

ELOQUENCE OF POPULAR ASSEMBLIES.

THE foundation of every species of eloquence is good sense and solid thought. It should be the first study of him, who means to address a popular assembly, to be previously master of the business on which he is to speak ; to be well provided with matter and argument ; and to rest upon these the chief stress. This will give to his discourse an air of manliness and strength, which is a powerful instrument of persuasion. Ornament, if we have genius for it, will succeed of course ; at any rate, it deserves only secondary regard.

To become a persuasive speaker in a popular assembly, it is a capital rule, that a man should always be persuaded of whatever he recommends to others. Never if it can be avoided, should he espouse that side of an argument, which he does not believe to be right. All high eloquence must be the offspring of passion. This makes every man persuasive, and gives a force to his genius, which it cannot otherwise possess.

The warmth, however, which we express, must be always suited to the subject ; since it would be ridiculous to introduce great vehemence into a subject of small importance, or which by its nature requires to be treated with calmness. We must also be careful not to counterfeit warmth without feeling it. The best rule is, to follow nature ; and never to attempt a strain of eloquence, which is not prompted by our own genius. A speaker may acquire reputation and influence by a calm, argumentative manner. To reach the pathetic and sublime of oratory, requires those strong sensibilities of mind and that high power of expression, which are given to few.

Even when vehemence is justified by the subject, and prompted by genius ; when warmth is felt, and not feigned ; we must be cautious, lest impetuosity transport us too far. If the speaker lose command of himself, he will soon lose command of his audience. He must begin with moderation, and study to warm his hearers gradually and equally with himself. For if their passions be not in unison with his, the discord will soon be felt. Respect for his audience should always lay a decent restraint upon his warmth, and prevent it from carrying him beyond proper limits. When a speaker is so far master of himself, as to preserve close attention to argument, and even to some degree of accurate expression ; this self command, this effort of reason, in the midst of passion, contributes in the highest degree both to please and to persuade. The advantages of passion are afforded for the purposes of persuasion, without that confusion and disorder which are its usual attendants.

In the most animated strain of popular speaking, we must always regard what the public ear will receive without disgust. Without attention to this, imitation of ancient orators might betray a speaker into a boldness of manner, with which the coolness of modern taste would be displeased. It is also necessary to attend with care to the decorums of time, place, and character. No ardour of eloquence can atone for neglect of these. No one should attempt to speak in public without forming to himself a just and strict idea of what is suitable to his