The Princess and Pekuah watching the approach of Dinarbas.

Chap. 27 Page 209.

T. Uwins, del. W. Finden sculp.

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RASSELAS & DINARBAS.

"He Started and stood confused afraid to tell his design, and yet hopeless to conceal it."
Rasselas, Chap. 14, p. 10.

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RASSELAS:

A TALE.

BY DR. JOHNSON.

RASSELAS.

CHAPTER I.

Description of a Palace in a Valley.

YE who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas prince of Abissinia.

Rasselas was the fourth son of the mighty emperor, in whose dominions the father of waters begins his course; whose bounty pours down the streams of plenty, and scatters over the world the harvests of Egypt.

According to the custom which has descended from age to age among the monarchs of the torrid zone, Rasselas was confined in a private palace, with the other sons and daughters of Abissinian royalty, till the order of succession should call him to the throne.

The place, which the wisdom or policy of antiquity had destined for the residence of the Abissinian princes, was a spacious valley in the kingdom of Amhara, surrounded on every side by mountains, of which the summits overhang the middle part. The only passage by which it could be en-

tered was a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it had long been disputed whether it was the work of nature or of human industry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by a thick wood, and the mouth which opened into the valley was closed with gates of iron, forged by the artificers of ancient days, so massy, that no man, without the help of engines, could open or shut them.

From the mountains on every side rivulets descended, that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle, inhabited by fish of every species, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. This lake discharged its superfluities by a stream, which entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern side, and fell with dreadful noise from precipice to precipice, till it was heard no more.

The sides of the mountains were covered with trees, the banks of the brooks were diversified with flowers: every blast shook spices from the rocks, and every month dropped fruits upon the ground. All animals that bite the grass, or browse the shrubs, whether wild or tame, wandered in this extensive circuit, secured from beasts of prey by the mountains which confined them. On one part were flocks and herds feeding in the pastures, on another all the beasts of chase frisking in the lawns: the sprightly kid was bounding on the rocks, the subtle monkey frolicking in the trees, and the solemn elephant reposing in the shade. All the diversities of the world were brought together, the blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.

The valley, wide and fruitful, supplied its inhabitants with the necessaries of life; and all delights and superfluities were added at the annual visit which the emperor paid his children, when the iron gate was opened to the sound of music; and during eight days, every one that resided in

the valley was required to propose whatever might contribute to make seclusion pleasant, to fill up the vacancies of attention, and lessen the tediousness of time. Every desire was immediately granted. All the artificers of pleasure were called to gladden the festivity; the musicians exerted the power of harmony, and the dancers showed their activity before the princes, in hopes that they should pass their lives in blissful captivity, to which those only were admitted whose performance was thought able to add novelty to luxury. Such was the appearance of security and delight which this retirement afforded, that they to whom it was new always desired that it might be perpetual; and as those on whom the iron gate had once closed were never suffered to return, the effect of longer experience could not be known. Thus every year produced new scenes of delight, and new competitors for imprisonment.

The palace stood on an eminence, raised about thirty paces above the surface of the lake. It was divided into many squares, or courts, built with greater or less magnificence, according to the rank of those for whom they were designed. The roofs were turned into arches of massy stone, joined by a cement that grew harder by time; and the building stood from century to century, deriding the solstitial rains and equinoctial hurricanes, without need of reparation.

This house, which was so large as to be fully known to none but some ancient officers, who successively inherited the secrets of the place, was built as if Suspicion herself had dictated the plan. To every room there was an open and secret passage; every square had a communication with the rest, either from the upper stories by private galleries, or by subterraneous passages from the lower apartments. Many of the columns had unsuspected cavities, in which a long race of monarchs had reposited their treasures. They then closed

up the opening with marble, which was never to be removed but in the utmost exigencies of the kingdom; and recorded their accumulations in a book, which was itself concealed in a tower, not entered but by the emperor, attended by the prince who stood next in succession.

CHAPTER II.

The Discontent of Rasselas in the happy Valley.

HERE the sons and daughters of Abissinia lived only to know the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose, attended by all that were skilful to delight, and gratified with whatever the senses can enjoy. They wandered in gardens of fragrance, and slept in the fortresses of security. Every art was practised to make them pleased with their own condition. The sages who instructed them told them of nothing but the misêries of public life, and described all beyond the mountains as regions of calamity, where discord was always raging, and where man preyed upon man. To heighten their opinion of their own felicity, they were daily entertained with songs, the subject of which was the happy valley. Their appetites were excited by frequent enumerations of different enjoyments, and revelry and merriment were the business of every hour, from the dawn of morning to the close of the evening.

These methods were generally successful: few of the princes had ever wished to enlarge their bounds, but passed their lives in full conviction that they had all within their reach that art or nature could bestow, and pitied those whom nature had excluded

from this seat of tranquillity, as the sport of chance and the slaves of misery.

Thus they rose in the morning and lay down at night, pleased with each other and with themselves, all but Rasselas, who, in the twenty-sixth year of his age, began to withdraw himself from the pastimes and assemblies, and to delight in solitary walks and silent meditation. He often sat before tables covered with luxury, and forgot to taste the dainties that were placed before him: he rose abruptly in the midst of the song, and hastily retired beyond the sound of music. His attendants observed the change, and endeavoured to renew his love of pleasure: he neglected their officiousness, repulsed their invitations, and spent day after day on the banks of rivulets sheltered with trees, where he sometimes listened to the birds in the branches, sometimes observed the fish playing in the stream, and anon cast his eyes upon the pastures and mountains filled with animals, of which some were biting the herbage, and some sleeping among the bushes. The singularity of his humour made him much observed. One of the sages, in whose conversation he had formerly delighted, followed him secretly, in hope of discovering the cause of his disquiet. Rasselas, who knew not that any one was near him, having for some time fixed his eyes upon the goats that were browsing among the rocks, began to compare their condition with his own.

'What,' said he, 'makes the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation? Every beast that strays beside me has the same corporal necessities with myself: he is hungry, and crops the grass; he is thirsty, and drinks the stream: his thirst and hunger are appeased; he is satisfied, and sleeps: he rises again, and is hungry; he is again fed, and is at rest. I am hungry and thirsty, like him, but when thirst and hunger cease, I am not at rest; I am, like him, pained with want, but am not, like him, satisfied with fulness. The interme-

diate hours are tedious and gloomy: I long again to be hungry, that I may again quicken the attention. The birds peck the berries or the corn, and fly away to the groves, where they sit in seeming happiness on the branches, and waste their lives in tuning one unvaried series of sounds. I likewise can call the lutanist and the singer; but the sounds that pleased me yesterday weary me to-day, and will grow yet more wearisome to-morrow. I can discover in me no power of perception which is not glutted with its proper pleasure, yet I do not feel myself delighted. Man surely has some latent sense, for which this place affords no gratification; or he has some desires distinct from sense, which must be satisfied before he can be happy.'

After this he lifted up his head, and seeing the moon rising, walked towards the palace. As he passed through the fields, and saw the animals around him, 'Ye,' said he, 'are happy, and need not envy me, that walk thus among you, burthened with myself; nor do I, ye gentle beings, envy your felicity; for it is not the felicity of man. I have many distresses from which ye are free; I fear pain when I do not feel it: I sometimes shrink at evils recollected, and sometimes start at evils anticipated: surely the equity of Providence has balanced peculiar sufferings with peculiar enjoyments.'

With observations like these the prince amused himself as he returned, uttering them with a plaintive voice, yet with a look that discovered him to feel some complacence in his own perspicacity, and to receive some solace of the miseries of life, from consciousness of the delicacy with which he felt, and the eloquence with which he bewailed them. He mingled cheerfully in the diversions of the evening, and all rejoiced to find that his heart was lightened.

CHAPTER III.

The Wants of him that wants nothing.

ON the next day, his old instructor, imagining that he had now made himself acquainted with his disease of mind, was in hope of curing it by counsel, and officiously sought an opportunity of conference, which the prince, having long considered him as one whose intellects were exhausted, was not very willing to afford. 'Why,' said he, 'does this man thus intrude upon me? shall I never be suffered to forget these lectures, which pleased only while they were new, and to become new again, must be forgotten?' He then walked into the wood, and composed himself to his usual meditations; when, before his thoughts had taken any settled form, he perceived his pursuer at his side, and was at first prompted by his impatience to go hastily away; but being unwilling to offend a man whom he had once reverenced, and still loved, he invited him to sit down with him on the bank.

The old man, thus encouraged, began to lament the change which had been lately observed in the prince, and to inquire why he so often retired from the pleasures of the palace, to loneliness and silence. 'I fly from pleasure,' said the prince, 'because pleasure has ceased to please: I am lonely because I am miserable, and am unwilling to cloud with my presence the happiness of others.'—'You, sir,' said the sage, 'are the first who has complained of misery in the happy valley. I hope to convince you that your complaints have no real cause. You are here in full possession of all the emperor of Abissinia can bestow; here is neither labour to be endured nor danger to be dreaded, yet

here is all that labour or danger can procure or purchase. Look round and tell me which of your wants is without supply: if you want nothing, how are you unhappy?'

'That I want nothing,' said the prince, 'or that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint: if I had any known want, I should have a certain wish; that wish would excite endeavour, and I should not then repine to see the sun move so slowly towards the western mountains, or to lament when the day breaks, and sleep will no longer hide me from myself. When I see the kids and the lambs chasing one another, I fancy that I should be happy if I had something to pursue. But, possessing all that I can want, I find one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former. Let your experience inform me how the day may now seem as short as in my childhood, while nature was yet fresh, and every moment showed me what I never had observed before. I have already enjoyed too much: give me something to desire.' The old man was surprised at this new species of affliction, and knew not what to reply, yet was unwilling to be silent. 'Sir,' said he, 'if you had seen the miseries of the world, you would know how to value your present state.'—'Now,' said the prince, 'you have given me something to desire: I shall long to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness.'

CHAPTER IV.

The Prince continues to grieve and muse.

AT this time the sound of music proclaimed the hour of repast, and the conversation was concluded. The old man went away sufficiently discontented to find that his reasonings had produced the only conclusion which they were intended to prevent. But in the decline of life, shame and grief are of short duration: whether it be that we bear easily what we have borne long; or that, finding ourselves in age less regarded, we less regard others; or, that we look with slight regard upon afflictions, to which we know that the hand of death is about to put an end.

The prince, whose views were extended to a wider space, could not speedily quiet his emotions. He had been before terrified at the length of life which nature promised him, because he considered that in a long time much must be endured: he now rejoiced in his youth, because in many years much might be done. This first beam of hope that had been ever darted into his mind rekindled youth in his cheeks, and doubled the lustre of his eyes. He was fired with the desire of doing something, though he knew not yet, with distinctness, either end or means. He was now no longer gloomy and unsocial; but, considering himself as master of a secret stock of happiness, which he could only enjoy by concealing it, he affected to be busy in all the schemes of diversion, and endeavoured to make others pleased with the state of which he himself was weary. But pleasures can never be so multiplied or continued as not to leave much of life unemployed; there were many hours, both of the night and day, which he could spend without suspicion in solitary thought. The

load of life was much lightened; he went eagerly into the assemblies, because he supposed the frequency of his presence necessary to the success of his purposes; he retired gladly to privacy, because he had now a subject of thought. His chief amusement was to picture to himself that world which he had never seen, to place himself in various conditions, to be entangled in imaginary difficulties, and to be engaged in wild adventures; but his benevolence always terminated his projects in the relief of distress, the detection of fraud, the defeat of oppression, and the diffusion of happiness.

Thus passed twenty months of the life of Rasselas. He busied himself so intensely in visionary bustle that he forgot his real solitude; and, amidst hourly preparations for the various incidents of human affairs, neglected to consider by what means he should mingle with mankind.

One day, as he was sitting on a bank, he feigned to himself an orphan virgin robbed of her little portion by a treacherous lover, and crying after him for restitution. So strongly was the image impressed upon his mind, that he started up in the maid's defence, and ran forward to seize the plunderer with all the eagerness of real pursuit. Fear naturally quickens the flight of guilt. Rasselas could not catch the fugitive with his utmost efforts; but, resolving to weary by perseverance him whom he could not surpass in speed, he pressed on till the foot of the mountain stopped his course.

Here he recollected himself, and smiled at his own useless impetuosity. Then raising his eyes to the mountain, 'This,' said he, 'is the fatal obstacle that hinders at once the enjoyment of pleasure and the exercise of virtue. How long is it that my hopes and wishes have flown beyond this boundary of my life, which yet I never have attempted to surmount!'—Struck with this reflection, he sat down to muse, and remembered, that since he first resolved to escape from his confinement, the sun had

passed twice over him in his annual course. He now felt a degree of regret with which he had never been before acquainted. He considered how much might have been done in the time which had passed, and left nothing real behind it. He compared twenty months with the life of man.—'In life,' said he, 'is not to be counted the ignorance of infancy or imbecility of age. We are long before we are able to think, and we soon cease from the power of acting. The true period of human existence may be reasonably estimated at forty years, of which I have mused away the four-and-twentieth part. What I have lost was certain, for I have certainly possessed it; but of twenty months to come who can assure me?'

The consciousness of his own folly pierced him deeply, and he was long before he could be reconciled to himself. 'The rest of my time,' said he, 'has been lost by the crime or folly of my ancestors, and the absurd institutions of my country; I remember it with disgust, yet without remorse: but the months that have passed since new light darted into my soul, since I formed a scheme of reasonable felicity, have been squandered by my own fault. I have lost that which can never be restored: I have seen the sun rise and set for twenty months, an idle gazer on the light of heaven: in this time the birds have left the nest of their mother, and committed themselves to the woods and to the skies; the kid has forsaken the teat, and learned by degrees to climb the rocks in quest of independent sustenance. I only have made no advances, but am still helpless and ignorant. The moon, by more than twenty changes, admonished me of the flux of life: the stream that rolled before my feet upbraided my inactivity. I sat feasting on intellectual luxury, regardless alike of the examples of the earth and the instructions of the planets. Twenty months are past, who shall restore them?'

These sorrowful meditations fastened upon his mind: he passed four months in resolving to lose no more time in idle resolves, and was awakened to more vigorous exertion, by hearing a maid, who had broken a porcelain cup, remark, that what cannot be repaired is not to be regretted.

This was obvious; and Rasselas reproached himself that he had not discovered it; having not known, or not considered, how many useful hints are obtained by chance, and how often the mind, hurried by her own ardour to distant views, neglects the truths that lie opened before her. He, for a few hours, regretted his regret, and from that time bent his whole mind upon the means of escaping from the valley of happiness.

CHAPTER V.

The Prince meditates his Escape.

HE now found that it would be very difficult to effect that which it was very easy to suppose effected. When he looked round about him, he saw himself confined by the bars of nature, which had never yet been broken, and by the gate, through which none that once had passed it were ever able to return. He was now impatient as an eagle in a grate. He passed week after week in clambering the mountains, to see if there was any aperture which the bushes might conceal, but found all the summits inaccessible by their prominence. The iron gate he despaired to open; for it was not only secured with all the power of art, but was always watched by successive sentinels, and was by its position exposed to the perpetual observation of all the inhabitants.

He then examined the cavern through which the waters of the lake were discharged; and, looking down at a time when the sun shone strongly upon its mouth, he discovered it to be full of broken rocks, which, though they permitted the stream to flow through many narrow passages, would stop any body of solid bulk. He returned discouraged and dejected: but, having now known the blessing of hope, resolved never to despair.

In these fruitless researches he spent ten months. The time, however, passed cheerfully away: in the morning he rose with new hope, in the evening applauded his own diligence, and in the night slept sound after his fatigue. He met a thousand amusements, which beguiled his labour and diversified his thoughts. He discerned the various instincts of animals, and properties of plants, and found the place replete with wonders, of which he proposed to solace himself with the contemplation, if he should never be able to accomplish his flight; rejoicing that his endeavours, though yet unsuccessful, had supplied him with a source of inexhaustible inquiry.

But his original curiosity was not yet abated; he resolved to obtain some knowledge of the ways of men. His wish still continued, but his hope grew less. He ceased to survey any longer the walls of his prison, and spared to search by new toils for interstices which he knew could not be found, yet determined to keep his design always in view, and lay hold on any expedient that time should offer.

CHAPTER VI.

A Dissertation on the Art of Flying.

AMONG the artists that had been allured into the happy valley, to labour for the accommodation and pleasure of its inhabitants, was a man eminent for his knowledge of the mechanic powers, who had contrived many engines both of use and recreation. By a wheel, which the stream turned, he forced the water into a tower, whence it was distributed to all the apartments of the palace. He erected a pavilion in the garden, around which he kept the air always cool by artificial showers. One of the groves, appropriated to the ladies, was ventilated by fans, to which the rivulets that ran through it gave a constant motion; and instruments of soft music were placed at proper distances, of which some played by the impulse of the wind, and some by the power of the stream.

This artist was sometimes visited by Rasselas, who was pleased with every kind of knowledge, imagining that the time would come when all his acquisitions should be of use to him in the open world. He came one day to amuse himself in his usual manner, and found the master busy in building a sailing chariot: he saw that the design was practicable upon a level surface, and with expressions of great esteem solicited its completion. The workman was pleased to find himself so much regarded by the prince, and resolved to gain yet higher honours. 'Sir,' said he, 'you have seen but a small part of what the mechanic sciences can perform. I have been long of opinion, that instead of the tardy conveyance of ships and chariots, man might use the swifter migration of wings; that the fields of air are open to knowledge, and that

only ignorance and idleness need crawl upon the ground.'

This hint rekindled the prince's desire of passing the mountains. Having seen what the mechanist had already performed, he was willing to fancy that he could do more; yet resolved to inquire farther before he suffered hope to afflict him by disappointment. 'I am afraid,' said he to the artist, 'that your imagination prevails over your skill, and that you now tell me rather what you wish than what you know. Every animal has his element assigned him; the birds have the air, and man and beasts the earth.'—'So,' replied the mechanist, 'fishes have the water, in which yet beasts can swim by nature, and man by art. He that can swim needs not despair to fly: to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in a subtler. We are only to proportion our power of resistance to the different density of matter through which we are to pass. You will be necessarily upborn by the air, if you can renew any impulse upon it faster than the air can recede from the pressure.'

'But the exercise of swimming,' said the prince, 'is very laborious; the strongest limbs are soon wearied: I am afraid the act of flying will be yet more violent; and wings will be of no great use, unless we can fly further than we can swim.'

'The labour of rising from the ground,' said the artist, 'will be great, as we see it in the heavier domestic fowls; but, as we mount higher, the earth's attraction, and the body's gravity, will be gradually diminished, till we shall arrive at a region where the man will float in the air without any tendency to fall; no care will then be necessary but to move forward, which the gentlest impulse will effect. You, sir, whose curiosity is so extensive, will easily conceive with what pleasure a philosopher, furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all its inha-

bitants, rolling beneath him, and presenting to him successively, by its diurnal motion, all the countries within the same parallel. How must it amuse the pendent spectator to see the moving scene of land and ocean, cities and deserts! to survey with equal security the marts of trade, and the fields of battle; mountains infested by barbarians, and fruitful regions gladdened by plenty and lulled by peace! How easily shall we then trace the Nile through all his passages, pass over to distant regions, and examine the face of nature from one extremity of the earth to the other.'

'All this,' said the prince, 'is much to be desired, but I am afraid that no man will be able to breathe in these regions of speculation and tranquillity. I have been told that respiration is difficult upon lofty mountains; yet from these precipices, though so high as to produce great tenuity of air, it is very easy to fall: therefore I suspect, that from any height, where life can be supported, there may be danger of too quick descent.'

'Nothing,' replied the artist, 'will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome. If you will favour my project, I will try the first flight at my own hazard. I have considered the structure of all volant animals, and find the folding continuity of the bat's wings most easily accommodated to the human form. Upon this model I shall begin my task to-morrow; and, in a year, expect to tower into the air beyond the malice and pursuit of man. But I will work only on this condition, that the art shall not be divulged, and that you shall not require me to make wings for any but ourselves.'

'Why,' said Rasselas, 'should you envy others so great an advantage? All skill ought to be exerted for universal good; every man has owed much to others, and ought to repay the kindness that he has received.'

'If men were all virtuous,' returned the artist,

'I should with great alacrity teach them to fly. But what would be the security of the good, if the bad could at pleasure invade them from the sky? Against an army sailing through the clouds, neither walls, mountains, nor seas, could afford security. A flight of northern savages might hover in the wind, and light with irresistible violence upon the capital of a fruitful region. Even this valley, the retreat of princes, the abode of happiness, might be violated by the sudden descent of some of the naked nations that swarm on the coast of the southern sea!'

The prince promised secrecy, and waited for the performance, not wholly hopeless of success. He visited the work from time to time, observed its progress, and remarked many ingenious contrivances to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength. The artist was every day more certain that he should leave vultures and eagles behind him, and the contagion of his confidence seized upon the prince. In a year the wings were finished; and, on a morning appointed, the maker appeared furnished for flight on a little promontory: he waved his pinions a while to gather air, then leaped from his stand, and in an instant dropped into the lake. His wings, which were of no use in the air, sustained him in the water; and the prince drew him to land half dead with terror and vexation.

CHAPTER VII.

The Prince finds a Man of Learning.

THE prince was not much afflicted by this disaster, having suffered himself to hope for a hap-

pier event only because he had no other means of escape in view. He still persisted in his design to leave the happy valley by the first opportunity.

His imagination was now at a stand; he had no prospect of entering into the world; and, notwithstanding all his endeavours to support himself, discontent, by degrees, preyed upon him; and he began again to lose his thoughts in sadness, when the rainy season, which in these countries is periodical, made it inconvenient to wander in the woods.

The rain continued longer and with more violence than had ever been known: the clouds broke on the surrounding mountains, and the torrents streamed into the plain on every side, till the cavern was too narrow to discharge the water. The lake overflowed its banks, and all the level of the valley was covered with the inundation. The eminence on which the palace was built, and some other spots of rising ground, were all that the eye could now discover. The herds and flocks left the pasture, and both the wild beasts and the tame retreated to the mountains.

This inundation confined all the princes to domestic amusements; and the attention of Rasselas was particularly seized by a poem, which Imlac rehearsed, upon the various conditions of humanity. He commanded the poet to attend him in his apartment, and recite his verses a second time; then, entering into familiar talk, he thought himself happy in having found a man who knew the world so well, and could so skilfully paint the scenes of life. He asked a thousand questions about things, to which, though common to all other mortals, his confinement from childhood had kept him a stranger. The poet pitied his ignorance, and loved his curiosity, and entertained him from day to day with novelty and instruction, so that the prince regretted the necessity of sleep,

and longed till the morning should renew his pleasure.

As they were sitting together, the prince commanded Imlac to relate his history, and to tell by what accident he was forced, or by what motive induced, to close his life in the happy valley. As he was going to begin his narrative, Rasselas was called to a concert, and obliged to restrain his curiosity till the evening.

CHAPTER VIII.

The History of Imlac.

THE close of the day is, in the regions of the torrid zone, the only season of diversion and entertainment, and it was therefore midnight before the music ceased and the princesses retired. Rasselas then called for his companion, and required him to begin the story of his life.

'Sir,' said Imlac, 'my history will not be long: the life that is devoted to knowledge passes silently away, and is very little diversified by events. To talk in public, to think in solitude, to read and to hear, to inquire and answer inquiries, is the business of a scholar. He wanders about the world without pomp or terror, and is neither known nor valued but by men like himself.

'I was born in the kingdom of Goiama, at no great distance from the fountain of the Nile. My father was a wealthy merchant, who traded between the inland countries of Africa and the ports of the Red Sea. He was honest, frugal, and diligent, but of mean sentiments and narrow comprehension; he desired only to be rich, and to conceal his riches,

lest he should be spoiled by the governors of the province.'

'Surely,' said the prince, 'my father must be negligent of his charge, if any man in his dominions dares take that which belongs to another. Does he not know that kings are accountable for injustice permitted as well as done? If I were emperor, not the meanest of my subjects should be oppressed with impunity. My blood boils when I am told that a merchant durst not enjoy his honest gains for fear of losing them by the rapacity of power. Name the governor who robbed the people, that I may declare his crimes to the emperor!'

'Sir,' said Imlac, 'your ardour is the natural effect of virtue animated by youth: the time will come when you will acquit your father, and perhaps hear with less impatience of the governor. Oppression is, in the Abissinian dominions, neither frequent nor tolerated; but no form of government has been yet discovered, by which cruelty can be wholly prevented. Subordination supposes power on one part and subjection on the other; and if power be in the hands of men, it will sometimes be abused. The vigilance of the supreme magistrate may do much, but much will still remain undone. He can never know all the crimes that are committed, and can seldom punish all that he knows.'

'This,' said the prince, 'I do not understand; but I had rather hear thee than dispute. Continue thy narration.'

'My father,' proceeded Imlac, 'originally intended that I should have no other education than such as might qualify me for commerce; and discovering in me great strength of memory and quickness of apprehension, often declared his hope that I should be some time the richest man in Abissinia.'

'Why,' said the prince, 'did thy father desire the increase of his wealth, when it was already

greater than he durst discover or enjoy? I am unwilling to doubt thy veracity, yet inconsistencies cannot both be true.'

'Inconsistencies,' answered Imlac, 'cannot both be right; but, imputed to man, they may both be true. Yet diversity is not inconsistency. My father might expect a time of greater security. However, some desire is necessary to keep life in motion; and he, whose real wants are supplied, must admit those of fancy.'

'This,' said the prince, 'I can in some measure conceive. I repent that I interrupted thee.'

'With this hope,' proceeded Imlac, 'he sent me to school: but when I had once found the delight of knowledge, and felt the pleasure of intelligence and the pride of invention, I began silently to despise riches, and determined to disappoint the purposes of my father, whose grossness of conception raised my pity. I was twenty years old before his tenderness would expose me to the fatigue of travel; in which time I had been instructed, by successive masters, in all the literature of my native country. As every hour taught me something new, I lived in a continual course of gratifications; but, as I advanced towards manhood, I lost much of the reverence with which I had been used to look on my instructors; because, when the lessons were ended, I did not find them wiser or better than common men.

'At length my father resolved to initiate me in commerce; and, opening one of his subterranean treasuries, counted out ten thousand pieces of gold. This, young man, said he, is the stock with which you must negotiate. I began with less than a fifth part, and you see how diligence and parsimony have increased it. This is your own, to waste or to improve. If you squander it by negligence or caprice, you must wait for my death before you will be rich; if in four years you double your stock, we will thenceforward let subordination

ther your crime nor your folly, could afford them no reason to applaud themselves; and the knowledge which they had, and which you wanted, they might as effectually have shown by warning, as betraying you.'

'Pride,' said Imlac, 'is seldom delicate; it will please itself with very mean advantages; and envy feels not its own happiness but when it may be compared with the misery of others. They were my enemies because they grieved to think me rich, and my oppressors because they delighted to find me weak.'

'Proceed,' said the prince: 'I doubt not of the facts which you relate, but imagine that you impute them to mistaken motives.'

'In this company,' said Imlac, 'I arrived at Agra, the capital of Indostan, the city in which the Great Mogul commonly resides. I applied myself to the language of the country, and in a few months was able to converse with the learned men; some of whom I found morose and reserved, and others easy and communicative: some were unwilling to teach another what they had with difficulty learned themselves; and some showed that the end of their studies was to gain the dignity of instructing.

'To the tutor of the young princes I recommended myself so much, that I was presented to the emperor as a man of uncommon knowledge. The emperor asked me many questions concerning my country and my travels; and though I cannot now recollect any thing that he uttered above the power of a common man, he dismissed me astonished at his wisdom, and enamoured of his goodness.

'My credit was now so high, that the merchants with whom I had travelled applied to me for recommendations to the ladies of the court. I was surprised at their confidence of solicitation, and

gently reproached them with their practices on the road. They heard me with cold indifference, and showed no tokens of shame or sorrow.

'They then urged their request with the offer of a bribe; but what I would not do for kindness I would not do for money, and refused them; not because they had injured me, but because I would not enable them to injure others; for I knew they would have made use of my credit to cheat those who should buy their wares.

'Having resided at Agra till there was no more to be learned, I travelled into Persia, where I saw many remains of ancient magnificence, and observed many new accommodations of life. The Persians are a nation eminently social, and their assemblies afforded me daily opportunities of remarking characters and manners, and of tracing human nature through all its variations.

'From Persia I passed into Arabia, where I saw a nation pastoral and warlike; who lived without any settled habitation, whose wealth is their flocks and herds, and who have carried on, through ages, an hereditary war with mankind, though they neither covet nor envy their possessions.'

CHAPTER X.

Imlac's History continued. A Dissertation upon Poetry.

'WHEREVER I went, I found that poetry was considered as the highest learning, and regarded with a veneration somewhat approaching to that which man would pay to angelic nature. And yet it fills me with wonder, that, in almost all coun-

tries, the most ancient poets are considered as the best: whether it be that every other kind of knowledge is an acquisition gradually attained, and poetry is a gift conferred at once; or that the first poetry of every nation surprised them as a novelty, and retained the credit by consent which it received by accident at first; or whether, as the province of poetry is to describe nature and passion, which are always the same, the first writers took possession of the most striking objects for description and the most probable occurrences for fiction, and left nothing to those that followed them but transcription of the same events, and new combinations of the same images. Whatever be the reason, it is commonly observed that the early writers are in possession of nature, and their followers of art; that the first excel in strength and invention, and the latter in elegance and refinement.

'I was desirous to add my name to this illustrious fraternity. I read all the poets of Persia and Arabia, and was able to repeat by memory the volumes that are suspended in the mosque of Mecca. But I soon found that no man was ever great by imitation. My desire of excellence impelled me to transfer my attention to nature and to life. Nature was to be my subject, and men to be my auditors. I could never describe what I had not seen; I could not hope to move those with delight or terror, whose interests and opinions I did not understand.

'Being now resolved to be a poet, I saw every thing with a new purpose; my sphere of attention was suddenly magnified; no kind of knowledge was to be overlooked. I ranged mountains and deserts for images and resemblances, and pictured upon my mind every tree of the forest and flower of the valley. I observed with equal care the crags of the rock and the pinnacles of the palace. —Sometimes I wandered along the mazes of the rivulet, and sometimes watched the changes of the

summer clouds.—To a poet nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination: he must be conversant with all that is awfully vast or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the minerals of the earth, and meteors of the sky, must all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety; for every idea is useful for the enforcement or decoration of moral or religious truth; and he who knows most will have most power of diversifying his scenes, and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions and unexpected instruction.

'All the appearances of nature I was therefore careful to study; and every country which I have surveyed has contributed something to my poetical powers.'

'In so wide a survey,' said the prince, 'you must surely have left much unobserved. I have lived till now within the circuit of the mountains, and yet cannot walk abroad without the sight of something which I had never beheld before, or never heeded.'

'The business of a poet,' said Imlac, 'is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades of the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features as recal the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness.

'But the knowledge of nature is only half the task of a poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life. His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition; observe the power of all the passions

in all their combinations; and trace the changes of the human mind, as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude. He must divest himself of the prejudices of his age and country; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same: he must, therefore, content himself with the slow progress of his name; contemn the praise of his own time, and commit his claims to the justice of posterity. He must write as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations, as a being superior to time and place.

'His labour is not yet at an end: he must know many languages and many sciences; and, that his style may be worthy of his thoughts, must, by incessant practice, familiarise to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony.'

CHAPTER XI.

Imlac's Narrative continued. A Hint on Pilgrimage.

IMLAC now felt the enthusiastic fit, and was proceeding to aggrandize his own profession, when the prince cried out, 'Enough! thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet. Proceed with thy narration.'

'To be a poet,' said Imlac, 'is indeed very diffi-

cult.' 'So difficult,' returned the prince, 'that I will at present hear no more of his labours. Tell me whither you went when you had seen Persia.'

'From Persia,' said the poet, 'I travelled through Syria, and for three years resided in Palestine, where I conversed with great numbers of the northern and western nations of Europe; the nations which are now in possession of all power and all knowledge; whose armies are irresistible, and whose fleets command the remotest parts of the globe. When I compared these men with the natives of our own kingdom and those that surround us, they appeared almost another order of beings. In their countries it is difficult to wish for any thing that may not be obtained: a thousand arts, of which we never heard, are continually labouring for their convenience and pleasure; and whatever their own climate has denied them is supplied by their commerce.'

'By what means,' said the prince, 'are the Europeans thus powerful? or why, since they can so easily visit Asia and Africa for trade or conquest, cannot the Asiatics and Africans invade their coasts, plant colonies in their ports, and give laws to their natural princes? The same wind that carries them back would bring us thither.'

'They are more powerful, sir, than we,' answered Imlac, 'because they are wiser; knowledge will always predominate over ignorance, as man governs the other animals. But why their knowledge is more than ours, I know not what reason can be given but the unsearchable will of the Supreme Being.'

'When,' said the prince with a sigh, 'shall I be able to visit Palestine, and mingle with this mighty confluence of nations? Till that happy moment shall arrive, let me fill up the time with such representations as thou canst give me. I am not ignorant of the motive that assembles such numbers in that place, and cannot but consider it as the

centre of wisdom and piety, to which the best and wisest men of every land must be continually resorting.'

'There are some nations,' said Imlac, 'that send few visitants to Palestine; for many numerous and learned sects in Europe concur to censure pilgrimage as superstitious, or deride it as ridiculous.'

'You know,' said the prince, 'how little my life has made me acquainted with diversity of opinions: it will be too long to hear the arguments on both sides; you, that have considered them, tell me the result.'

'Pilgrimage,' said Imlac, 'like many other acts of piety, may be reasonable or superstitious, according to the principles upon which it is performed. Long journeys in search of truth are not commanded. Truth, such as is necessary to the regulation of life, is always found where it is honestly sought. Change of place is no natural cause of the increase of piety, for it inevitably produces dissipation of mind. Yet, since men go every day to view the fields where great actions have been performed, and return with stronger impressions of the event, curiosity of the same kind may naturally dispose us to view that country whence our religion had its beginning; and I believe no man surveys those awful scenes without some confirmation of holy resolutions. That the Supreme Being may be more easily propitiated in one place than in another, is the dream of idle superstition; but that some places may operate upon our own minds in an uncommon manner, is an opinion which hourly experience will justify. He who supposes that his vices may be more successfully combated in Palestine will, perhaps, find himself mistaken; yet he may go thither without folly: he who thinks they will be more freely pardoned, dishonours at once his reason and religion.'

'These,' said the prince, 'are European distinctions. I will consider them another time. What

have you found to be the effect of knowledge? Are those nations happier than we?'

'There is so much infelicity,' said the poet, 'in the world, that scarce any man has leisure from his own distresses to estimate the comparative happiness of others. Knowledge is certainly one of the means of pleasure, as is confessed by the natural desire which every mind feels of increasing its ideas. Ignorance is mere privation, by which nothing can be produced; it is a vacuity in which the soul sits motionless and torpid for want of attraction; and, without knowing why, we always rejoice when we learn, and grieve when we forget. I am therefore inclined to conclude, that if nothing counteracts the natural consequence of learning, we grow more happy as our minds take a wider range.

'In enumerating the particular comforts of life, we shall find many advantages on the side of the Europeans. They cure wounds and diseases with which we languish and perish. We suffer inclemencies of weather which they can obviate. They have engines for the despatch of many laborious works, which we must perform by manual industry. There is such communication between distant places, that one friend can hardly be said to be absent from another. Their policy removes all public inconveniences: they have roads cut through their mountains, and bridges laid upon their rivers. And, if we descend to the privacies of life, their habitations are more commodious, and their possessions are more secure.'

'They are surely happy,' said the prince, 'who have all these conveniences, of which I envy none so much as the facility with which separated friends interchange their thoughts.'

'The Europeans,' answered Imlac, 'are less unhappy than we, but they are not happy. Human life is every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed.'

CHAPTER XII.

The Story of Imlac continued.

'I AM not willing,' said the prince, 'to suppose that happiness is so parsimoniously distributed to mortals; nor can I believe but that, if I had the choice of life, I should be able to fill every day with pleasure. I would injure no man, and should provoke no resentments: I would relieve every distress, and should enjoy the benedictions of gratitude. I would choose my friends among the wise, and my wife among the virtuous; and therefore should be in no danger from treachery or unkindness. My children should, by my care, be learned and pious, and would repay to my age what their childhood had received. What would dare to molest him who might call on every side to thousands enriched by his bounty, or assisted by his power? And why should not life glide away in the soft reciprocation of protection and reverence? All this may be done without the help of European refinements, which appear by their effects to be rather specious than useful. Let us leave them, and pursue our journey.'

'From Palestine,' said Imlac, 'I passed through many regions of Asia; in the more civilized kingdoms as a trader, and among the barbarians of the mountains as a pilgrim. At last I began to long for my native country, that I might repose, after my travels and fatigues, in the places where I had spent my earliest years, and gladden my old companions with the recital of my adventures. Often did I figure to myself those with whom I had sported away the gay hours of dawning life, sitting round me in its evening, wondering at my tales, and listening to my counsels.

'When this thought had taken possession of my

mind, I considered every moment as wasted which did not bring me nearer to Abissinia. I hastened into Egypt, and, notwithstanding my impatience, was detained ten months in the contemplation of its ancient magnificence, and in inquiries after the remains of its ancient learning. I found in Cairo a mixture of all nations; some brought thither by the love of knowledge, some by the hope of gain, many by the desire of living after their own manner without observation, and of lying hid in the obscurity of multitudes: for in a city populous as Cairo, it is possible to obtain at the same time the gratifications of society, and the secrecy of solitude.

'From Cairo I travelled to Suez, and embarked on the Red Sea, passing along the coast till I arrived at the port from which I had departed twenty years before. Here I joined myself to a caravan, and re-entered my native country.

'I now expected the caresses of my kinsmen, and the congratulations of my friends; and was not without hope that my father, whatever value he had set upon riches, would own with gladness and pride a son who was able to add to the felicity and honour of the nation. But I was soon convinced that my thoughts were vain. My father had been dead fourteen years, having divided his wealth among my brothers, who were removed to some other provinces. Of my companions, the greater part was in the grave; of the rest, some could with difficulty remember me, and some considered me as one corrupted by foreign manners.

'A man used to vicissitudes is not easily dejected. I forgot, after a time, my disappointment, and endeavoured to recommend myself to the nobles of the kingdom: they admitted me to their tables, heard my story, and dismissed me. I opened a school, and was prohibited to teach. I then resolved to sit down in the quiet of domestic life, and addressed a lady that was fond of my conversa-

tion, but rejected my suit because my father was a merchant.

'Wearied at last with solicitation and repulses, I resolved to hide myself for ever from the world, and depend no longer on the opinion or caprice of others. I waited for the time when the gate of the happy valley should open, that I might bid farewell to hope and fear: the day came; my performance was distinguished with favour, and I resigned myself with joy to perpetual confinement.'

'Hast thou here found happiness at last?' said Rasselas. 'Tell me without reserve; art thou content with thy condition? or dost thou wish to be again wandering and inquiring? All the inhabitants of this valley celebrate their lot, and, at the annual visit of the emperor, invite others to partake of their felicity.'

'Great prince,' said Imlac, 'I shall speak the truth: I know not one of all your attendants who does not lament the hour when he entered this retreat. I am less unhappy than the rest, because I have a mind replete with images, which I can vary and combine at pleasure. I can amuse my solitude by the renovation of the knowledge which begins to fade from my memory, and by recollection of the accidents of my past life. Yet all this ends in the sorrowful consideration that my acquirements are now useless, and that none of my pleasures can be again enjoyed. The rest, whose minds have no impression but of the present moment, are either corroded by malignant passions, or sit stupid in the gloom of perpetual vacancy.'

'What passions can infest those,' said the prince, 'who have no rivals? We are in a place where impotence precludes malice, and where all envy is repressed by community of enjoyments.'

'There may be community,' said Imlac, 'of material possessions, but there can never be community of love or of esteem. It must happen that one will please more than another: he that knows

himself despised will always be envious; and still more envious and malevolent if he is condemned to live in the presence of those who despise him. The invitations, by which they allure others to a state which they feel to be wretched, proceed from the natural malignity of hopeless misery. They are weary of themselves, and of each other, and expect to find relief in new companions. They envy the liberty which their folly has forfeited, and would gladly see all mankind imprisoned like themselves.

'From this crime, however, I am wholly free. No man can say that he is wretched by my persuasion. I look with pity on the crowds who are annually soliciting admission to captivity, and wish that it were lawful for me to warn them of their danger.'

'My dear Imlac,' said the prince, 'I will open to thee my whole heart. I have long meditated an escape from the happy valley. I have examined the mountain on every side, but find myself insuperably barred: teach me the way to break my prison; thou shalt be the companion of my flight, the guide of my rambles, the partner of my fortune, and my sole director in the *choice of life*.'

'Sir,' answered the poet, 'your escape will be difficult, and, perhaps, you may soon repent your curiosity. The world, which you figure to yourself smooth and quiet as the lake in the valley, you will find a sea foaming with tempests, and boiling with whirlpools; you will be sometimes overwhelmed by the waves of violence, and sometimes dashed against the rocks of treachery. Amidst wrongs and frauds, competitions and anxieties, you will wish a thousand times for these seats of quiet, and willingly quit hope to be free from fear.'

'Do not seek to deter me from my purpose,' said the prince: 'I am impatient to see what thou hast seen; and since thou art thyself weary of the valley, it is evident that thy former state was better

than this. Whatever be the consequence of my experiment, I am resolved to judge with mine own eyes of the various conditions of men, and then to make deliberately my *choice of life*.'

'I am afraid,' said Imlac, 'you are hindered by stronger restraints than my persuasions; yet, if your determination is fixed, I do not counsel you to despair. Few things are impossible to diligence and skill.'

CHAPTER XIII.

Rasselas discovers the Means of Escape.

THE prince now dismissed his favourite to rest, but the narrative of wonders and novelties filled his mind with perturbation. He revolved all that he had heard, and prepared innumerable questions for the morning.

Much of his uneasiness was now removed. He had a friend to whom he could impart his thoughts, and whose experience could assist him in his designs. His heart was no longer condemned to swell with silent vexation. He thought that even the happy valley might be endured with such a companion, and that, if they could range the world together, he should have nothing further to desire.

In a few days the water was discharged, and the ground dried. The prince and Imlac then walked out together, to converse without the notice of the rest. The prince, whose thoughts were always on the wing, as he passed by the gate, said, with a countenance of sorrow, 'Why art thou so strong, and why is man so weak?'

'Man is not weak,' answered his companion; 'knowledge is more than equivalent to force. The master of mechanics laughs at strength. I can burst the gate, but cannot do it secretly. Some other expedient must be tried.'

As they were walking on the side of the mountain, they observed that the conies, which the rain had driven from their burrows, had taken shelter among the bushes, and formed holes behind them, tending upwards in an oblique line. 'It has been the opinion of antiquity,' said Imlac, 'that human reason borrowed many arts from the instinct of animals; let us, therefore, not think ourselves degraded by learning from the cony. We may escape by piercing the mountain in the same direction. We will begin where the summit hangs over the middle part, and labour upward till we shall issue out beyond the prominence.'

The eyes of the prince, when he heard this proposal, sparkled with joy. The execution was easy, and the success certain.

No time was now lost. They hastened early in the morning to choose a place proper for their mine. They clambered with great fatigue among crags and brambles, and returned without having discovered any part that favoured their design. The second and the third day were spent in the same manner, and with the same frustration. But on the fourth they found a small cavern, concealed by a thicket, where they resolved to make their experiment.

Imlac procured instruments proper to hew stone and remove earth, and they fell to their work on the next day with more eagerness than vigour. They were presently exhausted by their efforts, and sat down to pant upon the grass. The prince, for a moment, appeared to be discouraged. 'Sir,' said his companion, 'practice will enable us to continue our labour for a longer time: mark, however, how far we have advanced, and you will find that our

toil will sometime have an end. Great works are performed not by strength, but perseverance: yonder palace was raised by single stones, yet you see its height and spaciousness. He that shall walk with vigour three hours a day, will pass in seven years a space equal to the circumference of the globe.'

They returned to their work day after day, and, in a short time, found a fissure in the rock, which enabled them to pass far with very little obstruction. This Rasselas considered as a good omen. 'Do not disturb your mind,' said Imlac, 'with other hopes or fears than reason may suggest: if you are pleased with prognostics of good, you will be terrified likewise with tokens of evil, and your whole life will be a prey to superstition. Whatever facilitates our work is more than an omen; it is a cause of success. This is one of those pleasing surprises which often happen to active resolution. Many things difficult to design prove easy to performance.'

CHAPTER XIV.

Rasselas and Imlac receive an unexpected Visit.

THEY had now wrought their way to the middle, and solaced their toil with the approach of liberty, when the prince, coming down to refresh himself with air, found his sister Nekayah standing at the mouth of the cavity. He started, and stood confused, afraid to tell his design, and yet hopeless to conceal it. A few moments determined him to repose on her fidelity, and secure her secrecy by a declaration without reserve.

'Do not imagine,' said the princess, 'that I came hither as a spy: I had long observed from my window that you and Imlac directed your walk every day towards the same point, but I did not suppose you had any better reason for the preference than a cooler shade, or more fragrant bank; nor followed you with any other design than to partake of your conversation. Since, then, not suspicion but fondness has detected you, let me not lose the advantage of my discovery. I am equally weary of confinement with yourself, and not less desirous of knowing what is done or suffered in the world. Permit me to fly with you from this tasteless tranquillity, which will yet grow more loathsome when you have left me. You may deny me to accompany you, but cannot hinder me from following.'

The prince, who loved Nekayah above his other sisters, had no inclination to refuse her request, and grieved that he had lost an opportunity of showing his confidence by a voluntary communication. It was therefore agreed, that she should leave the valley with them; and that, in the mean time, she should watch lest any other straggler should, by chance or curiosity, follow them to the mountain.

At length their labour was at an end: they saw light beyond the prominence, and, issuing to the top of the mountain, beheld the Nile, yet a narrow current, wandering beneath them.

The prince looked round with rapture, anticipated all the pleasures of travel, and in thought was already transported beyond his father's dominions. Imlac, though very joyful at his escape, had less expectation of pleasure in the world, which he had before tried, and of which he had been weary.

Rasselas was so much delighted with a wider horizon, that he could not soon be persuaded to return into the valley. He informed his sister that

the way was now open, and that nothing now remained but to prepare for their departure.

CHAPTER XV.

The Prince and Princess leave the Valley, and see many Wonders.

THE prince and princess had jewels sufficient to make them rich whenever they came into a place of commerce, which, by Imlac's direction, they hid in their clothes, and, on the night of the next full moon, all left the valley. The princess was followed only by a single favourite, who did not know whither she was going.

They clambered through the cavity, and began to go down on the other side. The princess and her maid turned their eyes towards every part, and seeing nothing to bound their prospect, considered themselves in danger of being lost in a dreary vacuity. They stopped and trembled. 'I am almost afraid,' said the princess, 'to begin a journey, of which I cannot perceive an end, and to venture into this immense plain, where I may be approached on every side by men whom I never saw.' The prince felt nearly the same emotions, though he thought it more manly to conceal them.

Imlac smiled at their terrors, and encouraged them to proceed; but the princess continued irresolute till she had been imperceptibly drawn forward too far to return.

In the morning they found some shepherds in the field, who set some milk and fruits before them. The princess wondered that she did not see a

palace ready for her reception, and a table spread with delicacies; but being faint and hungry, she drank the milk and ate the fruits, and thought them of a higher flavour than the products of the valley.

They travelled forward by easy journeys, being all unaccustomed to toil and difficulty, and knowing that, though they might be missed, they could not be pursued. In a few days they came into a more populous region, where Imlac was diverted with the admiration which his companions expressed at the diversity of manners, stations, and employments. Their dress was such as might not bring upon them the suspicion of having any thing to conceal; yet the prince, wherever he came, expected to be obeyed, and the princess was frighted, because those who came into her presence did not prostrate themselves. Imlac was forced to observe them with great vigilance, lest they should betray their rank by their unusual behaviour, and detained them several weeks in the first village, to accustom them to the sight of common mortals.

By degrees the royal wanderers were taught to understand that they had for a time laid aside their dignity, and were to expect only such regard as liberality and courtesy could procure. And Imlac, having, by many admonitions, prepared them to endure the tumults of a port, and the ruggedness of the commercial race, brought them down to the sea-coast.

The prince and his sister, to whom every thing was new, were gratified equally at all places, and therefore remained for some months at the port without any inclination to pass further. Imlac was content with their stay, because he did not think it safe to expose them, unpractised in the world, to the hazards of a foreign country.

At last he began to fear lest they should be discovered, and proposed to fix a day for their departure. They had no pretensions to judge for them-

selves, and referred the whole scheme to his direction. He therefore took passage in a ship to Suez, and when the time came, with great difficulty prevailed on the princess to enter the vessel. They had a quick and prosperous voyage; and from Suez travelled by land to Cairo.

CHAPTER XVI.

They enter Cairo, and find every Man happy.

AS they approached the city, which filled the strangers with astonishment, 'This,' said Imlac to the prince, 'is the place where travellers and merchants assemble from all corners of the earth. You will here find men of every character, and every occupation. Commerce is here honourable: I will act as a merchant, and you shall live as strangers, who have no other end of travel than curiosity; it will soon be observed that we are rich: our reputation will procure us access to all whom we shall desire to know; you will see all the conditions of humanity, and enable yourselves at leisure to make your *choice of life*.'

They now entered the town, stunned by the noise, and offended by the crowds. Instruction had not yet so prevailed over habit, but that they wondered to see themselves pass undistinguished along the streets, and met by the lowest of the people without reverence or notice. The princess could not at first bear the thought of being levelled with the vulgar, and for some time continued in her chamber, where she was served by her favourite, Pekuah, as in the palace of the valley.

Imlac, who understood traffic, sold part of the

jewels the next day, and hired a house, which he adorned with such magnificence, that he was immediately considered as a merchant of great wealth. His politeness attracted many acquaintance, and his generosity made him courted by many dependants. His companions, not being able to mix in the conversation, could make no discovery of their ignorance or surprise, and were gradually initiated in the world as they gained knowledge of the language.

The prince had, by frequent lectures, been taught the use and nature of money; but the ladies could not, for a long time, comprehend what the merchants did with small pieces of gold and silver, or why things of so little use should be received as an equivalent to the necessaries of life.

They studied the language two years, while Imlac was preparing to set before them the various ranks and conditions of mankind. He grew acquainted with all who had any thing uncommon in their fortune or conduct. He frequented the voluptuous and the frugal, the idle and the busy, the merchants and the men of learning.

The prince being now able to converse with fluency, and having learned the caution necessary to be observed in his intercourse with strangers, began to accompany Imlac to places of resort, and to enter into all assemblies, that he might make his *choice of life*.

For some time he thought choice needless, because all appeared to him really happy. Wherever he went he met gaiety and kindness, and heard the song of joy or the laugh of carelessness. He began to believe that the world overflowed with universal plenty, and that nothing was withheld either from want or merit; that every hand showered liberality, and every heart melted with benevolence: 'and who then,' says he, 'will be suffered to be wretched?'

Imlac permitted the pleasing delusion, and was

unwilling to crush the hope of inexperience: till one day, having sat a while silent, 'I know not,' said the prince, 'what can be the reason that I am more unhappy than any of our friends. I see them perpetually and unalterably cheerful, but feel my own mind restless and uneasy. I am unsatisfied with those pleasures which I seem most to court. I live in the crowds of jollity, not so much to enjoy company as to shun myself, and am only loud and merry to conceal my sadness.'

'Every man,' said Imlac, 'may, by examining his own mind, guess what passes in the minds of others: when you feel that your own gaiety is counterfeit, it may justly lead you to suspect that of your companions not to be sincere. Envy is commonly reciprocal. We are long before we are convinced that happiness is never to be found, and each believes it possessed by others, to keep alive the hope of obtaining it for himself. In the assembly, where you passed the last night, there appeared such sprightliness of air, and volatility of fancy, as might have suited beings of a higher order, formed to inhabit serener regions, inaccessible to care or sorrow: yet, believe me, prince, there was not one who did not dread the moment when solitude should deliver him to the tyranny of reflection.'

'This,' said the prince, 'may be true of others, since it is true of me; yet, whatever be the general infelicity of man, one condition is more happy than another, and wisdom surely directs us to take the least evil in the *choice of life*.'

'The causes of good and evil,' answered Imlac, 'are so various and uncertain, so often entangled with each other, so diversified by various relations, and so much subject to accidents which cannot be foreseen, that he who would fix his condition upon incontestable reasons of preference must live and die inquiring and deliberating.'

'But surely,' said Rasselas, 'the wise men, to

whom we listen with reverence and wonder, chose that mode of life for themselves which they thought most likely to make them happy.'

'Very few,' said the poet, 'live by choice. Every man is placed in the present condition by causes which acted without his foresight, and with which he did not always willingly co-operate; and therefore you will rarely meet one who does not think the lot of his neighbour better than his own.'

'I am pleased to think,' said the prince, 'that my birth has given me at least one advantage over others, by enabling me to determine for myself. I have here the world before me; I will review it at leisure: surely happiness is somewhere to be found.'

CHAPTER XVII.

The Prince associates with young Men of Spirit and Gaiety.

RASSELAS rose next day, and resolved to begin his experiments upon life. 'Youth,' cried he, 'is the time of gladness: I will join myself to the young men, whose only business is to gratify their desires, and whose time is all spent in a succession of enjoyments.'

To such societies he was readily admitted; but a few days brought him back weary and disgusted. Their mirth was without images, their laughter without motive; their pleasures were gross and sensual, in which the mind had no part; their conduct was at once wild and mean: they laughed at order and at law, but the frown of power dejected, and the eye of wisdom abashed them.

The prince soon concluded that he should never

be happy in a course of life of which he was ashamed. He thought it unsuitable to a reasonable being to act without a plan, and to be sad or cheerful only by chance. 'Happiness,' said he, 'must be something solid and permanent, without fear and without uncertainty.'

But his young companions had gained so much of his regard by their frankness and courtesy, that he could not leave them without warning and remonstrance. 'My friends,' said he, 'I have seriously considered our manners and our prospects, and find that we have mistaken our own interest. The first years of man must make provision for the last. He that never thinks, never can be wise. Perpetual levity must end in ignorance; and intemperance, though it may fire the spirits for an hour, will make life short or miserable. Let us consider that youth is of no long duration, and that in mature age, when the enchantments of fancy shall cease, and phantoms of delight dance no more about us, we shall have no comforts but the esteem of wise men, and the means of doing good. Let us, therefore, stop, while to stop is in our power: let us live as men who are sometime to grow old, and to whom it will be the most dreadful of all evils to count their past years by follies, and to be reminded of their former luxuriance of health only by the maladies which riot has produced.'

They stared awhile in silence one upon another, and, at last, drove him away by a general chorus of continued laughter.

The consciousness that his sentiments were just, and his intention kind, was scarcely sufficient to support him against the horror of derision. But he recovered his tranquillity, and pursued his search.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Prince finds a wise and happy man.

AS he was one day walking in the street, he saw a spacious building, which all were, by the open doors, invited to enter; he followed the stream of people, and found it a hall or school of declamation, in which professors read lectures to their auditory. He fixed his eye upon a sage raised above the rest, who discoursed with great energy on the government of the passions. His look was venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He showed, with great strength of sentiment, and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher; that when fancy, the parent of passion, usurps the dominion of the mind, nothing ensues but the natural effect of unlawful government, perturbation, and confusion; that she betrays the fortresses of the intellect to rebels, and excites her children to sedition against their lawful sovereign. He compared reason to the sun, of which the light is constant, uniform, and lasting; and fancy to a meteor, of bright but transitory lustre, irregular in its motion and delusive in its direction.

He then communicated the various precepts given from time to time for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory, after which man is no longer the slave of fear, nor the fool of hope; is no more emaciated by envy, inflamed by anger, emasculated by tenderness, or depressed by grief; but walks on calmly through the tumults or privacies of life, as the sun pursues alike his course through the calm or the stormy sky.

He enumerated many examples of heroes im-

movable by pain or pleasure, who looked with indifference on those modes or accidents to which the vulgar give the names of good and evil. He exhorted his hearers to lay aside their prejudices, and arm themselves against the shafts of malice or misfortune, by invulnerable patience: concluding, that this state only was happiness, and that this happiness was in every one's power.

Rasselas listened to him with the veneration due to the instructions of a superior being, and, waiting for him at the door, humbly implored the liberty of visiting so great a master of true wisdom. The lecturer hesitated a moment, when Rasselas put a purse of gold into his hand, which he received with a mixture of joy and wonder.

'I have found,' said the prince, at his return to Imlac, 'a man who can teach all that is necessary to be known; who, from the unshaken throne of rational fortitude, looks down on the scenes of life changing beneath him. He speaks, and attention watches his lips. He reasons, and conviction closes his periods. This man shall be my future guide: I will learn his doctrines, and imitate his life.'

'Be not too hasty,' said Imlac, 'to trust, or to admire, the teachers of morality: they discourse like angels, but they live like men.'

Rasselas, who could not conceive how any man could reason so forcibly without feeling the cogency of his own arguments, paid his visit in a few days, and was denied admission. He had now learned the power of money, and made his way by a piece of gold to the inner apartment, where he found the philosopher in a room half darkened, with his eyes misty, and his face pale. 'Sir,' said he, 'you are come at a time when all human friendship is useless; what I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be supplied. My daughter, my only daughter, from whose tenderness I expected all the comforts of my age, died last night of a fever. My views, my purposes, my hopes

are at an end: I am now a lonely being, disunited from society.'

'Sir,' said the prince, 'mortality is an event by which a wise man can never be surprised: we know that death is always near, and it should therefore always be expected.'—'Young man,' answered the philosopher, 'you speak like one that has never felt the pangs of separation.' 'Have you then forgot the precepts,' said Rasselas, 'which you so powerfully enforced? Has wisdom no strength to arm the heart against calamity? Consider that external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same.' 'What comfort,' said the mourner, 'can truth and reason afford me?—of what effect are they now, but to tell me, that my daughter will not be restored?'

The prince, whose humanity would not suffer him to insult misery with reproof, went away, convinced of the emptiness of rhetorical sounds, and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Glimpse of Pastoral Life.

HE was still eager upon the same inquiry; and having heard of a hermit, that lived near the lowest cataract of the Nile, and filled the whole country with the fame of his sanctity, resolved to visit his retreat, and inquire whether that felicity, which public life could not afford, was to be found in solitude; and whether a man, whose age and virtue made him venerable, could teach any peculiar art of shunning evils, or enduring them.

Imlac and the princess agreed to accompany him;

and, after the necessary preparations, they began their journey. Their way lay through the fields, where shepherds tended their flocks, and the lambs were playing upon the pasture. 'This,' said the poet, 'is the life which has been often celebrated for its innocence and quiet; let us pass the heat of the day among the shepherds' tents, and know whether all our searches are not to terminate in pastoral simplicity.'

The proposal pleased them, and they induced the shepherds, by small presents and familiar questions, to tell their opinion of their own state: they were so rude and ignorant, so little able to compare the good with the evil of the occupation, and so indistinct in their narratives and descriptions, that very little could be learned from them. But it was evident that their hearts were cankered with discontent; that they considered themselves as condemned to labour for the luxury of the rich, and looked up with stupid malevolence toward those that were placed above them.

The princess pronounced with vehemence, that she would never suffer these envious savages to be her companions, and that she should not soon be desirous of seeing any more specimens of rustic happiness; but could not believe that all the accounts of primeval pleasures were fabulous, and was in doubt whether life had any thing that could be justly preferred to the placid gratifications of fields and woods. She hoped that the time would come, when, with a few virtuous and elegant companions, she should gather flowers planted by her own hands, fondle the lambs of her own ewe, and listen without care, among brooks and breezes, to one of her maidens reading in the shade.

CHAPTER XX.

The Danger of Prosperity.

ON the next day they continued their journey, till the heat compelled them to look round for shelter. At a small distance they saw a thick wood, which they no sooner entered than they perceived that they were approaching the habitations of men. The shrubs were diligently cut away to open walks where the shades were darkest; the boughs of opposite trees were artificially interwoven, seats of flowery turf were raised in vacant spaces, and a rivulet, that wantoned along the side of a winding path, had its banks sometimes opened into small basins, and its stream sometimes obstructed by little mounds of stone heaped together to increase its murmurs.

They passed slowly through the wood, delighted with such unexpected accommodations, and entertained each other with conjecturing what, or who, he could be, that in those rude and unfrequented regions had leisure and art for such harmless luxury.

As they advanced they heard the sound of music, and saw youths and virgins dancing in the grove; and, going still farther, beheld a stately palace built upon a hill, surrounded with woods. The laws of eastern hospitality allowed them to enter, and the master welcomed them like a man liberal and wealthy.

He was skilful enough in appearances soon to discern that they were no common guests, and spread his table with magnificence. The eloquence of Imlac caught his attention, and the lofty courtesy of the princess excited his respect. When they offered to depart, he entreated their stay, and was the next day more unwilling to dismiss them

than before. They were easily persuaded to stop, and civility grew up in time to freedom and confidence.

The prince now saw all the domestics cheerful, and all the face of nature smiling round the place, and could not forbear to hope that he should find here what he was seeking; but when he was congratulating the master upon his possessions, he answered with a sigh, 'My condition has indeed the appearance of happiness, but appearances are delusive. My prosperity puts my life in danger; the Bassa of Egypt is my enemy, incensed only by my wealth and popularity. I have been hitherto protected against him by the princes of the country: but, as the favour of the great is uncertain, I know not how soon my defenders may be persuaded to share the plunder with the Bassa. I have sent my treasures into a distant country, and, upon the first alarm, am prepared to follow them. Then will my enemies riot in my mansion, and enjoy the gardens which I have planted.'

They all joined in lamenting his danger, and deprecating his exile; and the princess was so much disturbed with the tumult of grief and indignation, that she retired to her apartment. They continued with their kind inviter a few days longer, and then went to find the hermit.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Happiness of Solitude. The Hermit's History.

THEY came, on the third day, by the direction of the peasants, to the hermit's cell: it was a cavern

in the side of a mountain, overshadowed with palm-trees: at such a distance from the cataract, that nothing more was heard than a gentle uniform murmur, such as composes the mind to pensive meditation, especially when it was assisted by the wind whistling among the branches. The first rude essay of nature had been so much improved by human labour, that the cave contained several apartments appropriated to different uses, and often afforded lodging to travellers, whom darkness or tempests happened to overtake.

The hermit sat on a bench at the door, to enjoy the coolness of the evening. On one side lay a book with pens and paper, on the other mechanical instruments of various kinds. As they approached him unregarded, the princess observed that he had not the countenance of a man that had found or could teach the way to happiness.

They saluted him with great respect, which he repaid like a man not unaccustomed to the forms of courts. 'My children,' said he, 'if you have lost your way, you shall be willingly supplied with such conveniences for the night as this cavern will afford. I have all that nature requires, and you will not expect delicacies in a hermit's cell.'

They thanked him; and, entering, were pleased with the neatness and regularity of the place. The hermit set flesh and wine before them, though he fed only upon fruits and water. His discourse was cheerful without levity, and pious without enthusiasm. He soon gained the esteem of his guests, and the princess repented her hasty censure.

At last Imlac began thus: 'I do not now wonder that your reputation is so far extended; we have heard at Cairo of your wisdom, and came hither to implore your direction for this young man and maiden in the *choice of life*.'

'To him that lives well,' answered the hermit, 'every form of life is good; nor can I give any

other rule for choice, than to remove all apparent evil.'

'He will most certainly remove from evil,' said the prince, 'who shall devote himself to that solitude which you have recommended by your example.'

'I have indeed lived fifteen years in solitude,' said the hermit, 'but have no desire that my example should gain any imitators. In my youth I professed arms, and was raised by degrees to the highest military rank. I have traversed wide countries at the head of my troops, and seen many battles and sieges. At last, being disgusted by the preferments of a younger officer, and feeling that my vigour was beginning to decay, I resolved to close my life in peace, having found the world full of snares, discord, and misery. I had once escaped from the pursuit of the enemy by the shelter of this cavern, and therefore chose it for my final residence. I employed artificers to form it into chambers, and stored it with all that I was likely to want.

'For some time after my retreat, I rejoiced like a tempest-beaten sailor at his entrance into the harbour, being delighted with the sudden change of the noise and hurry of war to stillness and repose. When the pleasure of novelty went away, I employed my hours in examining the plants which grow in the valley, and the minerals which I collected from the rocks. But that inquiry is now grown tasteless and irksome. I have been for some time unsettled and distracted: my mind is disturbed with a thousand perplexities of doubt, and vanities of imagination, which hourly prevail upon me, because I have no opportunities of relaxation or diversion. I am sometimes ashamed to think that I could not secure myself from vice but by retiring from the exercise of virtue, and begin to suspect that I was rather impelled by resentment than led

by devotion into solitude. My fancy riots in scenes of folly; and I lament that I have lost so much, and have gained so little. In solitude, if I escape the example of bad men, I want likewise the counsel and conversation of the good. I have been long comparing the evils with the advantages of society, and resolve to return into the world to-morrow. The life of a solitary man will be certainly miserable, but not certainly devout.'

They heard his resolution with surprise, but, after a short pause, offered to conduct him to Cairo. He dug up a considerable treasure which he had hid among the rocks, and accompanied them to the city, on which, as he approached it, he gazed with rapture.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Happiness of a Life led according to Nature.

RASSELAS went often to an assembly of learned men, who met at stated times to unbend their minds, and compare their opinions. Their manners were somewhat coarse, but their conversation was instructive, and their disputations acute, though sometimes too violent, and often continued till neither controvertist remembered upon what question they began. Some faults were almost general among them: every one was pleased to hear the genius or knowledge of another depreciated.

In this assembly Rasselas was relating his interview with the hermit, and the wonder with which he heard him censure a course of life which he had so deliberately chosen, and so laudably followed.

The sentiments of the hearers were various. Some were of opinion, that the folly of his choice had been justly punished by condemnation to perpetual perseverance. One of the youngest among them, with great vehemence, pronounced him an hypocrite. Some talked of the right of society to the labour of individuals, and considered retirement as a desertion of duty. Others readily allowed, that there was a time when the claims of the public were satisfied, and when a man might properly sequester himself, to review his life, and purify his heart.

One, who appeared more affected with the narrative than the rest, thought it likely, that the hermit would, in a few years, go back to his retreat, and, perhaps, if shame did not restrain, or death intercept him, return once more from his retreat into the world. 'For the hope of happiness,' said he, 'is so strongly impressed, that the longest experience is not able to efface it. Of the present state, whatever it be, we feel, and are forced to confess, the misery; yet, when the same state is again at a distance, imagination paints it as desirable. But the time will surely come when desire will no longer be our torment, and no man shall be wretched but by his own fault.'

'This,' said a philosopher, who had heard him with tokens of great impatience, 'is the present condition of a wise man. The time is already come, when none are wretched but by their own fault. Nothing is more idle than to inquire after happiness, which nature has kindly placed within our reach. The way to be happy, is to live according to nature, in obedience to that universal and unalterable law with which every heart is originally impressed; which is not written on it by precept, but engraven by destiny; not instilled by education, but infused at our nativity. He that lives according to nature will suffer nothing from the delusions of hope or importunities of desire; he

will receive and reject with equability of temper; and act or suffer as the reason of things shall alternately prescribe. Other men may amuse themselves with subtle definitions, or intricate ratiocination. Let them learn to be wise by easier means: let them observe the hind of the forest, and the linnet of the grove: let them consider the life of animals, whose motions are regulated by instinct; they obey their guide, and are happy. Let us, therefore, at length, cease to dispute, and learn to live: throw away the encumbrance of precepts, which they who utter them with so much pride and pomp do not understand, and carry with us this simple and intelligible maxim, That deviation from nature is deviation from happiness.'

When he had spoken, he looked round him with a placid air, and enjoyed the consciousness of his own beneficence. 'Sir,' said the prince, with great modesty, 'as I, like all the rest of mankind, am desirous of felicity, my closest attention has been fixed upon your discourse: I doubt not the truth of a position which a man so learned has so confidently advanced. Let me only know what it is to live according to nature.'

'When I find young men so humble and so docile,' said the philosopher, 'I can deny them no information which my studies have enabled me to afford. To live according to nature, is to act always with due regard to the fitness arising from the relations and qualities of causes and effects; to concur with the great and unchangeable scheme of universal felicity; to co-operate with the general disposition and tendency of the present system of things.'

The prince soon found that this was one of the sages whom he should understand less as he heard him longer. He therefore bowed and was silent; and the philosopher, supposing him satisfied, and the rest vanquished, rose up and departed with the

air of a man that had co-operated with the present system.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Prince and his Sister divide between them the Work of Observation.

RASSELAS returned home full of reflections, doubting how to direct his future steps. Of the way to happiness he found the learned and simple equally ignorant; but, as he was yet young, he flattered himself that he had time remaining for more experiments, and farther inquiries.—He communicated to Imlac his observations and his doubts, but was answered by him with new doubts, and remarks that gave him no comfort. He therefore discoursed more frequently and freely with his sister, who had yet the same hope with himself, and always assisted him to give some reason why, though he had been hitherto frustrated, he might succeed at last.

'We have hitherto,' said she, 'known but little of the world; we have never yet been either great or mean. In our own country, though we had royalty, we had no power; and in this we have not yet seen the private recesses of domestic peace. Imlac favours not our search, lest we should in time find him mistaken. We will divide the task between us: you shall try what is to be found in the splendour of courts, and I will range the shades of humbler life. Perhaps command and authority may be the supreme blessings, as they afford the most opportunities of doing good: or, perhaps, what this world can give may be found in the modest

habitations of middle fortune: too low for great designs, and too high for penury and distress.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Prince examines the Happiness of high Stations.

RASSELAS applauded the design, and appeared next day with a splendid retinue at the court of the Bassa. He was soon distinguished for his magnificence, and admitted, as a prince whose curiosity had brought him from distant countries, to an intimacy with the great officers, and frequent conversation with the Bassa himself.

He was at first inclined to believe, that the man must be pleased with his own condition, whom all approached with reverence, and heard with obedience, and who had the power to extend his edicts to a whole kingdom.—'There can be no pleasure,' said he, 'equal to that of feeling at once the joy of thousands all made happy by wise administration. Yet, since, by the law of subordination, this sublime delight can be in one nation but the lot of one, it is surely reasonable to think that there is some satisfaction more popular and accessible, and that millions can hardly be subjected to the will of a single man, only to fill his particular breast with incommunicable content.'

These thoughts were often in his mind, and he found no solution of the difficulty. But as presents and civilities gained him more familiarity, he found that almost every man who stood high in employment hated all the rest, and was hated by them, and that their lives were a continual succession of

plots and detections, stratagems and escapes, faction and treachery. Many of those who surrounded the Bassa were sent only to watch and report his conduct: every tongue was muttering censure, and every eye was searching for a fault.

At last the letters of revocation arrived, the Bassa was carried in chains to Constantinople, and his name was mentioned no more.

'What are we now to think of the prerogatives of power?' said Rasselas to his sister: 'is it without any efficacy to good? or, is the subordinate degree only dangerous, and the supreme safe and glorious? Is the Sultan the only happy man in his dominions? or is the Sultan himself subject to the torments of suspicion, and the dread of enemies?'

In a short time the second Bassa was deposed. The Sultan that had advanced him was murdered by the Janizaries, and his successor had other views or different favourites.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Princess pursues her Inquiry with more Diligence than Success.

THE princess, in the meantime, insinuated herself into many families: for there are few doors through which liberality, joined with good-humour, cannot find its way. The daughters of many houses were airy and cheerful; but Nekayah had been too long accustomed to the conversation of Imlac and her brother, to be much pleased with childish levity and prattle which had no meaning. She found their thoughts narrow, their wishes low, and their merriment often artificial. Their pleasures, poor

as they were, could not be preserved pure, but were imbittered by petty competitions and worthless emulation. They were always jealous of the beauty of each other; of a quality to which solicitude can add nothing, and from which detraction can take nothing away. Many were in love with triflers like themselves, and many fancied that they were in love when in truth they were only idle. Their affection was not fixed on sense or virtue, and therefore seldom ended but in vexation. Their grief, however, like their joy, was transient; every thing floated in their mind unconnected with the past or future, so that one desire easily gave way to another, as a second stone, cast into the water, effaces and confounds the circles of the first.

With these girls she played as with inoffensive animals, and found them proud of her countenance, and weary of her company.

But her purpose was to examine more deeply, and her affability easily persuaded the hearts that were swelling with sorrow to discharge their secrets in her ear; and those whom hope flattered, or prosperity delighted, often courted her to partake their pleasure.

The princess and her brother commonly met in the evening in a private summer-house on the banks of the Nile, and related to each other the occurrences of the day. As they were sitting together, the princess cast her eyes upon the river that flowed before her. 'Answer,' said she, 'great father of waters, thou that rollest thy floods through eighty nations, to the invocations of the daughter of thy native king: tell me if thou waterest, through all thy course, a single habitation from which thou dost not hear the murmurs of complaint.'

'You are then,' said Rasselas, 'not more successful in private houses than I have been in courts.' 'I have, since the last partition of our provinces,' said the princess, 'enabled myself to enter familiarly

into many families, where there was the fairest show of prosperity and peace, and know not one house that is not haunted by some fury that destroys their quiet.

'I did not seek ease among the poor, because I concluded that there it could not be found. But I saw many poor whom I had supposed to live in affluence. Poverty has, in large cities, very different appearances; it is often concealed in splendour, and often in extravagance. It is the care of a very great part of mankind to conceal their indigence from the rest: they support themselves by temporary expedients, and every day is lost in contriving for the morrow.

'This, however, was an evil, which, though frequent, I saw with less pain, because I could relieve it. Yet some have refused my bounties; more offended with my quickness to detect their wants, than pleased with my readiness to succour them: and others, whose exigencies compelled them to admit my kindness, have never been able to forgive their benefactress. Many, however, have been sincerely grateful without the ostentation of gratitude, or the hope of other favours.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Princess continues her Remarks upon private Life.

NEKAYAH, perceiving her brother's attention fixed, proceeded in her narrative.

'In families, where there is or is not poverty, there is commonly discord: if a kingdom be, as

Imlac tells us, a great family, a family likewise is a little kingdom, torn with factions and exposed to revolutions. An unpractised observer expects the love of parents and children to be constant and equal: but this kindness seldom continues beyond the years of infancy: in a short time the children become rivals to their parents. Benefits are allayed by reproaches, and gratitude debased by envy.

'Parents and children seldom act in concert; each child endeavours to appropriate the esteem or fondness of the parents; and the parents, with yet less temptation, betray each other to their children; thus some place their confidence in the father, and some in the mother, and by degrees the house is filled with artifices and feuds.

'The opinions of children and parents, of the young and the old, are naturally opposite, by the contrary effects of hope and despondence, of expectation and experience, without crime or folly on either side. The colours of life in youth and age appear different, as the face of nature in spring and winter. And how can children credit the assertions of parents, which their own eyes show them to be false?

'Few parents act in such a manner as much to enforce their maxims by the credit of their lives. The old man trusts wholly to slow contrivance and gradual progression; the youth expects to force his way by genius, vigour, and precipitance. The old man pays regard to riches, and the youth reverences virtue. The old man deifies prudence: the youth commits himself to magnanimity and chance. The young man, who intends no ill, believes that none is intended, and therefore acts with openness and candour: but his father, having suffered the injuries of fraud, is impelled to suspect, and too often allured to practise it. Age looks with anger on the temerity of youth, and youth with contempt on the scrupulosity of age. Thus

parents and children, for the greatest part, live on, to love less and less: and, if those whom nature has thus closely united are the torments of each other, where shall we look for tenderness and consolation?'

'Surely,' said the prince, 'you must have been unfortunate in your choice of acquaintance: I am unwilling to believe that the most tender of all relations is thus impeded in its effects by natural necessity.'

'Domestic discord,' answered she, 'is not inevitably and fatally necessary; but yet it is not easily avoided. We seldom see that a whole family is virtuous: the good and the evil cannot well agree; and the evil can yet less agree with one another: even the virtuous fall sometimes to variance, when their virtues are of different kinds, and tending to extremes. In general, those parents have most reverence who most deserve it; for he that lives well cannot be despised.

'Many other evils infest private life. Some are the slaves of servants whom they have trusted with their affairs. Some are kept in continual anxiety by the caprice of rich relations, whom they cannot please, and dare not offend. Some husbands are imperious, and some wives perverse: and, as it is always more easy to do evil than good, though the wisdom or virtue of one can very rarely make many happy, the folly or vice of one may make many miserable.'

'If such be the general effect of marriage,' said the prince, 'I shall for the future think it dangerous to connect my interest with that of another, lest I should be unhappy by my partner's fault.'

'I have met,' said the princess, 'with many who live single for that reason; but I never found that their prudence ought to raise envy. They dream away their time without friendship, without fondness, and are driven to rid themselves of the day, for which they have no use, by childish

amusements or vicious delights. They act as beings under the constant sense of some known inferiority, that fills their minds with rancour, and their tongues with censure. They are peevish at home, and malevolent abroad; and, as the outlaws of human nature, make it their business and their pleasure to disturb that society which debars them from its privileges. To live without feeling or exciting sympathy, to be fortunate without adding to the felicity of others, or afflicted without tasting the balm of pity, is a state more gloomy than solitude: it is not retreat, but exclusion from mankind. Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures.'

'What then is to be done?' said Rasselas; 'the more we inquire the less we can resolve. Surely he is most likely to please himself that has no other inclination to regard.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

Disquisition upon Greatness.

THE conversation had a short pause. The prince, having considered his sister's observation, told her, that she had surveyed life with prejudice, and supposed misery where she did not find it. 'Your narrative,' says he, 'throws yet a darker gloom upon the prospects of futurity: the predictions of Imlac were but faint sketches of the evils painted by Nekayah. I have been lately convinced that quiet is not the daughter of grandeur, or of power: that her presence is not to be bought by wealth, nor enforced by conquest. It is evident, that as

any man acts in a wider compass, he must be more exposed to opposition from enmity, or miscarriage from chance: whoever has many to please or to govern must use the ministry of many agents, some of whom will be wicked, and some ignorant; by some he will be misled, and by others betrayed. If he gratifies one, he will offend another: those that are not favoured will think themselves injured; and, since favours can be conferred but upon few, the greater number will be always discontented.'

'The discontent,' said the princess, 'which is thus unreasonable, I hope that I shall always have spirit to despise, and you power to repress.'

'Discontent,' answered Rasselas, 'will not always be without reason under the most just and vigilant administration of public affairs. None, however attentive, can always discover that merit which indigence or faction may happen to obscure; and none, however powerful, can always reward it. Yet, he that sees inferior desert advanced above him will naturally impute that preference to partiality or caprice; and, indeed, it can scarcely be hoped that any man, however magnanimous by nature, or exalted by condition, will be able to persist for ever in fixed and inexorable justice of distribution: he will sometimes indulge his own affections, and sometimes those of his favourites; he will permit some to please him who can never serve him: he will discover in those whom he loves qualities which in reality they do not possess; and to those, from whom he receives pleasure, he will in his turn endeavour to give it. Thus will recommendations sometimes prevail which were purchased by money, or by the more destructive bribery of flattery and servility.

'He that hath much to do will do something wrong, and of that wrong must suffer the consequences; and if it were possible that he should

always act rightly, yet when such numbers are to judge of his conduct, the bad will censure and obstruct him by malevolence, and the good, sometimes, by mistake.

'The highest stations cannot therefore hope to be the abodes of happiness, which I would willingly believe to have fled from thrones and palaces, to seats of humble privacy and placid obscurity. For what can hinder the satisfaction, or intercept the expectations, of him whose abilities are adequate to his employments, who sees with his own eyes the whole circuit of his influence, who chooses by his own knowledge all whom he trusts, and whom none are tempted to deceive by hope or fear? Surely he has nothing to do but to love and to be loved, to be virtuous and to be happy.'

'Whether perfect happiness would be procured by perfect goodness,' said Nekayah, 'this world will never afford an opportunity of deciding. But this, at least, may be maintained, that we do not always find visible happiness in proportion to visible virtue. All natural, and almost all political evils, are incident alike to the bad and good: they are confounded in the misery of a famine, and not much distinguished in the fury of a faction; they sink together in a tempest, and are driven together from their country by invaders. All that virtue can afford is quietness of conscience, and a steady prospect of a happier state: this may enable us to endure calamity with patience; but, remember that patience must suppose pain.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Rasselas and Nekayah continue their Conversation.

'DEAR princess,' said Rasselas, 'you fall into the common errors of exaggeratory declamation, by producing, in a familiar disquisition, examples of national calamities, and scenes of extensive misery, which are found in books rather than in the world, and which, as they are horrid, are ordained to be rare. Let us not imagine evils which we do not feel, nor injure life by misrepresentations. I cannot bear that querulous eloquence which threatens every city with a siege like that of Jerusalem, that makes famine attend on every flight of locusts, and suspends pestilence on the wing of every blast that issues from the south.

'On necessary and inevitable evils which overwhelm kingdoms at once, all disputation is vain: when they happen, they must be endured. But it is evident, that these bursts of universal distress are more dreaded than felt: thousands and ten thousands flourish in youth, and wither in age, without the knowledge of any other than domestic evils, and share the same pleasures and vexations, whether their kings are mild or cruel, whether the armies of their country pursue their enemies, or retreat before them. While courts are disturbed with intestine competitions, and ambassadors are negotiating in foreign countries, the smith still plies his anvil, and the husbandman drives his plough forward; the necessaries of life are required and obtained, and the successive business of the season continues to make its wonted revolutions.

'Let us cease to consider what, perhaps, may never happen, and what, when it shall happen, will laugh at human speculation. We will not endea-

vour to modify the motions of the elements, or to fix the destiny of kingdoms. It is our business to consider what beings like us may perform; each labouring for his own happiness, by promoting within his circle, however narrow, the happiness of others.

'Marriage is evidently the dictate of nature; men and women were made to be the companions of each other; and, therefore, I cannot be persuaded but that marriage is one of the means of happiness.'

'I know not,' said the princess, 'whether marriage be more than one of the innumerable modes of human misery. When I see and reckon the various forms of connubial infelicity, the unexpected causes of lasting discord, the diversities of temper, the oppositions of opinion, the rude collisions of contrary desire where both are urged by violent impulses, the obstinate contest of disagreeing virtues where both are supported by consciousness of good intention, I am sometimes disposed to think, with the severer casuists of most nations, that marriage is rather permitted than approved, and that none, but by the instigation of a passion too much indulged, entangle themselves with indissoluble compact.'

'You seem to forget,' replied Rasselas, 'that you have, even now, represented celibacy as less happy than marriage. Both conditions may be bad, but they cannot both be worst. Thus it happens when wrong opinions are entertained, that they mutually destroy each other, and leave the mind open to truth.'

'I did not expect,' answered the princess, 'to hear that imputed to falsehood, which is the consequence only of frailty. To the mind, as to the eye, it is difficult to compare with exactness objects vast in their extent, and various in their parts. When we see or conceive the whole at

once, we readily note the discriminations, and decide the preference: but of two systems, of which neither can be surveyed by any human being in its full compass of magnitude and multiplicity of complication, where is the wonder, that, judging of the whole by parts, I am alternately affected by one and the other, as either presses on my memory or fancy? We differ from ourselves just as we differ from each other, when we see only part of the question, as in the multifarious relations of politics and morality; but when we perceive the whole at once, as in numerical computations, all agree in one judgment, and none ever varies in his opinion.'

'Let us not add,' said the prince, 'to the other evils of life the bitterness of controversy, nor endeavour to vie with each other in subtilties of argument. We are employed in a search of which both are equally to enjoy the success, or suffer by the miscarriage. It is therefore fit that we assist each other. You surely conclude too hastily from the infelicity of marriage against its institution; will not the misery of life prove equally that life cannot be the gift of Heaven? The world must be peopled by marriage, or peopled without it.'

'How the world is to be peopled,' returned Nekayah, 'is not my care, and needs not be yours. I see no danger that the present generation should omit to leave successors behind them: we are not now inquiring for the world, but for ourselves.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Debate on Marriage continued.

'THE good of the whole,' says Rasselas, 'is the same with the good of all its parts. If marriage be best for mankind, it must be evidently best for individuals; or a permanent and necessary duty must be the cause of evil, and some must be inevitably sacrificed to the convenience of others. In the estimate which you have made of the two states, it appears that the incommodities of a single life are, in a great measure, necessary and certain, but those of the conjugal state accidental and avoidable. I cannot forbear to flatter myself that prudence and benevolence will make marriage happy. The general folly of mankind is the cause of general complaint. What can be expected but disappointment and repentance from a choice made in the immaturity of youth, in the ardour of desire, without judgment, without foresight, without inquiry after conformity of opinions, similarity of manners, rectitude of judgment, or purity of sentiment?

'Such is the common process of marriage. A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of one another. Having little to divert attention, or diversify thought, they find themselves uneasy when they are apart, and therefore conclude that they shall be happy together. They marry, and discover what nothing but voluntary blindness before had concealed; they wear out life in altercations, and charge nature with cruelty.

'From those early marriages proceeds likewise the rivalry of parents and children: the son is eager to enjoy the world before the father is willing to

forsake it, and there is hardly room at once for two generations. The daughter begins to bloom before the mother can be content to fade, and neither can forbear to wish for the absence of the other.

'Surely all these evils may be avoided by that deliberation and delay which prudence prescribes to irrevocable choice. In the variety and jollity of youthful pleasures, life may be well enough supported without the help of a partner. Longer time will increase experience, and wider views will allow better opportunities of inquiry and selection: one advantage at least will be certain; the parents will be visibly older than their children.'

'What reason cannot collect,' said Nekayah, 'and what experiment has not yet taught, can be known only from the report of others. I have been told that late marriages are not eminently happy. This is a question too important to be neglected; and I have often proposed it to those, whose accuracy of remark and comprehensiveness of knowledge made their suffrages worthy of regard. They have generally determined, that it is dangerous for a man and woman to suspend their fate upon each other at a time when opinions are fixed, and habits are established; when friendships have been contracted on both sides, when life has been planned into method, and the mind has long enjoyed the contemplation of its own prospects.

'It is scarcely possible, that two travelling through the world under the conduct of chance should have been both directed to the same path, and it will not often happen that either will quit the track which custom has made pleasing. When the desultory levity of youth has settled into regularity, it is soon succeeded by pride ashamed to yield, or obstinacy delighting to contend. And even though mutual esteem produces mutual desire to please, time itself, as it modifies unchangeably the external mien, determines likewise the

direction of the passions, and gives an inflexible rigidity to the manners. Long customs are not easily broken; he that attempts to change the course of his own life very often labours in vain, and how shall we do that for others which we are seldom able to do for ourselves?'

'But surely,' interposed the prince, 'you suppose the chief motive of choice forgotten or neglected. Whenever I shall seek a wife, it shall be my first question, whether she be willing to be led by reason?'

'Thus it is,' said Nekayah, 'that philosophers are deceived. There are a thousand familiar disputes which reason never can decide; questions that elude investigation, and make logic ridiculous; cases where something must be done, and where little can be said. Consider the state of mankind, and inquire how few can be supposed to act upon any occasions, whether small or great, with all the reasons of action present to their minds. Wretched would be the pair, above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason, every morning, all the minute detail of a domestic day.

'Those who marry at an advanced age will probably escape the encroachments of their children; but in diminution of this advantage, they will be likely to leave them, ignorant and helpless, to a guardian's mercy: or if that should not happen, they must at least go out of the world before they see those whom they love best either wise or great.

'From their children, if they have less to fear, they have less also to hope; and they lose, without equivalent, the joys of early love, and the convenience of uniting with manners pliant, and minds susceptible of new impressions, which might wear away their dissimilitudes by long cohabitation, as soft bodies, by continual attrition, conform their surfaces to each other.

'I believe it will be found that those who marry late are best pleased with their children, and those who marry early with their partners.'

'The union of these two affections,' said Rasselas, 'would produce all that could be wished. Perhaps there is a time when marriage might unite them; a time neither too early for the father nor too late for the husband.'

'Every hour,' answered the princess, 'confirms my prejudice in favour of the position so often uttered by the mouth of Imlac, 'That nature sets her gifts on the right hand and on the left.' Those conditions which flatter hope and attract desire are so constituted, that as we approach one we recede from another. There are goods so opposed that we cannot seize both, but, by too much prudence, may pass between them at too great a distance to reach either. This is often the fate of long consideration: he does nothing who endeavours to do more than is allowed to humanity. Flatter not yourself with contrarieties of pleasure. Of the blessings set before you make your choice, and be content. No man can taste the fruits of autumn, while he is delighting his scent with the flowers of the spring: no man can at the same time fill his cup from the source and from the mouth of the Nile.'

CHAPTER XXX.

Imlac enters and changes the Conversation.

HERE Imlac entered, and interrupted them. 'Imlac,' said Rasselas, 'I have been taking from the princess the dismal history of private life, and am almost discouraged from further search.'

'It seems to me,' said Imlac, 'that while you are making the choice of life, you neglect to live. You wander about a single city, which, however large and diversified, can now afford few novelties, and forget that you are in a country famous among the earliest monarchies for the power and wisdom of its inhabitants; a country where the sciences first dawned that illuminate the world, and beyond which the arts cannot be traced of civil society or domestic life.

'The old Egyptians have left behind them monuments of industry and power before which all European magnificence is confessed to fade away. The ruins of their architecture are the schools of modern builders, and from the wonders which time has spared, we may conjecture, though uncertainly, what it has destroyed.'

'My curiosity,' said Rasselas, 'does not very strongly lead me to survey piles of stone, or mounds of earth; my business is with man. I came hither not to measure fragments of temples, or trace choked aqueducts, but to look upon the various scenes of the present world.'

'The things that are now before us,' said the princess, 'require attention, and deserve it. What have I to do with the heroes or the monuments of ancient times—with times which never can return, and heroes, whose form of life was different from all that the present condition of mankind requires or allows?'

'To know any thing,' returned the poet, 'we must know its effects; to see men, we must see their works, that we may learn what reason has dictated, or passion has incited, and find what are the most powerful motives of action. To judge rightly of the present, we must oppose it to the past; for all judgment is comparative, and of the future nothing can be known. The truth is, that no mind is much employed upon the present: recollection and anticipation fill up almost all our

moments. Our passions are joy and grief, love and hatred, hope and fear. Of joy and grief, the past is the object; and the future, of hope and fear: even love and hatred respect the past, for the cause must have been before the effect.

'The present state of things is the consequence of the former; and it is natural to inquire what were the sources of the good that we enjoy, or the evil that we suffer. If we act only for ourselves, to neglect the study of history is not prudent: if we are intrusted with the care of others, it is not just. Ignorance, when it is voluntary, is criminal: and he may properly be charged with evil who refused to learn how he might prevent it.

'There is no part of history so generally useful as that which relates to the progress of the human mind, the gradual improvement of reason, the successive advances of science, the vicissitudes of learning and ignorance, which are the light and darkness of thinking beings, the extinction and resuscitation of arts, and the revolutions of the intellectual world. If accounts of battles and invasions are peculiarly the business of princes, the useful or elegant arts are not to be neglected; those who have kingdoms to govern, have understandings to cultivate.

'Example is always more efficacious than precept. A soldier is formed in war, and a painter must copy pictures. In this, contemplative life has the advantage: great actions are seldom seen, but the labours of art are always at hand for those who desire to know what art has been able to perform.

'When the eye, or the imagination, is struck with any uncommon work, the next transition of an active mind is to the means by which it was performed. Here begins the true use of such contemplation; we enlarge our comprehension by new ideas, and perhaps recover some art lost to mankind, or learn what is less perfectly known in our

own country. At least we compare our own with former times, and either rejoice at our improvements, or, what is the first motion towards good, discover our defects.'

'I am willing,' said the prince, 'to see all that can deserve my search.'—'And I,' said the princess, shall rejoice to learn something of the manners of antiquity.'

'The most pompous monument of Egyptian greatness, and one of the most bulky works of manual industry,' said Imlac, 'are the pyramids; fabrics raised before the time of history, and of which the earliest narratives afford us only uncertain traditions. Of these the greatest is still standing, very little injured by time.'

'Let us visit them to-morrow,' said Nekayah: 'I have often heard of the pyramids, and shall not rest till I have seen them, within and without, with my own eyes.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

They visit the Pyramids.

THE resolution being thus taken, they set out the next day. They laid tents upon their camels, being resolved to stay among the pyramids till their curiosity was fully satisfied. They travelled gently, turned aside to every thing remarkable, stopped from time to time and conversed with the inhabitants, and observed the various appearances of towns ruined and inhabited, of wild and cultivated nature.

When they came to the great pyramid, they were astonished at the extent of the base, and the

height of the top. Imlac explained to them the principles upon which the pyramidal form was chosen for a fabric intended to co-extend its duration with that of the world: he showed that its gradual diminution gave it such stability, as defeated all the common attacks of the elements, and could scarcely be overthrown by earthquakes themselves, the least resistible of natural violence. A concussion that should shatter the pyramid would threaten the dissolution of the continent.

They measured all its dimensions, and pitched their tents at its foot. Next day they prepared to enter its interior apartments, and having hired the common guides, climbed up to the first passage; when the favourite of the princess, looking into the cavity, stepped back and trembled. 'Pekuah,' said the princess, 'of what art thou afraid?'—'Of the narrow entrance,' answered the lady, 'and of the dreadful gloom. I dare not enter a place which must surely be inhabited by unquiet souls. The original possessors of these dreadful vaults will start up before us, and perhaps shut us in for ever.' She spoke, and threw her arms round the neck of her mistress.

'If all your fear be of apparitions,' said the prince, 'I will promise you safety: there is no danger from the dead; he that is once buried will be seen no more.'

'That the dead are seen no more,' said Imlac, 'I will not undertake to maintain against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages and of all nations. There is no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which, perhaps, prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth: those that never heard of one another would not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers

can very little weaken the general evidence; and some who deny it with their tongues confess it by their fears.

'Yet I do not mean to add new terrors to those which have already seized upon Pekuah. There can be no reason why spectres should haunt the pyramid more than other places, or why they should have power or will to hurt innocence and purity. Our entrance is no violation of their privileges; we can take nothing from them; how then can we offend them?'

'My dear Pekuah,' said the princess, 'I will always go before you, and Imlac shall follow you. Remember that you are the companion of the princess of Abissinia.'

'If the princess is pleased that her servant should die,' returned the lady, 'let her command some death less dreadful than enclosure in this horrid cavern. You know I dare not disobey you; I must go, if you command me; but, if I once enter, I never shall come back.'

The princess saw that her fear was too strong for expostulation or reproof, and, embracing her, told her that she should stay in the tent till their return. Pekuah was not yet satisfied, but entreated the princess not to pursue so dreadful a purpose as that of entering the recesses of the pyramids. 'Though I cannot teach courage,' said Nekayah, 'I must not learn cowardice; nor leave at last undone what I came hither only to do.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

They enter the Pyramid.

PEKUAH descended to the tents, and the rest entered the pyramid; they passed through the galleries, surveyed the vaults of marble, and examined the chest in which the body of the founder is supposed to have been reposited. They then sat down in one of the most spacious chambers to rest awhile, before they attempted to return.

'We have now,' said Imlac, 'gratified our minds with an exact view of the greatest work of man, except the wall of China.

'Of the wall, it is very easy to assign the motive. It secured a wealthy and timorous nation from the incursions of barbarians, whose unskilfulness in the arts made it easier for them to supply their wants by rapine than by industry, and who from time to time poured in upon the inhabitants of peaceful commerce, as vultures descend upon domestic fowl. Their celerity and fierceness made the wall necessary, and their ignorance made it efficacious.

'But for the pyramids, no reason has ever been given, adequate to the cost and labour of the work. The narrowness of the chambers proves that it could afford no retreat from enemies, and treasures might have been reposited at far less expense with equal security. It seems to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination which preys incessantly upon life, and must be always appeased by some employment. Those who have already all that they can enjoy, must enlarge their desires. He that has built for use till use is supplied, must begin to build for vanity, and extend his plan to the utmost power of human per-

formance, that he may not be soon reduced to form another wish.

'I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king, whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures, and to amuse the tediousness of declining life, by seeing thousands labouring without end, and one stone, for no purpose, laid upon another. Whoever thou art, that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and dreamest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty with perpetual gratifications, survey the pyramids, and confess thy folly!'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Princess meets with an unexpected Misfortune.

THEY rose up, and returned through the cavity at which they had entered; and the princess prepared for her favourite a long narrative of dark labyrinths and costly rooms, and of the different impressions which the varieties of the way had made upon her. But when they came to their train, they found every one silent and dejected: the men discovered shame and fear in their countenances, and the women were weeping in their tents.

What had happened they did not try to conjecture, but immediately inquired. 'You had scarcely entered into the pyramid,' said one of the attendants, 'when a troop of Arabs rushed upon us: we

were too few to resist them, and too slow to escape. They were about to search the tents, set us on our camels, and drive us along before them, when the approach of some Turkish horsemen put them to flight; but they seized the lady Pekuah with her two maids, and carried them away: the Turks are now pursuing them by our instigation, but I fear they will not be able to overtake them.'

The princess was overpowered with surprise and grief. Rasselas, in the first heat of his resentment, ordered his servants to follow him, and prepared to pursue the robbers with his sabre in his hand. 'Sir,' said Imlac, 'what can you hope from violence or valour? the Arabs are mounted on horses trained to battle and retreat; we have only beasts of burden. By leaving our present station we may lose the princess, but cannot hope to regain Pekuah.'

In a short time the Turks returned, having not been able to reach the enemy. The princess burst out into new lamentations, and Rasselas could scarcely forbear to reproach them with cowardice; but Imlac was of opinion, that the escape of the Arabs was no addition to their misfortune, for, perhaps, they would have killed their captives rather than have resigned them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

They return to Cairo without Pekuah.

THERE was nothing to be hoped from longer stay. They returned to Cairo, repenting of their curiosity, censuring the negligence of the government, lamenting their own rashness, which had neglected

to procure a guard, imagining many expedients by which the loss of Pekuah might have been prevented, and resolving to do something for her recovery, though none could find any thing proper to be done.

Nekayah retired to her chamber, where her women attempted to comfort her, by telling her that all had their troubles, and that lady Pekuah had enjoyed much happiness in the world for a long time, and might reasonably expect a change of fortune. They hoped that some good would befal her wheresoever she was, and that their mistress would find another friend, who might supply her place.

The princess made them no answer; and they continued the form of condolence, not much grieved in their hearts that the favourite was lost.

Next day, the prince presented to the Bassa a memorial of the wrong which he had suffered, and a petition for redress. The Bassa threatened to punish the robbers, but did not attempt to catch them; nor indeed could any account or description be given by which he might direct the pursuit.

It soon appeared that nothing would be done by authority. Governors being accustomed to hear of more crimes than they can punish, and more wrongs than they can redress, set themselves at ease by indiscriminate negligence, and presently forget the request when they lose sight of the petitioner.

Imlac then endeavoured to gain some intelligence by private agents. He found many who pretended to an exact knowledge of all the haunts of the Arabs, and to regular correspondence with their chiefs, and who readily undertook the recovery of Pekuah. Of these, some were furnished with money for their journey, and came back no more; some were liberally paid for accounts which a few days discovered to be false. But the princess would not suffer any means, however im-

probable, to be left untried.' While she was doing something, she kept her hope alive. As one expedient failed, another was suggested; when one messenger returned unsuccessful, another was despatched to a different quarter.

Two months had now passed, and of Pekuah nothing had been heard; the hopes which they had endeavoured to raise in each other grew more languid; and the princess, when she saw nothing more to be tried, sunk down inconsolable in hopeless dejection. A thousand times she reproached herself with the easy compliance by which she permitted her favourite to stay behind her. 'Had not my fondness,' said she, 'lessened my authority, Pekuah had not dared to talk of her terrors. She ought to have feared me more than spectres. A severe look would have overpowered her; a peremptory command would have compelled obedience. Why did foolish indulgence prevail upon me? why did I not speak, and refuse to hear?'

'Great princess,' said Imlac, 'do not reproach yourself for your virtue, or consider that as blamable by which evil has accidentally been caused. Your tenderness for the timidity of Pekuah was generous and kind.—When we act according to our duty, we commit the events to Him by whose laws our actions are governed, and who will suffer none to be finally punished for obedience. When, in prospect of some good, whether natural or moral, we break the rules prescribed us, we withdraw from the direction of superior wisdom, and take all consequences upon ourselves. Man cannot so far know the connexion of causes and events, as that he may venture to do wrong in order to do right. When we pursue our end by lawful means, we may always console our miscarriage by the hope of future recompense. When we consult only our own policy, and attempt to find a nearer way to good, by overleaping the settled boundaries of right and wrong, we cannot be happy even by success,

because we cannot escape the consciousness of our fault; but if we miscarry, the disappointment is irremediably imbittered. How comfortless is the sorrow of him who feels at once the pangs of guilt and the vexation of calamity, which guilt has brought upon him!

'Consider, princess, what would have been your condition, if the lady Pekuah had entreated to accompany you, and, being compelled to stay in the tents, had been carried away; or how would you have borne the thought if you had forced her into the pyramid, and she had died before you in agonies of terror.'

'Had either happened,' said Nekayah, 'I could not have endured life till now; I should have been tortured to madness by the remembrance of such cruelty, or must have pined away in abhorrence of myself.'

'This, at least,' said Imlac, 'is the present reward of virtuous conduct, that no unlucky consequence can oblige us to repent it.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Princess languishes for Want of Pekuah.

NEKAYAH, being thus reconciled to herself, found that no evil is insupportable but that which is accompanied with consciousness of wrong. She was, from that time, delivered from the violence of tempestuous sorrow, and sunk into silent pensiveness and gloomy tranquillity. She sat from morning to evening recollecting all that had been done or said by her Pekuah, treasured up with care every trifle on which Pekuah had set an accidental value, and

which might recal to mind any little incident or careless conversation. The sentiments of her whom she now expected to see no more were treasured in her memory as rules of life, and she deliberated to no other end than to conjecture on any occasion what would have been the opinion and counsel of Pekuah.

The women by whom she was attended knew nothing of her real condition, and therefore she could not talk to them but with caution and reserve. She began to remit her curiosity, having no great desire to collect notions which she had no convenience of uttering. Rasselas endeavoured first to comfort, and afterwards to divert her: he hired musicians, to whom she seemed to listen, but did not hear them; and procured masters to instruct her in various arts, whose lectures, when they visited her again, were again to be repeated. She had lost her taste of pleasure, and her ambition of excellence. And her mind, though forced into short excursions, always recurred to the image of her friend.

Imlac was every morning earnestly enjoined to renew his inquiries, and was asked every night whether he had yet heard of Pekuah; till, not being able to return the princess the answer that she desired, he was less and less willing to come into her presence. She observed his backwardness, and commanded him to attend her. 'You are not,' said she, 'to confound impatience with resentment, or to suppose that I charge you with negligence, because I repine at your unsuccessfulness. I do not much wonder at your absence. I know that the unhappy are never pleasing, and that all naturally avoid the contagion of misery. To hear complaints is wearisome, alike to the wretched and the happy; for who would cloud, by adventitious grief, the short gleams of gaiety which life allows us? or who, that is struggling under his own evils, will add to them the miseries of another?

'The time is at hand, when none shall be disturbed any longer by the sighs of Nekayah: my search after happiness is now at an end. I am resolved to retire from the world with all its flatteries and deceits, and will hide myself in solitude, without any other care than to compose my thoughts, and regulate my hours by a constant succession of innocent occupations, till, with a mind purified from earthly desires, I shall enter into that state, to which all are hastening, and in which I hope again to enjoy the friendship of Pekuah.'

'Do not entangle your mind,' said Imlac, 'by irrevocable determinations, nor increase the burden of life by a voluntary accumulation of misery: the weariness of retirement will continue or increase when the loss of Pekuah is forgot. That you have been deprived of one pleasure is no very good reason for rejection of the rest.'

'Since Pekuah was taken from me,' said the princess, 'I have no pleasure to reject or to retain. She that has no one to love or trust, has little to hope. She wants the radical principle of happiness. We may, perhaps, allow that what satisfaction this world can afford must arise from the conjunction of wealth, knowledge, and goodness: wealth is nothing but as it is bestowed, and knowledge nothing but as it is communicated: they must therefore be imparted to others, and to whom could I now delight to impart them? Goodness affords the only comfort which can be enjoyed without a partner, and goodness may be practised in retirement.'

'How far solitude may admit goodness, or advance it, I shall not,' replied Imlac, 'dispute at present. Remember the confession of the pious hermit. You will wish to return into the world when the image of your companion has left your thoughts.' 'That time,' said Nekayah, 'will never come. The generous frankness, the modest obse-

quiousness, and the faithful secrecy of my dear Pekuah, will always be more missed, as I shall live longer to see vice and folly.'

'The state of a mind oppressed with a sudden calamity,' said Imlac, 'is like that of the fabulous inhabitants of the new-created earth, who, when the first night came upon them, supposed that day would never return. When the clouds of sorrow gather over us, we see nothing beyond them, nor can imagine how they will be dispelled: yet a new day succeeded to the night, and sorrow is never long without a dawn of ease. But they who restrain themselves from receiving comfort, do as the savages would have done, had they put out their eyes when it was dark. Our minds, like our bodies, are in continual flux; something is hourly lost, and something acquired. To lose much at once is inconvenient to either, but while the vital powers remain uninjured, nature will find the means of reparation. Distance has the same effect on the mind as on the eye; and while we glide along the stream of time, whatever we leave behind us is always lessening, and that which we approach increasing in magnitude. Do not suffer life to stagnate; it will grow muddy for want of motion; commit yourself again to the current of the world; Pekuah will vanish by degrees; you will meet in your way some other favourite, or learn to diffuse yourself in general conversation.'

'At least,' said the prince, 'do not despair before all remedies have been tried: the inquiry after the unfortunate lady is still continued, and shall be carried on with yet greater diligence, on condition that you will promise to wait a year for the event, without any unalterable resolution.'

Nekayah thought this a reasonable demand, and made the promise to her brother, who had been advised by Imlac to require it. Imlac had, indeed, no great hope of regaining Pekuah; but he supposed, that if he could secure the interval of a

year, the princess would be then in no danger of a cloister.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Pekuah is still remembered. The Progress of Sorrow.

NEKAYAH, seeing that nothing was omitted for the recovery of her favourite, and having, by her promise, set her intention of retirement at a distance, began imperceptibly to return to common cares and common pleasures. She rejoiced without her own consent at the suspension of her sorrows, and sometimes caught herself with indignation in the act of turning away her mind from the remembrance of her whom yet she resolved never to forget.

She then appointed a certain hour of the day for meditation on the merits and fondness of Pekuah, and for some weeks retired constantly at the time fixed, and returned with her eyes swollen and her countenance clouded. By degrees she grew less scrupulous, and suffered any important and pressing avocation to delay the tribute of daily tears. She then yielded to less occasions; and sometimes forgot what she was indeed afraid to remember; and, at last, wholly released herself from the duty of periodical affliction.

Her real love of Pekuah was not yet diminished. A thousand occurrences brought her back to memory, and a thousand wants, which nothing but the confidence of friendship can supply, made her frequently regretted. She, therefore, solicited Imlac never to desist from inquiry, and to leave no art of intelligence untried, that at least she might have the comfort of knowing that she did not suffer

by negligence or sluggishness. 'Yet what,' said she, 'is to be expected from our pursuit of happiness, when we find the state of life to be such that happiness itself is the cause of misery? Why should we endeavour to attain that of which the possession cannot be secured? I shall henceforward fear to yield my heart to excellence, however bright, or to fondness, however tender, lest I should lose again what I have lost in Pekuah.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Princess hears News of Pekuah.

IN seven months, one of the messengers, who had been sent away upon the day when the promise was drawn from the princess, returned, after many unsuccessful rambles, from the borders of Nubia, with an account that Pekuah was in the hands of an Arab chief, who possessed a castle or fortress on the extremity of Egypt. The Arab, whose revenue was plunder, was willing to restore her, with her two attendants, for two hundred ounces of gold.

The price was no subject of debate. The princess was in ecstasies when she heard that her favourite was alive, and might so cheaply be ransomed. She could not think of delaying for a moment Pekuah's happiness or her own, but entreated her brother to send back the messenger with the sum required. Imlac, being consulted, was not very confident of the veracity of the relater, and was still more doubtful of the Arab's faith, who might, if he were too liberally trusted, detain at once the money and the captives. He thought it

dangerous to put themselves in the power of the Arab, by going into his district; and could not expect that the rover would so much expose himself as to come into the lower country, where he might be seized by the forces of the Bassa.

It is difficult to negotiate where neither will trust. But Imlac, after some deliberation, directed the messenger to propose that Pekuah should be conducted by ten horsemen to the monastery of St. Anthony, which is situated in the deserts of Upper Egypt, where she should be met by the same number, and her ransom should be paid.

That no time might be lost, as they expected that the proposal would not be refused, they immediately began their journey to the monastery; and when they arrived, Imlac went forward with the former messenger to the Arab's fortress. Rasselas was desirous to go with them; but neither his sister nor Imlac would consent. The Arab, according to the custom of his nation, observed the laws of hospitality with great exactness to those who put themselves into his power, and, in a few days, brought Pekuah with her maids, by easy journeys, to the place appointed, where, receiving the stipulated price, he restored her, with great respect, to liberty and her friends, and undertook to conduct them back towards Cairo beyond all danger of robbery or violence.

The princess and her favourite embraced each other with transport too violent to be expressed, and went out together to pour the tears of tenderness in secret, and exchange professions of kindness and gratitude. After a few hours they returned into the refectory of the convent, where, in the presence of the prior and his brethren, the prince required of Pekuah the history of her adventures.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Adventures of the Lady Pekuah.

'AT what time, and in what manner, I was forced away,' said Pekuah, 'your servants have told you. The suddenness of the event struck me with surprise, and I was at first rather stupefied than agitated with any passion of either fear or sorrow. My confusion was increased by the speed and tumult of our flight, while we were followed by the Turks, who, as it seemed, soon despaired to overtake us, or were afraid of those whom they made a show of menacing.

'When the Arabs saw themselves out of danger, they slackened their course; and as I was less harassed by external violence, I began to feel more uneasiness in my mind. After some time, we stopped near a spring shaded with trees, in a pleasant meadow, where we were set upon the ground, and offered such refreshments as our masters were partaking. I was suffered to sit with my maids apart from the rest, and none attempted to comfort or insult us. Here I first began to feel the full weight of my misery. The girls sat weeping in silence, and from time to time looked on me for succour. I knew not to what condition we were doomed, nor could conjecture where would be the place of our captivity, or whence to draw any hope of deliverance. I was in the hands of robbers and savages, and had no reason to suppose that their pity was more than their justice, or that they would forbear the gratification of any ardour of desire, or caprice of cruelty. I, however, kissed my maids, and endeavoured to pacify them by remarking, that we were yet treated with decency, and that, since we were now carried beyond pursuit, there was no danger of violence to our lives.

'When we were to be set again on horseback, my maids clung round me, and refused to be parted; but I commanded them not to irritate those who had us in their power. We travelled the remaining part of the day through an unfrequented and pathless country, and came by moonlight to the side of a hill, where the rest of the troop was stationed. Their tents were pitched, and their fires kindled, and our chief was welcomed as a man much beloved by his dependants.

'We were received into a large tent, where we found women who had attended their husbands in the expedition. They set before us the supper which they had provided, and I ate it rather to encourage my maids than to comply with any appetite of my own. When the meat was taken away, they spread the carpets for repose. I was weary, and hoped to find in sleep that remission of distress which nature seldom denies. Ordering myself, therefore, to be undressed, I observed that the women looked very earnestly upon me, not expecting, I suppose, to see me so submissively attended. When my upper vest was taken off, they were apparently struck with the splendour of my clothes, and one of them timorously laid her hand upon the embroidery. She then went out, and, in a short time, came back with another woman, who seemed to be of higher rank and greater authority. She did, at her entrance, the usual act of reverence, and, taking me by the hand, placed me in a smaller tent, spread with finer carpets, where I spent the night quietly with my maids.

'In the morning, as I was sitting on the grass, the chief of the troop came towards me. I rose up to receive him, and he bowed with great respect. Illustrious lady, said he, my fortune is better than I had presumed to hope; I am told, by my women, that I have a princess in my camp. —Sir, answered I, your women have deceived themselves and you; I am not a princess, but an

unhappy stranger, who intended soon to have left this country, in which I am now to be imprisoned for ever. Whoever, or whencesoever, you are, returned the Arab, your dress, and that of your servants, show your rank to be high, and your wealth to be great. Why should you, who can so easily procure your ransom, think yourself in danger of perpetual captivity? The purpose of my incursions is to increase my riches, or more properly to gather tribute. The sons of Ishmael are the natural and hereditary lords of this part of the continent, which is usurped by late invaders and low-born tyrants, from whom we are compelled to take by the sword what is denied to justice. The violence of war admits no distinction; the lance that is lifted at guilt and power will sometimes fall on innocence and gentleness.

'How little, said I, did I expect that yesterday it should have fallen upon me.

'Misfortunes, answered the Arab, should always be expected. If the eye of hostility could learn reverence or pity, excellence like yours had been exempt from injury. But the angels of affliction spread their toils alike for the virtuous and the wicked, for the mighty and the mean. Do not be disconsolate; I am not one of the lawless and cruel rovers of the desert; I know the rules of civil life; I will fix your ransom, give a passport to your messenger, and perform my stipulation with nice punctuality.

'You will easily believe that I was pleased with his courtesy; and finding that his predominant passion was desire of money, I began now to think my danger less; for I knew that no sum would be thought too great for the release of Pekuah. I told him that he should have no reason to charge me with ingratitude, if I was used with kindness; and that any ransom which could be expected for a maid of common rank would be paid, but that he must not persist to rate me as a princess. He

said he would consider what he should demand, and then, smiling, bowed and retired.

'Soon after, the women came about me, each contending to be more officious than the other, and my maids themselves were served with reverence. We travelled onward by short journeys. On the fourth day, the chief told me that my ransom must be two hundred ounces of gold; which I not only promised him, but told him that I would add fifty more, if I and my maids were honourably treated.

'I never knew the power of gold before—From that time I was the leader of the troop.—The march of every day was longer or shorter as I commanded, and the tents were pitched where I chose to rest. We now had camels and other conveniences for travel: my own women were always at my side, and I amused myself with observing the manners of the vagrant nations, and with viewing remains of ancient edifices with which these deserted countries appear to have been, in some distant age, lavishly embellished.

'The chief of the band was a man far from illiterate: he was able to travel by the stars or the compass, and had marked in his erratic expeditions such places as are most worthy the notice of a passenger. He observed to me, that buildings are always best preserved in places little frequented, and difficult of access; for when once a country declines from its primitive splendour, the more inhabitants are left, the quicker ruin will be made. Walls supply stones more easily than quarries; and palaces and temples will be demolished, to make stables of granite and cottages of porphyry.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Adventures of Pekuah continued.

'WE wandered about in this manner for some weeks, either, as our chief pretended, for my gratification, or, as I rather suspected, for some convenience of his own. I endeavoured to appear contented where sullenness and resentment would have been of no use, and that endeavour conduced much to the calmness of my mind; but my heart was always with Nekayah, and the troubles of the night much overbalanced the amusements of the day. My women, who threw all their cares upon their mistress, set their minds at ease from the time when they saw me treated with respect, and gave themselves up to the incidental alleviations of our fatigue without solicitude or sorrow. I was pleased with their pleasure, and animated with their confidence. My condition had lost much of its terror, since I found that the Arab ranged the country merely to get riches. Avarice is an uniform and tractable vice: other intellectual distempers are different in different constitutions of mind; that which soothes the pride of one will offend the pride of another; but to the favour of the covetous there is a ready way—bring money, and nothing is denied.

'At last we came to the dwelling of our chief; a strong and spacious house, built with stone in an island of the Nile, which lies, as I was told, under the tropic. Lady, said the Arab, you shall rest after your journey a few weeks in this place, where you are to consider yourself as sovereign. My occupation is war: I have therefore chosen this obscure residence, from which I can issue unexpected, and to which I can retire unpursued. You may now repose in security: here are few pleasures,

but here is no danger. He then led me into the inner apartments, and, seating me on the richest couch, bowed to the ground.

'His women, who considered me as a rival, looked on me with malignity; but being soon informed that I was a great lady detained only for my ransom, they began to vie with each other in obsequiousness and reverence.

'Being again comforted with new assurances of speedy liberty, I was for some days diverted from impatience by the novelty of the place. The turrets overlooked the country to a great distance, and afforded a view of many windings of the stream. In the day I wandered from one place to another, as the course of the sun varied the splendour of the prospect, and saw many things which I had never seen before. The crocodiles and river-horses are common in this unpeopled region; and I often looked upon them with terror, though I knew that they could not hurt me. For some time I expected to see mermaids and tritons, which, as Imlac has told me, the European travellers have stationed in the Nile; but no such beings ever appeared, and the Arab, when I inquired after them, laughed at my credulity.

'At night the Arab always attended me to a tower set apart for celestial observations, where he endeavoured to teach me the names and courses of the stars. I had no great inclination to this study; but an appearance of attention was necessary to please my instructor, who valued himself for his skill, and, in a little while, I found some employment requisite to beguile the tediousness of time, which was to be passed always amidst the same objects. I was weary of looking in the morning on things from which I had turned away weary in the evening: I therefore was at last willing to observe the stars rather than do nothing, but could not always compose my thoughts, and was very often thinking on Nekayah when others imagined me

contemplating the sky. Soon after the Arab went upon another expedition, and then my only pleasure was to talk with my maids about the accident by which we were carried away, and the happiness that we should all enjoy at the end of our captivity.'

'There were women in your Arab's fortress,' said the princess; 'why did you not make them your companions, enjoy their conversation, and partake their diversions? In a place where they found business or amusement, why should you alone sit corroded with idle melancholy? or why could not you bear for a few months that condition to which they were condemned for life?'

'The diversions of the women,' answered Pekuah, 'were only childish play, by which the mind, accustomed to stronger operations, could not be kept busy. I could do all which they delighted in doing by powers merely sensitive, while my intellectual faculties were flown to Cairo. They ran from room to room, as a bird hops from wire to wire in his cage. They danced for the sake of motion, as lambs frisk in a meadow. One sometimes pretended to be hurt that the rest might be alarmed, or hid herself that another might seek her. Part of their time passed in watching the progress of light bodies that floated on the river, and part in marking the various forms into which clouds broke in the sky.

'Their business was only needle-work, in which I and my maids sometimes helped them; but you know that the mind will easily straggle from the fingers, nor will you suspect that captivity and absence from Nekayah could receive solace from silken flowers.

'Nor was much satisfaction to be hoped from their conversation: for of what could they be expected to talk? They had seen nothing, for they had lived from early youth in that narrow spot: of what they had not seen they could have no

knowledge, for they could not read. They had no idea but of the few things that were within their view, and had hardly names for any thing but their clothes and their food. As I bore a superior character, I was often called to terminate their quarrels, which I decided as equitably as I could. If it could have amused me to hear the complaints of each against the rest, I might have been often detained by long stories; but the motives of their animosity were so small that I could not listen without interrupting the tale.'

'How,' said Rasselas, 'can the Arab, whom you represented as a man of more than common accomplishments, take any pleasure in his seraglio when it is filled only with women like these? Are hey exquisitely beautiful?'

'They do not,' said Pekuah, 'want that unaffecting and ignoble beauty which may subsist without sprightliness or sublimity, without energy of thought or dignity of virtue. But to a man like the Arab, such beauty was only a flower casually plucked and carelessly thrown away. Whatever pleasures he might find among them, they were not those of friendship or society. When they were playing about him, he looked on them with inattentive superiority: when they vied for his regard, he sometimes turned away disgusted. As they had no knowledge, their talk could take nothing from the tediousness of life: as they had no choice, their fondness, or appearance of fondness, excited in him neither pride nor gratitude: he was not exalted in his own esteem by the smiles of a woman who saw no other man, nor was much obliged by that regard, of which he could never know the sincerity, and which he might often perceive to be exerted not so much to delight him as to pain a rival. That which he gave, and they received, as love, was only a careless distribution of superfluous time; such love as man can bestow upon that which he despises, such as has neither hope nor fear, neither joy nor sorrow.'

'You have reason, lady, to think yourself happy,' said Imlac, 'that you have been thus easily dismissed. How could a mind, hungry for knowledge, be willing, in an intellectual famine, to lose such a banquet as Pekuah's conversation?'

'I am inclined to believe,' answered Pekuah, 'that he was for some time in suspense; for notwithstanding his promise, whenever I proposed to despatch a messenger to Cairo, he found some excuse for delay. While I was detained in his house, he made many incursions into the neighbouring countries, and, perhaps, he would have refused to discharge me, had his plunder been equal to his wishes. He returned always courteous, related his adventures, delighted to hear my observations, and endeavoured to advance my acquaintance with the stars. When I importuned him to send away my letters, he soothed me with professions of honour and sincerity; and when I could be no longer decently denied, put his troop again in motion, and left me to govern in his absence. I was much afflicted by this studied procrastination, and was sometimes afraid that I should be forgotten; that you would leave Cairo, and I must end my days in an island of the Nile.

'I grew at last hopeless and dejected, and cared so little to entertain him, that he for a while more frequently talked with my maids. That he should fall in love with them, or with me, might have been equally fatal; and I was not much pleased with the growing friendship. My anxiety was not long; for, as I recovered some degree of cheerfulness, he returned to me, and I could not forbear to despise my former uneasiness.

'He still delayed to send for my ransom, and would, perhaps, never have determined, had not your agent found his way to him. The gold, which he would not fetch, he could not reject when it was offered. He hastened to prepare for our journey hither, like a man delivered from the pain of

an intestine conflict. I took leave of my companions in the house, who dismissed me with cold indifference.'

Nekayah, having heard her favourite's relation, rose and embraced her: and Rasselas gave her an hundred ounces of gold, which she presented to the Arab for the fifty that were promised.

CHAPTER XL.

The History of a Man of Learning.

THEY returned to Cairo, and were so well pleased at finding themselves together, that none of them went much abroad. The prince began to love learning, and one day declared to Imlac that he intended to devote himself to science, and pass the rest of his days in literary solitude.

'Before you make your final choice,' answered Imlac, 'you ought to examine its hazards, and converse with some of those who are grown old in the company of themselves. I have just left the observatory of one of the most learned astronomers in the world, who has spent forty years in unwearied attention to the motions and appearances of the celestial bodies, and has drawn out his soul in endless calculations. He admits a few friends once a month to hear his deductions and enjoy his discoveries. I was introduced as a man of knowledge worthy of his notice. Men of various ideas and fluent conversation are commonly welcome to those whose thoughts have been long fixed upon a single point, and who find the images of other things stealing away. I delighted him with my remarks: he smiled at the narrative of my travels,

and was glad to forget the constellations, and descend for a moment into the lower world.

'On the next day of vacation I renewed my visit, and was so fortunate as to please him again. He relaxed from that time the severity of his rule, and permitted me to enter at my own choice. I found him always busy, and always glad to be relieved. As each knew much which the other was desirous of learning, we exchanged our notions with great delight. I perceived that I had every day more of his confidence, and always found new cause of admiration in the profundity of his mind. His comprehension is vast, his memory capacious and retentive; his discourse is methodical, and his expression clear.

'His integrity and benevolence are equal to his learning. His deepest researches and most favourite studies are willingly interrupted for any opportunity of doing good by his counsel or his riches. To his closest retreat, at his most busy moments, all are admitted that want his assistance: For though I exclude idleness and pleasure, I will never, says he, bar my doors against charity. To man is permitted the contemplation of the skies, but the practice of virtue is commanded.'

'Surely,' said the princess, 'this man is happy.'

'I visited him,' said Imlac, 'with more and more frequency, and was every time more enamoured of his conversation: he was sublime without haughtiness, courteous without formality, and communicative without ostentation. I was at first, great princess, of your opinion, thought him the happiest of mankind, and often congratulated him on the blessing that he enjoyed. He seemed to hear nothing with indifference but the praises of his condition, to which he always returned a general answer, and diverted the conversation to some other topic.

'Amidst this willingness to be pleased, and la-

hour to please, I had quickly reason to imagine that some painful sentiment pressed upon his mind. He often looked up earnestly towards the sun, and let his voice fall in the midst of his discourse. He would sometimes, when we were alone, gaze upon me in silence with the air of a man who longed to speak what he was yet resolved to suppress. He would often send for me with vehement injunctions of haste, though, when I came to him, he had nothing extraordinary to say. And sometimes, when I was leaving him, would call me back, pause a few moments, and then dismiss me.'

CHAPTER XLI.

The Astronomer discovers the Cause of his Uneasiness.

'AT last, the time came when the secret burst his reserve. We were sitting together last night in the turret of his house, watching the emersion of a satellite of Jupiter. A sudden tempest clouded the sky, and disappointed our observation. We sat a while silent in the dark, and then he addressed himself to me in these words: Imlac, I have long considered thy friendship as the greatest blessing of my life. Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful. I have found in thee all the qualities requisite for trust; benevolence, experience, and fortitude. I have long discharged an office which I must soon quit at the call of nature, and shall rejoice in the hour of imbecility and pain to devolve it upon thee.

'I thought myself honoured by this testimony,

and protested that whatever could conduce to his happiness would add likewise to mine.

'Hear, Imlac, what thou wilt not without difficulty credit. I have possessed for five years the regulation of the weather, and the distribution of the seasons: the sun has listened to my dictates, and passed from tropic to tropic by my direction: the clouds, at my call, have poured their waters, and the Nile has overflowed at my command: I have restrained the rage of the dog-star, and mitigated the fervours of the crab. The winds alone, of all the elemental powers, have hitherto refused my authority, and multitudes have perished by equinoctial tempests which I found myself unable to prohibit or restrain. I have administered this great office with exact justice, and made to the different nations of the earth an impartial dividend of rain and sunshine. What must have been the misery of half the globe, if I had limited the clouds to particular regions, or confined the sun to either side of the equator?'

CHAPTER XLII.

The Opinion of the Astronomer is explained and justified.

'I SUPPOSE he discovered in me, through the obscurity of the room, some tokens of amazement and doubt; for, after a short pause, he proceeded thus:

'Not to be easily credited will neither surprise nor offend me; for I am probably the first of human beings to whom this trust has been imparted. Nor do I know whether to deem this distinction a

reward or punishment; since I have possessed it, I have been far less happy than before, and nothing but the consciousness of good intention could have enabled me to support the weariness of unremitted vigilance.

'How long, sir, said I, has this great office been in your hands?'

'About ten years ago, said he, my daily observations of the changes of the sky led me to consider, whether, if I had the power of the seasons, I could confer greater plenty upon the inhabitants of the earth. This contemplation fastened on my mind, and I sat days and nights in imaginary dominion, pouring upon this country and that the showers of fertility, and seconding every fall of rain with a due proportion of sunshine. I had yet only the will to do good, and did not imagine that I should ever have the power.

'One day as I was looking on the fields withering with heat, I felt in my mind a sudden wish that I could send rain on the southern mountains, and raise the Nile to an inundation. In the hurry of my imagination, I commanded rain to fall; and by comparing the time of my command with that of the inundation, I found that the clouds had listened to my lips.

'Might not some other cause, said I, produce this concurrence? The Nile does not always rise on the same day.

'Do not believe, said he, with impatience, that such objections could escape me: I reasoned long against my own conviction, and laboured against truth with the utmost obstinacy. I sometimes suspected myself of madness, and should not have dared to impart this secret but to a man like you, capable of distinguishing the wonderful from the impossible, and the incredible from the false.

'Why, sir, said I, do you call that incredible which you know, or think you know, to be true?

'Because, said he, I cannot prove it by any ex-

ternal evidence: and I know too well the laws of demonstration, to think that my conviction ought to influence another, who cannot, like me, be conscious of its force. I, therefore, shall not attempt to gain credit by disputation. It is sufficient that I feel this power, that I have long possessed, and every day exerted it. But the life of man is short: the infirmities of age increase upon me, and the time will soon come when the regulator of the year must mingle with the dust. The care of appointing a successor has long disturbed me: the night and the day have been spent in comparisons of all the characters which have come to my knowledge, and I have yet found none so worthy as thyself.'

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Astronomer leaves Imlac his Directions.

'HEAR, therefore, what I shall impart with attention, such as the welfare of a world requires. If the task of a king be considered as difficult, who has the care only of a few millions, to whom he cannot do much good or harm, what must be the anxiety of him, on whom depends the action of the elements, and the great gifts of light and heat? Hear me, therefore, with attention.

'I have diligently considered the position of the earth and sun, and formed innumerable schemes, in which I changed their situation. I have sometimes turned aside the axis of the earth, and sometimes varied the ecliptic of the sun: but I have found it impossible to make a disposition by which the world may be advantaged; what one region gains, another loses by an imaginable alteration, even without considering the distant parts of the

solar system with which we are unacquainted. Do not, therefore, in thy administration of the year, indulge thy pride by innovation; do not please thyself with thinking that thou canst make thyself renowned to all future ages, by disordering the seasons. The memory of mischief is no desirable fame. Much less will it become thee to let kindness or interest prevail. Never rob other countries of rain to pour it on thine own. For us the Nile is sufficient.

'I promised that when I possessed the power, I would use it with inflexible integrity; and he dismissed me, pressing my hand.—My heart, said he, will be now at rest, and my benevolence will no more destroy my quiet: I have found a man of wisdom and virtue, to whom I can cheerfully bequeath the inheritance of the sun.'

The prince heard this narration with very serious regard; but the princess smiled, and Pekuah convulsed herself with laughter. 'Ladies,' said Imlac, 'to mock the heaviest of human afflictions is neither charitable nor wise. Few can attain this man's knowledge, and few practise his virtues; but all may suffer his calamity. Of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason.'

The princess was recollected, and the favourite was abashed. Rasselas, more deeply affected, inquired of Imlac, whether he thought such maladies of the mind frequent, and how they were contracted.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The dangerous Prevalence of Imagination.

'DISORDERS of intellect,' answered Imlac, 'happen much more often than superficial observers will easily believe. Perhaps, if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state. There is no man whose imagination does not sometimes predominate over his reason, who can regulate his attention wholly by his will, and whose ideas will come and go at his command. No man will be found in whose mind airy notions do not sometimes tyrannize, and force him to hope or fear beyond the limits of sober probability. All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity; but while this power is such as we can control and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any depravation of the mental faculties: it is not pronounced madness but when it becomes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action.

'To indulge the power of fiction, and send imagination out upon the wing, is often the sport of those who delight too much in silent speculation. When we are alone, we are not always busy; the labour of excogitation is too violent to last long; the ardour of inquiry will sometimes give way to idleness or satiety. He who has nothing external that can divert him must find pleasure in his own thoughts, and must conceive himself what he is not; for who is pleased with what he is? He then expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire, amuses his desires with impossible enjoyments, and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion. The mind

dances from scene to scene, unites all pleasures in all combinations, and riots in delights which nature and fortune, with all their bounty, cannot bestow.

'In time, some particular train of ideas fixes the attention: all other intellectual gratifications are rejected; the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees, the reign of fancy is confirmed; she grows first imperious, and in time despotic. Then fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or of anguish.

'This, sir, is one of the dangers of solitude; which the hermit has confessed not always to promote goodness, and the astronomer's misery has proved to be not always propitious to wisdom.'

'I will no more,' said the favourite, 'imagine myself the queen of Abissinia. I have often spent the hours, which the princess gave to my own disposal, in adjusting ceremonies, and regulating the court; I have repressed the pride of the powerful, and granted the petitions of the poor; I have built new palaces in more happy situations, planted groves upon the tops of mountains, and have exulted in the beneficence of royalty, till, when the princess entered, I had almost forgotten to bow down before her.'

'And I,' said the princess, 'will not allow myself any more to play the shepherdess in my waking dreams. I have often soothed my thoughts with the quiet and innocence of pastoral employments, till I have in my chamber heard the winds whistle, and the sheep bleat; sometimes freed the lamb entangled in the thicket, and sometimes with my crook encountered the wolf. I have a dress like that of the village maids, which I put on to help

my imagination, and a pipe on which I play softly, and suppose myself followed by my flocks.'

'I will confess,' said the prince, 'an indulgence of fantastic delight more dangerous than yours. I have frequently endeavoured to imagine the possibility of a perfect government, by which all wrong should be restrained, all vice reformed, and all the subjects preserved in tranquillity and innocence. This thought produced innumerable schemes of reformation, and dictated many useful regulations and salutary edicts. This has been the sport, and sometimes the labour, of my solitude: and I start, when I think with how little anguish I once supposed the death of my father and my brothers.'

'Such,' said Imlac, 'are the effects of visionary schemes: when we first form them, we know them to be absurd, but familiarize them by degrees, and in time lose sight of their folly.'

CHAPTER XLV.

They discourse with an old Man.

THE evening was now far past, and they rose to return home. As they walked along the bank of the Nile, delighted with the beams of the moon quivering on the water, they saw, at a small distance, an old man whom the prince had often heard in the assembly of the sages. 'Yonder,' said he, 'is one whose years have calmed his passions, but not clouded his reason: let us close the disquisitions of the night, by inquiring what are his sentiments of his own state, that we may know

whether youth alone is to struggle with vexation, and whether any better hope remains for the latter part of life.'

Here the sage approached and saluted them. They invited him to join their walk, and prattled a while as acquaintance that had unexpectedly met one another. The old man was cheerful and talkative, and the way seemed short in his company. He was pleased to find himself not disregarded, accompanied them to their house, and, at the prince's request, entered with them. They placed him in the seat of honour, and set wine and conserves before him.

'Sir,' said the princess, 'an evening walk must give to a man of learning like you pleasures which ignorance and youth can hardly conceive. You know the qualities and the causes of all that you behold, the laws by which the river flows, the periods in which the planets perform their revolutions. Every thing must supply you with contemplation, and renew the consciousness of your own dignity.'

'Lady,' answered he, 'let the gay and the vigorous expect pleasure in their excursions: it is enough that age can attain ease. To me the world has lost its novelty: I look round, and see what I remember to have seen in happier days. I rest against a tree, and consider, that in the same shade I once disputed upon the annual overflow of the Nile with a friend who is now silent in the grave. I cast my eyes upwards, fix them on the changing moon, and think with pain on the vicissitudes of life. I have ceased to take much delight in physical truth; for what have I to do with those things which I am soon to leave?'

'You may at least recreate yourself,' said Imlac, 'with the recollection of an honourable and useful life, and enjoy the praise which all agree to give you.'

'Praise,' said the sage, with a sigh, 'is to an

old man an empty sound. I have neither mother to be delighted with the reputation of her son, nor wife to partake the honours of her husband. I have outlived my friends and my rivals. Nothing is now of much importance; for I cannot extend my interest beyond myself. Youth is delighted with applause, because it is considered as the earnest of some future good, and because the prospect of life is far extended: but to me, who am now declining to decrepitude, there is little to be feared from the malevolence of men, and yet less to be hoped from their affection or esteem. Something they may yet take away, but they can give me nothing. Riches would now be useless, and high employment would be pain. My retrospect of life recals to my view many opportunities of good neglected, much time squandered upon trifles, and more lost in idleness and vacancy. I leave many great designs unattempted, and many great attempts unfinished. My mind is burdened with no heavy crime, and therefore I compose myself to tranquillity; endeavour to abstract my thoughts from hopes and cares, which, though reason knows them to be vain, still try to keep their old possession of the heart; expect, with serene humility, that hour which nature cannot long delay, and hope to possess, in a better state, that happiness which here I could not find, and that virtue which here I have not attained.'

He arose and went away, leaving his audience not much elated with the hope of long life. The prince consoled himself with remarking, that it was not reasonable to be disappointed by this account; for age had never been considered as the season of felicity, and, if it was possible to be easy in decline and weakness, it was likely that the days of vigour and alacrity might be happy: that the noon of life might be bright, if the evening could be calm.

The princess suspected that age was querulous

and malignant, and delighted to repress the expectations of those who had newly entered the world. She had seen the possessors of estates look with envy on their heirs, and known many who enjoyed pleasure no longer than they could confine it to themselves.

Pekuah conjectured that the man was older than he appeared, and was willing to impute his complaints to delirious dejection; or else supposed that he had been unfortunate, and was therefore discontented: 'For nothing,' said she, 'is more common than to call our own condition the condition of life.'

Imlac, who had no desire to see them depressed, smiled at the comforts which they could so readily procure to themselves; and remembered, that at the same age he was equally confident of unmingled prosperity, and equally fertile of consolatory expedients. He forbore to force upon them unwelcome knowledge, which time itself would too soon impress. The princess and her lady retired; the madness of the astronomer hung upon their minds; and they desired Imlac to enter upon his office, and delay next morning the rising of the sun.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Princess and Pekuah visit the Astronomer.

THE princess and Pekuah, having talked in private of Imlac's astronomer, thought his character at once so amiable and so strange, that they could not be satisfied without a nearer knowledge; and Imlac was requested to find the means of bringing them together.

This was somewhat difficult; the philosopher

had never received any visits from women, though he lived in a city that had in it many Europeans, who followed the manners of their own countries, and many from other parts of the world, that lived there with European liberty. The ladies would not be refused, and several schemes were proposed for the accomplishment of their design. It was proposed to introduce them as strangers in distress, to whom the sage was always accessible; but, after some deliberation, it appeared, that by this artifice, no acquaintance could be formed, for their conversation would be short, and they could not decently importune him often. 'This,' said Rasselas, 'is true: but I have yet a stronger objection against the misrepresentation of your state. I have always considered it as treason against the great republic of human nature, to make any man's virtues the means of deceiving him, whether on great or little occasions. All imposture weakens confidence, and chills benevolence. When the sage finds that you are not what you seemed, he will feel the resentment natural to a man who, conscious of great abilities, discovers that he has been tricked by understandings meaner than his own, and, perhaps, the distrust which he can never afterwards wholly lay aside may stop the voice of counsel, and close the hand of charity; and where will you find the power of restoring his benefactions to mankind, or his peace to himself?'

To this no reply was attempted, and Imlac began to hope that their curiosity would subside; but, next day, Pekuah told him, she had now found an honest pretence for a visit to the astronomer, for she would solicit permission to continue under him the studies in which she had been initiated by the Arab, and the princess might go with her, either as a fellow-student, or because a woman could not decently come alone. 'I am afraid,' said Imlac, 'that he will soon be weary of your

company; men advanced far in knowledge do not love to repeat the elements of their art; and I am not certain that even of the elements, as he will deliver them connected with inferences and mingled with reflections, you are a very capable auditress.'—'That,' said Pekuah, 'must be my care: I ask of you only to take me thither. My knowledge is, perhaps, more than you imagine it; and by concurring always with his opinions, I shall make him think it greater than it is.'

The astronomer, in pursuance of this resolution, was told that a foreign lady, travelling in search of knowledge, had heard of his reputation, and was desirous to become his scholar. The uncommonness of the proposal raised at once his surprise and curiosity, and when, after a short deliberation, he consented to admit her, he could not stay without impatience till the next day.

The ladies dressed themselves magnificently, and were attended by Imlac to the astronomer, who was pleased to see himself approached with respect by persons of so splendid an appearance. In the exchange of the first civilities, he was timorous and bashful; but when the talk became regular, he recollected his powers, and justified the character which Imlac had given. Inquiring of Pekuah what could have turned her inclination towards astronomy, he received from her a history of her adventure at the pyramid, and of the time passed in the Arab's island. She told her tale with ease and elegance, and her conversation took possession of his heart. The discourse was then turned to astronomy: Pekuah displayed what she knew: he looked upon her as a prodigy of genius, and entreated her not to desist from a study which she had so happily begun.

They came again and again, and were every time more welcome than before. The sage endeavoured to amuse them, that they might prolong their visits, for he found his thoughts grow brighter

in their company; the clouds of solicitude vanished by degrees, as he forced himself to entertain them, and he grieved when he was left, at their departure, to his old employment of regulating the seasons.

The princess and her favourite had now watched his lips for several months, and could not catch a single word from which they could judge whether he continued, or not, in the opinion of his preternatural commission. They often contrived to bring him to an open declaration; but he easily eluded all their attacks, and, on which side soever they pressed him, escaped from them to some other topic.

As their familiarity increased, they invited him often to the house of Imlac, where they distinguished him by extraordinary respect. He began gradually to delight in sublunary pleasures. He came early, and departed late; laboured to recommend himself by assiduity and compliance, excited their curiosity after new arts, that they might still want his assistance; and when they made any excursion of pleasure or inquiry, entreated to attend them.

By long experience of his integrity and wisdom, the prince and his sister were convinced that he might be trusted without danger: and, lest he should draw any false hopes from the civilities which he received, discovered to him their condition, with the motives of their journey, and required his opinion on the choice of life.

'Of the various conditions which the world spreads before you, which you shall prefer,' said the sage, 'I am not able to instruct you. I can only tell that I have chosen wrong. I have passed my time in study without experience: in the attainment of sciences which can, for the most part, be but remotely useful to mankind. I have purchased knowledge at the expense of all the common comforts of life: I have missed the endearing

elegance of female friendship, and the happy commerce of domestic tenderness. If I have obtained any prerogatives above other students, they have been accompanied with fear, disquiet, and scrupulosity; but even of these prerogatives, whatever they were, I have, since my thoughts have been diversified by more intercourse with the world, begun to question the reality. When I have been for a few days lost in pleasing dissipation, I am always tempted to think that my inquiries have ended in error, and that I have suffered much, and suffered it in vain.'

Imlac was delighted to find that the sage's understanding was breaking through its mists, and resolved to detain him from the planets till he should forget his task of ruling them, and reason should recover its original influence.

From this time the astronomer was received into familiar friendship, and partook of all their projects and pleasures: his respect kept him attentive, and the activity of Rasselas did not leave much time unengaged. Something was always to be done: the day was spent in making observations, which furnished talk for the evening, and the evening was closed with a scheme for the morrow.

The sage confessed to Imlac, that since he had mingled in the gay tumults of life, and divided his hours by a succession of amusements, he found the conviction of his authority over the skies fade gradually from his mind, and began to trust less to an opinion which he never could prove to others, and which he now found subject to variation, from causes in which reason had no part. 'If I am accidentally left alone for a few hours,' said he, 'my inveterate persuasion rushes upon my soul, and my thoughts are chained down by some irresistible violence; but they are soon disentangled by the prince's conversation, and instantaneously released at the entrance of Pekuah. I am like a man habitually afraid of spectres, who is set at

ease by a lamp, and wonders at the dread which harassed him in the dark, yet, if his lamp be extinguished, feels again the terrors which he knows that when it is light he shall feel no more. But I am sometimes afraid, lest I indulge my quiet by criminal negligence, and voluntarily forget the great charge with which I am intrusted. If I favour myself in a known error, or am determined by my own ease in a doubtful question of this importance, how dreadful is my crime!'

'No disease of the imagination,' answered Imlac, 'is so difficult of cure, as that which is complicated with the dread of guilt; fancy and conscience then act interchangeably upon us, and so often shift their places, that the illusions of one are not distinguished from the dictates of the other. If fancy presents images not moral or religious, the mind drives them away when they give it pain; but when melancholy notions take the form of duty, they lay hold on the faculties without opposition, because we are afraid to exclude or banish them. For this reason the superstitious are often melancholy, and the melancholy almost always superstitious.

'But do not let the suggestions of timidity overpower your better reason: the danger of neglect can be but as the probability of the obligation, which, when you consider it with freedom, you find very little, and that little growing every day less. Open your heart to the influence of the light, which, from time to time, breaks in upon you: when scruples importune you, which you in your lucid moments know to be vain, do not stand to parley, but fly to business, or to Pekuah; and keep this thought always prevalent, that you are only one atom of the mass of humanity, and have neither such virtue nor vice as that you should be singled out for supernatural favours or afflictions.'

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Prince enters and brings a new Topic.

'ALL this,' said the astronomer, 'I have often thought; but my reason has been so long subjugated by an uncontrollable and overwhelming idea, that it durst not confide in its own decisions. I now see how fatally I betrayed my quiet, by suffering chimeras to prey upon me in secret; but melancholy shrinks from communication, and I never found a man before to whom I could impart my troubles, though I had been certain of relief. I rejoice to find my own sentiments confirmed by yours, who are not easily deceived, and can have no motive or purpose to deceive. I hope that time and variety will dissipate the gloom that has so long surrounded me, and the latter part of my days will be spent in peace.'

'Your learning and virtue,' said Imlac, 'may justly give you hopes.'

Rasselas then entered, with the princess and Pekuah, and inquired whether they had contrived any new diversion for the next day. 'Such,' said Nekayah, 'is the state of life, that none are happy but by the anticipation of change: the change itself is nothing; when we have made it, the next wish is to change again. The world is not yet exhausted; let me see something to-morrow which I never saw before.'

'Variety,' said Rasselas, 'is so necessary to content, that even the happy valley disgusted me by the recurrence of its luxuries; yet I could not forbear to reproach myself with impatience, when I saw the monks of St. Anthony support, without complaint, a life, not of uniform delight, but uniform hardship.'

'Those men,' answered Imlac, 'are less wretched

in their silent convent than the Abissinian princes in their prison of pleasure. Whatever is done by the monks is incited by an adequate and reasonable motive. Their labour supplies them with necessaries; it therefore cannot be omitted, and is certainly rewarded. Their devotion prepares them for another state, and reminds them of its approach, while it fits them for it. Their time is regularly distributed; one duty succeeds another; so that they are not left open to the distraction of unguided choice, nor lost in the shades of listless inactivity. There is a certain task to be performed at an appropriated hour; and their toils are cheerful, because they consider them as acts of piety, by which they are always advancing towards endless felicity.'

'Do you think,' said Nekayah, 'that the monastic rule is a more holy and less imperfect state than any other? May not he equally hope for future happiness who converses openly with mankind, who succours the distressed by his charity, instructs the ignorant by his learning, and contributes by his industry to the general system of life; even though he should omit some of the mortifications which are practised in the cloister, and allow himself such harmless delights, as his condition may place within his reach?'

'This,' said Imlac, 'is a question which has long divided the wise, and perplexed the good. I am afraid to decide on either part. He that lives well in the world is better than he that lives well in a monastery. But, perhaps, every one is not able to stem the temptations of public life; and, if he cannot conquer, he may properly retreat. Some have little power to do good, and have likewise little strength to resist evil. Many are weary of their conflicts with adversity, and are willing to eject those passions which have long busied them in vain. And many are dismissed by age and diseases from the more laborious duties of society. In mo-

nasteries the weak and timorous may be happily sheltered, the weary may repose, and the penitent may meditate. Those retreats of prayer and contemplation have something so congenial to the mind of man, that, perhaps, there is scarcely one that does not purpose to close his life in pious abstraction, with a few associates serious as himself.'

'Such,' said Pekuah, 'has often been my wish; and I have heard the princess declare, that she should not willingly die in a crowd.'

'The liberty of using harmless pleasures,' proceeded Imlac, 'will not be disputed; but it is still to be examined what pleasures are harmless. The evil of any pleasure that Nekayah can image is not in the act itself, but in its consequences. Pleasure, in itself harmless, may become mischievous, by endearing to us a state which we know to be transient and probatory, and withdrawing our thoughts from that, of which every hour brings us nearer to the beginning, and of which no length of time will bring us to the end. Mortification is not virtuous in itself, nor has any other use, but that it disengages us from the allurements of sense. In the state of future perfection, to which we all aspire, there will be pleasure without danger, and security without restraint.'

The princess was silent, and Rasselas, turning to the astronomer, asked him whether he could not delay her retreat, by showing her something which she had not seen before.

'Your curiosity,' said the sage, 'has been so general, and your pursuit of knowledge so vigorous, that novelties are not now very easily to be found: but what you can no longer procure from the living may be given by the dead. Among the wonders of this country are the catacombs, or the ancient repositories, in which the bodies of the earliest generations were lodged, and where, by the virtue of the gums which embalmed them, they yet remain without corruption.'

'I know not,' said Rasselas, 'what pleasure the sight of the catacombs can afford; but, since nothing else is offered, I am resolved to view them, and shall place this with many other things which I have done, because I would do something.'

They hired a guard of horsemen, and the next day visited the catacombs. When they were about to descend into the sepulchral caves, 'Pekuah,' said the princess, 'we are now again invading the habitations of the dead; I know that you will stay behind; let me find you safe when I return.'— 'No, I will not be left,' answered Pekuah: 'I will go down between you and the prince.'

They then all descended, and roved with wonder through the labyrinth of subterraneous passages, where the bodies were laid in rows on either side.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Imlac discourses on the Nature of the Soul.

'WHAT reason,' said the prince, 'can be given, why the Egyptians should thus expensively preserve those carcasses which some nations consume with fire, others lay to mingle with the earth, and all agree to remove from their sight as soon as decent rites can be performed?'

'The original of ancient customs,' said Imlac, 'is commonly unknown; for the practice often continues when the cause has ceased: and concerning superstitious ceremonies, it is vain to conjecture; for what reason did not dictate, reason cannot explain. I have long believed that the practice of embalming arose only from tenderness to the remains of relations or friends; and to this

opinion I am more inclined, because it seems impossible that this care should have been general; had all the dead been embalmed, their repositories must in time have been more spacious than the dwellings of the living. I suppose only the rich or honourable were secured from corruption, and the rest left to the course of nature.

'But it is commonly supposed that the Egyptians believed the soul to live as long as the body continued undissolved, and therefore tried this method of eluding death.'

'Could the wise Egyptians,' said Nekayah, 'think so grossly of the soul? If the soul could once survive its separation, what could it afterwards receive or suffer from the body?'

'The Egyptians would doubtless think erroneously,' said the astronomer, 'in the darkness of heathenism, and the first dawn of philosophy. The nature of the soul is still disputed, amidst all our opportunities of clearer knowledge: some yet say, that it may be material, who, nevertheless, believe it to be immortal.'

'Some,' answered Imlac, 'have indeed said that the soul is material, but I can scarcely believe that any man has thought it, who knew how to think; for all the conclusions of reason enforce the immateriality of mind, and all the notices of sense and investigations of science concur to prove the unconsciousness of matter.

'It was never supposed that cogitation is inherent in matter, or that every particle is a thinking being. Yet if any part of matter be devoid of thought, what part can we suppose to think? Matter can differ from matter only in form, density, bulk, motion, and direction of motion. To which of these, however varied or combined, can consciousness be annexed? To be round or square, to be solid or fluid, to be great or little, to be moved slowly or swiftly, one way or another, are modes of material existence, all equally alien from the

nature of cogitation. If matter be once without thought, it can only be made to think by some new modification; but all the modifications which it can admit are equally unconnected with cogitative powers.'

'But the materialists,' said the astronomer, 'urge that matter may have qualities with which we are unacquainted.'

'He who will determine,' returned Imlac, 'against that which he knows, because there may be something which he knows not; he that can set hypothetical possibility against acknowledged certainty, is not to be admitted among reasonable beings. All that we know of matter is, that matter is inert, senseless, and lifeless; and if this conviction cannot be opposed but by referring us to something that we know not, we have all the evidence that human intellect can admit. If that which is known may be overruled by that which is unknown, no being, not omniscient, can arrive at certainty.'

'Yet let us not,' said the astronomer, 'too arrogantly limit the Creator's power.'

'It is no limitation of Omnipotence,' replied the poet, 'to suppose that one thing is not consistent with another, that the same proposition cannot be at once true and false, that the same number cannot be even and odd, that cogitation cannot be conferred on that which is created incapable of cogitation.'

'I know not,' said Nekayah, 'any great use of this question. Does that immateriality, which, in my opinion, you have sufficiently proved, necessarily include eternal duration?'

'Of immateriality,' said Imlac, 'our ideas are negative, and therefore obscure. Immateriality seems to imply a natural power of perpetual duration as a consequence of exemption from all causes of decay: whatever perishes is destroyed by the solution of its contexture, and separation of its parts; nor can we conceive how that which has no

parts, and therefore admits no solution, can be naturally corrupted or impaired.'

'I know not,' said Rasselas, 'how to conceive any thing without extension: what is extended must have parts, and you allow that whatever has parts may be destroyed.'

'Consider your own conceptions,' replied Imlac, 'and the difficulty will be less. You will find substance without extension. An ideal form is no less real than material bulk; yet an ideal form has no extension. It is no less certain, when you think on a pyramid, that your mind possesses the idea of a pyramid, than that the pyramid itself is standing. What space does the idea of a pyramid occupy more than the idea of a grain of corn? or how can either idea suffer laceration? As is the effect, such is the cause; as thought, such is the power that thinks, a power impassive and indiscerptible.'

'But the Being,' said Nekayah, 'whom I fear to name, the Being which made the soul, can destroy it.'

'He surely can destroy it,' answered Imlac, 'since, however unperishable, it receives from a superior nature its power of duration. That it will not perish by any inherent cause of decay, or principle of corruption, may be shown by philosophy; but philosophy can tell no more. That it will not be annihilated by Him that made it, we must humbly learn from higher authority.'

The whole assembly stood a while silent, and collected. 'Let us return,' said Rasselas, 'from this scene of mortality. How gloomy would be these mansions of the dead to him who did not know that he should never die; that what now acts shall continue its agency, and what now thinks shall think on for ever. Those that lie here stretched before us, the wise and the powerful of ancient times, warn us to remember the shortness of our present state: they were, perhaps, snatched away

while they were busy, like us, in the *choice of life.*'

'To me,' said the princess, 'the choice of life is become less important; I hope hereafter to think only on the choice of eternity.'

They then hastened out of the caverns, and, under the protection of their guard, returned to Cairo.

CHAPTER XLIX.

The Conclusion, in which Nothing is concluded.

IT was now the time of the inundation of the Nile: a few days after their visit to the catacombs the river began to rise.

They were confined to their house. The whole region being under water, gave them no invitation to any excursions; and being well supplied with materials for talk, they diverted themselves with comparisons of the different forms of life which they had observed, and with various schemes of happiness which each of them had formed.

Pekuah was never so much charmed with any place as the convent of St. Anthony, where the Arab restored her to the princess, and wished only to fill it with pious maidens, and to be made prioress of the order: she was weary of expectation and disgust, and would gladly be fixed in some unvariable state.

The princess thought, that, of all sublunary things, knowledge was the best. She desired first to learn all sciences, and then proposed to found a college of learned women, in which she would preside, that, by conversing with the old, and educating the young, she might divide her time be-

tween the acquisition and communication of wisdom, and raise up for the next age models of prudence and patterns of piety.

The prince desired a little kingdom, in which he might administer justice in his own person, and see all the parts of government with his own eyes; but he could never fix the limits of his dominion, and was always adding to the number of his subjects.

Imlac and the astronomer were contented to be driven along the stream of life, without directing their course to any particular port.

Of these wishes that they had formed, they well knew that none could be obtained. They deliberated a while what was to be done, and resolved, when the inundation should cease, to return to Abissinia.

END OF RASSELAS.

DINARBAS;

A TALE:

BEING

A CONTINUATION

OF

RASSELAS,

PRINCE OF ABISSINIA.

DINARBAS.

CHAPTER I.

Reflections on the Return to the happy Valley.

THE inundation having subsided, the prince and princess, with their companions, left Cairo, and proceeded on the way to Abissinia. The journey was long and tedious, and their reflections on their return were by no means satisfactory.

'Are we then,' said Rasselas, 'no wiser than when we set out; or have we only learned, that all inquiries after happiness are vain, and that a state of mere vegetation is the highest degree of felicity which mortals are permitted to obtain in this world?'

'We have, at least,' answered the princess, 'acquired sufficient knowledge to instruct those whom we formerly left behind, and whom we are now going to rejoin: we may convince them, by our experience, of the fallacy of human enjoyments; we may guard them against the delusive powers of imagination, and teach them to be contented with that state which, by our example, they will find preferable to the several occupations of life.'

'Not only this,' said Pekuah, 'but we shall add to their amusements the relation of the various

scenes we have met with on our travels: our conversation will be sought for, because we can instruct and entertain; and while we renew our past pleasure by relating them, sheltered from the storms of life, the memory of the dangers we have escaped, and the hardships we have undergone, will give a higher relish to our state of security.'

'How we may be received by the inhabitants of the happy valley,' replied the prince, 'or how we may be entertained by our own reflections, is to me uncertain. I wish we may not be more discontented with the valley than we were while unacquainted with other scenes: wandering has often given a momentary desire of settled residence; but activity is natural to man; and he who has once tasted the joys of liberty and action will no more be contented with perpetual rest and seclusion, than he who may have wished for sleep in a moment of lassitude would desire to remain inactive on his couch after the light of the sun has awakened him from oblivion and repose. I am, however, neither displeased with our past attempts, nor hopeless for our future success; as we advance in years the fire of imagination will cool, and the agitation of restlessness subside: we have laid up a stock of knowledge which will teach us to distinguish real merit from false pretension. Reason, whom we have already perceived from afar, advances towards us as youth recedes; and I doubt not but, by taking her for our guide, we shall enjoy that serenity, calmness, and justness of perception, which are alone worthy of a thinking being.'

'Far be it from me, sir,' said Imlac, 'to anticipate your disappointment, or to increase your alarms; yet permit me to tell you, that eminent knowledge, if not accompanied with singular indulgence to others, often serves to render its possessors miserable, and even ridiculous: your experience and your studies have placed you in a class of beings

very different from the inhabitants of the happy valley, whom you can only treat with condescension or with contempt. Society cannot subsist without equality; and while you are considered as a prince, and as a man of superior intelligence, you may command admiration, but you cannot insure affection.'

'Alas,' said the astronomer, 'if reason is a blessing, it has the same fate as patience; we never invoke it till we have been fatigued with the rapturous wanderings of imagination, and exhausted by the exquisite feelings of sensibility; we then apply to reason as a refuge from care: it convinces without persuading, it instructs without improving us: reason should regulate, but a warmer motive must inspire our actions: devotion and benevolence, the two noblest incitements to virtue, are emanations of the heart, not reflections of the head; reason may come to their support, but has not the merit of creating them. Our condition in this world is too distant from perfection to give us hopes of enjoying any one advantage in the supreme degree: for the experience of age we must resign the gaiety of youth; we must sacrifice heroism to prudence, genius to correctness, and rapture to tranquillity: these are called the victories of reason, but I confess I rather attribute them to the influence of time. The wise man, in resignation to the decrees of Providence, repines not at the loss of the advantages of youth, and rejoices in the consolations granted to old age; but we know of none, either wise or foolish, who would voluntarily relinquish those pleasures which are peculiar to the spring and summer of his days, to anticipate the hour when he must in vain look back on what he has neglected to enjoy.'

CHAPTER II.

The Prince is no longer left to his own Choice.

RASSELAS, notwithstanding his doubts, was resolved to continue his journey: he reached the confines of Abissinia without accident, where, as he was discoursing with his sister on what methods they should take to excuse their absence when they arrived at the happy valley, their caravan was stopped by several horsemen of the king's troops, headed by a youth of animated countenance and courteous manners. 'Strangers,' said he, 'you are perhaps ignorant of the orders we have received. The Egyptians have lately committed hostilities on the Abissinian territories, and we cannot permit any of that nation to pass our boundaries: tell me, therefore, what is your country, and what the motive of your travels?'

'Sir,' replied the prince, 'we are travellers from curiosity, and our native country is Abissinia: you may, therefore, suffer us freely to enter into the dominions of your powerful monarch; and, if you please, we will remain under your guard till we have obtained from the court permission to continue our journey: we are not unknown there, and I have no doubt but our request will be speedily granted.'

The young warrior, well pleased with the answer of Rasselas, conducted him and his companions to a fortress on the banks of the river that separates Abissinia from Egypt.

The governor of this fortress, whose name was Amalphis, was a man of lofty stature and majestic presence; his hair was white as silver, his eyes were piercing as the mid-day sun, and several scars imprinted on his venerable countenance were the honourable testimonies of his service. He received

the prince and ladies with urbanity; and, with a look of penetrative inquiry, demanded the motive of their journey. His son Dinarbas, the young warrior who had conducted them to the fort, repeated what Rasselas had told him. 'The motive of curiosity,' replied Amalphis, 'though laudable, is so uncommon in this country, that we cannot, without injustice to ourselves and detriment to our emperor's service, permit you to proceed on your journey till the return of your messenger from the capital: in the mean time, we expect you to give an account of your names, families, and peregrination.'

The prince, not choosing to declare his name and quality, left to Imlac the care of answering the questions of the governor. The poet, without departing from truth, concealed as much as prudence required. He told Amalphis that he was Imlac, the merchant who had resided some time at Cairo in the occupations of commerce; that he had been accompanied thither by this young man and his sister, who were Abissinians of rank, and had a desire to see the world, and make choice of the state of life most conducive to happiness; that, finding equal disappointment in all, they were now resolved to return to their former dwelling, and pass the remainder of their lives in study and contemplation.

'As for myself,' said the astronomer, 'I will freely confess that I am by birth an Egyptian and an inhabitant of Cairo; but my life has been spent in the pursuits of knowledge and in the labyrinths of science: whoever has assisted me in my endeavours, has been my countryman: the world is my school, and its inhabitants my fellow-students: my disquisitions tend not towards the welfare or ruin of any particular state: if my studies could be of any utility, I would not confine their influence to one spot of the habitable globe. If truth and wisdom are emanations of the Divine Spirit, surely

their benefits ought to be generally distributed amongst our fellow-creatures. Whatever regard I have for my own country, my way of life has made me consider myself as a citizen of the universe, or, rather, I have considered only my studies; and my mind, busied with intellectual enjoyments, has been equally uninterested in the shock of great empires and the petty pursuits of domestic life. I have lately known blessings of which I was before ignorant—the charms of society and the consolations of friendship. Deprive me not of these, O governor! permit me to remain with persons who honour me with their confidence, and console me with their benevolence; and be assured, that I have neither the power nor the inclination to change any thing in the fate of empires.'

Amalphis was willing to believe the ingenuous declaration of the astronomer. Imlac and the prince seemed mysterious; but their train being neither sufficiently numerous to announce open force, nor small enough to give the suspicion of hidden treachery, he desired Imlac to despatch his messenger; and, in the mean time, assigned the company an apartment in his castle, where he treated them with the respect due to their appearance, and often questioned them on their travels, the different incidents of which they willingly related.

'I am amazed,' said Amalphis, 'how you should have ever imagined that happiness depended on any particular station in life. Providence, indeed, has permitted to a very few the choice of the path which they are to take in this world: the lower class of citizens are generally debarred by poverty from following the dictates of their inclination, and the great are still more irresistibly restrained by the prejudice of custom: those few who have it in their power to choose are too often guided by their passions. It remains, therefore, equally for him who has been compelled into any state of life by the will of others, and for him who has been so

by the force of his own imagination, to do his duty with firmness and resignation, whatever may be his disgust or repentance. There is no profession in which a man may not be virtuous and respected; the fault lies not in the state of life, it depends on the manner of acting. A man who is discontented with his employment, and for that reason neglects his duties, shows both want of sense and want of courage: if he acts up to the part allotted him, at least he fills some character in life: if he abandons it because it is contrary to his inclination, he either does nothing or goes out of his sphere; his existence is therefore useless. On the other hand, the priest who repines at consecrating his days to meditation or pastoral instruction, who wishes for the active life of a soldier, and is fired with enthusiasm when he hears the trumpet sound to arms, has more merit than his companions if he only feels these sentiments internally, and employs the energy that Heaven has given him to conquer his repugnance, and to be more active in his functions. The soldier who would have wished to pass his days in literary ease and philosophical disquisition, yet, far from neglecting his duty to his king and country, makes his studies serve to the perfection of the art of war, is a greater hero than he whom the desire alone of military fame drives headlong to the field. Similar examples may be found in any condition; and he alone is wretched and contemptible who will not act at least with decency, if not with distinction, the part assigned him on this great theatre. Courage, though a virtue peculiarly essential to our profession, is necessary in all: it teaches us equally to act with glory, and to suffer with patience; it inspires us with firmness towards men, and resignation towards God.'

CHAPTER III.

The Prince embraces a new State of Life.

IT was expected that some time might elapse before the return of the messenger despatched to the court of Abissinia; and, in the mean while, the prince told Imlac that he had an inclination to propose to the governor making an expedition with his son.

'I have always,' said he, 'felt a desire for the military life; my passion for glory was roused in the happy valley by the theory of the art of war, which the most skilful masters were ordered to instil into us, from the possibility that we may one day be obliged to act as commanders of a great army. I have often wished to put these lessons in practise; and surely any employment would be preferable to the state of inactivity in which we are doomed to remain till the return of our messenger.'

'Sir,' answered Imlac, 'if you persist in this intention, I will accompany you with pleasure; a camp is no unfavourable study for a poet: but let me first warn you of one thing, which has probably escaped your reflection; you are accustomed to command, and totally unacquainted with the subordination of a military life; constraint and obedience are equally unknown to you; and yet you will be obliged to execute every order of Dinarbas like the meanest of his soldiers.'

'I know not,' replied the prince, 'whether such a life would be agreeable to me for a long duration; but one campaign cannot exhaust my patience: all evils, of which we may calculate the term, are at least to be endured; and why should not I contentedly submit to a life which so many rejoice in?'

'As for me, sir,' said the astronomer, 'you will

forgive me if I do not accompany you; my age requires tranquillity, and my country forbids me to bear arms against her: I will stay with the princess and Pekuah.'

Nekayah entered in the midst of this conversation: she was far from approving the prince's intentions; she dreaded being left among persons to whom she was unknown. She represented to her brother, that a son of the emperor was not to hazard his life like the meanest of his subjects, and that slaves were made to defend their master.

'Sister,' said the prince, 'I blush to hear a reasoning so contrary to the principles of duty and humanity. Who is to defend the father, if not the son? And what right have princes to expect the assistance of their subjects, if they will not join in bearing a part of the toil? What obligations can the governor of this fortress and his son have to my father, in comparison with those I owe him? Indeed, to speak frankly, I see not why my life is more precious than that of Amalphis: he has served the emperor during several years; his loss would be felt on these frontiers: the enemy might gain ground, and the peace of Abissinia be endangered; his death would introduce despair into his now happy family; his son would be left at the most dangerous period of life without the counsels of a wise and prudent father; his daughter, in the bloom of youth and beauty, would remain friendless and unprotected. Where would be the fatal consequences of my fall? The importance of those who fill exalted stations is often imaginary, and what appears great in the eyes of the possessor, is perhaps totally indifferent to others. I would have thee divest thyself, Nekayah, of every prejudice of this nature, and seriously consider that no man is really important but as he is useful to his country.'

The arrival of Dinarbas put an end to this discourse; he learned and applauded the resolution

of Rasselas, and offered him his friendship, with all the warmth natural to his age and profession.

Rasselas had another motive for his departure besides those he had mentioned to Imlac and the princess. Zilia, the daughter of Amalphis, appeared to him entirely different from the women he had known in the happy valley, or during his travels: the first were slaves, the others lost the power in the attempt to please. Zilia seemed unconscious of her charms; her mind was cultivated by her father with assiduous care; her sentiments, naturally liberal, had received from education the dignity of superior virtue: she neither avoided nor sought the conversation of the strangers; yet all were interested by her.

Rasselas, however, though he had acquired much philosophy by his reading and observation, still retained the idea that women, if not beings of an inferior class, were, at least, not worthy of gaining too great an ascendancy over the minds of men: he knew his own sensibility, and feared lest he should become the slave of a passion, which he despised as trivial, or censured as romantic; he therefore hoped a short absence would obliterate the impression which he began to perceive Zilia had made on him, and seriously resolved to drive from his mind all thoughts of her till his return. Time, which, while considered as future, always promises happiness and wisdom, would, he doubted not, destroy the power of this enchantment: he therefore hastened the departure of Dinarbas; and they sallied forth, at the head of fifty horse, to make an incursion on the enemy's frontiers.

CHAPTER IV.

Rasselas acquires a Friend.

AFTER an absence of a few weeks, Rasselas and Dinarbas returned triumphant with the spoils of many conquered enemies: their friendship had been cemented by mutual testimonies of valour and of kindness; and the prince was surprised to see how much this expedition had raised him in the esteem of Amalphis, his son, and Zilia.

'You are now,' said the old warrior, 'our friend and fellow-soldier; you have proved your fidelity to your king and country, and we need not fear to treat you with that confidence with which your ingenuous and open manner at first inspired us.'

Imlac, whom the prince had not permitted to accompany him, that he might remain with Nekayah, could not forbear remarking the new esteem which Rasselas had acquired with the inhabitants of the fortress.

'Prince,' said he, 'how necessary is general knowledge to a man of your exalted station! Of what avail had been in this citadel your literature and philosophy, if your activity and courage had not added to these endowments the honours of military service? He who is useful will always be respected. In the moments of repose and tranquillity, we are pleased with the man who can instruct or amuse us; but, in the hour of distress and danger, we neglect him if he cannot be essentially useful.'

Nekayah complained much to her brother of the time in which he had been absent. She was weary, she said, of seeing every day the same faces, and hearing the same discourses: the conversation of Amalphis was indeed instructive and entertaining, but he was great part of the day engrossed by his

duty: and Zilia, though kind and gentle in her manners, did not treat her with that respect which the distance between them might naturally have inspired her with. 'Can you blame,' replied the prince, 'the daughter of Amalphis, for denying respect to that rank which you industriously conceal, and of which she can have no idea? You hide from others, but cannot yourself forget, that you are a princess; lose this idea for a moment, and you will find in the society of Zilia the same pleasure which I feel in that of her brother. I am delighted with the familiarity of Dinarbas: he believes himself my equal, and I am flattered with having, for the first time in my life, excited disinterested regard; which I suppose granted either to the qualities implanted in me by nature, or to those which I may have acquired by my own industry. I am pleased with the vivacity of his temper and the energy of his mind: I am resolved to make another expedition with him, and endeavour to confirm the good opinion he has conceived of me.'

Notwithstanding the wise resolutions of Rasselas, he found in the conversation and manners of Zilia an irresistible charm: he began now to condemn his former opinions as unjust and illiberal. 'What greater happiness,' said he to himself, 'could I experience than in passing my life with a being endowed with such perfection, and who feels so little her own superiority! But shall I have the power of choosing for myself? Am I not doomed to be for ever the victim of state and prejudice; and shall I disturb the heavenly serenity of Zilia, by seeking to inspire her with sentiments which can only render her as miserable as myself?'

Dinarbas found the prince absorbed in meditation. 'My friend,' said he, 'I am grieved to see you pensive and unhappy: were it in our power to restore you to liberty, you should not languish in

confinement; yet how often shall I regret the moments we have passed together! with what difficulty shall I tear myself from Nekayah! You think me not sufficiently deserving of your confidence to disclose to me the secret of your birth, and of the rank you held in Abissinia: I have reason to believe it elevated, both from your sentiments, from those of Nekayah, and from the respect with which you are treated by your fellow-travellers. You may perhaps be offended at my frankness, when I tell you it would have been more fortunate for me if I had never known your sister: with the gentlest manners, and the most engaging urbanity, she has sometimes a haughtiness that would lessen considerably any other woman in my esteem, and yet she possesses the power of making me instantaneously forget the distance which she had seemed to prescribe me, whenever the natural sweetness of her temper breaks through the constraint which she imposes on herself and others.'

'Dinarbas!' interrupted the prince, 'in the name of our friendship let us drop this subject: if thou couldst see into my heart, thou wouldst find me unhappy as thyself——let us depart with the next dawn, and attack the enemies of our country.'

CHAPTER V.

The Fortress besieged.

WHILE the two friends were engaged in this conversation, Amalphis having received intelligence that a large body of Egyptians and Arabs was advancing to assault the fortress, commanded his son to delay his intended expedition till he could be

certain of the truth of this information. In the mean time he took every necessary precaution to prevent the enemy from finding him unprepared; he doubled the guard on the walls, went round every night to see that all was in order, and assigned to every soldier the post he was to defend.

The princess could not, without some uneasiness, behold these preparatives for war, and Pekuah was greatly alarmed. The prince comforted them by assurances of security, of which, however, he was perhaps no more persuaded than they; yet his consolations, given with an air of confidence, had the desired effect, and the ladies accustomed themselves to the expectation of a siege, with as little concern as if they had never apprehended it. During this interval of uncertainty, the prince was neither able, nor indeed desirous, to avoid the company of Zilia; but he soon found her greatly altered; her anxieties returned, and she could not consider the danger to which Amalphis was soon to be exposed without the greatest uneasiness. In vain did she endeavour to assume her usual gaiety in her father's presence: in the midst of a lively conversation she would often burst into tears; and every night, when she bade adieu to Amalphis and her brother, she embraced them with an impression of sorrow in her countenance, which she vainly endeavoured to conceal.

Rasselas was deeply affected with the grief of Zilia; he could not refrain from telling her he had observed it, nor avoid expressing the pain it gave him: she received his consolations with sensibility, and treated him with more consideration than ever.

The princess was less pleased with the conduct of Dinarbas: since the day of his conversation with Rasselas he had sought to disengage himself from the pleasure he found in listening to her, he studiously avoided Nekayah, and discoursed only with Pekuah. The favourite thoughtlessly encou-

raged his advances, and the pride of Nekayah was mortified: she found every day less delight in the company of her dear Pekuah; she took every opportunity of separating herself from one whose absence had formerly made her resolve to abandon the world, and without whom she had considered existence as a torment; yet would she often reproach herself for this change of sentiments. Pekuah had still the same tender respect, the same attachment for the princess, which had been the greatest happiness of her life: Nekayah could only accuse her of passing too much time with Dinarbas, and she had herself found too great a pleasure in his company to condemn another for seeking it. She felt that jealousy was the motive of her new and extraordinary dislike; her pride and her principles equally combated this passion; she was surprised to find it possible that she could be susceptible of it, and was ashamed to listen to the voice that internally accused her.

While her mind was in this agitation, she one morning observed a great dust arising in the east: a general tumult in the fortress soon convinced her that she had not been the only person who had remarked it. 'The army of the Egyptians is advancing to attack us,' said Dinarbas, who at that instant entered her apartment; 'yet be not alarmed, Nekayah! you are here in safety; and did you know our hearts, you would be convinced that we would either defend you or perish: our numbers are not contemptible, and our courage has been often tried: the enemy's troops are numerous, but ours are better disciplined, and my father is no young soldier.'

'Dinarbas,' answered the princess, 'I thank you for your care; I have not the resolution of a warrior, but I am resigned: the first appearance of danger naturally alarms the mind of woman; but give me time for reflection, and I am prepared for all——your duty is to repulse the enemy, ours to

pray for your success, and to await the event with patience.'

Dinarbas hastened to his post, and the princess remained on a sofa in silent and anxious expectation. She had not been long in this situation before she was joined by Pekuah, who, throwing herself at the feet of her mistress, embraced her knees with a flood of tears: 'Dear lady,' said she, 'this is the most cruel moment of my life: when I was taken by the Arabs I consoled myself with the reflection that you did not share my misfortunes: alas! I am now doomed to see the princess of Abissinia in the power of lawless robbers, and the sacred person of the prince exposed to their savage fury——what fatal stars conducted us to this fortress?'

'Pekuah,' answered the princess calmly, 'a few days since you seemed to consider this fortress as the habitation of your choice; joy animated your eyes and inspired your tongue; all your sentiments, even your attachment to me, seemed absorbed in the delights of society; and I have reason to believe that your present fears arise more from the danger of losing that society, than from the perils to which the prince or myself may be exposed.'

'Beloved mistress!' replied Pekuah, 'if you withdraw your favour from your slave, she can only bow her head beneath your displeasure, and sink into her original state of insignificancy. But wherein can Nekayah accuse me of forgetting that respectful tenderness which alone possesses my heart? I am not conscious of any change of manners, or how that vivacity, which formerly used to meet your approbation in our discourses with Imlac and the astronomer, can have displeased you in this fortress; where, from the want of variety of objects, you allowed it was necessary to snatch every occasional amusement, and avail ourselves of every trivial matter that could excite it.'

'But why,' resumed the princess, a little softened, 'would you spend so much of your time with the son of Amalphis? Though your understanding and your virtue place you above the malignity of slander, why should you peculiarly choose the conversation of this young warrior in preference to the sage discourse of his father, or the lively and instructive converse of Imlac and the astronomer?'

'I know not, lady,' answered Pekuah, 'that I have held more discourse with Dinarbas than with the other inhabitants of the fortress; but if you command it, I will henceforward avoid his company, nor shall I consider it as a sacrifice to my obedience: indeed,' added she, smiling, 'if Nekayah will allow me to proceed without being offended at her servant, I will confess to her, that I find not in the society of Dinarbas those charms which so warmly affect the prince and Imlac: in the midst of the most interesting conversation his thoughts often wander from the subject, and his eyes are turned on Nekayah. I am fully conscious of the infinite attractions of my princess, and I cannot sometimes avoid pitying the youth for having nourished aspiring sentiments, of the vanity of which he is perhaps unconscious, and which yet his respect endeavours to stifle: but surely no woman can entirely conquer the pride inherent in our sex, nor likes to be the senseless idol that is crowned with flowers, while the vows and incense are offered to the divinity.'

The princess felt the truth of her favourite's discourse, and, at the same instant, found all her affection for her revive; but great were the accusations with which she loaded herself: she regretted her blindness, and at the same time upbraided her own heart for the pleasure which the discovery of Pekuah had given her: she anxiously prayed for the return of the messenger, that she might depart, and, if possible, lose the memory of all that had interested her in the castle.

CHAPTER VI.

The Princess meets with a real Misfortune.

NEKAYAH had never before found herself in so uneasy a situation: her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she knew not what answer to make to Pekuah, when they were suddenly interrupted by the arrival of Zilia, who, wild with grief, entered the apartment, and uttering a heart-piercing shriek, sunk lifeless on the ground. Pekuah ran hastily to her assistance, but Nekayah was unable to move; she raised her eyes to heaven, and remained in motionless horror; she dreaded to learn the cause of Zilia's affliction; a thousand confused images took possession of her mind, and the idea of Rasselas and Dinarbas rushed at once on her imagination.

The assistance of Pekuah soon recovered the unhappy Zilia. 'Nekayah!' cried she, 'I have cruel tidings to relate; but your misfortune is less than mine: your brother remains a prisoner among the Egyptians, but Dinarbas has scarcely a moment to live—even now perhaps he expires, and I have lost the only poor consolation of receiving his last breath—I saw him covered with wounds, and in a state of insensibility—his valour and that of your brother have saved the fortress, but they are victims to our safety—the enemy has retired with great loss.——Yet why should I repine?——Gracious Heaven!' continued she, falling on her knees, 'thou art merciful: my father lives, though he lives to misery—his laurels cost him the life of his beloved son, and he has no comfort left but the wretched Zilia—let me haste to find him, and by my tender cares endeavour to calm the sorrow that overwhelms him——I forget——he commands me to

remain here, and will not suffer me to be witness of the mournful scene.'

At this moment Imlac appeared, and confirmed the dreadful truth: he conjured Nekayah to take comfort, but she remained the image of despair, and returned no answer either to him or Pekuah; at length, casting her eyes on Zilia, she embraced her, and shed a torrent of tears.

She seemed now a little relieved, and listened with attention to the narrative of Imlac, who told her, that Amalphis had received with determined valour the assault of the enemy, many of whom had scaled the walls and entered the fortress; but that after a severe conflict they fled, and were pursued by Dinarbas and Rasselas at the head of their horsemen: that when they came to the plain beneath the castle, the enemy turned and renewed the combat with desperate fury; that the two young warriors fought with distinguished courage, till Dinarbas, pierced with wounds, fell lifeless from his horse, and was carried from the field by his soldiers, who fled with him to the fortress; and Rasselas, engaged in the midst of the enemy's troops, was at the same instant surrounded and taken prisoner. 'You have much cause for comfort, lady,' continued Imlac; 'your brother's life is in safety, the Egyptians are not a cruel nation, and it is not probable they will treat injuriously a prisoner of war.'

'I thank Heaven,' returned the princess, 'for having protected the life of my brother; but can I enjoy comfort while he remains a prisoner, and while I behold the affliction of Zilia and her father? Let us seek the good Amalphis, nor leave him longer alone, a prey to his sorrows.'

CHAPTER VII.

The Love of Dissipation not incorrigible.

WHILE grief had thus taken possession of the victors, the routed forces of the Egyptians retired tumultuously towards the confines of their kingdom. Rasselas had too much fortitude and philosophy to be dejected or surprised at what he knew to be the common chance of war: he rejoiced at the retreat of the enemy, and submitted with patience to his fate, though he regretted that he could not share the honours of the conquerors: he had been too active in the engagement to perceive the fall of Dinarbas, but he feared some ill accident might have attended him, as he knew not otherwise how to account for losing sight of him, and for the desertion of the troops. He was strictly secured in the midst of four horsemen, during the time of their march, and at night placed in a tent, surrounded by a strong guard. As soon as the army arrived in Lower Egypt he enjoyed greater liberty, and was permitted to converse with the officers, amongst whom he recognised several of the young men with whom he had been intimate at his first arrival at Cairo. They received him with joy, for they had equally forgotten the abrupt manner in which he had quitted their society, and the good admonitions he had left with them. Rasselas was displeased at meeting them. 'What shall I do,' said he to himself, 'in a society of which I have proved the inconveniences and have felt the disgust? If I could not bear the noisy mirth and thoughtless vivacity of my young companions, at my first entering into the various scenes of life; how shall I support the fatigue of their company when every day has increased my disapprobation of their conduct, and convinced me of the insufficiency of their amusements?'

In consequence of these reflections, he thanked them coolly for their civilities, and avoided any farther intercourse with them: but the mind oppressed with cares, and accustomed to communicate its inquietudes, requires the usual relief: he found, not without humiliation, that some society was necessary, and that trifling as their conversation formerly appeared to him, he was compelled frequently to fly to it, as to a refuge from his own thoughts. He began to discern, in the midst of frantic gaiety and remorseless dissipation, sparks of honour, sincerity, and good-nature, that were not to be stifled by the influence of passion: he pitied and esteemed the possessors of these virtues; and, having found by experience that severe rebuke and the air of superior prudence produced an effect contrary to his wishes, he took gentler and more successful means. By applauding their ardour, he taught them to distinguish courage from temerity, a sense of honour and the pride of virtue from revenge and vanity, generosity from prodigality, and friendship from blind affection: he learned, by studying their various dispositions and characters, that of the number whom he had considered as generally depraved, few were incapable of being reclaimed; and that he had judged too severely of the rest from the faults of their companions. He found that the same admonitions which they had rejected with derision when given with the severity of a preceptor, they received with avidity when offered with the familiar kindness of a friend: by commending them for whatever he discovered praiseworthy in their conduct, and by joining in such of their pleasures as were innocent, he acquired the right of censuring their faults, and refusing to imitate their irregularities: their minds, unaccustomed to occupation, could with difficulty be brought to serious studies; but the love of novelty first engaged them to listen to Rasselas, when he proposed any improvement that had the appearance

of pleasure; and the natural empire of calm and rational amusements made them at last adopt from conviction what they had at first taken up through caprice. Even those who had before seemed incorrigible gave way, either to the force of reason or to the prevalence of example, and either insensibly joined in the reformation, or complied with what they saw the greater number approve.

Rasselas could not, without a mixture of pleasure and regret, behold this change, which he would never have had the patience to effectuate, if he had not been compelled to it by his situation. 'Why did I not, while at Cairo,' thought he, 'use the same methods, and obtain the same success? I fear I must consider myself as guilty of the irregularities of my companions during the space of time which has passed since we parted. He who would wish to reform his fellow-creatures must study attentively the human heart; he must treat with tenderness the man whom weakness, not perverseness, has caused to deviate from the path of virtue; he must fortify by degrees his returning energy, nor dazzle at once the eyes of error with all the splendour of severe truth; he must show her to him first under the form of compassion, of benevolence, of indulgence: innocence alone can bear the light of her unveiled majesty; repentance would sink into despair without the balm of mercy.—No, henceforward let me avoid the pride of reproof and the frown of disapprobation: let me endeavour to instruct by example, and persuade by kindness.'

CHAPTER VIII.

Apology for Rusticity.

WHEREVER the army passed, the prince observed that great cordiality subsisted between the soldiers and the inhabitants of the country: the former received presents of the fruits of the earth, and of the milk of the flocks, which made the only riches of their rural friends. Rasselas was surprised to find great acuteness and penetration in many of these shepherds, who gave useful instructions to the soldiers for the remainder of their march, and amused them with pastoral sports, while they received them with frankness and hospitality. 'How different do I find you,' said Rasselas to one of the old shepherds, 'from the race who tend their flocks near the cataracts of the Nile! I visited these in hopes to find amongst them that gentleness and those harmless virtues which all ages and all nations have agreed to attribute to the pastoral life. My disappointment was great; they were discontented with their own situation, envious of the rich, rude and untaught in the arts of general utility, and not more uninstructed in the politeness of courts than in the common duties of hospitality. I find, on the contrary, amongst you, many who convince me that the poets have written after nature; and I am delighted to perceive, that the tranquil happiness of a pastoral life, though not universal, is not wholly banished from the earth.'

'Sir,' replied the shepherd, 'I have in my youth passed some time in the fruitful pastures which you mention, and either the warmth of fancy, not uncommon to our nation, particularly in the spring of life, has deceived me, or the shepherds who inhabit that happy climate are endowed with the same penetration, and exercise the same hospita-

lity as you find amongst us: nay, I have thought that they possessed these qualities in a higher degree: the purity of the air, the beautiful verdure of the fields, the infinite variety of birds that inhabit the groves on the borders of the father of waters; all these images of the power and goodness of the Deity must expand their hearts, and purify them from the dross of those vile passions which you describe. But, sir, the peasant feels, and therefore may justly groan under the pressure of the tyranny of the great: your appearance persuades me that your rank is above the class of mediocrity; they have been accustomed to look on such persons as their tyrants, by whom they are never to be visited, but when they are to contribute to enrich them by the fruits of their labours, or perhaps to amuse a moment of caprice or listlessness, by exciting in them sentiments of ridicule. What ideas can these have in common with the rich? If you would know their opinions and manners, you must divest yourself of the superiority which your rank has given you, and live like them. I will not promise you that such intercourse will make you amends for the sacrifice: I will only say, and your present observations may confirm it, that the poetical descriptions of pastoral life, though perhaps embellished, are not wholly fabulous; and that were you obliged to descend to our humble station, you would find our candour and simplicity not unworthy of your regard. The soldier, who respects our property, deserves our affection, and we let him reap the fruits of his moderation and of our gratitude. We envy not his riches: if he has any, they are acquired by greater hardships than we are accustomed to, and without him we could not possess our fields in tranquillity. Blame us not, therefore, for our rudeness towards the mighty; it is perhaps our greatest virtue: every subject of despotism is equally a slave; but it is difficult for him who spends the greatest part

of his time under the ample canopy of heaven, who sees all around him free except himself and his fellow-creature man, who feels no immediate benefit from the princes of the earth, and only knows his dependence on them by their temporary oppressions; it is difficult for that being not to consider the great and the rich as his enemies: it is still more difficult for him to disguise that feeling: neither can he conceive the necessity of feigning. It is no mark of illiberal sentiment to neglect those above us: we see and confess the wants of this army, we supply them with what we possess, and should be cruel if we denied them: the connexion which their necessity has made them form with us engages us to live familiarly together; we communicate to them our ideas, and receive information from them: our obligations are reciprocal, and our desire to please mutual; but where none of these motives subsist, how can you judge of the essential character of any individual, or of any class of people?'

CHAPTER IX.

Rasselas in Confinement.

THE army now arrived in a spacious plain, surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills, where, finding excellent pasturage, plentiful springs of water, and a large forest to screen them from the heats of the sun, they formed a regular camp, distributed rewards and punishments, and passed several days in feasts and dissipation. The Arabs, who had accompanied the Egyptians in their unsuccessful expedition, finding that they loitered away much time in a state of inaction, became weary of expectation,

and unanimously agreed to leave their allies and return to their ancient desultory mode of fighting; but before they departed, they demanded a division of the spoils and prisoners. The Egyptians being unable to refuse, after they had employed ineffectually all means of soothing them to remain among them, found themselves at last obliged not only to give up their best captives, but to enrich the Arabs with the most precious of their acquisitions; they murmured, but they complied. Such is the advantage of the strong and active over the weak and indolent.

Rasselas, in the division of prisoners, fell to the share of the commander of the Arabs, and was esteemed a valuable prize, on account of his youth, his commanding figure, and his skill in various languages; but it was not convenient for the chief to carry him immediately to Cairo, the great mart for captives, as he would have been embarrassed with him on his march; he therefore placed him with two slaves of approved fidelity, in a strong tower on the summit of an almost inaccessible mountain, and promised to return for him the next month. The slaves by turns descended into the valley to seek provisions for themselves and Rasselas, but in compliance with what their master had exacted in proof of their fidelity, for some time never exchanged a word with their prisoner.

Rasselas, notwithstanding his former philosophy, daily lost all temper in his present situation: during his journey thither, and after his arrival, he had shown so great an impatience of control, and so much desire of forcing his guard, that he was kept with uncommon strictness. However disagreeable and humiliating might be the fate which he expected after the return of the Arab, he anxiously counted the days allotted for his confinement: solitude appeared to him the worst of evils, and at the expiration of the month he looked over the country for the arrival of the Arab with an eager

expectation, equal to that with which he would have waited for the return of a friend. From the rising to the setting sun, he passed the day at the window of his prison, and would scarcely leave it to take his accustomed food: for several days following he remained in the same state of anxiety; his mind seemed absorbed in one idea, and could find no resources in itself. He endeavoured to substitute the thoughts of the past for those of the future: it was impossible—sleep fled from him by night, and repose by day: he interrogated the slaves, and received no answer. At last, as they perceived his agitation to be violent, and feared it would endanger his health, they told him their master often came much later than he had designed, since his return depended on the success of his arms; that he might possibly be several months absent, but that in the mean time he himself should experience no other inconveniency than that of confinement.

CHAPTER X.

The Resources of Solitude.

THE prince, far from being comforted by the answer of the slaves, was overwhelmed with affliction: he sunk hopeless on his mat, the only furniture of his prison, and gave himself up to all the melancholy of his reflections. 'I am now,' said he, 'arrived at the evil I have always dreaded, and which it has been my constant study to avoid. Why did I take such pains to quit the happy valley, but to emerge from a state of oblivion and inactivity? Why have I endeavoured all my life to

improve in virtue and knowledge, but with the hopes of advancing the good of others and my own glory? To whom now can I communicate my thoughts? From whom can I gain applause or receive information? If the Arab should fall a sacrifice to his avidity, than which nothing is more probable, who will be acquainted with my retreat? Shall I not be condemned to wear out my days in dreadful solitude, without any being to alleviate my woes? The guards who are placed to watch me are not only unwilling but incapable of affording me consolation: I have not the resource of conversing with the learned of former ages, since not a volume is to be found within these walls: the power of writing is denied me: I can gain no alleviation of my misery by setting down my thoughts and arranging them with reflection. How poor is man when divested of external succour!'

Nor were these the only reflections of Rasselas: he was anxious for what might be the fate of Nekayah: he recalled to mind, with the most bitter regret, the happy moments he had passed in listening to the eloquence of Imlac, and the science of the astronomer: he often feared that Dinarbas had fallen a victim to his courage, and perhaps to his friendship for him. The image of Zilia was eternally present to him; every situation in which he had found himself with her, every smile, every tear, was fresh in his imagination: he often repeated the conversations he had held with her; and though the remembrance gave him inexpressible pain, he feared the images should decay, and strove to imprint them more strongly on his memory, lest he should lose the only satisfaction that was left him. What gave him the greatest uneasiness, was the fear of being forgotten; and though he felt the improbability that his friends should discover the place of his retreat, his heart would sometimes accuse them of neglect.

In this state of weariness and affliction, Rasselas

passed near a fortnight; but at length he began insensibly to accustom himself to his situation, and to find amusement from the great objects of nature which alone presented themselves to his view. An awful tempest, exhibiting the most noble contrast of light and darkness, first attracted his attention, and for a few moments made him forget his cares: he therefore pursued this new resource, and watched the various changes of the sky, with their effects on the chain of mountains that surrounded him. A clear moonlight, which adorned the hemisphere some evenings after, gave him the first sentiment of pleasure which he had experienced since his captivity: he described his sensations in a small poem which he composed and addressed to Zilia: the pains he took to repeat and retain it in his memory employed the rest of the evening, and he slept that night better than he had done since his imprisonment. The following day he composed a description of the tempest, addressed to Imlac, and resolved, on the first occasion that the absence of the moon should restore brilliancy to the stars, to dedicate an ode on that subject to the astronomer. At night, as soon as the lunar rays entered his chamber, he flew with rapture to the window, as to a situation that recalled to him more forcibly the image of Zilia: he made some changes in the poem addressed to her the former evening, added some descriptions of the prospect in his view, and retired to rest with more than usual tranquillity.

Nekayah was not forgotten in these ideal compositions; and from the time of his finding this employment, he was less wearied with expectation, and consequently more content with his present situation. He no longer spent hours at the window, looking towards the only accessible side of the mountain; nor listened to the noise of the wind, in hopes it might be the trampling of horses. He felt applause in his own mind for this new-acquired patience, as for a victory gained over

himself; and the exultation of conscious merit gave new strength to his resolutions.

CHAPTER XI.

Resignation.

RASSELAS was not only resigned to his fate, but began to be persuaded that his confinement was rather a good than an evil. 'How unthinking and how ungrateful is man!' said he: 'how could I prefer the thoughts of slavery and degradation to the life I am now leading! It is true that I am deprived of the amusements of variety, and debarred from the reciprocal communications of friendship; but am equally saved from the mortifications so frequent in society, and from the malice of hatred and envy. If I am incapacitated from doing good, I am at least prevented from committing ill. It is true I am here useless to my friends; but I have the satisfaction of reflecting, that it was in their defence, and in the service of my country, that I lost my liberty. Nekayah has sense and resolution; she can neither want friends to assist her with advice, nor prudence to follow their counsels. Imlac and the astronomer pursued their path in life long before they knew me: Dinarbas either perished nobly in the battle, or is engaged in the career of glory. Zilia could never have been mine with honour to herself, and obedience to my father: I am saved from the pain of seeing her in the arms of another, or of destroying all the happiness of her life. Providence has certainly enclosed me here as a shelter from guilt, and I receive the benefit with gratitude.

'The hermit whom we visited in his retreat, and accompanied back to Cairo, was not contented with a voluntary retirement; and yet I have accustomed myself to forced seclusion, even without many of the advantages which he enjoyed. Whence arises so strange a difference? Perhaps, while the mind has a power of wandering, it can never sink into repose: perhaps, while choice is allowed us, inconstancy will attend our desires. How merciful is Heaven, in allotting to man the part he is to act in this world! Did it depend wholly on himself, caprice would direct his actions, and remorse would follow them. Resignation should be the favourite study of the wise, and the principal virtue of the brave.

'How can a man think himself alone, while surrounded with the noblest works of his Creator? while the planets, the stars, and that great luminary whose genial influence dispenses light and heat to the vast universe, afford a constant field for meditation and thankfulness? How can he consider himself as friendless and unprotected, when the hand of God equally supports the captive in his wretched dungeon, and the conqueror at the head of his triumphant army; when a moment may change the fate of either, as his will directs; and when all their efforts, without his immediate assistance, can neither alter nor continue their present situation? Uncertain as I am which is the most preferable of the various conditions of life, I am yet persuaded, that if there is much disappointment, there is likewise much comfort to be found in all. I will therefore form no other prayer to the Divinity, than to keep me from crime and error, and teach me to be wholly governed by his will. Would it not be presumption in a blind man to pretend to choose his path? All that he can do is to endeavour, as far as his strength will permit, to walk upright in that which is appointed him by his guide. And are we not all morally blind?

What have the greatest sages discovered, but that they knew nothing? And shall we not yield ourselves, without reserve, to the direction of that Divine Leader, who not only allots for us the path it is most fit we should pursue, but supports and consoles us amid the dangers and difficulties that surround it?'

CHAPTER XII.

Nekayah instructed by Misfortune.

DURING the confinement of Rasselas, various events happened in the fortress where he had left Nekayah.

Attended by Imlac, Nekayah went to the apartment of Amalphis: she found him seated on a sofa, writing; she was astonished at his tranquillity, and advancing, inquired, with trembling anxiety, after Dinarbas.

'Lady,' returned the venerable warrior, 'my son is no more; he has fallen nobly in the exercise of his duty: and while the funeral honours, that justly belong to the young hero, are preparing, I take this moment to inform the emperor of the success of his arms.' 'Is such, then,' replied Nekayah, 'the effect of philosophy, courage, or resignation? Can they divest you of the feelings of nature, or teach you to support with patience a loss under which the wisest have despaired, and the bravest have sunk?' 'Lady,' said Amalphis, 'neither philosophy nor reason could reconcile me to the death of my son: they who would cure grief by declamation, or stifle sentiment by reason, know little of the heart of man. The more I think, the more I

am persuaded of the virtues of Dinarbas: the more I reflect, the more must I regret his loss. My hopes are over in this world, and happiness is for ever banished from me: all that now remains is to do my duty for the poor remnant of my life, and then sink into tranquillity, or rise to glory. Grief does not always show itself by tears and exclamations: if there is any power in philosophy, it consists in preventing us from giving exterior proofs of our affliction, but it cannot cure the wound inflicted on the heart: employment and activity may, perhaps, have a greater effect, but not in sufferings like mine. The only reflection that saves me on the very brink of the precipice of despair is resignation to the will of Heaven; and the only motives that can make me outwardly conquer my affliction are my duty to my sovereign, and my love to Zilia. These,' added Amalphis, with a look of unutterable sorrow, 'make me bear life, nor trouble others with my complaints; but the anguish remains in my breast, and time or reflection will only serve to increase it.'

The princess retired, abashed, and penetrated with the most poignant grief: she threw herself on her couch, and commanded all her attendants, except Pekuah, to withdraw. 'How can I ever forgive myself,' said she, 'my dear Pekuah, for considering Amalphis as insensible? Is not his the only true philosophy? He is miserable; yet he will support his own character, and do his duty to others: his affliction will prey on his health, and perhaps he will fall a victim to that sentiment of which I supposed him incapable! And what am I?—how have I treated the hero whom I shall never cease to lament! Pride, where art thou now? Did I not, from the first moment of my conversing with Dinarbas, find in him all the noble fire of heroism, without vanity or rashness? all the liveliness of wit, and all the depth of knowledge, without ill-nature and without pedantry? Was not my first

care to please and interest him? and when I perceived with joy the impression I had made, did I not assume the air of haughty superiority, and of mortifying indifference? And why?—because he treated me with peculiar respect: because he wore my chains, I made them still more heavy, and used every art to render them lasting. If he had not honoured me with a regard of which I was unworthy, should I not anxiously have sought delight from his eloquence, and instruction from his knowledge? Should I not have been struck with awe and admiration at his virtue?——O power, how dangerous art thou to all! how little to be trusted in the hands of woman! Forgive me, Dinarbas! my whole remaining life, a life of remorse, shall expiate my fault——.'

As Nekayah uttered these words, Zilia entered the apartment: she was dressed in a long mourning-robe, her face was veiled, and she was attended by her women, habited in the same manner.

'Nekayah,' said she, 'I am going to pay the last sad duties to the remains of my brother: the funeral procession advances towards the final habitation of the brave—wilt thou not join me in this melancholy moment? If the dead are conscious of what passes on earth, the spirit of Dinarbas will rejoice in thy respect to his memory; for he loved thee, O Nekayah! and if thy brother was here, he would pay with tears this homage to his friend—— he would join me in my grief——.' Nekayah had not power to answer. She made a sign that they should bring her a mourning habit; covered herself with a thick veil, and, without pronouncing a word, followed the steps of Zilia.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Funeral of Dinarbas.

THE body of Dinarbas, clothed in a rich robe, was carried on a bier, decorated with branches of palm and laurel, by six of the chosen warriors whom he had commanded, while the rest followed, leading their horses, all marching with their arms reversed, to the sound of mournful harmony, with unfeigned affliction in their countenance. Next to them walked Amalphis, followed by Zilia, Nekayah, and their attendants; the procession being closed by the remainder of the garrison. Dinarbas had gained the affection of all, and by all he was regretted.

When they arrived at the place of burial, which was a small valley on the banks of the river, the soldiers set down the bier; and the garrison being formed into ranks, on one side headed by Amalphis, while on the other stood the female mourners, a venerable priest advanced, and, according to the custom of Abissinia, placing himself near the body, pronounced the following oration:

'Grieve not, O ye soldiers, companions of the hero whose obsequies we are met to celebrate: your lamentations cannot recal him to life. Weep not, ye lovely mourners; Dinarbas cannot be restored by your tears. Attend to the praise of his actions, and imitate his virtues, all ye who regret his loss: behold the fate of youth, of genius, of valour! Employ the fleeting hours; and let your life, like his, be glorious, and your death, like his, triumphant.

'Few have been thy years, Dinarbas! but well hast thou employed them. The burning sands of Libya, the stony precipices of Arabia, the fertile plains of Egypt, have been witnesses of thy glorious deeds: conquest sat on thy sword, and hu-

manity beamed from thy eyes. Unwearied by fatigue and hardship, uncorrupted by the charms of victory, thy mind was active as the northern breeze, and thy heart pure as the stream that flows before thee: fierce as the whirlwind in the day of battle, mild as the zephyr in the hour of friendship, thou knewest all the arts of war, and all the ornaments of peace! Merciful to thy vanquished enemies, unshaken in thy resolves, courteous in thy manners, firm and ardent in the cause of honour and of thy country, thou leavest us to lament thy loss, and follow thy example!' Yet who shall imitate thee, O Dinarbas? where shall we find the warmth of youth united to the experience of age? where shall we see, but in thy comprehensive mind, the knowledge of the sage who has passed his days in meditation, and that of the soldier whose years have flowed through the busy scenes of active life? Warriors! like him fly the seductions of dissipation. Dinarbas, in the bloom of youth, endowed with all the warmth of fancy, was superior to their enticements: his greatest conquests were over his own passions: he subdued them, or, like vanquished enemies, made them subservient to his great designs, and directed them with despotic sway in the cause of virtue and honour. Superior to every obstacle, when he had by his last action ensured his glory and our freedom, he fell in the arms of victory, and expired amidst the acclamations of a grateful people. Strew his bier with flowers, O ye virgins of Abissinia! he has saved you from slavery and dishonour: throw palms and laurels around him, O ye warriors! he led you to conquest, and he has left you the fruits of his triumph. And thou, Amalphis! by whom he was inspired with heroic ardour and godlike virtue; thou whose precepts and whose example he has so well obeyed and imitated, father of our hero, and father of thy troops! may the great exploits, may the exalted virtues of Dinarbas compensate to thee the shortness of the

term which Heaven has granted him! and may these, thy other children, emulate equally the valour and the filial affection of their beloved warrior!'

Amalphis could no longer refrain from tears; they trickled in abundance down his venerable cheeks: the chiefs of the army ran to embrace his knees, and the soldiers, whom respect detained from approaching, filled the air with exclamations of grief for Dinarbas, and vows of fidelity to his father.

Zilia and Nekayah remained motionless in silent sorrow: the priest made signs for them to advance, and cast flowers on the bier. They approached with trembling knees, and uncertain steps: the tender Zilia supported herself, half fainting, on her women; but Nekayah, summoning all her resolution to pay the last tribute to the memory of Dinarbas, walked majestically to the bier, and looking steadfastly on the body, as she scattered roses over it, thought she perceived the breast heave with some remains of life. Dubious and agitated between hope and fear, she approached still nearer, when she saw his eyes open, and again close from the light of day; and soon after a sigh assured her he was yet alive. 'No longer mourn, but assist your hero!' cried Nekayah, wild with joy, and yet trembling with apprehension: 'bring speedy succour, and he may still be preserved to his friends and country: he yet breathes——O haste to save him!'

The rapture and confusion were universal. Amalphis thought that the imagination of Nekayah, affrighted at the mournful solemnity, had flattered her disturbed senses with a momentary delusion: the most skilful physicians, the whole garrison, had pronounced him dead. Amalphis raised his eyes to heaven: 'Defend me, all-gracious Power!' cried the venerable warrior; 'defend me from this

dazzling ray of fallacious hope; save me from falling still deeper into the abyss of misery.'

CHAPTER XIV.

Embarrassment of Nekayah.

BY the care of those around him, Dinarbas was restored to life: he turned his eyes with astonishment on Nekayah, Zilia, and his father. Amalphis could no longer doubt: he poured forth his grateful thanks to Heaven with all the feelings of a father, and ordered his son to be carried back to his apartment in the fortress, where, in a few days, his wounds were proved not to be mortal.

Nekayah was in the mean time greatly embarrassed with her own reflections. She was sensible that as soon as Dinarbas was recovered, he would renew his visits to her: the supposed obligation of her restoring him to life would be a strong claim upon his gratitude, and he could therefore no longer avoid her company, even if he wished it: his distant respect must change into tender acknowledgments, and she could not trust her heart with receiving them. She now wanted counsel, and knew not where to seek it: Rasselas, in whom she had the highest confidence, was absent: Pekuah was too submissively attached to her mistress to have any other opinion than hers: Imlac she suspected of the same complaisance; and the astronomer was too unknowing in the ways of the world to afford her any assistance. Amalphis and Zilia were the last persons to whom she could have applied, even if they had been acquainted with her situation,

which she did not choose to disclose to them. In this perplexity of doubt, her mind often rested on the idea of Dinarbas. 'Did not my sentiments too nearly regard himself,' thought Nekayah, 'how excellent a friend might I have found in him! one in whom my confidence would have been securely placed, and whose judgment and sincerity would have directed me in the paths of honour and of prudence!'

Such were the anxieties of Nekayah, and she soon had reason to perceive they were not groundless.

Dinarbas recovered his health, and his first care was to visit her. Zilia had informed him of the grief which the princess had felt for his loss, and the respect she had paid to his memory. His father had related to him the circumstances of his being restored to life by Nekayah, and the joy that had appeared in her countenance. She had indeed foreseen that all this would happen; but she could not have solicited a concealment of her sentiments without giving a suspicion of their nature.

When she perceived Dinarbas enter the apartment, she endeavoured to hide her agitation, and turned the discourse on the universal joy of the garrison at his recovery, and particularly on the feelings of his father and Zilia: she smilingly mentioned the praises which had been bestowed on him at his funeral, and congratulated the young warrior on the rare advantage of being informed of them: she then changed the subject, talked of her brother, and of the fruitless inquiries made by Amalphis after the Egyptian army. But Dinarbas was not satisfied with the apparent ease with which she spoke of circumstances that, by the account of Zilia, had so deeply affected her.

'Nekayah,' said he, 'do not expect me to thank you for restoring me to life; my death would have been happy: I had done my duty, and my father and fellow-soldiers approved my actions: my sister had shown her regard for my memory: and I am

told, that even Nekayah shed some tears over me. Had I been sensible of so unexpected and so blest an event, I could have desired no more. I am now restored to life, and to your indifference; yet, Nekayah, you are mistaken in Dinarbas, if you suppose him capable of passing the bounds of that respect which he owes you: his conduct might have assured you of his efforts to subdue a passion, of which he is no longer master, and for which you ought rather to pity than to blame him.'

'Dinarbas!' answered the princess, 'I will be sincere with you; I own my fault in not having sooner been so: hear me, and learn the reasons of my conduct; but first let me entreat your promise never, till you see my brother, to disclose the secret with which I am going to intrust you.'

Dinarbas promised all she desired, and Nekayah continued: 'I am daughter to the emperor of Abissinia, and Rasselas is his fourth son: curiosity after new scenes, and disgust of inaction, first induced us to leave the valley; you know the rest:—judge whether I ought to hear you; judge, when I further confess, that I hear you with pleasure.'

Dinarbas was less surprised at the discovery of the rank of Nekayah than delighted with her avowal of an attachment, which he could scarcely have hoped for; he was about to thank her with all the raptures of happy love, when the princess stopped him.

'Dinarbas,' said she, 'the discovery I have made to you is not to authorize your weakness or mine; the confidence I have placed in you proves my opinion of your prudence, and my conviction of your honour. Pleased with the charms of your society, secure in your respect, and conscious of my own principles, I should perhaps have remained a long time in the delightful illusion, without thinking of the uneasiness I was preparing for myself and for you: but I had no right to leave you in error, and your conduct has deserved that I should

explain myself. After this explanation, I fly to you for counsel and support: assist me in clearing the mist which obscures our reason. It is true I consider as a prejudice the difference of our birth; but it is a prejudice established by the universal custom of ages, and consequently ought to be respected by all who regard their fame: virtue is wholly in our own power, but fame depends on the breath of the multitude, and the multitude is governed by prejudice.'

CHAPTER XV.

Dinarbas justifies the Confidence of the Princess.

DINARBAS, astonished and distressed at the discourse of Nekayah, remained for some time silent: at length, recovering himself, 'Princess,' said he, 'I will not ask your pardon for involuntary error: I thank you for the confidence you have reposed in me: you will soon judge whether I deserve it. Only remember, that though we may be masters of our actions, we cannot command our sentiments: mine will never alter; but your sincerity has found the only means of imposing on them an eternal silence.'

Having so said, he left abruptly the apartment. Nekayah arose, went to the window, and raising her eyes to heaven, 'All-seeing Power!' said she, 'support me in this hour of trial; this hour in which Nekayah has resigned all the happiness of her life: I feel the whole weight of the sacrifice; I find I was not deceived in Dinarbas.'

A short time after, Amalphis entered: 'Lady,' said he, 'my son is resolved to seek his friend: the

captivity of your brother will not permit him to continue longer in a repose which he thinks degrading to his honour, and injurious to his friendship. I approve his intention, but not the desire of its immediate execution: his wounds are recent, his health not yet re-established; join your entreaties to mine, and he will perhaps delay for a few days his departure; my counsels, nay, my commands, have been fruitless.' Zilia, who at this instant entered the apartment, made the same request to Nekayah, with tears in her eyes. The princess was more embarrassed than ever, yet could find no reason to refuse so just a prayer: she sent for Dinarbas, and, before his father and Zilia, thanked him for his generous resolution; but requested that he would defer to put it in execution till his health should be perfectly restored.

From this moment, she studiously avoided all occasions of meeting Dinarbas, except in company with Pekuah, Imlac, and the astronomer, whose lively and instructive conversation always found new subjects, and prevented the fatal vacuity which Nekayah dreaded: yet could not all her endeavours stop the increasing ill. The constraint which both the princess and Dinarbas imposed on themselves served only to augment their mutual esteem, and consequently defeated their intentions.

Imlac, without penetrating the cause of an uneasiness which he had long perceived in the princess, imagined the activity of her mind wanted new subjects; and that, fatigued with always seeing the same things, and pursuing the same topics, she was weary of her situation, and of all that surrounded her. He therefore endeavoured to find out some novelty that might fix her attention; and having been himself greatly delighted with the conversation of the priest who had pronounced the funeral oration of Dinarbas, he entreated leave of the princess to introduce him to her. Nekayah gladly accepted the proposal: his discourse on that

memorable day was deeply engraved on her mind, and she had often wished for an opportunity of conversing with him.

Elphenor was surprised at the proposal of Imlac. 'Immersed as I have been for more than forty years,' said he, 'in the studies necessary to my profession, what entertainment can my conversation afford to youth and beauty, gaiety and wit? Your lady will behold in me a man who has given up all connexions in this world, except with those individuals whose miseries lead them to apply to me for assistance. I have been long disused to the society of the fortunate: however, I will neither refuse the solicitations of kindness, nor the request of curiosity: I will accompany you whenever you command me.'

CHAPTER XVI.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Sacerdotal Station.

THE princess, Pekuah, and the astronomer, were waiting with impatience for the arrival of Imlac with the priest. At their entrance, the princess rose, and respectfully saluted Elphenor: he returned her courtesy with a modest, but not servile, humility; and the conversation soon became general. It turned on the happy event which had restored Dinarbas to his friends; and the princess took occasion to bestow the warmest praises on the oration pronounced by Elphenor. 'Lady,' answered he, 'whatever impression my words may have made on the assembly, you are not to attribute it to the powers of eloquence. I will not,

by a false delicacy, deny that I have been sometimes flattered with exciting the applauses of my auditors, and that I have passed days and nights in studying to deserve them; but my late theme was of itself sufficient to interest those who heard me, and the hearts of all the assembly felt more than the most studied discourse could inspire. If they approved of my words, it was because they perceived my feelings were congenial with their own. In courts and in great cities, the flowers of eloquence may be employed, with successful seduction, to persuade the multitude into an admiration of the imaginary virtues and the nugatory exploits of those whom we are commanded to celebrate: the veil of dignity which conceals them from the people, the uncertainty of opinions which disguises them amongst their equals, favour the deception, and hide the falsity of the orator. But in a place like this, where every one had been witness of the life, and could almost dive into the heart of him whom I undertook to propose as a model for their imitation, ornament would have been vain, and deceit useless: besides, I have long since given up the honours of elocution; and all my present aim is, as far as mortal frailty will admit, to pay due homage to truth, and to seize every opportunity of conveying instruction and consolation to those committed to my care.'

'This is the noblest of all aims,' replied the princess, 'and the only one really worthy of the good and the enlightened. Your occupations, venerable Elphenor! are so far above the common pursuits of mankind, that we cannot but consider you in a state infinitely superior to the rest of the inhabitants of this globe. What other profession consecrates itself wholly to the service of the Divinity, and to the comfort of our fellow-creatures?'

'My profession,' answered the sage, 'is certainly deserving of reverence and protection: but where

is the state of life in which a man cannot meditate on the power and goodness of the Deity? in which he cannot assist and instruct other human beings? It is true, we are peculiarly set apart for these duties: but do we always perform them? If we do not, how far more guilty are we than the rest of mortals, who have other employments, other avocations to divert their attention! Sensible of the awful charge committed to our care, how poignant must be our remorse, if we have omitted the means of guiding our disciples, if we have led them astray by false maxims or bad example!'—

Here Elphenor made a short pause, but soon added, with unusual warmth,—'And where is the instructor who has nothing of this kind with which to reproach himself? Yet let me add, whatever may be the faults, whatever the negligence of the members of our order, we are often too severely punished by the strictures of the world: the smallest error in our conduct, the smallest weakness in our nature, is harshly condemned, or cruelly ridiculed by the multitude, whose eyes, ever open to the failings of their fellow creatures, are particularly intent on ours. We often deserve blame, I confess, and mankind has the same right to censure us, as the other inhabitants of the globe; but at least let their censure be equally distributed, and let not a larger share than we deserve fall on our heads. Let them consider, that however our thoughts are raised to heaven, our origin is the same as theirs; that we have the same inclinations, the same passions as themselves: and whether the habits and restraints of the clerical life give us greater means of resisting them or not, is to me uncertain: either, therefore, the whole world is unjust, or our profession has no advantages superior to those of other men.'

'You have at least,' said Imlac, 'the advantage of being and having been in every age, and in every nation, the class of men to whom every one

has applied for counsel, and whom the greater number have obeyed without hesitation. You enjoy the most flattering of all distinctions, that of respect: and you exercise the most powerful of all jurisdictions, for your empire is exercised over the mind: your influence has been equally felt in the great revolutions of kingdoms, and in the management of domestic concerns. While you enjoy these distinguished prerogatives, can you wonder that envy should attack you, or that mankind, naturally impatient of subjection, should take the first opportunity of emancipating itself from that respect, to which it submits with pain, because enjoined as a duty?'

'These very prerogatives,' answered Elphenor, 'are the greatest enemies that we have to fear: dazzled with the specious titles lavished on us by the world, convinced of the real advantages to be reaped from power and influence, pride has taken possession of so many individuals among us, that censure has often called it the distinctive character of our order: and as simplicity and truth have only power to govern rational minds, many of us who have aimed at universal dominion have thought it necessary to employ other means to catch the greater number. We have had recourse to the assistance of pomp and luxury to command the respect of the vain, and have armed ourselves with all the terrors of superstition to subdue the ignorant, the fearful, and the weak. Such have been the errors into which ambition has led us; errors more hurtful to mankind than all the destruction which has followed the sword of the general, or the projects of the statesman.'

CHAPTER XVII.

Danger of Fanaticism.

NEKAYAH, delighted with the candour of Elphenor, told him 'that she was assured he had no reason to reproach himself with the ills mankind had suffered by men of his order; and that she doubted not but many others, though they might not have attained to the height of beneficence and exemplary conduct which distinguished him, yet had, to the best of their knowledge, fulfilled the duty of their station.'

'Indeed, lady,' answered the sage, 'I have known many to whom I have looked up with reverence; many who have subdued their passions with heroism, and who have devoted themselves entirely to their functions. I have seen amongst my brethren some examples of uncommon fortitude, some who in times of that most dreadful scourge of human nature, general pestilence, have steadfastly remained with their disciples to encourage and console them, when universal terror had broken even the ties of blood, and when the fear of death alone reigned with despotic sway. I have known others who, firm in the cause of religion, have sacrificed their life to their belief: but here much distinction is to be made: obstinately attached to his opinion, a man often mistakes hypothesis for truth; and will often go as far in its defence. Every religion has had its martyrs, whose deaths frequently inspire us with less admiration of their constancy than abhorrence of the cruelty of their intolerant persecutors.'

'Sir,' said the astronomer, 'your discourse convinces me not only of your sincerity, but of your judgment: I am therefore persuaded you will for-

give me, if I ask you whether your piety is not often shocked, and your understanding disgusted, at finding yourself obliged by the laws of Abissinia not only to practise, but to enjoin to others, some ceremonies which you cannot approve? Are you not grieved to find, that many of the more enlightened part of your disciples doubt of the most essential truths of our religion, on account of the accessory circumstances invented by man? and to see that the lower class of those committed to your care embrace equally the practices of exalted piety and of senseless fanaticism, while with affecting, though mistaken zeal, they follow blindly every error into which custom compels you to lead them?'

'That I have felt all the sentiments you now describe,' replied Elphenor, 'you will scarcely believe, when you see me pursue the practices which you so justly disapprove; yet nothing is more true. I venerate the unsullied purity of religion, and lament that it should be encompassed with the veil of superstition: but some ceremonies are necessary, and they who have endeavoured to divest it totally of such have found that reverence has been laid aside, and respect forgotten, while fanaticism has taken the same hold of the ignorant, though it has assumed a different form. Error is natural to man: the wayward mind will ever substitute superstition for devotion, and sophistry for philosophy. Where can you see this more exemplified than in the science which you have made your particular study? During how many ages has not the strangest of all errors, judicial astrology, prevailed over the senses of man, while the demonstrations of astronomical truth have been neglected? With respect to those whom you call the more enlightened part of my hearers, who condemn the whole of religion because some accessory circumstances are faulty, they have likewise their incomprehensible tenets and their particular fana-

ticism; and it has been justly remarked, that none is more credulous than the unbeliever.'

'Alas!' rejoined Nekayah, 'who would madly give up the only consolation in the time of affliction, the only refuge for grief, the only calmer of inquietude? Without the aiding power of religion, we should be abandoned to despair—what other means could we find to conquer those sentiments, and subdue those afflictions, which give way only to the prevalence of devotion?'

'It is certain,' answered the sage, 'religion is the universal and the only true consoler; yet I must add, that from this maxim, true as it is, often springs a most fatal error: the mind, weakened by affliction, falls more easily a victim to the baneful influence of fanaticism; and when once it has begun to wander in the gloomy mansions of that destructive phantom, its energy is wholly lost; and it is conducted by its haughty ruler amid the mazes of deception, till it loses not only the hope, but even the desire of returning happiness.

'My situation has often afforded me examples of this truth: and I have been so much convinced of the danger, that, whenever the afflicted apply to me, after I have exhorted them to hope in the beneficence of that Being, who can raise the humble from the dust, calm every discordant passion, and restore peace and tranquillity to the bosom lacerated by disappointed ambition or hopeless love, I always counsel them to avoid meditation, to fly from solitude, as the most pernicious of evils, and seek in employment a refuge from morbid care.

'The greatest of all mental afflictions, the consciousness of guilt, may be lessened by deprecating the wrath of offended Heaven, and by the exercise of active virtue; but to substitute indolent fanaticism for criminal pursuits, is only exchanging one passion for another, and losing those precious

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moments which a merciful Deity has granted for expiatory repentance.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Troubles in Abissinia.

NEKAYAH was struck with the advice of Elphenor, and felt the necessity of exercising the virtues he recommended.

The time now approached which had been fixed for the departure of Dinarbas, and every motive engaged him to hasten it: he selected only a few horsemen to accompany him, that he might not leave the fortress unprovided in case of a second attack; and, to the regret of the whole garrison, set forward on an expedition, of which the success was uncertain.

The first days of his absence were spent by the princess in reflections on her conduct; and these reflections being naturally consolatory, she applauded her firmness, and hoped that returning tranquillity would soon be the reward of the sacrifice which she had made: but after some time passed in these thoughts, which were only interrupted by the usual occurrences of society, she felt every hour increasing weariness. Unwilling to suppose her victory incomplete, she attributed her anxiety and restlessness to the uncertainty of her fate, to the situation of her brother, to a thousand causes, none of which had occurred to her a few days before. One morning, as she was immersed in these contemplations, Pekuah entered, and informed her that the messenger, despatched to the court of Abissinia, was returned, and desired ad-

mittance. The princess was alarmed at this intelligence: for how could she quit the fortress, and return to the happy valley, without her brother?

The messenger, after he had prostrated himself before Nekayah, delivered to her letters directed to the prince, which she received and placed beside her on the sofa: he then, by her command, related, that being arrived at Gonthar, the capital of Abissinia, he had found an universal confusion spread over the city. 'The second and third sons,' said he, 'of your glorious father, Sarza and Menas, have rebelled against him, and the venerable monarch is almost a prisoner in his court: these princes, with whose ambitious characters you are not unacquainted, found means to escape from the happy valley by the same passage which prince Rasselas had made: they have raised a considerable army, and are already masters of the fertile province of Amhara. The emperor, on hearing of their revolt, took arms with celerity, and marched against them, having first obliged his eldest son, Zengis, to accompany him and head the cavalry; but this unfortunate prince being lately killed in a skirmish with some of the insurgents, grief and despair have taken possession of the heart of the emperor, who has returned to his capital, surrounded by his best troops, leaving the rest under the command of his generals in the field.

'When he received the letter of prince Rasselas, he burst into tears, and said—I pardon him for leaving the happy valley, though, had he not divested himself of his obedience to his sovereign and father, Sarza and Menas would never have dared to attempt an escape superior to their courage and to their penetration. Go to Rasselas, command him to come to me immediately, and expiate his fault by the defence of his father: let Nekayah remain where she now is: but recommend to them both a total silence on their rank, as necessary in the present circumstances, lest Rasselas

should be intercepted by his rebellious brothers. My further instructions to him, and the order for the governor of the fortress to set him at liberty, shall be delivered to thee before thy departure. These are the papers, lady, and the commands of our sovereign: I am not surprised at the astonishment which I perceive in your looks: the rebellion of the princes has been sudden, and is conducted with such art as to prevent all communication between the capital and the frontiers: I had the utmost difficulty to escape their guards; but I will not trouble you with a recital of the various disguises I have employed to elude their vigilance.'

CHAPTER XIX.

The same Subject continued.

THE princess felt deeply the affliction of her father, and the misfortunes of the state: she reflected seriously on the share she had in causing them, and lamented her total inability of being useful to the emperor: she found herself destitute of all assistance: Rasselas was absent, and in a situation that made it impossible to estimate the time of his return. Dinarbas was, in compliance with her wishes, departed in search of him; and she was deprived of the present aid of that young warrior, without knowing whether he might succeed in finding the prince: she was equally perplexed to know what directions ought to be given to Amalphis in the present emergency. Pekuah conjured her to open the packet addressed to Rasselas; but she firmly refused. 'My dear Pekuah,' said the princess, 'an action which in itself is blamable can never be justified by the lawfulness of the mo-

tive: to open a letter addressed to another is a breach of confidence, which political reasons may authorize, but which honour and delicacy must ever reject. I know not what orders the emperor may have given to Rasselas: I know his commands to me, and will obey them.'

The princess then ordered the messenger to repair to Amalphis, and inform him of the rebellion, and of every thing that he was permitted to tell; of her intention of remaining with Zilia, to be in safety from the horrors of war; and of the commands imposed on Rasselas by his sovereign, to fly to his assistance.

Amalphis soon received from various persons the same intelligence of the flame which had made such rapid progress in Abissinia. Precautions may be observed, and respected for a short time, by a numerous army; but that will not remain a secret which many are enjoined to keep, and many interested to divulge. Not having received any instructions from the emperor, he was uncertain how to act; for despotic power will not even be served against its commands: he was likewise informed, that a strong body of the enemy's troops had cut off all communication with the capital: the fortress which he commanded could not make a sufficient defence against the army of the princes, if they advanced to attack it; and the Egyptians might invest it during his absence, if he attempted to march to the assistance of the emperor. Duty and prudence both determined him not to abandon his post, but to wait the event with patience.

Every day, however, increased the anxiety of Amalphis, and redoubled the agitation of Nekayah. New reports of the success of the princes, and of the want of conduct of the royal army, succeeded each other; but in the midst of their inquietudes, they had the satisfaction of receiving an embassy, sent by the new Bassa of Cairo, to make excuses to the governor for the hostilities committed by

the Egyptians under the influence of his predecessor. The sultan had no sooner been informed of this unauthorized war than he punished the ambitious Bassa, and appointed another, who was directed to make reparation for the injuries, to restore the prisoners, and chastise the delinquents. The envoy informed Amalphis, that a large body of Turkish horse had been sent to enforce the orders of the sultan against the Egyptians and Arabs, who had so rashly enlisted themselves under the standard of the late Bassa. Amalphis informed him what prisoners had been made in his district, and particularly mentioned Rasselas as having been taken in the sally.

The envoy promised that the most diligent inquiries should be made; and Amalphis, Nekayah, and Zilia, conceived the warmest hopes of the approaching liberty of Rasselas.

CHAPTER XX.

The Prince gives Proof of real Courage.

RASSELAS had been now several months in confinement, and, from comparing in his mind the various conditions of life, and calculating the resources of resignation and philosophy, he had reasoned himself into a state of tranquillity nearly resembling content. The slaves who served him had again relapsed into the obstinate silence which they had been enjoined by their master; but Rasselas at length perceived an uneasiness, and even a terror in their looks, of which he in vain inquired the cause.

One day he was surprised to find that at the usual hour of repast no nourishment was brought

him, and felt great uneasiness when night drew near and no one appeared: he listened, but could not hear the accustomed sound of the voices of the slaves: no light was reflected on the ground from the narrow window of their chamber, which was under his own; he called to them, but received no answer. At length he thought he heard the noise of footsteps: he repeated his call, when the slave, whose companion had not returned that day with the usual provisions from the valley, and who was gone out to seek him, again entered the tower, but being alone would not enter the chamber of Rasselas, lest his prisoner should attempt the recovery of his liberty. The prince passed the night without sleep, and at break of day perceived the slave departing from the tower: in vain did he call to him; the slave only hastened his pace towards the valley. Rasselas composed himself with the idea that he was probably gone to seek provisions, and that the negligence of the other slave, in not returning the day before, had been the cause of his remaining that day without food; but this day, like the former, being spent in vain expectation, the solicitude of the prince was now changed into apprehension of the most horrid of deaths. All was silent and desolate around him; darkness came on without the consoling prospect of rest, and the last dreadful hour of fate seemed to draw near without the hopes of relief or the balm of pity.

Rasselas had faced death with intrepidity in the rage of battle, but its present silent and cold approaches were far different: a greater share of courage was here necessary to subdue, unaided by the voice of glory, the horrors of dissolution, and a more exalted resignation must inspire him, to abandon every tie that can endear existence, without giving the last counsels, and without taking the last farewell.

Yet had the prince fortitude sufficient to resign

himself to the will of Heaven, and to await without impatience the close of this scene of solitary woe.

Sleep, which flies from agitation, may yet naturally follow resignation. Rasselas had passed some time in the calm of oblivion, when an unusual noise awakened him, and he had scarcely time to rise before he saw his chamber door burst open, and several armed Turks enter his apartment: their chief informed him that they were sent for his deliverance, and had orders to conduct him to the fortress commanded by Amalphis.

He told him the resentment of the sultan, and the injunctions he had laid on his troops to make diligent search after the prisoners, and informed him they had discovered his retreat by intercepting the slaves: the first, he said, would not betray his trust; but the second, more fearful or more compassionate, had guided them to the path by which alone the tower was accessible.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Prince returns to the Fortress.

IDEAS long banished from the mind of Rasselas, or considered by him merely as illusions, now returned with new-acquired force: he seemed to endeavour to retrieve in a moment all the time he had lost in solitude; he crowded question on question, but soon had his attention wholly engrossed by the intelligence which the Turks gave him of the rebellion of his brothers.

Grief and remorse took possession of all his faculties, and, without knowing the manner of the escape of the princes, or thinking on the re-

proaches of his father, he already condemned himself for having, though from innocent motives, set them the example of disobedience: he was now more than ever convinced of the evils arising from a capricious love of change, and of the necessity that every man should be content with the station in which he is placed. 'To my own restless disposition,' said Rasselas to himself, 'I owe the humiliation of fruitless inquiry, the disgrace and weariness of imprisonment, the pangs of hopeless love, and the remorse of not only having destroyed the peace of my father and of my country, but of having driven my brothers into the most odious crimes.'

The prince, in consequence of these reflections, entreated the Turks to hasten their march, till with astonishing rapidity they arrived at the fortress commanded by Amalphis: here Rasselas heard a distinct account of the rebellion of his brothers, and received the letter of the emperor from the princess, who anxiously inquired of Rasselas whether he owed his liberty to Dinarbas, relating to him the exertions of friendship in that young warrior. The prince felt all the warmth of gratitude and affection, and bitterly regretted the absence of his generous friend: he then hastily read over the letters that explained to him the present state of his sovereign, who, after having tenderly reproached him for abandoning the happy valley, conjured him to come to his assistance, take the command of the army, and assume the regal power. 'I am too old,' says the emperor, 'to direct the thunderbolts of war, or to hold the balance of justice: come and receive the imperial diadem from the hand of thy father: conquer and punish thy rebellious brothers, whom blind affection might lead me to spare: let Nekayah remain with the brave Amalphis, whose virtues and services have been long known to me, and whom long since I should have promoted to higher employ-

ments, had I not considered his usefulness on the frontiers: his fidelity is approved, yet make him not acquainted with thy rank, or that of thy sister: I do not think he would betray you to Sarza; but it would not be prudent to give him so great a claim to reward, as the known protection of a son and daughter of the emperor of Abissinia.'

This letter made a singular impression on Rasselas: he venerated his father, and was averse to commit a second time the fault of disobedience: yet his humanity was shocked at the idea of depriving his brothers of their right of succession; and he recoiled with horror from the thoughts of their punishment. His generosity was equally disgusted at the diffidence and unthankfulness shown by the emperor towards a man, whose fidelity he confessed, and whose bravery he admired. The prince then perused the imperial mandate, which he was to deliver to Amalphis, wherein the governor was informed that Rasselas and Nekayah were the children of one of the emperor's favourite emirs: that Rasselas was to have permission to repair immediately to court, and that Nekayah was to remain under the protection of the governor.

The prince, having debated an instant in his own mind, now thought himself at liberty to consult his inclinations: all his filial deference for a father could not induce him to imitate his ingratitude; he sought the good old warrior, delivered to him the emperor's mandate, and spoke thus:

'I must depart, Amalphis, and have not words to express my sense of the important services which you have done me: to you I owe, not only protection and support, but instruction and kindness: without you I should have nothing at present to offer to the emperor but rash and unskilful valour, or at best but idle theory without practice. You have taught me the only true philosophy, resignation and patience: I leave you, overwhelmed with obligations, yet I must entreat you to add one more,

and that the greatest which you have in your power to confer: promise to make me happy in the possession of Zilia; let me be assured by your unerring faith, that you will consent she shall be my wife, when the troubles of Abissinia are appeased, and I shall depart contented.'

Amalphis read the emperor's mandate, respectfully kissed the signature, and said, 'My sovereign's orders shall be obeyed—as for your request, sir, I thank you for the honour you are disposed to confer on my family; but, contrary to the custom of our country, I disclaim all right over the choice of Zilia: if she consents, I shall be happy to bestow her on a man whose conduct and principles I have ever esteemed, and whose kindness I am ambitious to preserve: permit me to consult her inclinations; Zilia is sincere, and will soon determine my answer.'

CHAPTER XXII.

The Power of Artifice.

ZILIA was neither unacquainted with the sentiments of Rasselas, nor insensible to them: she had indeed endeavoured to suppress her sensibility, because she could see no reason for the concealment of his rank from her, and none to prevent his demanding her of Amalphis, whom she informed of all that had passed in her mind on this occasion, freely submitting to him what answer should be given to Rasselas.

Amalphis smiled, and, introducing Rasselas, acceded to every hope of their mutual affection, with tears of paternal benediction.

Nekayah took her brother aside, and imparted

to him all her conversations with Dinarbas: he forbore to make remarks on her story; for happiness cannot easily console, and has no right to upbraid disappointment.

After a few moments given to kindness and gratitude, Rasselas quitted the fortress; and, conducted by the messenger, whose precautions for avoiding a discovery were again successful, arrived at Gonthar, the capital of the kingdom of Abissinia. He found the city in a general consternation, though the forces of the princes were still at a considerable distance. The emperor, surrounded by a few aged counsellors, who had never distinguished themselves in their youth, and whose timidity and indolence had increased with their years, was divided between fear and anger: the punishment of the rebel princes was alone the theme of debate, while every measure was taken to guard against their approach.

In the mean time, desertions were frequent in the royal army, the chiefs of which were tyrannical without firmness, and profuse without liberality: their pomp and magnificence demanded continual supplies, and exhausted the province in which they were encamped: they did not choose to hazard either their reputation or their safety in a general engagement, and they were usually defeated in the skirmishes with which they were perpetually harassed by the princes. Had these continued to conduct themselves with discernment, and profited by the advantages daily given them, they would have made the most rapid progress; but division had taken possession of their camp. Sarza was of a haughty and violent temper; sudden in his resolves, and uncertain in their execution; prodigal even to madness, and openly avowing the most reprehensible inclinations, which he spared no means to gratify; impatiently desirous of attaining his end, yet neglecting, in the arms of pleasure, the steps necessary for obtaining success.

Menas, with no less ambition, had a more regular plan and more apparent modesty: his vices were more cautiously concealed from the eye of public stricture, and his love of pleasure was flattered by the hopes of a crown, which would put him in possession of all he could desire: he acted apparently for his brother, and industriously gave out that he had no other wish than to place the diadem on the head of Sarza; yet he laboured to form a party, that might support him in his pretensions, when his brother by his imprudence should have lost the affections of the people; which he thought must inevitably happen, on his ascending the throne of Abissinia. Though at present the minds of the multitude were much more favourable to the splendid Sarza than to the cautious Menas, as the exterior accomplishments of the former were more striking, his temerity being denominated heroism, and his love of pleasure popularity, yet the steps of Menas towards power were more sure; and as he had been the instigator of the attempt, so he was the supporter of it; though all the nation considered Sarza as the only author of the enterprise.

Such were the enemies whom Rasselas was commanded by his father to oppose, and these enemies his own brothers!

As soon as he arrived at the camp, he was invested by the generals with the supreme command: his first care was to introduce discipline and frugality among the troops: he succeeded in his attempt, without losing their affection; and set them that example which virtue or shame obliged them to follow. When he thought his army sufficiently disciplined to face that of the enemy, he advanced towards the kingdom of Amhara, and met the rebels on a large plain near the city of Bagemder, where he ordered his troops to halt; and having formed them into order of battle, sent

a messenger to demand a conference with his brothers.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Rasselas endeavours to produce a Reconciliation.

THE two princes advanced to meet Rasselas into the middle of the plain, and after a royal pavilion had been erected, entreated him to enter; but Rasselas declined the offer, and insisted on their conference being held in the open air, and in sight of the two armies.

He began by an inquiry into the cause of their impious rebellion, and received for answer the usual pretences for insurrection, complaints of the emperor, artfully veiled in respectful terms, open accusations of his favourites and ministers, zeal for the public good, and dread of increasing evils.

Rasselas replied, that they were sons and subjects of the emperor, and that, whatever might be the faults of government, they were not authorized, either by the nation or by its chief, to attempt a reformation. He entered deeply into considerations of the respect due to the monarch and the father; of the baneful influence of the spirit of mutiny; and of the danger of foreign invasion, while the arms of Abissinia were turned against herself. He finished by conjuring the princes to return to their duty, and by accusing himself of having, by his departure from the happy valley, given them the first example of disobedience: he promised them unconditional pardon, and a general amnesty to their troops.

Sarza was affected at the discourse of Rasselas,

which was sometimes pathetic and sometimes forcible; and seemed willing to enter into a treaty of accommodation, of which he deferred the execution till the next day, by the advice of Menas.

The different sentiments of the brothers had not escaped the observation of Rasselas: he knew the character of each, and felt all that was to be apprehended from the dangerous influence of Menas. He retired into his tent, hopeless of reconciliation, the expectation of which was general in the two armies; but Rasselas knew that Sarza was only to be prevailed on by sudden starts of conviction, and that, if he delayed to follow the momentary ray of virtue, he became the victim of the first seducer whose interest it was to present a different counsel in a plausible light: he wanted that firmness, without which virtue is useless, and understanding merely an illusion.

These reflections distressed the prince: whenever he turned his thoughts on the continuation of the war, he saw nothing but horror, whether in conquest or defeat: sometimes, however, he would think that he had conceived too harsh an opinion of the character of Menas, and sometimes he flattered himself that Sarza would have sufficient energy to withstand his insinuations.

As he was seated in his tent, waiting with impatience for the morning, a stranger was announced, whom he perceived, through the disguise that covered him, to be his brother Menas: he commanded his attendants to withdraw, and then inquired the occasion of his visit.

'Thou mayst see, Rasselas,' said Menas, 'the confidence I place in thy generosity: I come to treat with thee, and to free myself from every suspicion that may have arisen in thy breast against me: thou knowest the headstrong disposition of Sarza: ambition and ill counsellors inflamed him with a desire of seizing the reins of government, and enclosing his father in the palace of the valley,

there to finish his days in peaceful pleasures. After vainly endeavouring to dissuade him from an enterprise, which, whatever might be its motive, must always have the appearance of disobedience, I offered to accompany him, flattering myself that I should be able to set some bounds to the impetuosity of his temper, and save both my father and the nation from the tempest which menaced them. Hitherto I have so far succeeded, as to prevent unnecessary effusion of blood, and my brother has now reduced his ambitious schemes to a redress of grievances, and change of bad ministers, particularly since you have joined your efforts to mine; for I have observed, since yesterday's conference, that he is more than ever disposed to follow my advice, and submit himself to our offended father on the conditions I have mentioned. Your own conduct proves that you were wearied and indignant at the confinement in the valley; we intend to exact from our father a promise, that no son of Abissinia shall be again reduced to that state of restraint and inaction; and to entreat that he will bestow on us employments, of which we may without vanity declare ourselves to be more worthy than the indolent and pernicious ministers by whom he is surrounded. My desire is, that you will join us in this request: you are less odious to our father, and may more easily prevail. If you persist in refusing an union so necessary to our general welfare, even should conquest smile on your arms, you will have not only the remorse of having destroyed your brothers, but will expose yourself to the artful snares and malicious envy of a court: your triumph will be short, and your ruin certain.'

'Brother,' replied the prince, 'I wish we could with justice say that blood has been spared—have you forgotten the death of Zengis? I am grieved to be compelled to reproach you with it; but should be far more grieved were my future life to

be poisoned with a like reproach: yet mine would be the crime of necessity; yours has been that of choice.

'I hope, Menas, thou dost not even thyself suspect me of being capable of accepting thy proposals. My father can have no worse ministers than rebels: and were I to persuade him to receive you into his councils, I should render myself an accomplice of your crime. If you will return to your duty, your submission must be unconditional, and so will be your pardon: I trust these considerations may have their due weight: to-morrow's conference, or to-morrow's battle, decides your destiny.'

Rasselas said no more, but commanded his guards to conduct the prince in safety to his tents.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Victory and Gratitude to the Conqueror.

THE next morning, by break of day, the two armies appeared as before, drawn up in order of battle, and the conference was resumed.

Menas, who had reason, from the firmness he observed in Rasselas, to apprehend that a general engagement would not be favourable to the rebels, had by this time changed his opinion, or at least wished to amuse his brother with the prospect of a reconciliation; but Sarza's impetuosity now took place of his returning affection: he broke the conference, gave the signal of battle, and scarcely left Rasselas time to set himself at the head of his army before he attacked him with impetuosity.

The prince defended himself with intrepidity and

skill, and his troops, better disciplined, though inferior in number to the enemy, seconded his wishes: he had particularly commanded his soldiers to spare the lives of the princes. Sarza was taken prisoner, but Menas escaped by flight: a part of the army surrendered, and the rest were dispersed.

Rasselas returned to Gonthar, and laid the trophies of victory at his father's feet: he with difficulty obtained the pardon of Sarza, whom the emperor had resolved to sacrifice to his resentment, or rather to the counsels of his ministers. At length, in consideration of the services and supplications of Rasselas, he decreed that Sarza should return to the happy valley, accompanied with a strong guard, by which he was to be continually surrounded.

The emperor then took the diadem from his head, and would have placed it on that of Rasselas, but the prince resolutely refused to accept it, and declared his intention of retiring to the happy valley, whence he would never more depart, except by the express commands of the emperor, and in the greatest exigencies of the state.

The emperor at first combated his resolution with gratitude and tenderness; but finding Rasselas steady in his determination, and attending himself to the representations of his favourites, who were not sorry for the prince's departure, he at length consented to his retreat, loading him with riches and honours.

Rasselas, before he departed, gave his father an account of Imlac and the astronomer, and desired that they might be permitted to accompany his sister and her attendant to the happy valley.

He recommended Amalphis to the emperor, who promised to reward his services: he likewise informed him of his own engagement with Zilia, requesting permission to conclude a marriage, which, though contrary to the custom of Abissinia, might be authorised by the approbation of the emperor,

and would add happiness to his retirement. To this he obtained no other answer than vague promises of compliance, when the troubles of the state should be perfectly appeased, which promises his father never meant to fulfil.

By the unaccountable desire of secrecy in matters of no avail, which forms all the policy of weak governments, assisted by the invisibility of despotic princes and their families, the person and history of Rasselas were unknown, though his actions could not be concealed. It was generally understood in Abissinia, that one of the king's sons had headed the army, and gained a decisive victory: that he was to return to the happy valley, whence they supposed he had been taken for the conduct of the war; but no more was known, and no further inquiries were made.

Rasselas, however, received from his troops the most sincere testimonies of affection and regret. The man who has shared the dangers of his general in the field is neither ignorant of his true character, nor will be silent on a subject so interesting to his own honour. The soldiers idolised the valour, and respected the prudence of Rasselas, and even declared they could not serve under another commander, after having followed the orders of their beloved prince.

CHAPTER XXV.

Retrospect of a Life of Dissipation.

THE prince wished to make a visit to the fortress before he devoted himself to lasting seclusion; but the emperor having expressed a desire that he

would lose no time to accompany his brother Sarza, who was considered as a prisoner of state, he departed from Gonthar, and soon arrived at the happy valley.

It is difficult to express the sentiments of Rasselas when the massy gates, which separate the valley from the rest of the universe, closed behind him. Amalphis and his son, Imlac, the astronomer, and Nekayah, but above the rest Zilia, presented themselves forcibly to his mind: he found as much resolution was necessary in this moment as when he thought himself condemned to perish unknown in the Arabian tower. He sought the palace, and had the additional mortification of finding that neither his victory nor his obedience received the praise which they deserved; that his return was considered as an act of compulsion, and that curiosity and suspicion alone brought society around him.

But, supported by the sentiment of conscious virtue, he looked on all his sufferings as so many additions to his triumph: that effort which impels to great actions, or painful sacrifices, continues awhile to support the mind with a sort of elastic force: but time diminishes the communicated vigour, and it falls again into dejection and languor. Such was the state of Rasselas, who no longer found himself weary alone of the happy valley, but weary of his existence. Indifferent to instruction, and insensible to hope, he wandered in solitude without enjoying the beauties of nature, and returned to the palace without admiring the works of art.

His melancholy was increased by the despair of Sarza. A gloomy horror had taken the place of ambition in the heart of this mistaken prince: he found he had been misled by those whom he had most trusted, and regarded Rasselas in no other light than as a conqueror. Shame and anger made him reject the consolations of a brother, who now

feeling no other sentiments for him but those of tenderness and compassion, endeavoured, with unremitting solicitude, to soften the impressions of his grief, and the violence of his resentments.

The efforts of Rasselas were long fruitless. He had the pain of seeing that Sarza's impatience of his fate brought on him a gradual decay. As his health wasted, Rasselas became still more assiduous to console him: he soon gave up his whole time to this employment, and found in it a mournful satisfaction that compensated the mortifications he endured. Whenever he perceived in Sarza the least sensibility of his attentions, a heartfelt pleasure repaid him for his anxiety, and he began to thank Heaven for having placed him in a situation to assist his brother.

His mind now enjoyed more tranquillity, when he was one day surprised with the joyful intelligence of the arrival of Nekayah, who, as all danger of war seemed to be past, was, by the emperor's command, taken from the fortress, and conducted to her former habitation. Imlac accompanied her, and the astronomer obtained permission to follow them.

After the first transports of their meeting had subsided, Rasselas inquired anxiously after Zilia and her father. 'I fear,' said he, 'that the letters which I have sent to the fortress must have been intercepted at Gonthar, as none of my messengers have ever returned. What must have been the ideas of Zilia; and what must the good Amalphis now think of me?'

'I was myself,' answered the princess, 'in the greatest uneasiness. Our information of the events of the war was confused and uncertain: we were kept in the most painful agitation by a variety of reports; and the messenger, who brought the emperor's orders for my return to the valley, was the first who acquainted us with the true state of affairs; at the same time he delivered to me new

injunctions of secrecy in regard to our condition, and I had not even the consolation of informing Amalphis and Zilia of the place destined for my habitation, nor of the situation of my brother: all I could tell them in answer to their frequent inquiries was, that I knew you followed the fortunes of the prince, who had commanded the royal army, and that I would give them the speediest intelligence in my power.'

The first days of the re-union of Rasselas and Nekayah passed in these mutual narrations, and in various fruitless endeavours to despatch some messenger with letters to the fortress. Imlac returned to his studies, and the astronomer was delighted with the splendour and novelty of the scene. Pekuah was liberal in her communication to the inhabitants of the valley, and was soon surrounded by a numerous auditory. The prince and princess found their concern lessened by reciprocal confidence; they joined their efforts for the assistance and consolation of Sarza, whose health grew every day more precarious: as his strength decreased, his passions softened; he seemed no longer to regret the ill success of his enterprise, but to repent that he had attempted it. He confessed to Rasselas how artfully he had been led astray by the insinuations of Menas; and perceiving the resources which Rasselas and Nekayah found in literary pursuits and innocent pleasures, he regretted not having followed the same path, and tenderly acknowledged their kindness to him.

'Alas!' said he, one day, when they had drawn his sofa to the window of his apartment where he was confined, 'why have I been hitherto insensible to the beauties of nature? Yon vast orb of light, which tinges with the brightest purple the exhalations that accompany its retreat, is new to Sarza! If I have ever watched its disappearing, it has been only as a signal to the commencing banquet, in the hopes of tumultuous pleasures; nor has its rising

majesty impressed on me other images than those of disgust, as it warned me to retire from the scene of riot and intoxication. How often have I repined at the appearance of yon silvery moon, which attracts the enraptured eyes of Nekayah as it advances to take possession of the sky, and yield us a more gentle light to compensate the splendour we have lost: I feared its rays, lest they should betray my disguise, and force me to return guiltless.

'O Rasselas! O Nekayah! you have not always been happy, but you know not the pangs of remorse: you are unacquainted with the horrors of guilt: I have not one consolatory reflection to soften my last moments; nothing remains on my mind but confused scenes of dissipation, of intemperance, of error, at best, of folly! Among those whom similar pursuits and base adulation made my companions, not one can I call by the sacred name of friend, not one whose breast will feel for me the tender pang of pity, or whose bleeding heart sympathises with mine.—Chimerical dreams of criminal ambition had taken possession of my serious moments, and lawless revelling was all my gaiety.—It is over, and my tardy repentance only consecrates to virtue, to reason, and to affection, the hours of pain, of disappointment, and of satiety.

'The bleeding form of the unhappy Zengis is ever present to my imagination!—yet why should I say unhappy? He whose talents I depreciated, and whose mildness I despised, is now superior to me; for he died innocent, and I am his murderer! My father's stern indifference stings me to the soul—even thou, Rasselas, whose tender care soothes my affliction, thou excitest in me a sentiment of grief and remorse; why did I not listen to thee sooner! —Of Menas I cannot think without horror, and condemn me not while I speak it, scarcely without detestation.—I endeavour to forgive him; but how

far am I yet from attaining that resignation and serenity with which thou seekest to inspire me!'

Nekayah remained in tears, during the discourse of Sarza, and Rasselas strove to calm his agitated mind with hopes for the future, and consolations for the past.

'Thou art not the first, my brother,' said he, 'whom violent passion and smooth seduction hath led into error; the same qualities which raise to the height of heroism, may, when wrong directed, lead us to the precipice of guilt: but repentance is always in our power, nor are the means wanting for thee to retrieve the virtue thou hast lost. Rash ambition, and immoderate love of pleasure, may make us commit faults, nay, even crimes; but dissimulation, perfidy, and cowardice, are the only vices that render honour irretrievable: I know thou hast not descended to any of these; they are contrary to thy nature; thy virtues are thy own, thy errors proceed from others, and more than all from the dreadful fatality that attends greatness.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

A new Inhabitant enters the Valley.

WHILE the princes and Nekayah were thus employed, a messenger entered and informed them that Menas was returned to court, and reinstated in the emperor's favour: by secret correspondence with his father's ministers, from the place of his retreat, he had found means to clear himself from the imputation of any share in the rebellion, by throwing the whole blame on Sarza, and now go-

verned Abissinia in the name of the emperor. Insinuations had been given that the interviews between Rasselas and Sarza were frequent, and consequently seditious: the emperor's age and natural temper inclined him to suspicion, and some officers of the army, who were friends to Rasselas, had despatched this messenger to conjure him to be on his guard.

This intelligence, however kind, was useless: it was immediately followed by a mandate from court, which ordered Rasselas to one of the towers of the palace, whence it was not permitted him to have any communication with his brother.

Nekayah divided her time between her two brothers, but she had not long occasion to show her tenderness to Sarza: this last stroke hastened his end, and he expired soon after in the arms of his sister, resigned and repentant.

In the mean time the successful Menas, not content with having in his hands the sole authority in Abissinia, wished to have it confirmed by the name and honours of royalty. He endeavoured to persuade his father to retire to the happy valley, and pass the remainder of his life in ease and tranquillity: but the emperor was unwilling to inhabit a place, that offered him nothing but the image of death or of rebellion, and had even avoided making his annual visit: besides, he had been long accustomed to royalty, and feared dependence. Danger had engaged him to offer the resignation of his throne to Rasselas; that motive was no more, and his refusal to Menas was accompanied with severe reproach.

But the emperor only retained the exterior of royalty; the power had passed from his feeble hand into the grasp of Menas: his anger was therefore derided, and his remonstrances were neglected; and finding, with grief, that the only means to retain the poor appearance of sovereignty was to consent unconditionally to the desire of his son, he took

the road of the valley, surrounded by every new professor of the arts of luxury whom he could collect, seeking to forget the power he had lost in scenes of magnificence and pleasures.

Menas, being thus arrived at the summit of his wishes, was yet disturbed with doubts and alarms: he feared his father would forget the prejudices with which he had inspired him against Rasselas, and that duty as well as allegiance might induce the latter to make a desperate effort to replace him on the throne. To prevent, therefore, all communication which could awaken in the emperor his former affection for Rasselas, he insinuated to him, that the visits which the prince received from his sister and friends were dangerous to the peace of Abissinia, and that the only effectual means of preventing the ill consequences that were likely to ensue from their meetings, was to secure every individual of the party.

The emperor approved, or at least consented to this proposal. Imlac and the astronomer were condemned to separate confinements; and the princess with difficulty obtained permission to be attended by her favourite Pekuah in the apartments which were assigned her as a prison.

The artful Menas had no sooner effected his designs, than he sought every means for rendering the retirement of his father a magnificent and seducing prison: he sent frequent messengers with superb presents, accompanied by the most skilful artists, and by all those who make it their study to delight; his letters were filled with expressions of filial duty, complaints of the fatigue of government, and suspicions, cautiously introduced, of seditions excited by emissaries of Rasselas.

Sumptuous banquets, the charms of poetry and music, ease and flattery, took such strong possession of the aged emperor, that at length he considered his retreat as a shelter from the storms of life, and gave the strictest orders for guarding Ras-

selas and the princess, lest they should endeavour to disturb his repose.

Much time passed in this manner: the prince made many daring but fruitless attempts to recover his liberty, and to convince his father of the fatal error into which he had fallen: the princess was not more successful in her endeavours.

Imlac made use of the lessons of philosophy, which he had learned in the experience of a long life, and comforted himself with reflecting, that revolutions are frequent in eastern monarchies. He was, however, uneasy with respect to the astronomer; he feared that solitude might again pervert his imagination, and bring back those ideas, with which it had formerly been led astray: he therefore sought, and at last obtained permission of his guards, to be removed to the same prison, and soon perceived that his fears had not been groundless. The astronomer confessed to Imlac that he had been seized with a hopeless melancholy, in which he considered his imprisonment as a punishment for having neglected, in the charms of conversation, the great charge of the government of the seasons: the reason and eloquence of Imlac soon convinced him of his error, but could scarcely console him for the privation of general society. 'I feel,' said he, 'that pleasure and amusement are natural to the mind of man: curiosity incites us to engage in the busy scenes of life; they who have not enjoyed them in youth will seek them in age, with that avidity which naturally attends on every wish, whose gratification has been long delayed. Age has fewer resources, and consequently stands more in need of the assistance of others: study becomes difficult, and therefore irksome: hope is less extensive, and gives less consolation: the moments appear to us more precious, as we suppose them to be fewer; and we fear to retreat for an instant, lest we should be totally laid aside.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

Return of a Friend.

NEKAYAH, who had at present more time for reflection than she had ever before experienced, passed her days in a less uneasy manner than any of the other captives. She was persuaded that happiness was unattainable, and this persuasion, which is perhaps destructive to the fortunate, is often useful to the unhappy: the attachment of Pekuah was a consolation, but she depended more on herself than on others. Compelled to renounce what she most loved, no other companion could be an adequate compensation; she was devoid of hope and of fear, and, having experienced their vicissitudes, she felt the advantages of tranquillity.

One day, Pekuah informed her that she had perceived, during many successive evenings, a young man of lofty stature and generous aspect, though poorly clothed, who soon after sun-set took his post opposite to her windows, and seemed to desire to be noticed, but that fear of the guards had always prevented her from gratifying her curiosity of knowing his intentions; that for a while he had been absent, but that she had seen him again the preceding evening.

Nekayah ordered her to observe, and if he returned that night, make signs to him to come round to the eastern side of their mansion, which was usually less guarded, as it overlooked the lake; and endeavour to make him comprehend that he might approach near enough in a boat to converse unobserved. 'It is, probably,' added Nekayah, 'some messenger from my brother, and if my conference with him can afford Rasselas comfort, I would neglect nothing to facilitate his access.'

The young man did not appear that evening;

but on the following night, as the princess and Pekuah were looking over from a terrace near the lake, they perceived a small boat advancing towards them, and soon after saw two persons leap on shore, and silently climb the ascent that led to the castle; one of them placed a ladder against the terrace wall, and mounted with rapidity, not without alarming the princess and Pekuah. The stranger soon put an end to their fears, by discovering himself to be the messenger whom they had formerly despatched from the fortress, to the court of Abissinia, and who had since been retained, for his musical talents, in the train of the old emperor. The princess, delighted with seeing him, was about to ask him various questions, when he informed her that no time was to be lost, that the son of Amalphis was beneath the terrace, and desired permission to visit her, as he had something of importance to communicate.

Nekayah's joy and agitation were greater than any language can express; and she had scarcely recovered the power of utterance, when Dinarbas appeared disguised in the habit of a fisherman.

After the first emotion natural to their situation was subsided, he informed her, that he had long attempted in vain to approach her apartment, and had been equally unsuccessful in his endeavours to speak with Rasselas; that at last he had the good fortune of meeting the messenger, who told him on which side the palace was most accessible, and accompanied him in a boat, which he had procured. 'I am now,' added Dinarbas, 'come to offer you my assistance, and I am rejoiced that fortune has so singularly distinguished me, as to put it in my power, perhaps, to free you and the prince from your confinement: O Nekayah! we may yet be happy———.'

He was going to proceed in his narrative, when the hour approaching to relieve the guard, Nekayah warned him to retire, lest the boat should

be observed. Dinarbas obeyed, with a promise of returning the next evening.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Adventures of Dinarbas.

DINARBAS, charmed with having seen Nekayah, persuaded the messenger to accompany him to the tower where Rasselas was confined, and, if possible, procure his admittance. The attempt was successful; and what neither the prince nor his friend could have effected, however penetrative and active were their minds, the slave, accustomed to combine and to employ stratagems, easily accomplished.

The prince and Dinarbas embraced each other with equal joy, and mutual demonstrations of friendship. As the latter had entered unperceived, they found sufficient opportunity for conversation; and the son of Amalphis related to Rasselas all that had passed since his quitting the fortress in search of him.

'I sought for you long in Egypt,' said he, 'and afterwards in Arabia; where, on the frontiers, I met a party of Arabs, who told me they had seen you under the guard of Turkish horsemen, and supposed that you were gone to Constantinople. I could not hear of your embarkation at Cairo, but continued my voyage, in hopes of finding you at the court of the sultan. As that prince had shown openly his disapprobation of the conduct of the late Bassa of Cairo, he was singularly desirous of paying every attention possible to the Abissinian nation. He had heard my name, and had approved my actions; he received me with peculiar courtesy:

he commanded that diligent search should be made after the prisoner for whom I was come to supplicate his justice, and named a day on which I was to return to know the result of his inquiries. His inquiries were fruitless; but he told me that he was not placed on the throne of Mahomet to abandon the innocent, or to favour injustice; that many Greek pirates had lately infested the seas in his dominions, and that, as it was probable they might have intercepted the Turks, with my friend, in their passage from Cairo to Constantinople, he had given orders for strictly searching all the Greek islands and the coasts of that country. In the mean while he desired me to remain at his court, and held various discourses with me on the art of war: he listened to my answers with attention and complacency, and discovered much of the genius and knowledge for which he has been so justly celebrated in his transactions with the Venetians. During my interviews with him, I found how unjustly we often attribute to greatness fastidious and oppressive insolence. He who finds himself by birth superior in rank to the rest of mankind can have neither the motives of jealousy nor of emulation; his condescension will scarcely be abused, or his courtesy humiliated. It is not so with him who has risen above his equals by the caprice of fortune, and whose ambition makes him still aim at loftier distinctions: he fears lest affability and ease should again sink him to his former station; and as his greatness is only comparative, he thinks himself obliged to support it by artificial means. Whatever qualities may be wanting in sovereigns, courtesy is, I believe, rarely among the number; but this is not a time to lengthen my story with reflections.

'Before the vassals returned, which the sultan had ineffectually sent in quest of you, I had sufficiently gained his confidence to obtain permission to undertake the same expedition with my Abis-

sinians. He granted me a light-armed galley, skilful mariners, and an experienced pilot: with these I visited not only the islands, but great part of the continent belonging to the dominions of the sultan.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

Adventures of Dinarbas continued.

HERE Rasselas exclaimed, 'how often have I wished to view those places celebrated in history, and sung by the poets of antiquity!'

'Prince,' replied his friend, 'your leisure moments may hereafter be employed in listening to the incidents of my travels: at present both your curiosity and your interest must require me to hasten to a conclusion of the narrative. Not finding my attempts successful, I directed my galley towards Candia, where the fleet and army of the sultan, under the command of the grand vizier, had been long employed against the united forces of the western world, who assisted the Venetians in maintaining a siege of more than two years. As I had now lost all hopes of finding my prince, I wished at least to testify my sense of the sultan's goodness to me. I happened fortunately to arrive on the eve of the day allotted for the general attack of the place: I obtained permission of the vizier to head a considerable body of troops, and had the good fortune to carry the bastion of Sant' Andrea, one of the most important of the city: much of the success of the assault was attributed to this action: I was loaded with praises by the vizier, and advanced to the highest commands. The place capitulated soon after, and our army

returned triumphant to Adrianople, where the sultan then was, and where the peace, for which the Venetians were obliged to sue, the mortification of the haughty princes of Europe, and the despair of the chief of their religion, added new glories to the victory of the sultan. His munificence was proportioned to his successes; he considered my services as the most signal, perhaps, because they were voluntary; he recompensed me with sovereignty; and to retain me in his dominions, made me despot of Servia. My kingdom is only dependent on the sultan, so far as I am obliged to assist his allies and attack his enemies; and I have the next place to the grand vizier in the divan. At Adrianople I heard of your victory over your brothers, and of your retreat into this valley. The promise which I had given Nekayah would not allow me to disclose your history to the sultan; but after I had made a visit to my new dominions, I found him, at my return to his court, interested in your favour; and received from him the account of your imprisonment, and of the intrigues of Menas against you, of the forced retirement of the emperor from public business, and the death of Sarza. I was surprised to see the facility with which sovereigns can penetrate into the most secret councils of neighbouring states, and the care they take to inform themselves of affairs with which they have no apparent connexion, while those who are deeply concerned in them are often blindly ignorant of the most essential circumstances. The opportunity was favourable to me, and I entreated permission of the monarch to go as his ambassador to Menas, and to employ his mediation as an ally, to demand the restoration of the emperor. He readily granted my request; but Menas returned me such specious answers, and gave so many apparent proofs of the voluntary retirement of your father, that I wrote to the sultan for leave to enter the valley, and there, by dis-

coursing with our sovereign in the sultan's name, discover his real sentiments. I left my train at the fortress commanded by my father, where I am still supposed to remain with them; and, disguising myself, found means to enter the valley with one of the messengers despatched from court with presents to the emperor; but I have not yet been able to obtain access to him.'

CHAPTER XXX.

Dinarbas visits the Emperor.

RASSELAS congratulated Dinarbas on his success at the court of the sultan, and thanked him for the offers of his assistance. 'I fear,' said he, 'the emperor will not be prevailed on to replace himself on the throne: he seems immersed in pleasure and insensibility; he fears to think, and all means are taken to prevent his being undeceived. I am alarmed at the rashness of your attempt. The valley is filled with emissaries of Menas; and should you be discovered you are lost.'

'I have no fears of that sort,' replied Dinarbas: 'the sultan is not of a character to suffer tamely an injury to his ambassador; nor is Menas hardy enough to awaken his anger. Instruct me how I can obtain an audience of your father, and I have great hopes for the rest.

'First tell me,' said Rasselas, 'whether Amalphis and Zilia still remember me. I have experienced too many of the caprices of fortune to be anxious after the projects of ambition, and have found that the only ornament of prosperity, and the only consolation in adversity, is the sympathy of friendship and affection.'

'They were totally ignorant of your fate,' said Dinarbas, 'and their anxiety was greater than I can describe. As I was not at liberty to discover to them the whole of your situation, I told them I had heard of your distinguishing yourself during the war; and that I believed you to be at present confined, by the order of Menas, in the happy valley. I promised them, at my departure, that they should soon receive fuller information. Let us now consider what methods will prevail with the emperor.'

'I know not,' said Rasselas, 'whether we shall render him a service in tearing the veil which Menas has so artfully drawn around him; and I doubt not that, if he were replaced on the throne, he would regret the delights of the happy valley. All I can wish from your friendship is, that you will endeavour to convince him of my innocence, and of that of Nekayah; and I know no easier nor safer means of admittance than to proclaim yourself the son of Amalphis: the fidelity of your father is well known to the emperor, and he will sooner admit a subject than the ambassador of a powerful neighbour.'

'Pardon me, prince,' answered Dinarbas, 'if I say that you judge the emperor by your own heart: power could not dictate to you, but fidelity might soothe you. I will however try the expedient which you propose, but if it succeeds, I know not the character of the emperor.'

Dinarbas staid till the shades of night permitted him to depart unperceived: he then left the prison of Rasselas, and went to the terrace, where he was again received by Nekayah and Pekuah: he related to them his adventures and his intentions. The princess charged him not to discover himself as ambassador from the sultan, till he had sounded the disposition of her father. 'I know,' said she, 'that the spirit of an emperor of Abissinia can never brook the interference of a foreign power.'

Dinarbas, against his own inclinations, obeyed the counsel of the prince and princess: he announced himself to the emperor as the son of Amalphis, who had important affairs to communicate. The sovereign gave for answer, that he must apply to Menas; but recollecting himself that Nekayah and Rasselas had been long under the guard of Amalphis, he concluded the son might be an accomplice of their supposed crimes, and commanded him to enter, surrounded with guards.

Dinarbas then related, with frankness and energy, all the circumstances of the wrong done to Rasselas and the princess: he spared not Menas as an usurper; and invited the emperor to return to his throne, and do justice to his family. But his discourse made no other impression on the monarch than to convince him that Rasselas must have been guilty, as he had betrayed the secret of his birth, and that the son of Amalphis was his accomplice. As Dinarbas could not exculpate the prince without accusing Nekayah, he blushed, and was embarrassed.

The emperor considered this as a signal of guilt, and commanded him instantly to be imprisoned.

Dinarbas now thought himself at liberty to act upon his own plan. He declared himself ambassador from the sultan, sent by him in the most open manner to remonstrate with Menas; and, should he not succeed with him, to apply to the emperor, assure him of the sultan's friendship, and reinstate him on the throne.

Awe of superior power took place of anger in the heart of the sovereign. He knew not what he was to believe; but he resolved to send a messenger to his son for instructions, and in the mean time to treat Dinarbas with the respect due to the representative of the sultan.

A report was spread next day in the valley, by messengers arrived from Gonthar, that a consider-

able body of Turkish troops had marched towards the frontiers of Abissinia. This news engaged the emperor to pay still more attention to Dinarbas, and even to grant the request he made of visiting Rasselas as often as he should think proper.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Sketch of the Travels of Dinarbas.

DINARBAS forbore to make any remark to the prince on the conduct of the emperor: he simply related to him what had passed; from which Rasselas formed small hopes: he found that his friend was in some sort become, on his account, a prisoner of state, and he was alarmed at his danger.

'Fear not for me,' said Dinarbas; 'I know my steps are watched, and that I must remain here till the emperor hears from Menas; but I hope by that time to have convinced him of your innocence, and of the necessity of his returning to the management of public affairs. No sovereign, I believe, ever retired, but by some species of constraint; and none, I am convinced, ever failed of repenting the step he had taken. Authority and active life are too natural to the mind, not to retain their hold, however circumstances may have at any period weakened their impression: the scenes of action will retrace themselves to the voluptuary in the bosom of pleasure, and to the anchorite in the cell of austerity. When the emperor reflects on the conversation I held with him last night, he will find the charms of royalty again rush on his imagination; and, with a few more interviews, I hope to rouse all his sleeping ambition.'

Rasselas found his imprisonment greatly relieved

by the visits of Dinarbas, who every day informed him of the progress he made with the emperor, in awakening his tenderness for the prince and princess. Rasselas, however, did not willingly give way to hope, and would often change the subject of conversation, by asking Dinarbas for the detail of his travels in the dominions of the sultan.

'I have often wished to know,' said Rasselas, 'whether the scenes so beautifully described by the ancient European poets are really as interesting as we should believe from their works, did we not judge by our own writers of the embellishments of poetry. I have always considered our total ignorance of other countries as one of the greatest misfortunes that attends our government, and have tried to obviate this inconvenience for myself, as far as books could assist me.'

'In my voyages in the Archipelago and Mediterranean,' replied Dinarbas, 'I have seen enough to solve your question: nations have disappeared from the face of the earth, laws have been forgotten, and morals corrupted; but nature, though subject to great revolutions, ever remains beautiful in temperate climates. That poets have been thought to embellish nature, is an opinion that must have had its rise and its continuance in countries where the northern blasts deface the charms of fertility, or where the too ardent rays of the sun dry up its sources; but in those happy climes where vegetation is never wholly stopped, poets will be found, with all their eloquence, to trace very faintly the charms of nature. The Abissinian, scorched on the burning sands that surround him; the Scythian, sliding over frozen rivers, and climbing mountains, whose dazzling whiteness makes no distinction to the sight, can have but a very imperfect idea of the variegated landscape that attracts the eyes of the fortunate inhabitant of Greece.

In these celebrated scenes every thing tends to diversify and heighten the beauties of the prospect: the majestic rocks, glowing with all the warmth of colouring; the cascades, reflecting the azure of an unsullied sky: the trees, not more various in their forms than in their hues: the earth, enriched with vegetable production: but chiefly that light and transparent vapour, which gives the faint blue to the distant mountains, and the splendid purple to the western clouds; and, like tenderness in moral life, softens every object, and diffuses serenity and rapture! Rasselas, thou mayst think me an enthusiast; yet, hadst thou accompanied me in the enchanted spots where I sought thee, thou wouldst have felt the same warmth of fancy, the same sensibility of heart that transported me: these are the favourite theatres of august and pleasing meditation. How often have I been led to adore the goodness of the Creator of the Universe, when wandering through some delightful valley, adorned as I have in vain attempted to describe to thee, I contemplated the beauties which he has so bountifully offered to man! There some majestic and awful ruin would rear its venerable head, and silently instruct me: every part in these countries unites the charms of situation and of celebrity; no mountain is without a name—the ground we tread is consecrated to fame in the historic page; even fable becomes respected, and while our heart is raised to heroism at the pass of Thermopylæ, our imagination is filled with poetic ardour on the side of Olympus and Parnassus! In these places the images of those who were most dear to me returned with double force; I longed for my father amidst the ruins of Sparta, and for my prince near the temple of Theseus! In the shade of those trees, which are the progeny of the academic grove, I wished for the assistance of Imlaç, to converse with Plato and his disciples! My warlike companions were

present to my thoughts at Platea and at Marathon. In the valley of Tempé I forgot, for a moment, my hopeless situation; and imagined that I saw Nekayah beside me, the humble and pleased companion of my enthusiastic raptures.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

Grandeur of the Ancients.

'THOU hast now said enough,' replied the prince, 'to be considered as an enthusiast by the greater part of mankind, by those whose hearts are steeled, or whose heads are stupefied by interest or gaiety; happily we are not heard by them in this prison, where, if our bodies are enclosed, our minds are at liberty; a privilege not always attainable in the world. But, to return to thy travels: hast thou observed many of those monuments of ancient grandeur and elegance, of which the few scattered remains afforded me such delight in Egypt?'

'The effect which those buildings produced on me,' said Dinarbas, 'is far superior to my powers of description: the noble simplicity of the Grecian temples, the elegance of their proportion, the harmony of their parts, and the majesty of the whole, give an impression of awe and of satisfaction, which no modern building affords. I have never yet been able to comprehend how the taste of any architect should be so strangely depraved, as to permit him to view unmoved those stately fabrics, and vainly imagine he could, by mean plans, disproportionate combinations, and glittering deformity, give delight to rational spectators: yet such artists have been found, and they have not wanted rotectors. He who built the mosque of Sta. Sophia

undoubtedly supposed he had raised an edifice that would show how far the elegance of the golden age, in which he lived, was superior to the barbarism of that which saw the elevation of the temple of Theseus. It has ever been the irremediable error of weak minds and degenerate nations to substitute ornament for proportion, curious minuteness for majestic beauty, and heterogeneous variety for harmony and grace.

'Our spires, our turrets, and our many-coloured roofs, are become odious to my eyes, since I have beheld simplicity and elegance on the desolate shores of Greece: nor did the architecture alone take possession of my imagination; I found the same characteristic feature in all their remaining productions. Their inscriptions are lofty, pure, and energetic; they seem only written to convey the meaning, and the flowers of eloquence spring naturally from the subject. Their statues, not writhed into distortion to catch the eye by forced contrasts, are simple and beauteous like nature itself, which they represent in the general effect, more than by descending into little peculiarities: every figure speaks to the heart; we confess the influence of the passion it breathes, or the respect it inspires. But, in the works of modern art, even among its best performances, our mind must have the labour of combining particulars, before we perceive the general effect: we approve or criticise ere we can feel, and therefore scarcely feel at all. When we contemplate the master-pieces of the ancients, our sentiments are immediately engaged, our imagination is interested, and the first impression must begin to weaken before we can descend to minute examination; yet even then we admire; we see that, as in a well-ordered kingdom, though some parts are inferior, they are in their place, and contribute to the beauty of the whole.

'Such, in the view of moral or political greatness, if we examine history, was the conduct of the

illustrious men of ancient Greece and Rome: their enterprises were vast, and their minds capacious; they formed a comprehensive plan, and acted up to it. It is not by adding one little idea to another that perfection is insensibly attained. Alexander had conceived his scheme for the conquest of the East before he left his native Macedon; nor did Cæsar take the command in Gaul without a previous design of becoming the first in the republic. I am not surprised at the policy of our courts, which usually excludes their subjects from all communication with the knowledge of Europe; in order to confine us to narrow views, to indolent magnificence, and, if I may so express it, to living by the day: this is the surest foundation for despotism: the mind being easily reduced to inactivity, when its flights are not allowed to go beyond a certain extent.'

'All this is true,' said Rasselas, 'yet I cannot see what the sovereign gains by debasing the faculties of his subjects: a good prince will be respected and beloved by a wise nation, and, what he can never rely on from a herd of willing slaves, will be sure of their fidelity: he will not be deserted at the first appearance of a foreign enemy, or domestic usurper, who, in our despotic governments, obtains the same tribute of obedience as the rightful monarch, because he has the same authority, that of terror. What else could have so calmly placed Menas on the throne, at the expense of his brother's life, and his father's sovereign dignity?'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Prince and Princess accompany their Father to Gonthar.

DINARBAS at length prevailed on the emperor to visit Nekayah, whose innocence it was easy to prove, and whose tenderness and eloquence soon convinced him of the truth of Rasselas: after a short struggle between pride and paternal affection, the prince was justified and restored to liberty.

The difficulty now remained to force Menas to resign a throne in which he was supported by his own guilt, and that of traitors, who must defend him because they were his accomplices. It was probable, that with the assistance of Amalphis, and from the fame of Rasselas, the troops might have been engaged to declare for their former sovereign; but their officers had been changed, men devoted to Menas now commanded them, and it was not easy, in case they were disposed to second the efforts of Rasselas, to communicate any plan by which they might act without exposing themselves to the fury of the reigning party, before they could have a chief to support them.

The authority of the sultan might be easily exerted: he had warmly offered his mediation; and what sovereign will not warmly offer his mediation in the differences of his less powerful neighbours? This disposition of the Turks gave pain to Rasselas: he would have preferred any other method of reinstating his father on the throne of his ancestors: but his disgust to foreign aid he soon found to be fruitless. The report of a Turkish army marching towards the frontiers had not been without foundation; and more certain accounts arrived of their having penetrated into the heart

of Abissinia. It was said that Amalphis and his garrison, who were entreated to join them, remained neuter, but had not prevented the train of Dinarbas from following them; that Menas, at the head of his troops, was gone out to meet them, and that a decisive battle might soon be expected.

It was now time to act: Dinarbas obtained permission of the emperor to join the Turkish army, where his presence was necessary to prevent many irregularities. The confusion was become general, and the valley was no longer strictly guarded; the emissaries of Menas began to pay their court to the emperor and his party, and suffered them to enjoy all the liberty they desired.

Dinarbas hastily advanced towards Gonthar, near which place he had been told the two armies lay encamped. He hoped, by intimidating Menas, to make him resign the crown, and, after replacing the emperor on the throne, to conduct the sultan's troops back to his dominions; but, on his approach, he was met by the principal officers of his train, and the chiefs of the army, with the head of Menas: they informed him of their victory, and of the flight of the usurper under a mean disguise, in which he was stopped and put to death. They invited the son of Amalphis to share their triumph, and decide the fate of the prisoners, among whom were the principal ministers and favourites of Menas.

Dinarbas, in consequence of the sultan's mandate, delivered to him by the chiefs, assumed the command of the army, entered Gonthar, and despatched messengers to the happy valley, entreating the presence of the emperor and Rasselas.

The death of Menas made little impression on his father, but deeply affected Rasselas and Nekayah: they had, however, the consolation to reflect that they were innocent of his fate; and accompanied the emperor to Gonthar, attended by the lady Pekuah, Imlac, and the astronomer, whom

they had restored to liberty as soon as they were reinstated in the favour of their father.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Inconveniences of Foreign Aid.

THE emperor resumed with joy the imperial dignity, but made few reflections on the revolutions which replaced him on the throne; and, being asked what was to be done with his former favourites, he coolly ordered them to execution. Rasselas, however, obtained from him their pardon, on condition of their perpetual imprisonment, and the sovereign mentioned them no more.

He likewise complied with the request of Rasselas to send a messenger to the fortress of Amalphis, to demand Zilia in marriage. As she was the sister of his deliverer, whom he loaded with praises and thanks, he no longer considered the alliance as derogatory from his dignity. A train of women and slaves accompanied the messenger, to honour the royal bride; and letters from Rasselas, Nekayah, and Dinarbas, informed Amalphis and Zilia, that the prince and princess, formerly celebrated by fame for their sufferings, and now for a happy reverse, were the guests whose society they had enjoyed in the fortress. These letters contained a minute detail of all the public events, and the sentiments of Rasselas on his change of fortune. Amalphis was invited to court, with a considerable command in the army.

Rasselas impatiently expected the arrival of Amalphis and Zilia, and in the mean time saw with grief the disorder which reigned in the capital and its environs, from the licence given by the

officers of the Turkish army to their numerous troops. Dinarbas, though invested with the chief command, found it difficult to exercise severe authority over foreign soldiers elated with victory, conscious of belonging to superior power, and of having conferred assistance. The officers were haughty and extravagant in their demand, the men riotous and avaricious; the highways were infested by their outrages, nor were the houses of the inhabitants of the city protected from their lawless insolence. In vain did Dinarbas attempt, by alternate menaces and soothing, to reduce them to discipline; the timidity of the Abissinians had given them an advantage which they had no inclination to relinquish: a reinforcement was advancing from Egypt; the sultan either not being yet informed of the success of the enterprise, or choosing to facilitate and give validity to a treaty of alliance with Abissinia, by the presence of a formidable army.

'Prince,' said Dinarbas to his friend, 'I am sensible that I have involved you in all the present difficulties, by rashly engaging the sultan in your interests; your doubts were justly founded, and I know not how to extricate you from the danger of which I have been inadvertently the cause. If I depart for the sultan's court to remonstrate with him on the conduct of his troops, I leave them without a chief, to repress in any degree their excesses. I have written to entreat him to recal them, but I have no reason to hope, from the present appearance of things, that my request will be granted without a demand on his side of concessions injurious to your honour.'

'Dinarbas,' answered the prince, 'if we were to be accountable for the ill success of every good intention, we must suppose ourselves endued with general prescience, a quality inherent in the Divinity alone. Your proceedings were open and just, and you had no reason to imagine that the

Turkish army would be lawless and ungenerous: we are not yet assured whether the sultan is in fault; if he is not, he will recal his troops; but if he persists in treating us like a conquered kingdom, we have a right to consider him as our enemy, not our benefactor; and his enmity is perhaps not so formidable as the world has been taught to suppose.

'By the accounts thou hast often given me of the siege of Candia, he owes that conquest more to the division of the enemy, and to the singular bravery of some of his officers, among whom thou hast been particularly distinguished, than to the general tenor of his conduct: it is even probable that all his efforts would have proved fruitless, had not the Venetians been abandoned by their allies. They who trust to the mutability of courts, and to the complicated interests of governments, will find themselves deserted like the Venetians, or menaced like ourselves. The only way to make allies useful, is to be respectable without them.

'Consider how a small island in the same seas, merely from the courage and conduct of its defenders, victoriously resisted the attacks of the most formidable and most numerous armies of the Turks, headed by their ablest generals.

'I have not the hopes of forming instantaneously a well-disciplined army, but I have at least learned not to fear ungovernable multitudes; and if I am compelled to take up arms, I shall dread more the imputation of ingratitude than the power of the sultan.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

Death of the Emperor.

THE emperor did not long survive his usurping son: he was, like many other men, solicitous for the events that might happen after his death, though he had been careless of what had been done in his lifetime: all wish to extend their influence beyond the grave, and few approach their end without making some reflections on their past existence. The mind of the emperor was less weakened by age than enervated by indolence and pleasures; when infirmity obliged him to retire from dissipation, thought returned upon him more forcibly; his tenderness for Rasselas and Nekayah redoubled as he was about to quit them. 'My children,' said he, 'I shall neither leave you precepts nor example; I can only beseech you to beware of my errors, and, if possible, to cast a veil over my faults—I have, by indolence, brought my kingdom into greater distresses than the most cruel and avaricious tyrants have ever occasioned.

'I am now convinced that inactivity is generally the source of crime: it is scarcely possible for the man who does nothing to be free from guilt; we, in particular, are placed in a sphere, in which it is our duty to direct, like the pilot, who, if he neglects the rudder for an instant, is in danger of seeing the vessel dashed on the neighbouring rock. Yet are not my faults without extenuation; a mistaken notion of humanity has made me detest war, and consequently neglect my army: the desire of being loved has induced me to court the friendship of my slaves, and you see the gratitude of my favourites: a mind not uninformed nor incurious led me naturally to the love of arts and sciences; but this inclination has been falsely

turned to those of luxury and amusement, rather than to those of political or moral utility. Had I possessed sufficient energy of mind to rouse myself from the illusions that surrounded me, I might have seen the fallacy of my ideas as soon as I had attempted to investigate them: but the dream was prolonged by all who came near me; the vicious offered to me new schemes of dissipation, and even the virtuous praised me for that gentleness and good-nature, which they celebrated as superior to the shining qualities of the conqueror. War is, undoubtedly, shocking to humanity; but while we live amongst mortals, actuated by mortal passions, we must be ever ready to defend those committed to our care.

'Thou, my son, to whom I am rather confessing my own errors than conveying instruction, hast the activity and rectitude which I have wanted. I believe that royalty will not shake thy virtues; yet consider how different is the state of the subject and the sovereign, the prince and the king. Thou wilt soon be absolute master of vast dominions; and, what is still more dangerous, master of thyself, with nothing to control, and every thing to mislead thee. Why is prosperity more dangerous than adversity? Because it leaves no obstacle to our will; because we have no restraint upon our passions, and, having no difficulties to struggle with, fall indolently asleep in the lap of pleasure. We often owe our preservation from final ruin to temporary evils. Mayst thou be preserved in dignity and honour by gentler means, by reason and virtue!'

Thus did the emperor lament the errors of his former conduct, and warn his son against the like misfortune. Rasselas received his exhortations with respect, and soon after, with tears of filial piety, saw his remains deposited in the tomb of his ancestors.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Reflections of Rasselas on his Accession to the Throne.

RASSELAS was now, by right of succession, and with the general acclamations of the people, proclaimed emperor of Abissinia. He was not elated with the dignity; he looked round the sepulchral monuments of the royal house, and he could not, without a melancholy reflection, contemplate the tombs of a father and three brothers, who, in so short a space of time, had finished their course amidst the troubles in which the nation had been plunged.

'There,' said he to Nekayah, from whom he was never separated, 'there are the steps by which I have ascended the throne. O my sister! we are guiltless of these deaths, but let us be warned by the awful scene. Our Creator alone knows how many years, months, or days, will revolve before we become inhabitants of the silent mansion; but as his goodness permits us a free agency in this life, let us endeavour to act so as to obtain more than a bare memorial that we have existed.

'Let us not entertain an impious vanity, because we have seen and avoided the errors of our race; let us offer up our thanks to Heaven for the greatest of all blessings, that of innocence. Born with the same frailties as those whose mortal remains fill these marble structures, we might, like them, have been the sport of contending passions, and at last the victims of their fury! We should now deserve execration, where they merited compassion, if with more instruction, with better friends, and especially with the knowledge of adversity, we had erred like them. Thou, Nekayah, hast a calm and serene part to act through life,

and therefore less difficult than mine. Ye, whose ambitious wishes have long grasped at sovereign power, could you see the heart of Rasselas, you would fear to sink under the burthen of cares and duties which it imposes on you.

'Nekayah! let us leave this scene of contemplation; not the dead but the living are to be benefited or injured by the sceptre of Rasselas: if to be injured, all-powerful arbitrator of mankind! let me soon hide my remorse, though not my shame, in some lone angle of this receptacle of death.'

Having so said, he departed thoughtful. At the entrance of his palace, he met the chief of the slaves whom he had despatched to the fortress. He anxiously inquired whether Zilia and Amalphis were arrived, and listened with the greatest agitation to the following answer:

'Dread sovereign! when we were only at the distance of a day's journey from the fortress, the messenger who was charged with your letter suddenly disappeared. We searched for him long in vain; and, during this delay, received the news of our late emperor's death, and of your majesty's accession to the imperial power: we proceeded to the castle, where we related the purport of our mission, and the loss of our credentials. We informed the governor of the various events which had contributed to place you on the throne; and we found he had long supposed you to be the same hero whose presence formerly honoured his mansion; but, how great was our surprise, when we perceived that, instead of complying with our request, he delivered to us this letter; and, commanding us to assure the emperor of his inviolable fidelity, said he waited your further orders for prostrating himself at the foot of your throne!'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Letter of Zilia.

RASSELAS found the letter was from Zilia, and opened it with infinite impatience: it was conceived in these terms:

'As sincerity and candour are the ruling principles of Zilia, let my sovereign pardon me if I disclose my heart to Rasselas. Think, O prince! what must be my sensations, when I learn that fortune and thy own merit have placed thee in a rank above my fondest hopes; and forgive me if I say, beyond my wishes. Had I at first inspired thee with that confidence which my heart tells me I deserve, I should not now be compelled to act a painful, and apparently an ungrateful part; but as thy prudence was then superior to thy passion, and as, since that time, every thing has prevented thee from conveying to me thy sentiments, an explanation is now necessary, both for thy satisfaction and for my own.

'I thank thee for the assurance that thou wishest me to share thy honours; but does this wish arise from a scrupulous observance of thy promise, or from that affection which first dictated thy vows? The step thou hast taken is a proof of thy principles, but not of thy sentiments. Zilia could never doubt the honour of Rasselas; but is she assured of his love?

'Attend to me, O prince! The throne of Abissinia, even dignified as it is by thy virtues, has no charms for me, if the place which I once flattered myself of possessing in thy breast is no longer mine. Consult thyself; reflect whether the circumstances which constrained thee, during a time, to inhabit the fortress commanded by my father, did not favour an illusion; think whether, in the midst of

the serious and important scenes in which thou hast been since engaged, the image of Zilia has invariably presented itself to thy memory. Hast thou the same sentiments from which we sometimes derived the highest felicity, and often the most anxious solicitude, when wandering beneath these lofty palm trees that overlook the plains of Abissinia, and the distant mountains whence the Nile derives its source, thou wouldst often say that joy, pleasure, and content, were in this fortress, and all beyond its walls was a vast desert, or a troubled ocean? Was not this illusion, Rasselas? Hast thou not found in that desert flowers not cultivated by the hand of Zilia; in that troubled ocean, harbours not formed by her care? In the midst of thy sufferings, hast thou wished to pour thy griefs into her faithful bosom? Hast thou at least thought her worthy of thy confidence?

'If the emotions of thy heart impelled thee to summon Zilia to the court of Gonthar, she will obey their summons; she will accept happiness and Rasselas; but if she owes this message to thy former promise, she will irrevocably resign herself to retirement, to distant admiration of thy virtues, and to prayers for thy prosperity: Rasselas, thou art free: whatever is thy answer, I know it will be dictated by truth, and received with gratitude.'

It is impossible to describe the sensations with which Rasselas read this letter. Had his regard for Zilia suffered any change, it would have revived every tender thought; but the impression which her virtues had made on him was not capable of diminution. He loved her with unabating fondness and unshaken constancy: he felt and applauded the delicacy of her sentiments, and immediately despatched the same slaves to the fortress, with letters to Amalphis and Zilia, that sufficiently assured them how necessary to his happiness was their speedy arrival. He took care that a stronger guard should accompany these attendants, as he

your service, if I was to undertake the distribution of employments.

'This province more properly belongs to the sovereign, guided by the opinion of the nation, which he must study with unremitting diligence.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Rasselas takes a View of the Legislature of Abissinia.

THE sultan sent an ambassador to Rasselas in return; and, while he congratulated him on his accession to the throne, and promised to recal his forces, he proposed a treaty of alliance, the terms of which were highly injurious to the honour and interest of Abissinia. The sultan demanded, in virtue of this alliance, the cession of a considerable port in the Red Sea, which had long been the object of Turkish ambition, and was not only the greatest mart of Abissinian commerce, but the best safeguard of the coasts. This proposal had been made to the late emperor, who, by the intrigues of his ministers, was nearly led to accept it, in consideration of a large sum offered by the Turks, if he had not been timely prevented by the rebellion of his sons. The negotiation had been broken off, but a plea was still left for the sultan to resume it.

Rasselas received the ambassador with dignity, and answered him with firmness: he told him he was not conscious of any obligations to the sultan which could authorize such demands; that he renounced all alliance that was not to be formed on a footing of equality; that he knew not what might

have been his father's motive for entering into such negotiation; but that, in his situation, it would be no less abject than impolitic to become tributary to a man, whose assistance he had neither directly nor indirectly courted, and whose intentions, as they appeared from his demands, cancelled all obligation.

The ambassador had orders to denounce war, in case of a refusal; but Dinarbas, who felt himself in some measure the cause of this dispute, and who, whatever might be the conduct of the sultan on this occasion, was attached to him by all the ties of honour, requested, and, though with difficulty, obtained permission of Rasselas to accompany the ambassador, and make a last attempt on the mind of his benefactor.

Rasselas, in the mean time, with the assistance of Amalphis, prepared for war with an activity that alarmed the Turkish army, who remained within their camp, and seemed rather to fear being attacked than to have any inclination to commence hostilities.

He did not neglect the civil part of government: he found the tribunals subject to injustice, the natural consequence of that dilatoriness which gives room for prejudice to bias the minds of those magistrates who have less penetration than study, while the greater number have not even the merit of endeavouring to distinguish right from wrong, but blindly fall in with the opinion of others to avoid the trouble of thinking for themselves. Rasselas took all possible means to obviate, in a temporary manner, these evils, by pardoning the condemned when there was the least probability of innocence; while he applied himself seriously, with the assistance of the most eminent for learning and rectitude, to form a code of laws, which might for the future rather prevent crimes than chastise them, and have equal power over the magistrate and the accused. This most arduous and most

essential part of legislation at first alarmed him, on account of the labyrinths in which he found himself involved: yet, on examining the subject more closely, he believed it far less complex than he at first imagined. Virtue and vice, right and wrong, are, when truly considered, impossible to be mistaken: sophistry and prejudice may cast a veil over their features, but cannot totally conceal them from him who seeks for justice and truth; and such was Rasselas. He therefore found few obstacles in framing laws for criminal judicature, and when he had once established them, he was firm to enforce their execution: their tenor was lenient, but it was impossible to escape from their power: he soon with pleasure perceived their efficacy, by an amazing diminution in the number of crimes committed in his dominions. At the same time he found greater difficulties in forming a plan that might secure the possessions of his subjects from destructive chicanery, this part of justice being naturally involved in more perplexities, and less subject to evidence. Happily the Abissinians were not greatly addicted to these pursuits, which are rather the consequence of the degeneracy of a nation once civilized than the remains of pristine barbarism; and Rasselas not only took care that testaments and laws should be as clear as possible, but discouraged every thing that tended to introduce litigious inquiries; and, being convinced that interest was generally the promoter of these mischiefs, he industriously placed magistrates in such a situation as to be, if possible, inaccessible to bribery; while, as the simplicity of the laws put it in the power of every man to plead for himself, there should be no exterior influence, such as he had observed in other countries, among the lower officers of justice, to breathe the flame of discord into weak minds from motives of interest and avarice.

CHAPTER XL.

Priests at Court.

NEKAYAH had not forgotten the wise and good Elphenor, with whom she so often conversed during her residence at the fortress: she entreated her brother to send for him to court: 'His piety,' said she, 'will assist our devotion, and his charity direct our benevolence. I have observed, with concern, that your palace is filled with men who, under the venerable garb of priesthood, are not only subject to every passion of the courtier, but are even the great springs that set in motion all the petty intrigues and invidious cabals that infest the dwelling of princes: some who, without a blush, live in open contempt of those maxims which they are obliged to inculcate, whose ostentation vies with the dignity of the prince, and whose gaiety, not to say libertinism, equals that of your emirs, and of the officers of your guards. These are indeed greatly hurtful to religion; for, though their precepts are good, there is a want of example to enforce them; yet these have often charity and often talents, and appear less dangerous than their brethren of another class, who edify the people with the exterior of rigid virtue and warm devotion; who, alike with their airy rivals, wish for despotic influence, and who pursue it by closer, and therefore more destructive methods: these are the men most to be feared; and all are surely unworthy of the station they enjoy. We have need of some pious man who may regulate the duties of devotion, and reform the many abuses introduced: such a one, as I have often told you is to be found in Elphenor: his humility is not to be tainted by this air of infection, and his wisdom and piety are only equalled by his experience.'

'Nekayah!' answered Rasselas, 'I know the rectitude of thy heart, and the purity of thy intentions: I confess that great abuses have been introduced into the practices of worship, and greater still among the ministers; but Heaven protect me from ever erecting myself into a judge of religious causes! To rouse the sleeping demon of fanaticism in my dominions would be the greatest error I could commit in administration: this must inevitably be the case, were I to attempt a reform by authoritative measures: every command would be considered as an innovation, every regulation would become a source of controversy. In all civil, all moral considerations, controversy is useful; it maintains independency of spirit, and diffuses light over a nation; but in matters of religion, it is the most dangerous of fiends. All I mean to do, and all I can do with prudence, is to give, as far as human frailty will admit, the example of unaffected constancy in the duties of piety; to discountenance equally dissipation and superstition in the ministers of the altar; to choose for the higher offices those of the most unblemished principles, and to exclude all from any influence in civil or political affairs. As for Elphenor, of whom I believe what you have told me, I will, in consequence of that belief, promote him to one of the first dignities of his profession, where his example and his precepts may enlighten and improve the district committed to his care; but I am persuaded, when my sister reflects, she will agree with me, that more cannot, and ought not to be expected from a man of his function.'

In consequence of this determination, a message was despatched to the fortress, inviting Elphenor to court, and assuring him of the intentions of the emperor in his favour, from a conviction of the good which he would diffuse in a situation of more extensive influence. This mandate was accompanied by a letter from Nekayah, in which she re-

turned him thanks for the consolation he had afforded her by his visits at the fortress, and expressed her desire of seeing him a witness of her happiness, as he had been of her affliction.

CHAPTER XLI.

History of Elphenor.

THE messenger soon returned to Nekayah with the following letter:

'THINK not, most esteemed lady! that I am insensible of the honour which your royal brother would confer on me, or of the kindness with which you repay what was merely a duty, consoling virtue in affliction.

'Neither suppose me neglectful of my sacred ministry, if I decline to act in a more extensive sphere, where Heaven might bless my endeavours with diffusing good over an ampler space than the narrow limits of this fortress.

'Believe me, princess! neither indolence nor ingratitude prevent me from accepting this splendid offer. Vouchsafe to peruse my history: it is neither long nor eventful. I did not choose to relate it during your residence here; your mind then required rather to be calmed than agitated by adventitious impressions.

'I am descended from no ignoble family, and followed the example of my forefathers, by serving the emperor in the field. I was crowned with conquest in a successful engagement, and should probably have continued the pursuits of military ho-

nours, had it not been for a calamity, the remembrance of which time has never been able to efface. I loved and was beloved;—but, at the moment in which I was to have been united to the object of my affection, an awful event separated us—a flash of lightning reduced my bride to ashes as she received my vows at the altar. I will not expatiate on so dreadful a circumstance, but leave the heart of Nekayah to judge of my feelings. After a long conflict between despair and resignation, I sought consolation in visiting and comforting the afflicted: I embraced the sacred ministry, and have consecrated my life to Heaven, which forbade me to seek a refuge in the grave.

'I have been repaid for my sufferings by the blessing conferred on my endeavours: the flock, of which I am become the shepherd, love me, and find in my advice are source against mortifications and adversity. Let those who have, from choice alone, dedicated themselves to the immediate service of the Divinity, be promoted to the supreme dignities of our order: in me it would be the height of ingratitude to abandon that duty, which has been so long the only alleviation of my sorrows.

'I have not always, it is true, remained in the state of tranquillity in which you found me: my mind, naturally active, and my ambition, once boundless, led me first to seek fame, and to deafen by tumult the voice of affliction. I endeavoured by my eloquence to distinguish myself at Gonthar, and might then have obtained the honours which you now offer me; but after viewing the splendid scene, I found it more dazzling than real: I discovered that it would not make me amends for the serenity I must relinquish. I felt that my natural sensibility might, in a narrower sphere, be turned to the consolation of those individuals who should stand in need of my assistance; but that a heart blasted by misfortune was not capable of great

pursuits, and that tenderness could never happily be exchanged for ambition. I retired to this fortress, where I have passed near half a century. Can I abandon my children, when my age and my declining health require that I should lose no time in giving them proofs of my affection? If my prayers can avail, I offer them up sincerely for the prosperity of my sovereign, for that of Nekayah, and of Dinarbas. This young hero has ever been the object of my regard; I watched his growing virtues: I once thought they were recompensed by a glorious death, before he had known misfortune. I now see they are rewarded in a different manner: it has pleased Heaven that he should contribute to the preservation of his country, and that he should be crowned with glory and with love: few, very few, can hope for so singular a blessing! May you both long enjoy it! and ever recal to your memory, that Heaven seems to have particularly distinguished you, because your passions were made subservient to the voice of reason and virtue! May you, as the greatest felicity I can wish you, be taken both at the same instant to the blissful habitations of permanent security! For, in the midst of transport, Nekayah must remember, that all happiness in this world is transitory, except virtue; and that while she retains her steady attachment to that heavenly guide, she can want no earthly director to point out to her the celestial enjoyments of piety and beneficence.'

CHAPTER XLII.

The Utility of Learning.

THE cares of government had too much engrossed Rasselas to permit him to enjoy, as formerly, the conversation of Imlac and the astronomer. One evening, as these were assembled with Nekayah, Zilia, and Pekuah, in a small palace of the emperor, the gardens of which overlooked the river, Rasselas joined them, with Amalphis.

'You are not to think, my friends,' said the monarch, 'that your society is less dear to me than formerly, or that my heart is less sensible of the charms of literary and social converse. I have found an empire in such confusion, that every branch of its goverment demands immediate attention; but I hope it will not be long before I may again enjoy the delights I have ever found in your company. I shall likewise require your assistance for the benefit of my subjects: you have talents to be useful; and a long intercourse with you has convinced me that your hearts are warm in every virtuous pursuit. You are not unacquainted with my notions on the necessity of learning in a state: the Abissinians in general want neither acuteness nor application, but their studies have hitherto been wrong directed: as a proof of this, we have only to consider the famous libraries which are the source of vanity to our nation, and of envy to our neighbours. Of what are they chiefly composed? Of manuscripts, which have no other merit than the claims of dubious antiquity; treatises on mystical devotion or judicial astrology, and annals of nations from whom we can gain little instruction, because they were not further advanced than ourselves. I know, Imlac,

you already hear me with impatience, and would except, in my general censure, the beautiful and affecting pastorals composed by the wandering Arab, from the view of simple nature, and the ideas analogous to his state of life; but these, you will yourself confess, do not much improve the learning of a people.'

'If they do not immediately improve the learning,' answered Imlac, 'they form the taste, which I hold to be a considerable step towards it.'

'I too,' said the astronomer, 'must speak in favour of a part of your libraries, consisting of numberless volumes, which prove that the revolutions of the planets, and the division of the stars into constellations, were known to the ancients, and that modern astronomy is rather a revival than a discovery, perhaps even an imperfect revival. Probably these remaining treasures of antiquity may not be sufficient to explain to us wholly the system of the heavens; had they been so, the sages, who examined them, would have been capable of putting an end to the doubts which still arise amidst our most penetrating inquiries. But they convince us of the application and researches of former ages; they lead us to wish for a knowledge of the productions of times still more remote, and to accompany that wish with endeavours to investigate the origin of a science, founded, it is true, on nature and observation, but not susceptible of perfection without great labour and astonishing perspicacity. I do not mean from this to infer that astronomy, though one of the noblest of studies, deserves the immediate attention of a monarch, who has to form an infant nation: there are other parts of the mathematics far more essential, for which public masters should be established; such are the mechanics, hydraulics, and in short, every thing that contributes to introduce simplicity in the construction of machines, to spare labour, and to improve agriculture: all which advantages can no other-

wise be attained than by a knowledge of the mathematics.'

'I shall be always ready,' answered Rasselas, 'to promote in my dominions the study of the sciences; and, though thy modesty has been sparing of praise to thy favourite contemplations, I shall not be neglectful of them. For thee, Imlac, thou hast long known my veneration for learning: no instruction equals that obtained by the perusal of history; but how far dost thou think this study should be carried by the generality of mankind? Are not most men devoted to pass their lives in one spot; and is not the history of their own country, if they mean to be useful to it, the only one necessary for them?'

CHAPTER XLIII.

The same Subject continued.

'I AM far from being of that opinion,' said Imlac: 'he who would confine his knowledge to one particular kingdom, would fancy it, as experience often shows us, superior to every other, and consequently think nothing could be added to its advantages: his ideas thus restrained would be incapable of forming extensive designs or plans of general utility. We cannot learn how to act in the various circumstances of life, without considering various examples; and how can we find all these in the limited boundaries of one country? We must have very little judgment if we cannot discriminate those parts of history which are applicable to our situation; and, though we would not be Romans at Constantinople, or Abissinians at Venice, we

may, even from conditions directly opposite to our own, gain instruction and improvement, as we receive by reflection the light of the sun, when its rays are directed to the moon. General history is, therefore, in my opinion, useful to all, and for this purpose it is necessary to have a competent knowledge of different languages, without which we are obliged to see through the false medium of translation; or, what is still worse, to rely implicitly on the faith of our own historians. The Abissinians have few works of this nature; and even if they had many, it is most probable they would be infected with the same partiality and prejudices which we find in the volumes of other nations. The only method of discovering truth is to compare these different narrations; to study the character of the people described, and of the author who describes them; to enter into their views, and adopt their feelings, but not suffer ourselves to be led astray, either by the charms of eloquence or by any apparent connexion with our own systems and interests.

'Poetry, as it teaches the knowledge of the heart, and developes the powers of the imagination, is not only pleasing, but instructive in the great study of morality, the most essential of all, that to which all learning tends, and without which learning is of no avail.'

'I am perfectly persuaded,' replied Rasselas, 'that such is the use, and such the necessity of learning to polish the manners, and rectify the principles of a nation, that I shall ever consider it as my duty to encourage all men of letters, and to distinguish more particularly with my protection those who by their talents and assiduity have acquired the glorious pre-eminence of enlightening and improving their fellow-citizens.'

Amalphis smiled at the expression of Rasselas; which Imlac observing, said, 'I see Amalphis is not of opinion that men of letters are always the

promoters of learning, if I am not mistaken in the interpretation of that smile.'

'You are right, Imlac,' said Amalphis: 'I honour and esteem men of letters, while they retain that character; but when they make their talents subservient either to base adulation or to the rage of party, they lose all their merit in my eyes: besides, their petty jealousies are more disgraceful than those of women, because we always expect that some philosophy and elevation of thought should be found in those minds that have been cultivated by study and instruction. I may safely say this to you, Imlac, whose pen has neither flattered nor insulted, and who have only known envy by being the object of it.'

'I hope, in some measure,' said Rasselas, 'to guard my literary subjects against the practice of adulation, by showing them it would be lost on me; and I may perhaps diminish the fuel of envy, by giving equal encouragement to those who equally deserve. If envy could be destroyed, satire and malevolence would be unknown; for no man takes pains to dispraise him, from whom he fears no competition: but, if an angel reigned in Abissinia, he could not remedy this evil, and all my endeavours will only serve to palliate what can never be eradicated.

'There is another circumstance which Amalphis might have remarked, and which only his partiality to me has omitted. Most sovereigns, who have been particularly attached to letters, have given themselves wholly up to the delightful seduction, and have neglected their council-chamber and their camp, for their closet and their library. He who sacrifices his time, even to innocent pursuits, when they call him off from his duty, is criminal; but he is praiseworthy when he makes these pursuits tend to the great object which he must ever keep in view. I must therefore sedulously arm myself against the charms of music, painting, sculpture,

and architecture, the embellishments of life, the delight of rational minds and active imaginations. A monarch should in this imitate the sun, whose rays bestow colour and radiancy on the flowers which spring up beneath his influence, but who stops not his fiery chariot to contemplate their beauty, lest he should endanger the safety of the universe, to which it is his essential office to communicate light and heat. Such should be the conduct of the prince; in this, as in many things, less happy than his subjects, who may innocently employ their hours to attain perfection in whatever study they have made their peculiar choice, while he should have a general knowledge of all, without sacrificing his life to any in particular, however useful or pleasing.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

Education.

'I HAVE been listening attentively to all your conversation,' said Pekuah; 'and nothing but my respect for the emperor would have kept me from interrupting Amalphis, when he spoke in so contemptuous a manner of the jealousies of women. Our sovereign thinks the conduct of the patron may increase or diminish the envy that subsists between men of letters, and I am persuaded that the jealousy of women is fomented by the influence of men.'

'I believe,' answered Amalphis, 'that none are more sensible of the merit of women than the military man, who can best defend them, and who, if he has any good principles, will be tender of their

honour, because he feels the nicety of his own. It is true, I spoke with some contempt of the jealousy of women: whatever is the cause, we know it equally reigns over the recluse, whom we should suppose devoted to meditation, and the thoughtless, whom we might imagine busied only in gaiety. Cast your eyes on a company of children; they have not to accuse men of raising the passion of envy by flattery, yet never does it operate more forcibly than in their infant breasts: all causes are capable of bringing to light the fatal evil with those in whom it is unfortunately inherent, and none but great minds are totally exempt from it.

'The good or the bad dispositions of women have a very extensive influence in society; and could we be so fortunate as to discover the motives of what we call by the general name of caprice, we might probably succeed in preventing the effects. Empires have been ruined by the jealousies of women; to them are owing many of the great revolutions that have decided the fate of nations; and if we join to theirs the sacerdotal influence, I fancy we shall prove that statesmen and conquerors have often been simply the machines put in motion by weak hands and versatile heads.'

'If women,' said Imlac, 'frequently do great hurt by interposing in affairs which seem foreign to their sex, how useful are they when they turn their thoughts to the education of their children, and by these domestic and natural cares, provide happiness in future, not only for themselves, but for their country! The first impressions are difficult to efface, and the first impressions are given by women; their mistaken tenderness has formed cowards, and their capricious anger has reared up tyrants. If, therefore, they deserve our censure for the ill qualities which their children have imbibed from them, let us not deny them our praises for many of the virtues which make men an honour to their age and to their nation.'

'When I think on education,' said Rasselas, 'I wander in a labyrinth, from which I know not how to extricate myself, and yet every delay to pursue this important subject seems to accuse me of criminal omission. From faulty or neglected education springs the evils which I am labouring to correct at present, and which I would endeavour to obviate for the future.

'Private education, I believe, in general, to be pernicious to men, because it is the way to perpetuate the failings of the race from one generation to another; for how can he teach wisely who has not been wisely taught? It seems more expedient that the public should form those by whose service it is to be benefited—but what is the public? It is a name without a determined idea, in which, though all individuals are interested, few think themselves immediately concerned. If so small a number of parents are found capable of educating their own children, are we to expect that more attention will be paid to this duty by persons who have no tie for the performance of it but that of general utility, or self-interest?'

'The great advantages of public education,' said Imlac, 'are these: proper rules are formed, and blind tenderness is not likely to interfere with their execution: the children have the benefit of reciprocal emulation, and of some initiation into a knowledge of the world: this, I own, is too frequently attended by an early acquaintance with vice; but could not this be remedied by a prudent choice of masters? The greatest model of this sort is the Lacedæmonian school, which was imperfect only in what was ill-planned from the first: the institution was rigorously followed, and therefore if wise rules are made, they can be strictly observed.'

'I depend greatly on thee, Imlac,' returned the prince, 'for the formation of such rules; thou hast not only read, but seen much; and the great fault

I have remarked in those who preside over the education of youth is their total ignorance of those scenes for which they are to prepare their disciples.'

CHAPTER XLV.

False Pretensions to Knowledge.

'AS for myself,' said Pekuah, 'I would willingly undertake to teach children what little I have myself attained: I know no happiness in knowledge without communication, but I must be permitted to choose my scholars: to instruct those who have genius is delightful, but to drive ideas into minds incapable of making them spread or fructify is a torment which none but wretched preceptors know.'

'Lady,' said the astronomer, 'all are not so happy in pupils as the Arab and myself; yet I know too well the sweetness of your temper not to believe you would think your pains well rewarded, if they succeeded in fixing the giddy to application, or in enlivening the apathy of dulness.'

'Such a task,' interrupted Nekayah, 'is worthy of your beneficence and talents, but I own myself of the opinion of Pekuah—who can make feathers solid or lead elastic?'

'Madam,' replied the astronomer, 'though their qualities cannot be changed, they may be directed to useful purposes.'

'True,' said Amalphis, 'the feather may, by being applied to the arrow, guide its intended flight; and the lead, formed into a shot, will reach the destined mark from the musket: this may be called their education, without which the feather would

have fluttered useless in the air, and the lead remained unheeded on the ground. The misfortune is, that weak and sordid minds are sometimes employed in great attempts; to this fatal error we owe thoughtless or indolent statesmen, and tedious or delusive writers. It were much to be wished that servile offices could be left to mean capacities, and that none should act the first parts on the great theatre of the world but those who have talents to fill the character. All men may be made useful, if they are placed in their proper station, and their faculties directed to those pursuits of which they are most capable.'

'As for utility,' resumed Imlac, 'few parents reflect whether the education which they give their sons will make them serviceable to their country, or to their fellow-creatures: they wish that it may enable them to shine in society, and they early inspire them with a desire of showing all the learning of which they are possessed. As vanity has been the motive of his education, the same disposition attends the unfortunate youth through life: perhaps he finds himself unequal to support, without further study, the reputation of that instruction which he pretends to have received: he therefore seeks the resource of nomenclature, syllabus, and compilation, which keep him for ever immersed in ignorance and impertinence.'

Such are the steps of those who affect knowledge, members of society far more insupportable than the rustic or the trifler; men who have no original ideas, no solid erudition, and yet mix boldly with the learned, while they impose on the untaught. Even serious application, diligent study, and sound judgment, must wait long in the vestibule of learning, before they can be admitted to her sanctuary.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Conversation turns on various Matters.

IMLAC here interrupted his discourse, on perceiving that Rasselas was not listening to him, but that his thoughts were employed on some idea which he seemed not unwilling to communicate.

'I was thinking,' said the prince, 'how miserable we should be, if Heaven was to grant us what we have fondly desired at a former period of our lives. Do you remember, while we were detained in Egypt by the inundations of the Nile, that Pekuah, delighted with the convent of St. Anthony, wished to be prioress of an order of pious maidens, and there fix her invariable residence? yet Pekuah is contented with the diversity of life that has since been her lot, and would not, I fancy, be willing to relinquish the court of the princess, where her mind enjoys rational amusement in the society of Amalphis, Imlac, and her astronomical instructor; and where the liveliness of her wit finds constant exercise in the different groupes that compose the motley scene in the mansion of a sovereign.'

'Certainly,' answered Pekuah, 'I have at present no wish for retirement: while I was lately imprisoned with the princess of the valley, I often wondered how I should have ever desired to become the inhabitant of a monastery, and reflected where I could have found nuns whose society would have been comparable to that of Nekayah; and yet, even with that society so dear to me, I longed to be again at liberty.'

'And you, sister,' said Rasselas, 'would you be greatly delighted, if Heaven shall make you directress of a college of learned ladies? and would you renounce the society of Dinarbas, and your friends, for the pleasure of discoursing with the

aged, and instructing the young? As for myself, I wished for a little kingdom, and was ever extending the limits of my fancied dominions: I now find the government of Abissinia an arduous task; and though nothing should induce me to renounce what it is my duty to retain, I see in the friendship of Zilia, and the esteem of those around me, the summit of my happiness, a happiness totally independent on the charms of royalty. Such were our wishes, Nekayah! thou and Pekuah should return thanks to Heaven that yours were not accomplished, and I, that blessings were bestowed on me, which alone could make the accomplishment of mine supportable.'

'I feel the force of your observation, my brother,' answered the princess; 'but circumstances are perpetually changing, and we are not responsible for the influence which they may have on our minds. Imlac and the astronomer, it is true, were wiser; they made no choice, because they had experienced how little we know in this world what is best for us. I believe, however, we may venture to affirm, that they who condemn themselves to irrevocable retirement are greatly deceived in their expectations; and if their repentance is not manifest, it is because pride will not allow them to own it.

'I think I should have been sufficiently mistress of myself to bear with resignation the misfortunes of which I had once the gloomy prospect; but I am certain I could never have hoped for so great felicity as Providence has been pleased unexpectedly to grant me.'

'It is singular,' said the astronomer, 'that those whose imagination is most lively are generally the most subject to occasional disgust and dejection, and consequently most led to seek a refuge in solitude; whether their spirits are more worn by greater exertion, or whether a mind, naturally active, takes a stronger impulse whatever way it tends.'

'I believe,' said Pekuah, 'such minds want constant employment, and feel more pain from inaction than from misfortune: indeed, listless indifference is the most insupportable of all situations. I know, that when I am deprived of the society of those who can entertain and instruct me, I prefer the intercourse of beings whose follies or singularities are of the ridiculous kind to those in whom I can find nothing to blame or commend, who weary me with insipidity, and yet afford no theme for amusing my friends at their expense.'

'The arms of ridicule are very dangerous, Pekuah,' said the princess: 'I confess thou hast often used them with dexterity, and I cannot deny that I have taken pleasure in thy sallies; but consider what pain they may give to the innocent, what enemies they may create among the vindictive!'

'And yet, if we were deprived of ridicule,' said Imlac, 'we should lose much of the power of wit, and much of the influence of general opinion—two invisible monarchs, who govern with sufficient justice, and who, if they do not prevent crimes, at least may reform errors.'

CHAPTER XLVII.

Simplicity.

'IMLAC,' said Rasselas, 'I have often observed with what skill those who possess the advantages of a superior education and knowledge of the world can, without apparent incivility, lessen, in his own opinion, that man who has intruded himself on their company, or who has abused the privileges they have allowed him: he has no rea-

son to complain, yet he feels himself uneasy in their presence, and is awed into respect without the shame of reproof.

'This is one of the many advantages of good-breeding—a quality which has perhaps more power than any other, since it will for a time conceal even want of talents and want of virtue. How necessary is it therefore to acquire this pleasing pre-eminence, without which the most essential endowments are abashed before inferior merit. Politeness may be called the portrait of virtue, and its resemblance is so perfect, that nothing but the solidity of the original is wanting. Ceremony and affectation are poor imitators of true good breeding, which is easy and simple, like nature itself. If I was to form a system, it would be that of simplicity; it should pervade all works of imagination, all inquiries of science, all performances of the chisel and pencil, all behaviour, and all dress. Carry this idea even to the most awful height, what is simplicity, but truth, the great basis of virtue and religion? When I call this a system, it is only to comply with the common mode of speech, which would make of the most natural ideas a philosophical discovery. Simplicity is the child of nature: the love of it seems implanted in us by Providence; yet all the labour of erring mortals is to depart from this great and open road, and to return to it when they have seen the fallacy of winding paths and doubtful mazes.'

'My brother,' said Nekayah, 'when you extol with reason the universal merit of simplicity, you certainly do not mean to imply a neglect of combination of ideas in the works of art or science, or a neglect of common forms in dress or manners.'

'So far from it,' replied the prince, 'that as nature is varied, so must be the imitation or investigation of it; and to affect singularity, either in

habit or behaviour, would be wandering from the very rule that I have been proposing.'

'To explain this,' said Imlac, 'we need only have recourse to our own feelings and perceptions: the variety of nature is infinite; but it is harmonized by general effect. The verdant leaves of the trees participate of the azure of the sky, and their trunks of the colouring of the earth: the most discordant sounds in music, the most distant ideas in metaphysics, are combined by gradation, or opposed by contrast; yet even in contrast there is an imperceptible connexion that unites the whole. Without one great plan, to which all is subservient, our general conduct in life, and our finest productions of art or genius, are like a republic without laws, or a monarchy without a king.

'Simplicity, by those whose wayward minds are not susceptible of its charms, is supposed to exclude pomp and elegance; yet what is pomp without dignity, and elegance without grace? Both are the offspring of nature, and sisters to simplicity.'

'I know,' said Zilia, 'that no other power obtains access to our hearts: the various inflexions of voice, the painful efforts of the musician, who shows his art in deviating from nature, excite our wonder; but the nightingale, and he whose notes are equally pathetic and simple, inspire us with more than admiration.'

'If our sovereign introduces simplicity at court,' said Pekuah, 'what will become of the numberless artists, merchants, and other abettors of luxury, that owe their chief support to the inhabitants of this mansion, and to the influence of their example over the rest of the nation?'

'The circulation of riches, for the gratification of pride, indolence, or the love of pleasure,' replied the prince, 'is, in my opinion, detrimental to a kingdom. I have often thought, that every ingot, stored by commerce in the treasury of a monarch, has cost him the virtue and principles of

a subject. The romantic warmth of youth may, perhaps, make me judge too severely; and it is possible that commerce may, in some nations, be carried on without insidious treaties between the respective governments, and without unjust attempts of individuals to make their fortunes at the expense of their neighbours. Though I love virtue too well not to wish that I could be persuaded of its general influence in every station of life, yet I shall never consider luxury at best but as a necessary evil, and its dependent, commerce, as a very dangerous trial for the principles of its followers.—Notwithstanding this conviction, I cannot abolish either: money is wanted in all states, that they may not become the prey of their richer neighbours; commerce must therefore be encouraged; but it is our duty to endeavour, as far as we are able, to prevent fraud and monopoly. Were it possible for any monarch to render a people perfectly happy in themselves, it would not be sufficient; he must make the whole world participate in the great reformation, or he could never preserve his own subjects in security. We may indulge ideal speculation, but experience shows us this humiliating truth, that all we can do is to diminish evil and to promote good, by the means that are given us: perfect justice can alone be exercised by the Divinity.'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Dinarbas returns from the Court of the Sultan.

THE conversation was here interrupted by the arrival of Dinarbas from Constantinople. He was received with great joy by the sovereign, by his

father, Nekayah, and Zilia. But Amalphis was impatient to know the success of his embassy: he considered that the honour of his son was engaged, and anxiously entreated him to begin his narration.

'When I arrived at Constantinople,' said Dinarbas, 'I found the sultan highly incensed at the independent answer of the Abissinian monarch, and displeased with me for not having warmly seconded his proposal of a treaty: he declared that nothing should persuade him to relinquish pretensions which he thought justly founded on the assistance he had furnished: he said, that Rasselas owed to him alone the throne of Abissinia, and could not, without ingratitude, refuse to comply with his demands.

'In answer to this, I observed, that when I had first recourse to him for assistance, the prince was totally ignorant of my intentions; that afterwards, the army marched without my knowledge, and expressly contrary to the wishes of Rasselas: that a happy change had indeed been effected by their intervention, but that the whole nation joined in restoring their former sovereign; and that, had Rasselas, instead of Menas, headed the troops of Abissinia, the victory might not have been so easily obtained.

'The sultan would not listen to my remonstrances: he denounced war against my country, but accompanied his denunciation with a desire that I would remain in his council, and retain the government of Servia; both which I refused, and prepared to depart from Constantinople, offended with myself for having indulged the romantic idea, that a man at the head of a powerful and submissive nation would listen to the voice of justice, against what he supposed his own interest: I said to myself that I had mistaken in him magnificence for generosity, and splendid professions for honourable sentiments.

'Being on the point of leaving his dominions, I again requested an audience, that I might testify my gratitude for the favours which he had conferred on me, and my regret for not being able to retain them without infidelity to my natural sovereign: he seemed affected, and, commanding his attendants to withdraw, spoke to me in the following manner:

'Dinarbas! I love thee, and will say to thee, what I would not say to any other man. I believe thee—read these letters, and tell me whether they are genuine.

'So saying, he gave into my hands the letters which your majesty, the princess, and myself, had sent by the messenger to my father and Zilia, the loss of which we always suspected to have been owing to the Turks. These letters, continued the sultan, have just been delivered to me—I wait thy answer.

'I easily convinced him that they were really sent from the court of Abissinia: on which he made me this reply:

'Dinarbas! I perceive that truth, honour, and integrity, ought not only in individuals, but in governments, to be the great ruling principles of action. I learn by these letters the real sentiments of thy sovereign, his innocence in his steps to the throne, and the firmness of his character: were I to make war against him, the event would at least be doubtful on my side, and the disgrace inevitable. His army is better disciplined than mine, and I know not whether any superiority of number would weigh against the attachment of his troops to a warlike sovereign and a tender father: I cannot boast of either of these titles, nor have I energy sufficient to deserve them; but the fatal delusion of flattery, which seems to have enchanted this imperial seat, has not so totally blinded me as to prevent me from revering in others the virtues of which I am incapable; besides, my own interest

engages me to retain one honest man in my dominions, and to cultivate a friendship with one disinterested prince. Return to Abissinia, offer my alliance to thy monarch on equal terms, lead back my army, and teach me how to govern.

'I was astonished and affected at the sultan's discourse. Does not this man deserve to be virtuous?'

CHAPTER XLIX.

Marriages of Rasselas and Nekayah.

'THE interception of our letters,' said Rasselas, 'has then informed the sultan of the purity of my intentions, and of the loyalty of my subjects. How frequently have I wished that my inmost thoughts could be known! Guilt and innocence so often wear the same aspect, that far from fearing the secret emissaries who may be placed to observe my conduct, I only desire that they should report the truth.

'To thee, Dinarbas, we owe the tranquillity of the empire; and in thy friendship I have found more than a recompense for all my searches after happiness; but how can I estimate the felicity that is promised me in the society of my Zilia! A felicity which was once beyond my hopes, but without which I now could not exist. I remember that I had formerly with Nekayah a long debate on marriage, in which we could not decide whether early or late unions, whether sympathy or reason, were most conducive to conjugal happiness. We have, by a singular course of events, been permitted to enjoy at once these opposite advantages: the warmest affection has been confirmed by the

severest trials: surely we have before us the fairest prospect, a prospect to which neither interested views nor transitory passion can lay claim.'

'In this,' said the astronomer, 'your virtues are rewarded: he who wants firmness deserves not success; reason can be no enemy to that love, which is founded on virtue, and supported by constancy.'

The nuptials of Rasselas and Zilia, Dinarbas and Nekayah, were celebrated without ostentatious magnificence, but with a dignity becoming their rank. The poor had the greatest share in the rejoicings, because the superfluous treasures, consumed on similar occasions, were distributed among them. It was decided, that Dinarbas should in a few weeks conduct back the army of the sultan into his dominions; that he should, with Nekayah, fix his residence in Servia, but that their visits to Abissinia should be frequent. Pekuah was to accompany the princess, and the astronomer, delighted in varying the scene, since he had tasted the charms of society, begged leave to visit the states of Dinarbas, who, with Nekayah, gladly acceded to his proposal: his knowledge and his virtues made them revere him as a father.

Rasselas concluded an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the sultan; repaid the expenses of the troops, and graced the officers with distinguished marks of his favour.

Amalphis, honoured and beloved by his son and sovereign, applied all his care to form the Abissinian army. Imlac was no less attentive to the institutions of Rasselas for promoting learning in his dominions. Both enjoyed the confidence of the monarch: but neither did Amalphis receive the memorials of the officers of the army, nor Imlac the dedications of the poets; every matter was first referred to the emperor, who consulted those whom he had appointed to be the heads of the several departments of the state, before he gave

his answer, but did not always decide according to their judgment.

Zilia never interfered in public business: her voice often directed establishments of charity, and her taste frequently decided on the protection to be given to genius.

Innocent gaiety, and rational amusements, were introduced by her into the court of Abissinia; her dress was simple and elegant, and consisted of the manufactures of the country. She distinguished no woman as her favourite, but showed peculiar regard to all those whose conduct was exemplary, without affectation, and whose minds were well informed, without vain pretensions to a display of learning. Her beneficence was extended to all; and if she showed any partiality, it was to the orphans and widows of those who had served their country in battle; for she did not forget that she was the daughter of Amalphis: she knew the heart-felt misery of that disappointed hope and poverty, which honest pride forbids to own; the lot of many families, whose chiefs have bravely supported the honour of their prince and country.

CHAPTER L.

Visit to the Happy Valley.

BEFORE the departure of Dinarbas and Nekayah, Rasselas and his friends made a visit to the happy valley. The prince and his sister wished to review those scenes which had been to them the objects of satiety at one time, and of uneasiness at another: they returned to every spot which remembrance had dignified, and rejoiced to contemplate

those situations which were once irksome to their imagination.

Rasselas had only one brother left, a youth whose education he recommended to the care of Imlac; he freed the princesses, his sisters, from the confinement of the valley, and gave them permission either to remain there, or return with him to Gonthar. He commanded the massy gates that closed the entrance of the valley to be destroyed; the dancers, musicians, and other professors of arts, merely of amusement, to be dismissed with pensions, and liberty to be granted to all.

The prince, followed by his companions, led Zilia to the entrance of the cavern, through which he had first made his escape. 'Consider this cavity,' said he, 'and think what must be the grateful transports that glow in my breast ——; Nekayah! Imlac! Pekuah! is not our search rewarded? Let us return thanks to Heaven for having inspired us with that active desire of knowledge, and contempt of indolence, that have blessed us with instruction, with friendship, and with love. It is true that we have been singularly favoured by Providence; and few can expect, like us, to have their fondest wishes crowned with success; but even when our prospects were far different, our search after happiness had taught us resignation: let us, therefore, warn others against viewing the world as a scene of inevitable misery. Much is to be suffered in our journey through life; but conscious virtue, active fortitude, the balm of sympathy, and submission to the Divine Will, can support us through the painful trial. With them every station is the best; without them prosperity is a feverish dream, and pleasure a poisoned cup.

'Youth will vanish, health will decay, beauty fade, and strength sink into imbecility; but if we have enjoyed their advantages, let us not say there is no good, because the good in this world is not permanent: none but the guilty are excluded from

at least temporary happiness; and if he whose imagination is lively, and whose heart glows with sensibility, is more subject than others to poignant grief and maddening disappointment, surely he will confess that he has moments of ecstacy and consolatory reflection, that repay him for all his sufferings.

'Let us now return to the busy scene of action where we are called, and endeavour, by the exercise of our several duties, to deserve a continuation of the blessings which Providence has granted, and on the use of which depends all our present, all our future felicity.'

THE END.

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