

recommended it; but the observers of the times have remarked, that a plan more superficial, and more flattering to idleness and vice, has of late began to prevail.

* I am the rather induced to defend that discipline which lays the foundation of improvement in antient learning, because I think, and am not singular in the opinion, that not only the taste, but the religion, the virtue, and I will add the liberties of our countrymen, greatly depend upon its continuance. True patriotism and true valour * originate from that enlargement of mind, which the well regulated study of philosophy, poetry, and history, tends to produce; and if we can recal the antient discipline, we may perhaps recal the generous spirit of antient virtue. He who is conversant with the best Greek and Roman writer, with a Plato, a Xenophon, and a Cicero, must imbibe, if he is not deficient in the powers of intellect, sentiments no less liberal and enlarged than elegant and ingenious.

Indeed this enlargement, refinement, and embellishment of the mind, is the best and noblest effect of classical discipline. Classical discipline is not only desirable, as it qualifies the mind for this profession or for that occupation; but as it opens a source of pure pleasure unknown to the vulgar. Even if it were not the best preparation for every employment above the low and the mechanical, which it confessedly is; yet it is in itself most valuable, as it tends to adorn and improve human nature, and to give the ideas a noble elevation.

The possession of an elegant, enlightened and philosophical mind is greatly superior to the possession of a fortune; † and I do not consider his lot as unfortunate, who enjoys but a small income, but has received the benefits of a liberal and philosophical education. I will point out an instance taken from a department in life where instances abound. The country curate, tho' his pittance is small, yet if he adheres to his character, and affects not the sportsman, or the man of expensive and vicious pleasure, but has formed a taste for the classics, for composition, and for the contemplation of the works of na-

ture may be most respectable and happy. The passions will sometimes ruffle the stream of happiness in every man; but they are the least likely to discompose him, who spends his time in letters, and who at the same time studies virtue and innocence, which indeed have a natural connexion with true learning.

Yet whatever may be advanced in favour of classical education, they who censure it will always find a numerous audience. The ignorant and illiberal, who are seldom deficient in cunning, will endeavour, like the crafty animal in the fable, to persuade others, that the ornaments in which they are deficient, are of little value.

But I will venture to assert, that classical learning tends most directly to form the true gentleman; an effect of it, which men of the world will scarcely allow. The business of forming the gentleman they arrogate to themselves, and are too apt to separate that character from the idea of a scholar. But it is not a fashionable dress, nor a few external decencies of behaviour, which constitute the true gentleman. It is a liberal and an embellished mind. I will not indeed assert, that a man who understands Virgil and Horace must, from that circumstance, become a gentleman; because it is possible that he may be able to construe and to explain the meaning of every word, without tasting a single beauty; but I cannot help thinking, that no man can taste their excellencies without a polite and elegant mind; without acquiring something more pleasing than the mere graces of external accomplishments. Is it not reasonable to conclude, that he who has caught the spirit of the polite writers of the politest ages and cities, must possess a peculiar degree of polish and comprehension?

An objector may perhaps urge, that there are reputed scholars, who have no appearance of this superiority; and I will allow the assertion to be true; at the same time I believe it is easy to assign a probable cause. Such persons are, perhaps, reputed, and only reputed scholars; or, it is possible they may have attended only to the less elegant pursuits of literature, such

as

* Alexander made his expedition against the Persians with better supplies from his master Aristotle, than from his father Philip.

PLUTARCH.

† He who hath rendered his son a VERY VALUABLE MAN, though he should bequeath but little, hath already bestowed a great deal.

XENOPHON.

‡ — — *Medicus voti, pressio lare; dulcis amicis.*

Contented in a snug little house, beloved by his friends.

PERSIUS.

Quæ pauca requirunt, non multis exidunt.

They who have few wants, cannot have many disappointments.

PLAUTUS.