

## HAS MAN PROGRESSED ?

WHILST we believe that man has made great and real progress in substantial happiness and intelligence, we would not be classed among those who see nothing excellent in the past, and we heartily subscribe to the ideas expressed by HAZLITT in the following words:

There is not a lower ambition, a poorer way of thought, than that which would confine all excellence, or arrogate its final accomplishment to the present, or modern times. We ordinarily speak and think of those who had the misfortune to write or live before us, as laboring under very singular privations and disadvantages in not having the benefit of those improvements which we have made, as buried in the grossest ignorance, or the slaves of "poring pedantry;" and we make a cheap and infallible estimate of their progress in civilization upon a graduated scale of perfectibility, calculated from the meridian of our own times. If we have pretty well got rid of the narrow bigotry that would limit all sense or virtue to our own country, and have fraternised, like true cosmopolites, with our neighbours and contemporaries, we have made our self-love amends, by letting the generation we live in engross nearly all our admiration, and by pronouncing a sweeping sentence of barbarism and ignorance on our ancestry backwards, from the commencement—as near as can be—of the nineteenth, or the latter end of the eighteenth century. From thence we date a new era, the dawn of our own intellect, and that of the world, like the sacred influence of light, glimmering on the confines of "Chaos and old night;" new manners rise, and all the cumbrous "pomp of elder days" vanishes, and is lost in worse than Gothic darkness. Pavilioned in the glittering pride of our superficial accomplishments and upstart pretensions, we fancy that every thing beyond that magic circle is prejudice and error; and all, before the present enlightened period, but a dull and useless blank in the great map of time. We are so dazzled by the gloss and novelty of modern discoveries, that we cannot take into our mind's eye the vast expanse, the lengthened perspective of human intellect, and a cloud hangs over and conceals its loftiest monuments, if they are removed to a little distance from us—the cloud of our own vanity and short sightedness. The modern sciolist stultifies all understanding but his own, and that which he conceives like his own. We think, in this age of reason and consummation of philosophy, because we knew nothing twenty or thirty years ago, and began then to think for the first time in our lives, that the rest of mankind were in the same predicament, and never knew anything till we did; that the world had grown old in sloth and ignorance, had dreamt out its long minority of five thousand years in a dozing state, and that it first began to wake out of sleep, to rouse itself, and look about, startled by the light of our unexpected discoveries, and the noise we made about them. Strange error of our infatuated self-love. Because the clothes we remember to have seen worn when we were children are now out of fashion, and our grandmothers were then old women, we conceive, with magnanimous continuity of reasoning, that it must have been much worse three hundred years before, and that grace, youth, and beauty are things of modern date—as if nature had ever been old, or the sun had first shone on our folly and presumption. Because, in a word, the last generation, when tottering off the stage, were not so active, so sprightly, and so promising as we were, we begin to imagine that people formerly must have crawled about in a feeble, torpid state, like flies in winter, in a sort of dim twilight of the understanding. "Nor can we think what thoughts they could conceive," in the absence of all those topics that so agreeably enliven and diversify our conversation and literature, mistaking the imperfection of our knowledge for the defect of their organs, as if it was necessary for us to have a register and certificate of their thoughts, or

as if, because they did not see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and understand with our understandings, they could hear, see, and understand nothing. A false inference could not be drawn, nor one more contrary to the maxims and cautions of a wise humanity.

SHOULD WE IMPUGN THE MOTIVES OF OP-  
PONENTS.

It has been too common with all parties to impugn the motives, instead of answering the arguments, of opponents. Instead of showing that what was urged as reasoning was nothing but sophistry, disputants have rather tried to lower each other in the estimation of society: they catch up any stray word, harp upon any peculiarity of appearance, or rake up some bye-gone indiscretion. Though these things may be entirely out of place as far as the merits of the question are concerned, yet do partisans hail with pleasure such a stroke of policy as has the effect of discrediting an opponent. They seem to imagine that the best mode of making one see clearly is to throw dust in the eyes—they act as if they believed that the best mode of settling a disputed point is to attract attention to something else. This species of intellectual chicanery, this 'wolf-and-lamb' mode of reasoning, is one of those relics of antiquity which held all things fair in war. It is the besetting sin of all disputants—theological and political especially: it presents an almost insurmountable barrier to social harmony; it extends its baneful influence throughout the whole of society, and prevents very materially the full and fair discussion of a subject. It is time that every 'reasoner' should set his face against this policy, and on no occasion permit discussion of principles to descend to personal recriminations. It is curious—but no more curious than true—that men, who say that conviction depends on the weight of evidence, should be satisfied by ridiculing, when they might convince by reasoning, or overwhelm by testimony. They either have no faith in their principle, or have no courage to act upon it. But if it is the result of habit more than the want of argument, it is a bad habit, which we hope 'needs but to be seen.' The intentions of individuals, or even their characters, have seldom to do with the thing discussed—it is what they say which we have to consider; the proofs which they adduce or the evidence they offer which we ought to sift, without caring who brought it or why it was brought. Not bearing these things in mind has led many a one to subjects foreign to that in hand. To us it appears of great consequence that all parties should discontinue this imputation of motives, which, if true, seldom proves anything, whilst it keeps up feelings of acerbity, which it should be the endeavor of all to allay. No one individual has more right to consider himself a truth-seeker or the truth-finder than another, yet each seems to look upon himself as the only disinterested and positive one. We ought to take professions of others in the same way as we should desire our own to be received. That all may come to the discussion of any subject with that determination to be right, which a desire for truth can alone convey, must be a desideratum to which "reasoners" must look forward with ardour—and that the time is approaching they cannot be without hope, seeing that the shadow of its approach are even now visible in the different feelings existing amongst disputants in our Parliaments, and in our political religious discussions, compared with those of a few years ago.

—Reasoner.

## THE GO-BETWEEN.

There is, perhaps, not a more odious character in the world than that of a go-between—by which we mean that creature who carries to the ears of one neighbor every injurious observation that happens to drop from another.—Such a person is the slanderer's herald, and is altogether more odious than the slanderer himself. By his vile officiousness he makes that poison effective which else were inert; for three-fourths of the slanders in the world would never injure their object, except by the malice of go-betweens, who, under the mask of double friendship, act the part of double traitors.