

is generally lost in Trifles ; the Mind is conscious of having acted suitably to the Dignity of it's Nature, and for this Reason feels that refined Delicacy of Pleasure, and that agreeable Complacency, which is infinitely preferable to any short-lived Blaze of Mirth and Laughter.

I would not be thought an Enemy to the Graces and Embellishments of *Wit*, though I think *Religion* and *Learning* ought to take Place of them. The Imagination does indeed sometimes get the Ascendent of Reason ; and a surprizing Brightness of Thought has been observed in some, where a steady Judgment and nervous Sense have been wanting : As Diamond-Mines are said to be often found in loose, sandy Ground. But *Wit*, under due Regulations, and in it's proper Sphere, may be of no small Service ; and I have known some Men, who would have embittered the Conversation by a Singularity of Carriage, and a morose Reservedness of Temper, dextrously rallied into good Humour and Complaisance, and forced to sacrifice to the Graces. The Waters of *Marah* (if I may use a Scripture Simile) were very bitter, and disagreeable to the Taste, till the Prophet, by throwing in some Salt, rendered them sweet and palatable. If *Wit* instead of keeping within it's proper Province, be misemployed to keep Vice in Countenance, and decry Men of Merit ; nothing can be of a more dangerous and destructive Tendency. If I should express myself with more Warmth against this Abuse of it, I should be very excusable, since to this was, in a great Measure, owing the Disgrace of the greatest Man *England* could boast of ; in whom were happily reconciled the disinterested Spirit and Sincerity of the Patriot, and the deep Penetration and consummate Abilities of the Statesman : When that faithful Counsellor represented to King CHARLES II, the Blackness of his darling Vices, which the Wits of the Age had palliated under the softer Name of Gallantries ; the Duke of BUCKINGHAM, and other Courtiers of the same Stamp, took Occasion to ridicule, expose, and mimic him before his Majesty ; and, with an Air of Contempt, used to call him the King's School-Master. In the *Apology* for himself, which he left behind him when he fled beyond Sea, he complains heavily of some, who had reviled all Counsels and Counsellors ; who had turned Things serious and sacred into Ridicule, and taken all Means to render him ungrateful both to the King and People.

Is a Man possessed with a great many shining Qualities ? If he have but one remarkable Foible, if, like *Achilles*, he be only vulnerable in one Part, these Gentlemen, like *Paris*, (so dextrous Archers are they) will be sure to hit that Place, and too successfully wound his Reputation. Let then all Topicks of *Defamation*, and let all *Abuse of Wit* be exploded. I have always been mightily pleased with that amiable, and, I hope, just Character, which a celebrated Writer gives Mr. CONGREVE ; namely, that, after a joyful Evening spent in his Company, no Man could ever reflect upon any Expression of Mr. CONGREVE's that dwelt upon him with Pain and Uneasiness. A good-natured Wit will never think, that nothing but the Poignancy of *Raillery* and *Scandal* can give Life and Spirit to Conversation ; whereas unhappy Tempers, that are eaten up with Spleen and Melancholly take a sullen Satisfaction in blasting Reputations. And it must be owned, that they have very often an unlucky Turn this Way ; malignant Glances of Satyr, like Flashes of Lightning, coming generally from a dark, gloomy Sky.

III<sup>dly</sup>, Upon the Manner of handling the Subject Matter of Conversation.

The great Secret of Conversation is, to aim rather at being agreeable, than to appear shining, in Discourse. If we should trace the Faults and Defects of Conversation up to their original Source, I believe most of them might be resolved into the Neglect of this Rule. Some are still endeavouring to raise the Admiration of the Company, instead of gaining their Love. This kindles a Spirit of Contention and Strife for the Superiority ; and the Affectation of the *Witt* and *Scholar* destroys the Complaisance and Benevolence of the Gentleman and Friend. If a Man should happen to be of Superior Abilities to the rest of the Society ; he should, for that Reason, put himself upon a Foot of Equality with them ; condescend to the Level of their Capacities, and should not set his shining Qualities in a full, glaring Light, but rather modestly cast them in Shades.

To the Neglect of the Rule which I have mentioned, it is owing, that some are so very ostentatious of their Reading. This is a certain Sign, that their Learning sits but loosely about them ; and, if I may use so homely an Allusion, I would say, they have not digested those Notions very well, which they are so apt to throw