

to keep danger at a distance. By timely caution and suspicious vigilance those desires may be repressed, to which indulgence would soon give absolute dominion; those enemies may be overcome, which, when they have been a while accustomed to victory, can no longer be resisted.

Nothing is more fatal to happiness or virtue, than that confidence which flatters us with an opinion of our own strength, and by assuring us of the power of retreat precipitates us into hazard. Some may safely venture further than others into the regions of delight, lay themselves more open to the golden shafts of pleasure, and advance nearer to the residence of the Syrens; but he that is best armed with constancy and reason is yet vulnerable in one part or other, and to every man there is a point fixed, beyond which, if he passes, he will not easily return. It is certainly most wise, as it is most safe, to stop before he touches the utmost limit, since every step of advance will more and more entice him to go forward, till he shall at last enter the recesses of voluptuousness, and sloth and despondency close the passage behind him.

To deny early and inflexibly, is the only art of checking the importunity of desire, and of preserving quiet and innocence. Innocent gratifications must be sometimes withheld; he that complies with all lawful desires will certainly lose his empire over himself, and in time either submit