

THE
CHOICE,

A
POEM.

BY JOHN POMFRET.

The CHOICE exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear, and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous, or entangled with intricate sentiments. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's CHOICE.

JOHNSON.

Printed for ALEX. CAMERON, Bookseller,
GLASGOW.

THE easy elegance of the versification of POMFRET has justly entitled him to a place among the first of the British Poets. Of all his works, the CHOICE undoubtedly is to be considered as the most finished, whether we regard the excellence of the materials he works upon, or the manner in which he manages these materials. There is something in it so congenial to the feelings of every one, and which, without allowing reason time to determine, seizes upon the heart, that he must be more or less than man who does not admire it. As such we shall make no apology for presenting it to the Public.

THE
CHOICE,

A
POEM.

IF heav'n the grateful liberty would give,
That I might choose my method how to live ;
And all those hours propitious fate should lend,
In blissful ease and satisfaction spend.

Near some fair town I'd have a private seat,
Built uniform, not little, nor too great :
Better, if on a rising ground it stood ;
On this side fields, on that a neighb'ring wood.
It should within no other things contain,
But what are useful, necessary, plain.
Methinks 'tis nauseous ; and I'd ne'er endure
The needless pomp of gaudy furniture.
A little garden, grateful to the eye ;
And a cool rivulet run murm'ring by :
On whose delicious banks a stately row
Of shady limes, or sycamores, should grow.
At th' end of which a silent study plac'd,
Should be with all the noblest authors grac'd :

Horace and *Virgil*, in whose mighty lines,
 Immortal wit, and solid learning, shines ;
 Sharp *Juvenal*, and am'rous *Ovid* too,
 Who all the turns of love's soft passion knew ;
 He that with judgment reads his charming lines,
 In which strong art with stronger nature joins,
 Must grant his fancy does the best excel ;
 His thoughts so tender, and express'd so well :
 With all those moderns, men of steady sense,
 Esteem'd for learning and for eloquence.
 In some of these, as fancy should advise,
 I'd always take my morning exercise :
 For sure no minutes bring us more content,
 Than those in pleasing, useful studies spent.

I'd have a clear and competent estate,
 That I might live genteely, but not great :
 As much as I could moderately spend ;
 A little more sometimes, t' oblige a friend.
 Nor should the sons of poverty repine
 Too much at fortune, they should taste of mine ;
 And all that objects of true pity were,
 Should be reliev'd with what my wants could spare ;
 For that our Maker has too largely giv'n,
 Should be return'd in gratitude to heav'n.
 A frugal plenty should my table spread,
 With healthy, not luxurious dishes laid :
 Enough to satisfy and something more,
 To feed the strangers, and the neighb'ring poor.
 Strong meat indulges vice, and pamp'ring food,
 Creates diseases, and inflames the blood.

But what's sufficient to make nature strong,
And the bright lamp of life continue long,
I'd freely take; and as I did possess,
The bounteous author of my plenty blefs.


I'd have a little vault but always stor'd
With the best wines each vintage could afford.
Wine whets the wit, improves its native force,
And gives a pleasant flavour to discourse:
By making all our speeches debonair,
'Throws off the lees, the sediment of care.
But as the greatest blessing heaven lends,
May be debauch'd, and serve ignoble ends;
So, but too oft, the grape's refreshing juice,
Does many mischievous effects produce.
My house should no such rude disorders know,
As from high drinking consequently flow;
Nor would I use what was so kindly giv'n,
To the dishonour of indulgent heav'n.
If any neighbour came he should be free,
Us'd with respect, and not uneasy be,
In my retreat, or to himself or me.
What freedom, prudence, and right reason gave,
All men may with impunity receive:
But the least swerving from that rule's too much;
For what's forbidden us, 'tis death to touch.

That life may be more comfortable yet,
And all my joys refin'd, sincere, and great;
I'd choose two friends, whose company would be
A great advance to my felicity:

Well born, of humours suited to my own,
 Discreet, and men, as well as books, have known :
 Brave, gen'rous, witty, and exactly free
 From loose behaviour, or formality :
 Airy and prudent ; merry but not light ;
 Quick in discerning, and in judging right :
 Secret they should be, faithful to their trust ;
 In reas'ning cool, strong, temperate, and just :
 Obliging, open, without huffing, brave ;
 Brisk in gay talking, and, in sober, grave :
 Close in dispute, but not tenacious ; try'd
 By solid reason, and let that decide :
 Not prone to lust, revenge, or envious hate ;
 Nor busy medlers with intrigues of state :
 Strangers to slander, and sworn foes to spite ;
 Not quarrelsome, but stout enough to fight ;
 Loyal and pious, friends to *Cæsar* ; true,
 As dying martyrs, to their maker too.
 In their society I could not miss
 A permanent, sincere, substantial bliss.

Would bounteous heav'n once more indulge, I'd
 (For who would so much satisfaction lose, [choose
 As witty nymphs in conversation, give)
 Near some obliging modest fair to live :
 For there's that sweetness in the female mind,
 Which in a man we cannot hope to find :
 That by a secret but a pow'rful art,
 Winds up the string of life, and does impart
 Fresh vital heat to the transported heart. }
 I'd have her reason all her passion sway :
 Easy in company, in private gay ;

Coy to a sop, to the deserving free ;
Still constant to herself, and just to me.
A soul she should have for great actions fit ;
Prudence and wisdom to direct her wit :
Courage to look bold danger in the face ;
No fear, but only to be proud, or base ;
Quick to advise, by an emergence prest,
To give good counsel, or to take the best.
I'd have th' expression of her thoughts be such,
She might not seem reserv'd, nor talk too much :
That shews a want of judgment, and of sense ;
More than enough, is but impertinence :
Her conduct regular, her mirth refin'd ;
Civil to strangers, to her neighbours kind :
Averse to vanity, revenge, and pride :
In all the methods of deceit untried :
So faithful to her friend, and good to all,
No censure might upon her actions fall :
Then would e'en envy be compell'd to say,
She goes the least of womankind astray.
—To this fair creature I'd sometimes retire ;
Her conversation would new joys inspire ;
Give life an edge so keen, no surly care
Would venture to assault my soul, or dare
Near my retreat, to hide one secret snare.
But so divine, so noble a repast
I'd seldom, and with moderation, taste ;
For highest cordials all their virtue lose,
By a too frequent and too bold a use ;
And what would cheer the spirits in distress
Ruins our health, when taken to excess.



I'd be concern'd in no litigious jar:
Belov'd by all, not vainly popular.
Whate'er assistance I had pow'r to bring,
T' oblige my country, or to serve my king,
Whene'er they call, I'd readily afford
My tongue, my pen, my counsel, and my sword.
Law suits I'd shun, with as much studious care,
As I would dens where hungry lions are;
And rather put up injuries, than be,
A plague to him, who'd be a plague to me.
I value quiet at a price too great,
To give for my revenge so dear a rate:
For what do we by all our bustle gain,
But counterfeit delight for real pain.

If heav'n a date of many years would give,
Thus I'd in pleasure, ease, and plenty live.
And as I near approach'd the verge of life,
Some kind relation, (for I'd have no wife)
Should take upon him all my worldly care,
Whilst I did for a better state prepare.
Then I'd not be with any trouble vex'd,
Nor have the ev'ning of my days perplex'd;
But by a silent and a peaceful death,
Without a sigh, resign my aged breath:
And when, committed to the dust, I'd have
Few tears, but friendly, dropt into my grave,
Then would my exit so propitious be,
All men would wish to live and die like me.