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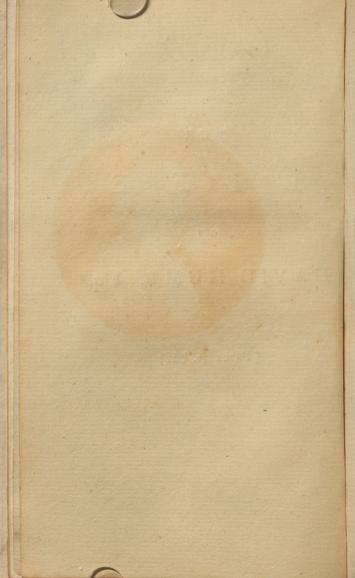
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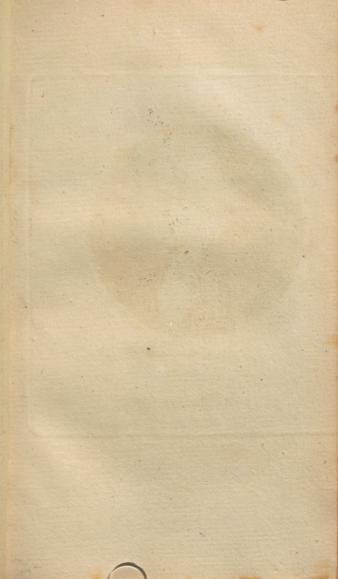
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DAVID HUME, Efq.

OF

[PRICE IS. 6d.]







THE

LIFE

DAVID HUME, Efq.

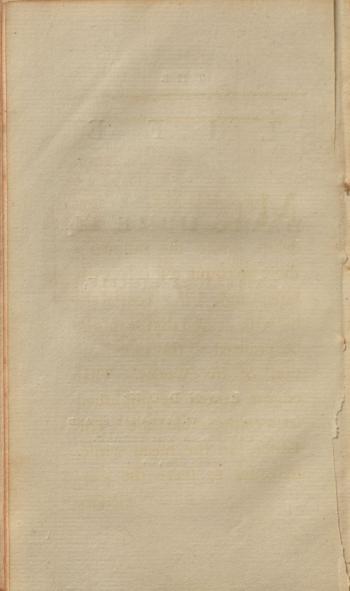
OF

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

LONDON:

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MDCCLXXVII.



MR. HUME, a few months before his death, wrote the following fhort account of his own Life; and, in a codicil to his will, defired that it might be prefixed to the next edition of his Works. That edition cannot be published for a confiderable time. The Editor, in the mean while, in order to ferve the purchafers T

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chafers of the former editions; and, at the fame time, to gratify the impatience of the public curiofity; has thought proper to publifh it feparately, without altering even the title or fuperfcription, which was written in Mr. Hume's own hand on the cover of the manufcript.

MY

T is difficult for a man to fpeak long of himfelf without vanity; therefore, I fhall be fhort. It may be thought an inflance of vanity that I pretend at all to write my life; but this Narrative fhall contain little more than the Hiftory of my Writings;

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as, indeed, almost all my life has been spent in literary purfuits and occupations. The first fuccess of most of my writings was not such as to be an object of vanity.

I was born the 26th of April 1711, old ftyle, at Edinburgh. I was of a good family, both by father and mother : my father's family is a branch of the Earl of Home's, or Hume's; and my anceftors had been proprietors of the eftate, which my brother poffeffes, for feveral generations. My mother was daughter of Sir David

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David Falconer, Prefident of the College of Justice: the title of Lord Halkerton came by fucceffion to her brother.

My family, however, was not rich, and being myfelf a younger brother, my patrimony, according to the mode of my country, was of courfe very flender. My father, who paffed for a man of parts, died when I was an infant, leaving me, with an elder brother and a fifter, under the care of our mother, a woman of fingular merit, who, though young and handfome, devoted B 2 her-

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herfelf entirely to the rearing and educating of her children. I paffed through the ordinary courfe of education with fuccefs. and was feized very early with a paffion for literature, which has been the ruling paffion of my life, and the great fource of my enjoyments. My studious difpofition, my fobriety, and my industry, gave my family a notion that the law was a proper profession for me; but I found an unfurmountable averfion to every thing but the purfuits of philosophy and general learning; and while they fancied I was poring

poring upon Voet and Vinnius, Cicero and Virgil were the authors which I was fecretly devouring.

My very flender fortune, however, being unfuitable to this plan of life, and my health being a little broken by my ardent application, I was tempted, or rather forced, to make a very feeble trial for entering into a more active scene of life. In 1734, I went to Briftol, with fome recommendations to eminent merchants, but in a few months found that fcene totally B 3 unfuit-

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unfuitable to me. I went over to France, with a view of profecuting my fludies in a country retreat; and I there laid that plan of life, which I have fleadily and fuccefsfully purfued. I refolved to make a very rigid frugality fupply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my independency, and to regard every object as contemptible, except the improvement of my talents in literature.

During my retreat in France, first at Reims, but chiefly at La Fleche, in Anjou, I composed

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posed my Treatife of Human Nature. After passing three years very agreeably in that country, I came over to London in 1737. In the end of 1738, I published my Treatife, and immediately went down to my mother and my brother, who lived at his country-house, and was employing himself very judicioully and successfully in the improvement of his fortune.

Never literary attempt was more unfortunate than my Treatife of Human Nature. It fell B 4 dead-

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dead-born from the prefs, without reaching fuch diffinction, as even to excite a murmur among the zealots. But being naturally of a cheerful and fanguine temper, I very foon recovered the blow, and profecuted with great ardour my fludies in the country. In 1742, I printed at Edinburgh the first part of my Esfays: the work was favourably received, and foon made me entirely forget my former disappointment. I continued with my mother and brother in the country, and in that time recovered the

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the knowledge of the Greek language, which I had too much neglected in my early youth.

In 1745, I received a letter from the Marquis of Annandale, inviting me to come and live with him in England; I found alfo, that the friends and family of that young nobleman were defirous of putting him under my care and direction, for the ftate of his mind and health required it .--- I lived with him a twelvemonth. My appointments during that time made a confiderable acceffion to my fmall fortune.

tune. I then received an invitation from General St. Clair to attend him as a fecretary to his expedition, which was at first meant against Canada, but ended in an incursion on the coast of France. Next year, to wit, 1747, I received an invitation from the General to attend him in the fame station in his military embaffy to the courts of Vienna and Turin. I then wore the uniform of an officer, and was introduced at these courts as aid-de-camp to the general, along with Sir Harry Erskine and Captain Grant, now General 2

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ral Grant. These two years were almost the only interruptions which my studies have received during the courfe of my life: I paffed them agreeably, and in good company; and my appointments, with my frugality, had made me reach a fortune, which I called independent, though most of my friends were inclined to fmile when I faid fo; in fhort, I was now master of near a thousand pounds.

I had always entertained a notion, that my want of fuccefs in publishing the Treatife of Human

Human Nature, had proceeded more from the manner than the matter, and that I had been guilty of a very usual indifcretion. in going to the prefs too early. I, therefore, caft the first part of that work anew in the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, which was published while I was at Turin. But this piece was at first little more fuccessful than the Treatife of Human Nature. On my return from Italy, I had the mortification to find all England in a ferment, on account of Dr. Middleton's Free Enquiry, while my performance was

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was entirely overlooked and neglected. A new edition, which had been published at London of my Essays, moral and political, met not with a much better reception.

Such is the force of natural temper, that these disappointments made little or no impreffion on me. I went down in 1749, and lived two years with my brother at his country-house, for my mother was now dead. I there composed the second part of my Essays, which I called Political Discourses, and also my t Enquiry

Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, which is another part of my treatife that I caft anew. Meanwhile, my bookfeller, A. Millar, informed me, that my former publications (all but the unfortunate Treatife) were beginning to be the fubject of conversation; that the fale of them was gradually increafing, and that new editions were demanded. Anfwers by Reverends, and Right Reverends, came out two or three in a year; and I found, by Dr. Warburton's railing, that the books were beginning to be efteemed in good com-

company. However, I had fixed a refolution, which I inflexibly maintained, never to reply to any body; and not being very irafcible in my temper, I have eafily kept myfelf clear of all literary fquabbles. Thefe fymptoms of a rifing reputation gave me encouragement, as I was ever more difposed to fee the favourable than unfavourable fide of things ; a turn of mind which it is more happy to poffels, than to be born to an effate of ten thousand a year.

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In 1751, I removed from the country to the town, the true fcene for a man of letters. In 1752, were published at Edinburgh, where I then lived, my Political Difcourfes, the only work of mine that was fuccefsful on the first publication. It was well received abroad and at home. In the fame year was published at London, my Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals; which, in my own opinion (who ought not to judge on that fubject), is of all my writings, hiftorical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the beft. It came

MY OWN LIFE. 17 came unnoticed and unobferved into the world.

In 1752, the Faculty of Advocates chofe me their Librarian, an office from which I received little or no emolument, but which gave me the command of a large library. I then formed the plan of writing the Hiftory of England; but being frightened with the notion of continuing a narrative through a period of 1700 years, I commenced with the acceffion of the Houfe of Stuart, an epoch when, I thought, the misrepresentations of faction be-C

gan

gan chiefly to take place. I was, I own, fanguine in my expectations of the fuccefs of this work. I thought that I was the only historian, that had at once neglected present power, interest, and authority, and the cry of popular prejudices; and as the fubject was fuited to every capacity, I expected proportional applaufe. But miferable was my difappointment: I was affailed by one cry of reproach, difapprobation, and even deteftation; English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, churchman and fectary, freethinker and religionist, patriot

patriot and courtier, united in their rage against the man, who had prefumed to fhed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I. and the Farl of Strafford; and after the first ebullitions of their fury were over, what was still more mortifying, the book feemed to fink into oblivion. Mr. Millar told me, that in a twelvemonth he fold only forty-five copies of it. I fcarcely, indeed, heard of one man in the three kingdoms, confiderable for rank or letters, that could endure the book. I must only except the primate of England, Dr. Her-C 2 ring,

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ring, and the primate of Ireland, Dr. Stone, which feem two odd exceptions. These dignified prelates separately fent me messages not to be discouraged.

I was, however, I confefs, difcouraged; and had not the war been at that time breaking out between France and England, I had certainly retired to fome provincial town of the former kingdom, have changed my name, and never more have returned to my native country. But as this fcheme was not now practicable, and the fubfequent volume was con-

MYOWNLIFE. 21 confiderably advanced, I refolved to pick up courage and to perfevere.

In this interval, I published at London my Natural Hiftory of Religion, along with fome other fmall pieces: its public entry was rather obfcure, except only that Dr. Hurd wrote a pamphlet against it, with all the illiberal petulance, arrogance, and fcurrility, which diftinguish the Warburtonian fchool. This pamphlet gave me fome confolation for the otherwife indifferent reception of my performance.

In

In 1756, two years after the fall of the first volume, was published the second volume of my History, containing the period from the death of Charles I. till the Revolution. This performance happened to give less displeasure to the Whigs, and was better received. It not only rose itself, but helped to buoy up its unfortunate brother.

But though I had been taught by experience, that the Whig party were in pofferfion of beflowing all places, both in the flate and in literature, I was fo little

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little inclined to yield to their fenfelefs clamour, that in above a hundred alterations, which farther fludy, reading, or reflection engaged me to make in the reigns of the two firft Stuarts, I have made all of them invariably to the Tory fide. It is ridiculous to confider the Englifh conflitution before that period as a regular plan of liberty.

In 1759, I published my History of the House of Tudor. The clamour against this performance was almost equal to that against the History of the two C 4 first

first Stuarts. The reign of Elizabeth was particularly obnoxious. But I was now callous against the impressions of public folly, and continued very peaceably and contentedly in my retreat at Edinburgh, to finish, in two volumes, the more early part of the English History, which I gave to the public in 1761, with tolerable, and but tolerable fucces.

But, notwithstanding this variety of winds and feafons, to which my writings had been exposed, they had still been making

ing fuch advances, that the copymoney given me by the bookfellers, much exceeded any thing formerly known in England; I was become not only independent, but opulent. I retired to my native country of Scotland, determined never more to fet my foot out of it; and retaining the fatisfaction of never having preferred a request to one great man, or even making advances of friendship to any of them. As I was now turned of fifty, I thought of paffing all the reft of my life in this philosophical manner, when I received, in 1763, 21

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an invitation from the Earl of Hertford, with whom I was not in the least acquainted, to attend him on his embaffy to Paris, with a near profpect of being appointed fecretary to the embaffy ; and, in the meanwhile, of performing the functions of that office. This offer, however inviting, I at first declined, both becaufe I was reluctant to begin connexions with the great, and becaufe I was afraid that the civilities and gay company of Paris, would prove difagreeable to a perfon of my age and humour: but on his lordship's repeating the invitation,

tion, I accepted of it. I have every reafon, both of pleafure and intereft, to think myfelf happy in my connexions with that nobleman, as well as afterwards with his brother, General Conway.

Thofe who have not feen the ftrange effects of modes, will never imagine the reception I met with at Paris, from men and women of all ranks and ftations. The more I refiled from their exceffive civilities, the more I was loaded with them. There is, however, a real fatisfaction in

in living at Paris, from the great number of fenfible, knowing, and polite company with which that city abounds above all places in the univerfe. I thought once of fettling there for life.

I was appointed fecretary to the embaffy; and, in fummer 1765, Lord Hertford left me, being appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. I was *chargé d'affaires* till the arrival of the Duke of Richmond, towards the end of the year. In the beginning of 1766, I left Paris, and next fummer

fummer went to Edinburgh, with the fame view as formerly, of burying myself in a philosophical retreat. I returned to that place, not richer, but with much more money, and a much larger income, by means of Lord Hertford's friendship, than I left it; and I was defirous of trying what fuperfluity could produce, as I had formerly made an experiment of a competency. But, in 1767, I received from Mr. Conway an invitation to be Under-fecretary; and this invitation, both the character of the perfon, and my connexions with . 8 Lord

Lord Hertford, prevented me from declining. I returned to Edinburgh in 1769, very opulent (for I poffeffed a revenue of 1000 l. a year), healthy, and though fomewhat firicken in years, with the prospect of enjoying long my eafe, and of feeing the increase of my reputation.

In fpring 1775, I was ftruck with a diforder in my bowels, which at first gave me no alarm, but has fince, as I apprehend it, become mortal and incurable. I now reckon upon a speedy diffolution.

MY OWN LIFE. 31 lution. I have fuffered very little pain from my diforder; and what is more ftrange, have, notwithftanding the great decline of my perfon, never fuffered a moment's abatement of my fpirits; infomuch, that were I to name the period of my life, which I should most choose to pass over again, I might be tempted to point to this later period. I poffefs the fame ardour as ever in fludy, and the fame gaiety in company. I confider, befides, that a man of fixty-five, by dying, cuts off only a few years of infirmities; and though I fee many

many fymptoms of my literary reputation's breaking out at laft with additional luftre, I knew that I could have but few years to enjoy it. It is difficult to be more detached from life than I am at prefent.

To conclude hiftorically with my own character. I am, or rather was (for that is the ftyle I muft now ufe in fpeaking of myfelf, which emboldens me the more to fpeak my fentiments); I was, I fay, a man of mild difpolitions, of command of temper, of an open, focial, and cheerful

cheerful humour, capable of attachment, but little fusceptible of enmity, and of great moderation in all my paffions. Even my love of literary fame, my ruling paffion, never foured my temper, notwithstanding my frequent difappointments. My company was not unacceptable to the young and carelefs, as well as to the fludious and literary; and as I took a particular pleafure in the company of modeft women, I had no reafon to be difpleafed with the reception I met with from them. In a word, though most men any wife

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wife eminent, have found reafon to complain of calumny, I never was touched, or even attacked by her baleful tooth: and though I wantonly exposed myfelf to the rage of both civil and religious factions, they feemed to be difarmed in my behalf of their wonted fury. My friends never had occafion to vindicate any one circumftance of my character and conduct: not but that the zealots, we may well fuppofe, would have been glad to invent and propagate any flory to my difadvantage, but they could never find any which they thought

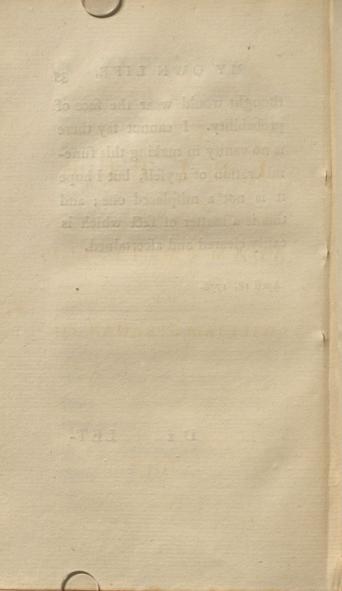
thought would wear the face of probability. I cannot fay there is no vanity in making this funcral oration of myfelf, but I hope it is not a mifplaced one; and this is a matter of fact which is eafily cleared and afcertained.

April 18, 1776.

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LETTER

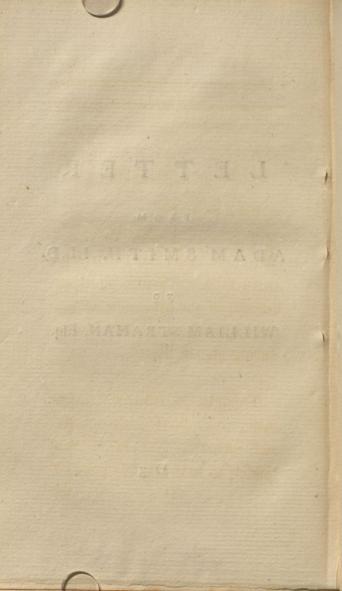
FROM

ADAM SMITH, LL.D.

TO

WILLIAM STRAHAN, Efq.





Kirkaldy, Fifeshire, Nov. 9, 1776.

DEAR SIR,

T is with a real, though a very melancholy pleafure, that I fit down to give you fome account of the behaviour of our late excellent friend, Mr. Hume, during his laft illnefs.

Though, in his own judgment, his difeafe was mortal and incurable, yet he allowed himfelf to be prevailed upon, by D 4 the

the entreaty of his friends, to try what might be the effects of a long journey. A few days before he fet out, he wrote that account of his own life, which, together with his other papers, he has left to your care. My account, therefore, fhall begin where his ends.

He fet out for London towards the end of April, and at Morpeth met with Mr. John Home and myfelf, who had both come down from London on purpofe to fee him, expecting to have found him at Edinburgh. Mr.

Mr. Home returned with him, and attended him during the whole of his ftay in England, with that care and attention which might be expected from a temper fo perfectly friendly and affectionate. As I had written to my mother that fhe might expect me in Scotland, I was under the neceffity of continuing my journey. His difease seemed to yield to exercife and change of air, and when he arrived in London, he was apparently in much better health than when he left Edinburgh. He was advifed to go to Bath to drink the waters.

waters, which appeared for fome time to have fo good an effect upon him, that even he himfelf began to entertain, what he was not apt to do, a better opinion of his own health. His fymptoms, however, foon returned with their usual violence, and from that moment he gave up all thoughts of recovery, but fubmitted with the utmost cheerfulnefs, and the most perfect complacency and refignation. Upon his return to Edinburgh, though he found himfelf much weaker, yet his cheerfulnefs never abated, and he continued to

to divert himfelf, as usual, with correcting his own works for a new edition, with reading books of amusement, with the converfation of his friends; and, fometimes in the evening, with a party at his favourite game of whift. His cheerfulnels was fo great, and his conversation and amusements run so much in their ufual firain, that, notwithftanding all bad fymptoms, many people could not believe he was dying. " I shall tell your friend, " Colonel Edmondstone," faid Doctor Dundas to him one day, " that I left you much better, " and

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" and in a fair way of recovery." " Doctor," faid he, " as I be-" lieve you would not chuse to " tell any thing but the truth, " you had better tell him, that " I am dying as faft as my ene-" mies, if I have any, could " wifh, and as eafily and cheer-" fully as my beft friends could " defire." Colonel Edmondstone foon afterwards came to fee him, and take leave of him; and on his way home, he could not forbear writing him a letter bidding him once more an eternal adieu. and applying to him, as to a dying man, the beautiful French verfes

veries in which the Abbé Chaulieu, in expectation of his own death, laments his approaching feparation from his friend, the Marquis de la Fare. Mr. Hume's magnanimity and firmnefs were fuch, that his most affectionate friends knew, that they hazarded nothing in talking or writing to him as to a dying man, and that fo far from being hurt by this frankness, he was rather pleafed and flattered by it. I happened to come into his room while he was reading this letter, which he had just received, and which he immediately fhowed

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me.

me. I told him, that though I was fenfible how very much he was weakened, and that appearances were in many refpects very bad, yet his cheerfulnefs was still fo great, the fpirit of life feemed still to be fo very strong in him, that I could not help entertaining fome faint hopes. He anfwered, "Your hopes are ground-" less. An habitual diarrhœa of " more than a year's flanding, " would be a very bad difeafe at " any age: at my age it is a " mortal one. When I lie down " in the evening, I feel myfelf " weaker than when I role in the " morning ;

" morning; and when I rife in the " morning, weaker than when I " lay down in the evening. I am " fenfible, belides, that fome of my " vital parts are affected, fo that "I must foon die." " Well," faid I, " if it must be fo, you have at least the fatisfaction of leaving all your friends, your brother's family in particular, in great profperity." He faid that he felt that fatisfaction for fenfibly, that when he was reading a few days before, Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead, among all the excuses which are alleged to Charon for not entering readily

1

readily into his boat, he could not find one that fitted him ; he had no houfe to finish, he had no daughter to provide for, he had no enemies upon whom he wifhed to revenge himfelf. " I " could not well imagine," faid he, "what excufe I could make to " Charon in order to obtain a little " delay. I have done every thing " of confequence which I ever " meant to do, and I could at no " time expect to leave my relations " and friends in a better fituation " than that in which I am now " likely to leave them; I, there-" fore, have all reafon to die con-" tented."

" tented." He then diverted himfelf with inventing feveral jocular excuses, which he fupposed he might make to Charon, and with imagining the very furly anfwers which it might fuit the character of Charon to return to them. " Upon further con-" fideration," faid he, " I " thought I might fay to him, " Good Charon, I have been " correcting my works for a new " edition. Allow me a little " time, that I may fee how the " Public receives the alterations." But Charon would anfwer, " When you have feen the effect E " of

" of these, you will be for mak-" ing other alterations. There " will be no end of fuch excufes; " fo, honeft friend, pleafe ftep " into the boat." But I might still urge, " Have a little pa-" tience, good Charon, I have " been endeavouring to open " the eyes of the Public. If I " live a few years longer, I may " have the fatisfaction of feeing " the downfal of fome of the " prevailing fystems of fupersti-" tion." But Charon would then lofe all temper and decency. " You loitering rogue, that will " not happen thefe many hun-" dred

" dred years. Do you fancy I " will grant you a leafe for fo " long a term? Get into the " boat this inftant, you lazy " loitering rogue."

But, though Mr. Hume always talked of his approaching diffolution with great cheerfulnefs, he never affected to make any parade of his magnanimity. He never mentioned the fubject but when the converfation naturally led to it, and never dwelt longer upon it than the courfe of the converfation happened to require : it was a fubject indeed E 2 which

which occurred pretty frequently, in confequence of the inquiries which his friends, who came to fee him, naturally made concerning the flate of his health. The conversation which I mentioned above, and which paffed on Thursday the 8th of August, was the laft, except one, that I ever had with him. He had now become fo very weak, that the company of his most intimate friends fatigued him; for his cheerfulness was still fo great, his complaifance and focial difpolition were still fo entire, that when any friend was with him,

he could not help talking more, and with greater exertion, than fuited the weaknefs of his body. At his own defire, therefore, I agreed to leave Edinburgh, where I was flaying partly upon his account, and returned to my mother's house here, at Kirkaldy, upon condition that he would fend for me whenever he wished to fee me; the phyfician who faw him most frequently, Doctor Black, undertaking, in the mean time, to write me occafionally an account of the flate of his health. all and mailes it's

On the 22d of August, the Doctor wrote me the following letter:

" Since my laft, Mr. Hume has paffed his time pretty eafily, but is much weaker. He fits up, goes down stairs once a day, and amufes himfelf with reading, but feldom fees any body. He finds that even the conversation of his most intimate friends fatigues and oppreffes him ; and it is happy that he does not need it, for he is quite free from. anxiety, impatience, or low spirits, and paffes his time very well

DR. ADAM SMITH. 55 well with the affiftance of amufing books."

I received the day after a letter from Mr. Hume himfelf, of which the following is an extract.

Edinburgh, 23d August, 1776.

" MY DEAREST FRIEND,

" I am obliged to make ufe of my nephew's hand in writing to you, as I do not rife today. * * * * * * *

E 4

" I go

" I go very fast to decline, and last night had a small fever, which I hoped might put a quicker period to this tedious illnefs, but unluckily it has, in a great measure, gone off. I cannot fubmit to your coming over here on my account, as it is poffible for me to fee you fo fmall a part of the day, but Doctor Black can better inform you concerning the degree of ftrength which may from time to time remain with me. Adieu, &c."

Three

DR. ADAM SMITH. 57 Three days after I received the following letter from Doctor Black.

Edinburgh, Monday, 26th August, 1776.

" DEAR SIR,

"Yefterday about four o'clock afternoon, Mr. Hume expired. The near approach of his death became evident in the night between Thurfday and Friday, when his difeafe became exceffive, and foon weakened him fo much, that he could no longer rife out of his bed. He continued to the laft perfectly fenfible,

fible, and free from much pain or feelings of diftress. He never dropped the fmalleft expression of impatience; but when he had occasion to speak to the people about him, always did it with affection and tendernefs. I thought it improper to write to bring you over, especially as I heard that he had dictated a letter to you defiring you not to come. When he became very weak, it coft him an effort to fpeak, and he died in fuch a happy composure of mind, that nothing could exceed it."

Thus

Thus died our most excellent, and never to be forgotten friend; concerning whole philosophical opinions men will, no doubt, judge varioufly, every. one approving, or condemning them, according as they happen to coincide or difagree with his own; but concerning whofe character and conduct there can fcarce be a difference of opinion. His temper, indeed, feemed to be more happily balanced, if I may be allowed fuch an expreffion, than that perhaps of any other man I have ever known. Even in the lowest state of his fortune,

fortune, his great and neceffary frugality never hindered him from exercifing, upon proper occafions, acts both of charity and generofity. It was a frugality founded, not upon avarice, but upon the love of independency. The extreme gentlenefs of his nature never weakened either the firmness of his mind, or the steadiness of his resolutions. His constant pleafantry was the genuine effusion of good-nature and good-humour, tempered with delicacy and modefly, and without even the flightest tincture of maligni-

ty,

ty, fo frequently the difagreeable fource of what is called wit in other men. It never was the meaning of his raillery to mortify; and therefore, far from offending, it feldom failed to pleafe and delight, even those who were the objects of it. To his friends, who were frequently the objects of it, there was not perhaps any one of all his great and amiable qualities, which contributed more to endear his conversation. And that gaiety of temper, fo agreeable in fociety, but which is fo often accompanied with frivolous and fuper-

superficial qualities, was in him certainly attended with the moft fevere application, the most extenfive learning, the greatest depth of thought, and a capacity in every respect the most comprehenfive. Upon the whole, I have always confidered him, both in his lifetime and fince his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wife and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit,

I ever am, dear Sir,

Most affectionately your's,

ADAM SMITH.





