

The Epistle to the Reader.

farther I went, the larger Prospect I had : New Discoveries led me still on, and so it grew insensibly to the bulk it now appears in. I will not deny, but possibly it might be reduced to a narrower compass than it is ; and that some Parts of it might be contracted: the way it has been writ in, by catches, and many long intervals of Interruption, being apt to cause some Repetitions. But to confess the Truth, I am now too lazie, or too busie to make it shorter.

I am not ignorant how little I herein consult my own Reputation, when I knowingly let it go with a Fault, so apt to disgust the most judicious, who are always the nicest Readers. But they who know Sloth is apt to content it self with any Excuse, will pardon me, if mine has prevailed on me, where, I think, I have a very good one. I will not therefore alledge in my Defence, that the same Notion, having different Respects, may be convenient or necessary, to prove or illustrate several Parts of the same Discourse ; and that so it has happened in many Parts of this : But waving that, I shall frankly avow, that I have sometimes dwelt long upon the same Argument, and expressed it different ways, with a quite different Design. I pretend not to publish this Essay for the Information of Men of large Thoughts and quick Apprehensions ; to such Masters of Knowledge I profess my self a Scholar, and therefore warn them before-hand not to expect any thing here, but what being spun out of my own course Thoughts, is fitted to Men of my own size, to whom, perhaps, it will not be unacceptable, that I have taken some Pains to make plain and familiar to their Thoughts some Truths, which established Prejudice, or the Abstractness of the Ideas themselves, might render difficult. Some Objects had need be turned on every side ; and when the Notion is new, as I confess some of these are to me ; or out of the ordinary Road, as I suspect they will appear to others, 'tis not one simple view of it, that will gain it admittance into every Understanding, or fix it there with a clear and lasting Impression. There are few, I believe, who have not observed in themselves or others, That what in one way of proposing was very obscure, another way of expressing it, has made very clear and intelligible : Though afterward the Mind found little difference in the Phrases, and wondered why one failed to be understood more than the other. But every thing does not hit alike upon every Man's Imagination. We have our Understandings no less different than our Palats ; and he that thinks the same Truth shall be equally relished by every one in the same dress, may as well hope to feast every one with the same sort of Cookery : The Meat may be the same, and the Nourishment good, yet every one not be able to receive it with that Seasoning ; and it must be dressed another way, if you will have it go down with some, even of strong Constitutions. The Truth is, those who advised me to publish it, advised me, for this Reason, to publish it as it is : and since I have been brought to let it go abroad, I desire it should be understood by whoever gives himself

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