ments of thoſe caſuiſts who have undertaken the deſpicable office of advocates for the crime of ſuicide. Their talents might ſurely have been employed more uſefully to the world, and more honourably to themſelves, than in pleading for a crime which, if it were committed by every man to whom their principles would make it lawful, would totally destroy ſome of the nobleſt virtues, fortitude, patience, and reſignation ; nay, would deſtroy ſociety itſelf, and teach us to deſpiſe the opinion that this world is a state of preparation for another. “ I came into life without my own conſent, and may I not quit it at pleaſure?” (say the advocates for ſuicide). If, becauſe we came into life without our own con­ſent, we might quit it at pleaſure, why may we not ſpend our life alſo as we pleaſe ? Why may we not rob and murder, and commit every kind of crime, if *mere inclination* is to be the rule of action ? Thus upon the principles of ſuicide the highwayman and murderer may reaſon, and every man may find a ſufficient apology for any crime which he is tempted to commit. Or this abſurdity may be otherwiſe anſwered ; As we came into life without our own conſent, we must have come with the conſent of ſome other being ; and logic ſays, that with the conſent of that Being only can we lawfully quit it.

It is ſufficient shortly to say, that ſuicide is contrary to the strongeſt principle of the human conſtitution, ſelf-preſervation ; that it is rebellion againſt God ; that it is cruel­ty to the feelings and reputation, and often takes away the ſubſiſtence of a wife, a child, or a father ; that it proves a want of fortitude to brave misfortunes ; that it delivers only from imagined to plunge into real evils. We may add, that almoſt every inſtance of ſuicide of which we have heard was raſh, imprudent, and premature, interrupted a uſeful life, or prevented a more honourable death. Had Cato’s pride permitted him to yield himſelf to the genera­lity of Cæsar, his character and his influence might have con­tributed to retard the ſlavery of his country, which his death tended to hasten. Had Brutus and Cassius not exe­cuted the fatal reſolution which they had formed, of dying by their own hands in case of misfortune, the battle of Philippi might have had a very different iſſue. Had Han­nibal ſurrendered himſelf to the Romans, inſtead of ſwallowing person, he would have gained more glory in braving their tortures than he won in the battle of Cannæ ; for to die innocently and heroically is the greateſt exertion of hu­man fortitude.

As ſuicide was deemed a crime by the moſt illuſtrious and virtuous of the Greek and Roman philoſophers, it was con­ſidered as a crime by the laws, and treated with ignomi­ny. By the law of Thebes suicides were to have no ho­nours paid to their memory @@\*. The Athenian law ordain­ed the hand which committed the deed to be cut off, and burned apart from the rest of the body. The body was not buried with the uſual solemnites, but was ignominiouſly thrown into ſome pit. In Cea and Maſſilia (the ancient *Marseilles),* it was conſidered as a crime againſt the state ; and it was therefore neceſſary for thoſe who wiſhed to destroy themſelves to obtain permiſſion from the magiſtrates. @@\* Plu­tarch acquaints us, that an unaccountable paſſion for sui­cide ſeized the Mileſian virgins ; from indulging which they could not be prevented by the tears and entreaties of parents and friends : but what perſuaſion and entreaty could not effect was accompliſhed by very different means. A decree was issued, “ that the body of every young woman who hanged herſelf ſhould be dragged naked through the ſtreets by the same rope with which she had committed the deed.” This wise edict put a complete flop to the extraor­dinary frenzy, and ſuicide was no longer committed by the virgins of Miletus.

In the early part of the Roman hiſtory there ſeems to have been ſeldom occaſion for framing any laws againſt ſui­cide. The only inſtance recorded occurs in the reign of Taiquinius Priſcus. The ſoldiers who were appointed to make drains and common ſewers, thinking themſelves diſgraced by ſuch ſervile offices, put themſelves to death in great numbers. The king ordered the bodies of all the ſelf-murderers to be expoſed on croſſes, and this put an effec­tual ſtop to the practice. It is doubtful whether there was any ſtanding law againſt ſuicide during the exiſtence of the republic ; but during the reign of the emperors it was thought proper to lay it under certain regulations, though not abſolutely to condemn it as a crime.@@ In Juſtinian’s Digeſts there is a law, by which it was enacted, “ that if per­sons accuſed, or who had been found guilty, of any crime ſhould make away with themſelves, their effects ſhould be

@@@[m]\* Petite Comment. in Leges Atticas, p. 523.

@@@[m]\* Plutarch on the Virtues of Women.

@@@[mu] Lib. xlviii. Tit. xxi. par. 3.

level of his ſpecies, to ſeem ſuperior to the vulgar feelings of happineſs. True good ſenſe, however, moſt certainly consists not in deſpiſing, but in managing our stock of life to the best advantage, as a cheerful acquieſcence in the measures of Providence is one of the strongeſt ſymptoms of a well constituted mind. Self-wearineſs is a circumſtance that ever attends folly ; and to condemn our being is the greateſt, and indeed the peculiar infirmity, of human nature. It is a no­ble ſentiment which Tully puts into the mouth of Cato, in his Treatiſe upon old Age ; *Non lubet mihi.* (ſays that venerable Roman ) *deplorare vitam, quod multi, et ii docti, Sœpe Jecerunt ; neque me vixisse paenitet : quoniam ita vixi, ut non frustra me natum exstimem.*

“ It is in the power, indeed, of but a very ſmall portion of mankind to act the ſame glorious part that afforded ſuch high ſatisfaction to this diſtinguiſhed patriot ; but the number is yet far more inconſiderable of thoſe who cannot, in any station, ſecure themſelves a ſufficient fund of complacency to render life juſtly valuable. Who is it that is placed out ot the reach of the highest of all gratifications, thoſe of the generous affections, and that cannot provide for his own happineſs, by contributing ſomething to the welfare of others? As this diſease of the mind generally breaks out with moſt vio­lence in thoſe who are ſuppoſed to be endowed with a greater delicacy of taste and reaſon than is the uſual allotment of their fellow-creatures, one may ask them, whether there is any ſatiety in the purſuits of uſeful knowledge ? or, if one can ever be weary of benefiting mankind ? Will not the fine arts ſupply a laſting feaſt to the mind ? or, can there be wanting a pleaſurable enjoyment, ſo long as there remains even one advantageous truth to be diſcovered or confirmed ? To complain that life has no joys, while there is a single creature whom we can relieve by our bounty, aſſist by our coun­sels, or enliven by our preſence is, to lament the lots of that which we poſſeſs, and is just as rational as to die for thirſt with the cup in our hands. But the misfortune is, when a man is ſettled into a habit of receiving all his pleaſures from the mere selfiſh indulgences, he wears out of his mind the reliſh of every nobler enjoyment, at the ſame time that his powers of the ſenſual kind are growing more languid by each repetition. It is no wonder, therefore, he ſhould fill up the meaſure of his gratifications long before he has completed the circle of his duration ; and either wretchedly sit down the remainder of his days in diſcontent, or raſhly throw them up in deſpair.”