, who instructs him in true principles of virtue, and shews him wherein he has been deficient: the strength of his constitution overcomes both the drugs and the disease, the patient recovers, becomes a man of integrity and religion, and ever after honours the honest clergy as the most useful men in any state." Now are these effects to be ascribed to the quacks? Are such pretenders the less odious? Is quackery the cause of religion or virtue, necessary to it? Does the honour of the clergy depend upon the practice of quacks? It is best in such affairs to go no farther than confused apothegms: "private quackery, public virtue: medicinal nonsense, patients repentance: quacks prescriptions, honours to the clergy."

But let us in the next place examine if an equal consumption of manufactures, and encouragement of trade, may be without these vices. Any given number, in a small time, will certainly consume more wine by being drunkards, than by being sober men; will consume more manufactures by being luxurious or proud, if their pride turn upon expences, than by being frugal and moderate. But it may be justly questioned, whether that same number would not have consumed more in their whole lives, by being temperate and frugal: since all allow that they would probably live longer, and with better health and digestion; and temperance makes a country populous, were it only by prolonging life.

Again, would there not be the same consumption of the same products, if inferior people contracted their drinking and dress within the bounds of temperance and frugality, and allowed poor wives and children what might be necessary to exhilarate and strengthen them for labour, and to defend them from the cold, or make their live easier? Would there be a less consumption, if those of greater wealth kept themselves within the bounds of temperance; and reserved the money thus saved to supply the interest of money lent gratis to a friend, who may be thereby enabled, consistently with temperance, to drink as much wine, as, had it been added to the quantity drunk by the lender, would have taken away his senses? Or, if all men drink too much, and families too; what if they retrenched? The money saved might improve their dress, habitation, or studies; or might enable a poorer friend to consume the same, or other manufactures, with equal advantage to the public; or might preserve the same persons longer in life, and health and good circumstances, so as in their whole lives to consume more.

In general, if the single luxury of the master of a family consumes manufactures, might not an equal quantity be consumed by retrenching his own expenses, and allowing conveniences to his family? If a whole family be luxurious in dress, furniture, equipage; suppose this retrenched, the increase of wealth to the family may soon enable younger children in their families to consume among them frugally, as much as would have been consumed luxuriously by the ancestor; or the frugal consumption of fifty years, in the condition of a wise gentleman, may be as great, as the luxurious consumption of twenty years, succeeded by thirty years of pinching, remorse or beggary. If a man of wealth has no children, his own moderate enjoyment, with what he may enable worthy friends to consume in their own houses, or what he may spend temperately at a hospitable table, and genteel equipage, may amount to as much as the squandering of a luxurious epicure, or vain fool, upon his own person, in the short time his life or fortune will last.

Unless therefore all mankind are fully provided not only with all necessaries, but all innocent conveniences and pleasures of life, it is still possible without any vice, by an honest care of families, relations, or some worthy care of families, relations, or some worthy persons in distress, to make the greatest consumption. Two or three plain suits becoming gentlemen, worn by younger brothers or friends, will employ as many hands as a foppish one worn by a vain heir. The same be said of furniture of houses, equipage, or table. If there be sufficient wealth to furnish the most sumptuous dress, habitation, equipage, and table, to the proprietor, and discharge all offices of humanity, after a proportionable rate, why should this be called vice? It plainly tends to public good, and injures no man. It is indeed the business of a wise man to look before him, and to be armed against those hazards or accidents which may reduce the highest fortunes: all men should correct their imaginations, and avoid any habit of body or mind, which might be pernicious upon a change of fortune, or unfit them for any duty of life: but this may be done without reducing men to a Cynical tub, or frize coats. Wherein then the virtue of this retrenchment should consist, or the vice of a more pleasant chearful way of life, is not easy to tell; unless it lies in the confused use of ambiguous words, temperance, and frugality, and humility.

Who needs be surprized that luxury or pride are made necessary to public good, when even theft and robbery are supposed by the same author to be subservient to it, by employing locksmiths? Not to repeat again, that all the good effect is plainly owing to the industrious, and not to the robber; were there no occasion for locks, had all children and servants discretion enough never to go into chambers unseasonably, this would make no diminution of manufactures; the money saved to the house-keeper would afford either better dress, or other conveniences to a family, which would equally support artificers: even smiths themselves might have equal employment. Unless all men be already so well provided with all sorts of convenient utensils, or furniture, that nothing can be added, a necessity or constant usefulness of robbers can never be pretended, any more than the public advantages of shipwrecks and fires, which are not a little admired by the author of the fable.

It is probable indeed we shall never see a wealthy state without vice. But what then? it is not impossible; and the less any nation has of it, so much the happier it is. Wise governors will force some public good out of vices, if they cannot prevent them: and yet much greater public good would have flowed from opposite virtues. The excise is now increased by the drunkenness of some poor masters of families: but sharing their drink with their poor families might make equal consumption of the same kind; or if they retrenched this article, they might consume other kinds of goods, paying equal duty to the public. The persons themselves would avoid many diseases, be more capable of labour, live longer, in all probability, in contentment and good temper, without foolish contention, quarrels, and dissatisfaction both in their families and among their neighbours. The like would be the effect of a sober and temperate deportment in better stations.

As to the question of fact in this matter: perhaps, whosoever looks into all the ranks of men, will find it is but a small part of our consumptions which is owing to our vices. If we find too splendid dress at court, or at Lucas's [The gayest coffee house in Dublin], or at public meetings for diversion; we shall find plain dresses at the exchange, at the custom-house, at churches. The expensive gaiety continues but a few years of most peoples lives, during their amours, or expectation of preferment: nor would a good-natured man call this gaiety always vitious. Our gentlemen in the country seldom suffer in their fortunes by their dress. The consumption in tables would not be much diminished, though men would never run into surfeiting and drunkenness; it is not one in a hundred who is frequently guilty of these vices, and yet all are very day consuming. The extraordinary consumption of revels occasions generally abstinence for some time following; so that in a sober week as much may be consumed as in the week one has a debauch. Did we examine our own manufactures, either linen or woolen, we should find that coarse cloths and stuff, the wearing of which none count extravagant, employ ten times as many hands as the fine. And of the fine cloths which are bought, not one of the buyers in ten can be called extravagant. Were even this extravagance removed, the consumption of the same persons during their lives might be as great, as by the vanity of a few years with the poverty of the remainder.

Thus we may see with how little reason vices are either counted necessary, or actually subservient to the public happiness, even in our present corruption.

I am Sir, Yours, etc.

P.M.

### To Hibernicus

--- *Cujus, velut aegri somnia, vanae*  
*Fingentur species, ut nec pes, neccaput uni*  
*Reddatur formae*  
Hor.

SIR,

Mr Addison in his fourth Whig Examiner has given an excellent description of a certain way of writing which is absolutely unanswerable, and he has pointed out the secret strength by which it is made so. That the Fable of the Bees is a performance of this kind, may be easily shewn, not by general encomiums, but by pointing out its particular excellencies.

There is one outwork of this sort of authors, which though it be not their main strength, yet is often of great consequence to terrify the timorous reader, or adversary; I mean open vanity, and pretences to the deepest knowledge. -- Hic murus abencus esso.

How formidable must that writer be, who lets us know "he has observed so much above the short-sighted vulgar, and has given himself leisure to gaze upon the prospect of concatenated events, and seen good spring and pullulate from evil as naturally," (p. 89) so condescending is he to the meanest of his readers, "as chickens do from eggs!" How does he raise admiration in the first paragraph of his preface, letting us know that he has seen the "chief organs and nicest springs of our machine," which are yet but "trifling films, and little pipes, not such gross strong things as nerves, bone, or skin!" Nay, he has no doubt seen "the very strength, elasticity, and due contexture of spirits which constitute the fear of shame, and anger, or courage;" (p. 234) and also all the other qualities of spirits which constitute the other passions: these passions "along with skin, flesh, and bone, make the compound man." But this is not all his knowledge; he has "anatomised the invisible part, has seen the gentle strokes, and slight touches of the passions." (p. 155 and p. 77) This author can "swagger about fortitude and poverty as well as Seneca, and shew the way to summum bonum as easily as his way home." (p. 164) He has searched through "every degree of life; and foresees opposition only from those who have lost public spirit, and are narrow-souled, incapable of thinking of things of uncommon extent, which are noble and sublime. He cries apage vulgus to very opposer," (p. 163 and p. 366, 367) and writes only "for the few who think abstractly, and are elevated above the vulgar." (See the journal subjoined to the Fable.)

He tells us, "he has pleased men of unquestionable sense; will always live, and be esteemed while such read him."

Who will not stand in awe of that author, "who describes the nature and symptoms of human passions; detects their force and disguises; and traces self-love in its darkest recess beyond any other system of ethics?"(p. 467)

Who, after all this and much more, and egotisms, and affectations in every page, needs be told by the author that "his vanity he could never conquer?" (p. 472)

Another useful secret of invincible authors is to interperse a contempt of pedantry and of the clergy. These damned pendants have got a trick of reading many authors, observing the sentiments of the greatest men in all ages; and acquire an impertinent facility of discerning nonsense in the writings of your easy genteel authors, who are above perplexing themselves with the sourness and intricacies of thought. Without some defiances and contempt of pendants and clergy, readers would never have so much as dreamed that some of our authors were witty and easy writers. When this point is obtained, then we may fall upon our readers like thunder, with all the little learning we are masters of in season and out of season: "about Greek and Roman religions, Egyptian worship of onions (though long ago laughed at by a pedantic clergyman in a brother-easy-writer on freethinking) trophies, monuments, arches, military crowns, Alexander, Lorenzo Gratian, Hydaspes, Ostracisms; the Laconic spirit of our nation appearing in the word gin: that fiery lake, the Lethe, the Stygian and Circean cup, from whence pullutate Leucophlegmacies: "we may talk of Stoics, Epicureans, Seneca's estate; nay, even cite Ovid, and transpose a passage in Juvenal: Si licit exemplis: make double entendres upon the word enervate; trabat sua quemque voluptas: a Latin joke from Erasmus: nay, may make most philosophico-philosophical digressions about "the essences of hope, inkerns, ice, and oak;" we may launch out into those profound depths in optics, that "air is not the object of sight; that bulk diminishes by distance, is owing to our imperfection; that the sky might appear through a hole in a wall as near as the stones; talk of Pythagoras's abstaining from flesh, Aesop's making beasts to speak; ira furor brevis est: Lucretia killed herself for fear of shame." We may improve our language by that easy phrase, "meliorating our condition." We may use that most grammatical epithet "superlative;" talk of Vannini, Bruno and Essendi as martyrs, though some of the facts have been disapproved long ago; "that Homer's heroes talk as porters; Lycurgus's Laws; Epaminondas, Leotyichidas, Agis, the Polemarchi; saturnine tempers, adoration of the manes of the British Aesculapius; Cicero's vanity, he wrote O fortunatam, etc. My friend Horace:" with many other most pert evidences of immense critical erudition; which having spend several years at a Latin school, and reading Plutarch's lives Englished by several hands.

When thus the character of erudition is secured, next comes knowledge of the world, another essential quality of an easy writer. This may be displayed by a word or two of French, though we have English words exactly of the same meaning; by talking in the strain of porters and hands, about their affairs. Then the polite gentleman of fine genius will soon appear by a great deal of poetical language, mixed with prose. What pity it had not at all been in rhyme, like the fable itself! the author's slaughter-house and gin-shop would have been as renowned as the cave of the Cyclops, or the dwelling of Circes ingeniuni par materiae!

These are but additional helps. The main strength of the impregnable writer consists in intricate contradictions and inconsistencies; with some manifest absurdities boldly asserted, against which no man can produce an argument, any more than to prove that twice three are not ten. Thus his first sentences is, that "all untaught animals desire only to please themselves, and follow the bent of their inclination, without regard to the good or harm of others:" but a few pages after we shall find that gratitude is natural, or that men "must wish well to benefactors: that pity or aversion to the misery of others is a natural passion; that affection to offspring, and desire of their happiness, is natural: that men may wish well to any other in what they themselves cannot obtain." (p. 34 and p. 68 and 140)

His very definition of vice is "gratifying appetite without regard to the public:"(p. 34) by "without regard", we may charitably understand him to have intended "pernicious to the public", unless he can shew that all men have agreed to call eating when one is hungry, or going to sleep when one is weary, vitious, whenever he does not think of a community. Vice then here is "doing detriment to the public by gratifying appetite". But go on, and you will find the whole strain of the book to be, that "vices are useful to the public, and necessary to its happiness: the solid comforts and happiness of life are the gratifications of appetite."

His definition of virtue is "endeavouring the benefit of others contrary to the impulse of nature."(p. 34) Yet through the whole book "Universal virtue would be detrimental to society;" that is, all mens endeavouring to benefit others would be detrimental to all. "The moral virtues are the offspring of flattery begot upon pride;"(p. 37) yet in the very same page, and many other places, "No passion more natural or universal than pride." Virtue then, which was before contrary to the impulse of nature, now is become following the strongest impulse of nature.

Again, "Virtue is the conquest of passion out of the rational ambition of being good;" (p. 36) but a



few pages after this, "doing worthy actions from love of goodness has certain signs of pride, which is the strongest passion:" and yet, says the author, "This is a sublimer notion of virtue than his own".

"Heathen religion could not influence men to virtue,"(p. 36) says he: the direct contrary is asserted by all the heathen philosophers, historians, orators, tragedians and comedians. The wiser men saw the folly of their theological fables, but never denied a governing mind, the vulgar might believe the fables of Jupiter and his brothers; but imagining in the gods a right superior to that of men, they might fear the judgment of the gods for like facts to those done by Jupiter, and expect rewards for obedience to laws given by men, which yet did not bind superior natures. This notion may make it probable that even very corrupt religions may have in the whole much more good effects than evil. But who will regard the testimonies of poor heathens, against this "Observer of concatenated events?"

Presently we find "the seeds of all virtue in the two passions of pride and shame, which are most natural."(p. 56) In another place, "Virtue was contrary to the impulse of nature, and the conquest of the passions;" and soon after it will become what it was again, "No virtue in what is designed to gratify pride; the only recompence of virtue is the pleasure of doing good;"(p. 68 and p. 246) but even this pleasure of "doing good, or acting from love of goodness, was pride."(p. 43)

Pag. 59. He begins his anatomizing of passions; "The passions, concealed from modesty or good manners, are pride, lust, and selfishness." Either then pride and lust is not selfish, but disinterested; or this division amounts to these three members, to wit, "one sort of selfishness, another sort of selfishness, and selfishness in general."

He asserts, that "Ambassadors debates about precedency flow from pride concealed under shew of virtue," (p. 73) that is, of "conquering the passions from the ambition of being good." It seems they all naturally desire to be hindmost, but affect precedency, that they may seem to conquer this passion.

"Gratitude is a natural motive of inclination, and not virtue: returns of good offices are not from gratitude but from virtue; or manners, that is, concealment of pride, lust, and selfishness, in order to gratify them."(p. 76)

"Luxury is the use of any thing above necessity; nor can any other bounds be fixed:" (p. 108 and 132) and yet a few pages after, "All men ought to dress suitably to condition."

"Envy is a mixture of sorrow and anger. Sorrow arises from our want of what we desire, and anger is raised by us for our ease." (p. 140 and 221) A pleasing passion surely! "Anger is the passion arising when our desire is crossed." Thus envy amounts to sorrow for want of what we desire, compounded with the "passion arising when desire is crossed." This composition is as artful as that of a merry fellow's punch, who liked to have it made of two quarts of brandy, and one quart of brandy; si licet exemplis.

"Self-Love bids us look on every satisfied being as a rival:" and "yet nothing can excite any being to oppose another but his being unsatisfied."(p. 143)

"Laughing at another's fall, is either from envy or malice."(p. 146)

"Love signifies affection, that is, liking or wishing well." The object's interest becomes our own in this wonderful manner. "Self-love makes us believe that the sufferings we feel must lessen those of our friend; and then a secret pleasure arises from our grieving, because we imagine we are relieving him."(p. 149) How strangely does our self-love govern us! It first forms an opinion so prodigiously secret, that never any mortal believed it; and then makes us feel pleasure, not in relieving ourselves, but another. Nay, what is it that self-love cannot perform? "When a man stands in the "street, and shrieks at another's fall from a high window or scaffold, he believes that he himself is flying through the air: when a man blushes, upon seeing another do a base action, he believes he is doing it himself." (p. 55)

I have got yet no further than the 150th page, but with many omissions; you may have, when you please, twice as many, rather greater beauties of the same nature; but these may suffice at present. Only I cannot pass over two passages more; the one is a wonderful composition, so dearly does he love making a very dispensatory of passions, that rather than want composition, he will take two pieces of the same thing for want of different materials: "Laziness is an aversion to business, generally attended with a desire of being unactive." (p. 267) The other passage is a most important maxim; "That man never exerts himself but when he is roused by desire;" or, never exerts himself but when he desires something or other. And he subjoins this sublime simile, of "a huge windmill

without a breath of air."

Before any one pretends to answer this book, he must know what the author means by "good opinion, high value, worth, unworthiness, merit, noble actions, overvaluing, thinking well, or having a right to do any thing." But upon these terms, all mortals may despair of it.

We may make one general observation on the dexterity of this author in confuting opposite schemes. Suppose the scheme of almost all moralists, except Epicureans, to be true; "That we have in our nature kind affections in different degrees, that we have a moral sense determining us to approve them whenever they are observed, and all actions which flow from them; that we are naturally bound together by desire of esteem from each other, and by compassion; and that withal we have self-love or desire of private goods." What would be the consequence of this constitution, or the appearances in human nature? All men would call those actions virtuous, which they imagine to tend to the public good: where men differ in "opinions of the natural tendencies of actions." they must differ in approbation or condemnation: they will find pleasure in contemplating or reflecting on their own kind affections and actions: they will delight in the society of the kind, good-natured, and beneficent: they will be uneasy upon seeing or even hearing of the misery of others, and be delighted with the happiness of any persons beloved: men will have regard to private goods as well as public: and when other circumstances are equal, will prefer what tends most to private advantage. Now these are the direct and necessary consequences of this supposition: and yet this penetrating swaggerer, who surpasses all writers of ethics, makes those very appearances proofs against the hypothesis. No proofs will please him but the contrary appearances: if he saw "men approving what is pernicious to the public; or men agreeing to approve the same action, though one thought it useful to the public, and another thought it pernicious; or if men had no manner of pleasure in good actions, or in reflecting upon them, nor would value themselves more for heroism than villany; then indeed he would acknowledge a moral sense independent of interest and true virtue." So also "Men must delight in the company of the proud, morose, revengeful and quarrelsome; they must be indifferent in beholding the most cruel tortures, or the greatest joy and happiness of our fellows, or even of our offspring. Men must do mischief to themselves, or neglect their most innocent pleasures, and interest, by a thorough self-denial, without any inclination to the good of others; and must have no more pleasure in gratitude, generosity, or humanity, than in malice and revenge; otherwise this author will never believe any other affection than self-love: at present he sees all to be but disguises of it, from his deep reflection about fresh herrings, and the company he would choose."

He has probably been struck with some old fanatic sermon upon self-denial in his youth, and can never get it out of his head since. It is absolutely impossible upon his scheme, that God himself can make a being naturally disposed to virtue: for virtue is "self-denial, and acting against the impulse of nature." What else then can we imagine concerning all the works of God in their best state, but

--- *That they were intended,  
For nothing else but to be mended?*  
Hud.

Might we poor vulgar make conjectures concerning the spirits of nations, we would be apt to conclude, that through incapacity for abstract thinking, the Bocratic spirit of the British is much better discovered by a fourth edition of his book, than the Laconic by the word Gin.

Thus may thine enemies triumph, O Virtue and Christianity!

I am, Sir,  
Your very humble Servant,  
P.M.

THE END

55 55 60. The Fable of the Bees. Bernard Mandeville. Remarks S, T, V, X and Y.Â pitched on topics that I wanted to expatiate upon; and that far from striving to extenuate the errors committed before, I have made bad worse, and shown myself a more barefaced champion for vice in the rambling Remarks than I had done in the fable itself. I shall spend no time in answering these accusations; where men are prejudiced, the best defences are lost; and I know that those who think it criminal to suppose vice is ever a necessity will never be reconciled to any part of the work; but if the work is thoroughly examined, all the offence it can give must result from inferences wrongly dr