

tably subside, and the desire of fame, which has been the source of so many meritorious achievements, will in a manner be extinguished; for every one will then live uninfluenced by the conduct of his progenitors, and equally unawed by any odium infamous actions might deservedly leave upon record.

But if the Almighty (as we are told in the Decalogue) visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, and on the contrary, shews mercy and favour to the issue of the virtuous; why are not the descendants of the one, and of the other, to be duly distinguished among men? Birth, on the one hand, is not to be too highly and immoderately esteemed; we should consider that the most illustrious families, could they be traced to their origin, were at first obscure, and not distinguished from the common race of mortals: and that, however mortifying it may be, many of the greatest families that ever existed, after gradually rising from obscurity, to the greatest eminence, wealth and power, and after having been conspicuous a few centuries, have again as progressively dwindled into extinction. Many such there were, the names of which alone only now remain which all persons conversant in the history and antiquities of Europe must allow. And how many thousand families, of a second class have there been, who after furnishing for 5, 6, 7, or 800 years, a long succession of knights and gentlemen, have after such various periods of time (and often a much less) dropt into oblivion, either by a total cessation of descendants, by the alienation of their estates, (through prodigality, profusion, and excess) or by some other human contingen-

cy?—Empires and kingdoms have hitherto had an origin, meridian, and period to their glory and continuance; and shall families, which are only so many limbs of states and governments, expect to have a more protracted duration? No: there seems to be nothing human designed for us to pride ourselves too highly upon; those therefore only delude themselves, who, instead of an humble and due deportment, assume haughtiness and arrogance.

As to the influence of blood or the qualities inherent from descent, though they are not to be insisted upon as infallible, yet they are not to be treated as wholly chimerical by any candid or rational person. The advocates of this say, it is so very apparent, even in animals, that they wonder any one will dispute it: and many are the arguments made use of, which are admitted or disputed, as they tally with the principles or prejudices of the persons contending; but that which seems at once to surmount every objection that can be made, is, that we seldom fail to see the infirmities and maladies of human nature entailed on posterity. Madness, chronic diseases, violent and inordinate passions, and the various evils of intemperance, are usually transmitted from the parent to his offspring; why then may we not from hence presume to infer, that many valuable and amiable endowments are as often derived from birth? An inherent generosity and benevolence have been the distinguishing characteristics of some families, and various other virtues of others. Children often more resemble their parents by a parity of manners and conduct, than in the external similitude of their persons. This has been observed in orphans and posthumous issue, where neither paternal example nor precept could