I had a harder Task set this Evening by the Royal Society than was ever yet put to me, since I professed to answer Questions sent me from the Ingenious. It was, how far, and to what Age Men ought to make their Studies publick to the World. The Regard and Care of the Management of their Thoughts and Persons are as variously to be considered, as their natural and acquired Parts differ; but if one may transgress against the Careful Practice of the Learned in the present times, so much as to give an Opinion in such a material Point I am apt to believe, that less Care better employed would much longer continue the fineness of their Notions, and make Wit and Judgment last many Years longer than they generally do. A Man that lives reserved and temperate in his Youth may be better qualified for an Author at Fourscore than he that spends one half of his Age in a heedless Neglect of himself can be capable of performing at Fifty. Excesses in Vertue as well as Vice take off the Beauty of the Mind betimes. A Scholar may as much weaken and impair his Health and Memory in too hard and severe a Study in Divinity or Mathematicks, as he who gives away the Strength and Vigour of his Youth to a fair Woman. A Student who would spin out his Labours to a long and fine Thread, must be moderate in his Diet and Sleep, yet take Care to keep up the Flame and Vigour of a sprightly Nature; for when that Light and Force of Thought begins to be extinguished in the Mind, he is entirely superannuated and disabled from being an Author,
Author, altho' he has lived but Twenty or Thirty Years in the World. But if he can by a strong and healthy Constitution preserve that Perfection of Sense in his Soul till he comes to the Age of Ninety; he is absolutely fitted to be a Writer. If these Rules are duly observed, Authors may know when to leave off studying, and when they can no longer come up to the true Relish of the Age. It is for want of making this Observation, that many have gone on to publish their Works, when Weakness and Infirmities have worn out the Spirits. The Defect is but too common; few Persons know how to make their Retreat in season, and can say with Horace,

_Est mibi purgatum crebro qui personat aurum, Solvte senescentem matutne sanus equum, ne Psecce ad extreumum ridendus, & lia ducat._

Poets and Orators ought especially to be most diligent to know the time when to withdraw themselves from Affairs, because they have more need of an intense Fire of Imagination than others; yet it happens but too often that they keep in the Career until the umfoft Declination of Age. They think the Publick is constrain'd to drink the very Dregs of their pretended Nectar. But if formerly the Legislators limited the time, wherein People might marry; (for they forbid the Women of Fifty, and the Men of Sixty Years of Age to do it) and if they suppos'd that after a certain Age, they should not think any more of getting Children, either because of the extinction, or the weakness of the Faculties; every one ought also to set bounds to himself, for the Production of Books; which is a kind of Generation where-to every Age is in no wise proper. The Comparison Horace makes use of, puts me in mind of a Precept that Virgil left us, which old Poets ought to apply to themselves.

_Hunc quoque, ubi aut marbo gravis aut jam senior anni, Deficit, abde done, nec turpi ignore sine.'e.
Frivdus in Venerem senior, frustraque laborem
Ingratum trabir, & si quando ad practia ventum est,
Ut quondam in stipulis magnus fine viribus ignis
Incajsum fuerit._

Ancient Poets ought to make the best use of this Lesson, and not to think to climb on Parnassus, when they become like that Horse Pliny spoke of after Aristotle, _Generat mas ad annos triginta tres__- Opus & ad quadragesima durasse tradunt, ad- jutum modo in attollenda priove parte corporis. They obscure their first Glory by it in Imitation of Domitian Afier. Many consecrate their Muses to devout Poems in their old Age, which are commonly insipid Fruits; though sometimes I have known very excellent Works compos'd by old Men on all Subjects. As soon as I came home from the College, I told my Family what a difficult Questiion
sion the Royal Society had put upon me to answer. One of my Grand
Children, who is a sprightly Youth and a good Scholar, told me (after
he had heard what I had been about) that he thought it was high time for
me to consider those things I had been telling others, and leave off be-
ing an Author; for Sir (said he) methinks you are as far advanced in
Years, as any you have been speaking of.

From my House in St. James's Square,
February 2.

I have often taken a Survey to learn
how far the Powers of a Humane
Instrument could reach, but never
measured it to that length as I did
last Night, after reading the History
of the French King. And then I came
very short of knowing what Mis-
chiefs and Treasons ly conceald'd in
the Mind of Man. In that Micro-
cosm, or little World, are acted Tra-
gedies which neither Poets nor Or-
ators by all their Odes, Sonnets and
Panegyricks are capable of figuring
out. It is as impossible to be done
as to dip ones Pen into Eternity, and
write in Cyphers the exact length of
Time. The Extremes, the Ambi-
tion and the Madness that lodge in
an aspiring Mortal, are three Gulphs
too deep to fathom; for the Heart
being a Triangle, and the World
round, nothing which is round can
fill the Triangular Heart of Man. I
think it very superfluous to give an
Abridgement of the Life of a Prince
who affords Products enough upon
this Subject. If all that History relates
of his most Christian Majesty be true,
he is not so much a human Creature
as an incarnate Fiend. One would say
that Providence made choice of him
to demonstrate to late Ages what a
Man would be at. That rapid speed
wherewith he laid hold of occasions,
and used his Advantages, gave the
World an insight of the Harvests and
Triumphs he wanted. It is to
him it might have been once said, I
expect you in two Campaigns at the
Hague, Vienna and Edinburgh. He
look'd upon it as a Crime that any
should doubt of the Succes of his
Designs; but now his Conquests are
broke into many Pieces, and there
is not so much Pride to be seen in his
Person as there was formerly in his
Picture. Some Writers were not
mistaken in believing France too lit-
tle for this Monarch; how was
France likely to content him, when
Europe did not seem a Conquest large
enough for his Ambition? He frown'd
when he heard the Ambassador of
Venice say, it would take up more
than an Age to conquer all the Con-
federate Princes joyn'd in War a-
gainst him. A German Poet expresses
this Vanity after a very lively man-
nner; he represents the King fainting
for want of Breath, in so strait an
Apartment as a Country no bigger
than Europe. Europe was to the King
what a strait Dungeon is to a Cri-
minal confined in it. If he is straignt-
ened for Room, the King for his Part
looks upon the Possession of all Eu-
rope as the Misery of being crowded
up
up in a narrow Corner. An Italian Painter carries the Jeft much farther than all this; he holds out the Kings Heart an Archicor; in a little spot of which the World was so un-straightened, that there was Room for three more; but does it not seem that so vast a Heart determinates upon a very trifling Thing, when it proposes only to be praised by publick Record. It is reported the great Expence he has been at to have his History writ forced him to say, What Prodigious Sums have I given to be said a Conqueror, when all the World will proclaim me Beaten? Is it not a Madness to expose a Mans self to so much Pain and Trouble for the sake of being counted when he is dead, what he never was in his Life? Let the Emisaries of the French Court say what they will upon the Contradiction of the Heart of Man upon its intolerable Follies and Extravagancies; nevertheless I shall be of Opinion, that the end the King proposed to himself was very consistent with the vast and immense extent of his Ambition. He had a Mind to reach to the very last Moment of Time, though it were to be extended to as many Ages as there are Days in his long Reign, and hoped not this from one or more conquer'd Kingdoms, but from Books. He is not mistaken; for if France had not furnished him with Pens, there would not have been half that Glory paid to his Memory as there is. He concerns himself so much with what shall be said of him five or six Ages hence, that it looks as if he wished he might then be born again to read what Historians relate of him. By this inextinguishable Desire of Praise he values the Lives of Men no more than the chopping off the Heads of Beasts. It is not Ten Years, since he was impious enough to be thought and said invincible. Some began to pay homage to his very Statues, as well as to his Name. He experienced this sort of Adoration brought his Subjects to a very great Submission; and indeed Matters were then carried so far, that several Princes durst not take up Arms against a Potentate who was look'd upon to be little inferior to a Deity. It was therefore his Interest the World should have this mighty Opinion of him, and he very dexterously encouraged it. One Day he publickly acknowledged that his Affairs required him to be call'd invincible, and that he wished it were in his Power to give Laws to all Nations. I could easily perswade myself, that by often saying this to others, and hearing his Paraphrases upon this Topick, he doubtless was inclined to believe, that he was descended from the Loins of Jupiter. For there are hardly any Thoughts so vain, but extraordinary Prosperity and Power, with the Addresses of an unlimited Flattery, will be able to infuse.