

DISCOURSES

ON A

SOBER AND TEMPERATE LIFE.

BY

LEWIS CORNARO,

A NOBLE VENETIAN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN ORIGINAL.

L O N D O N



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P R E F A C E.

THE author of the following discourses, Lewis Cornaro, was descended from one of the most illustrious families in Venice, but by the ill conduct of some of his relations, had the misfortune to be deprived of the dignity of a nobleman, and excluded from all honours and public employments in the state. Chagrined at this unmerited disgrace, he retired to Padua, and married a lady of the family of Spiltemberg, whose name was Veronica. Being in possession of a good estate, he was very desirous of hav-

ing children ; and after a long expectation of this happiness, his wife was delivered of a daughter, to whom he gave the name of Clara. This was his only child, who afterwards was married to John, the son of Fantini Cornaro, of a rich family in Cyprus, while that island belonged to the republic of Venice. Though he was far advanced in life when his daughter Clara came into the world, yet he lived to see her very old, and the mother of eight sons and three daughters. He was a man of sound understanding, determined courage and resolution. In his younger days he had contracted infirmities by intemperance, and by indulging his too great propensity to anger ; but when he perceived the ill consequence of his irregularities, he had command enough of himself to subdue his

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passion and inordinate appetites. By means of great sobriety, and a strict regimen in his diet, he recovered his health and vigour, which he preserved to an extreme old age. At a very advanced stage of life he wrote the following discourses, wherein he acquaints us with the irregularity of his youth, his reformation of manners, and the hopes he entertained of living a long time. Nor was he mistaken in his expectation, for he resigned his last breath without any agony, sitting in an elbow chair, being above an hundred years old. This happened at Padua, the 26th of April, 1566. His lady, almost as old as himself, survived him but a short time, and died an easy death. They were both interred in St. Antony's church, without any pomp, pursuant to their testamentary directions.

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These discourses, though written in Cornaro's old age, were penned at different times, and published separately : The first, which he wrote at the age of eighty three, is entitled *A Treatise on a Sober Life*, in which he declares war against every kind of intemperance ; and his vigorous old age speaks in favour of his precepts. The second treatise he composed at the age of eighty six : it contains farther encomiums on sobriety, and points out the means of mending a bad constitution. He says, that he came into the world with a choleric disposition, but that his temperate way of life had enabled him to subdue it. The third, which he wrote at the age of ninety one, is intitled, *An Earnest Exhortation to a Sober Life* ; here he uses the strongest arguments to persuade mankind to embrace
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a temperate life, as the means of attaining a healthy and vigorous old age. The fourth and last, is a letter to Barbaro, Patriarch of Aquileia, written at the age of ninety five; it contains a lively description of the health, vigour, and perfect use of all his faculties, which he had the happiness of enjoying at that advanced period of life.

This useful work was translated some years ago into English, under the title of, *Sure and certain methods of attaining a long and healthy life*. The translator seems rather to have made use of a French version than of the Italian original; he has likewise omitted several passages of the Italian, and the whole is rather a paraphrase than a translation. This has induced us to give the public an exact and faithful version of that excellent performance, from the Venice

nice edition in 8vo, in the year 1620:* at the same time we have followed the advice of some friends, in adding the original Italian, which was become very rare, with a view of rendering the work serviceable, not only to those who aim at health and longevity, but to such also as are desirous of improving in the Italian language.

EXTRACT FROM THE SPECTATOR.

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“ The most remarkable instance of the
 “ efficacy of temperance, towards the pro-
 “ curing long life, is what we meet with
 “ in a little book published by *Lewis Cor-*
 “ *naro the Venetian*; which I the rather
 “ mention, because it is of undoubted cre-

* The first edition was published by the author at Padua, in 4to, A. D. 1558.

“ dit,

“ dit, as the late *Venetian* ambaffador, who
 “ was of the fame family, attested more
 “ than once in converfation, when he re-
 “ fided in *England*. *Cornaro*, who was
 “ the author of the little treatife I am
 “ mentioning, ~~was~~ of an infirm constitu-
 “ tion, till about forty, when, by obfti-
 “ nately perfifting in an exact courfe of
 “ temperance, he recovered a perfect ftate
 “ of health; infomuch that at fourfcore
 “ he publifhed his book, which has been
 “ tranflated into *Engliſh* under the title of,
 “ *Sure and certain methods of attaining a long*
 “ *and healthy life*. He lived to give a
 “ third or fourth edition of it, and after
 “ having paffed his hundreth year, died
 “ without pain or agony, and like one who
 “ falls afleep. The treatife I mention has
 “ been taken notice of by feveral eminent

“ authors, and is written with such a spirit
 “ of chearfulness, religion, and good sense,
 “ as are the natural concomitants of tem-
 “ perance and sobriety. The mixture of
 “ the old man in it, is rather a recom-
 “ mendation than a discredit to it.”

A

T R E A T I S E

O N A

S O B E R L I F E.

IT is a thing past all doubt, that custom, with time, becomes a second nature, forcing men to use that, whether good or bad, to which they have been habituated: nay, we see habit, in many things, get the better of reason. This is so undeniably true, that virtuous men, by conversing with the wicked, very often fall into the same vicious course of life. The contrary, likewise, we see sometimes happen; viz. that,

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as good morals easily change to bad, so bad morals change again to good. For instance; let a wicked man, who was once virtuous, keep company with a virtuous man, and he will again become virtuous; and this alteration can be attributed to nothing but the force of habit, which is, indeed, very great. Seeing many examples of this; and besides, considering that, in consequence of this great force of habit, three bad customs have got footing in Italy within a few years, even within my own memory; the first flattery and ceremoniousness; the second Lutheranism*, which

* The author writes with the prejudice of a zealous Roman Catholic against the doctrine of the Reformation, which he here distinguishes by the name of Lutheranism. This was owing to the artifices of the Romish clergy in those days, by whom the reformed religion was misrepresented, as introductive of licentiousness and debauchery.

some have most preposterously embraced; the third intemperance; and that these three vices, like so many cruel monsters, leagued, as indeed they are, against mankind, have gradually prevailed so far, as to rob civil life of its sincerity, the soul of its piety, and the body of its health; seeing and considering all this, I say, I have resolved to treat of the last of these vices, and prove that it is an abuse, in order to extirpate it, if possible. As to the second, Lutheranism, and the third; flattery, I am certain, that some great genius or another will soon undertake the task of exposing their deformity, and effectually suppressing them. Therefore, I firmly hope, that, before I die, I shall see these three abuses conquered and driven out of Italy; and this country of course

restored to its former laudable and virtuous customs.

To come then to that abuse, of which I have proposed to speak, namely, intemperance; I say, that it is a great pity it should have prevailed so much, as entirely to banish sobriety. Though all are agreed, that intemperance is the offspring of gluttony, and sober living of abstemiousness; the former, nevertheless, is considered as a virtue and a mark of distinction, and the latter as dishonourable and the badge of avarice. Such mistaken notions are entirely owing to the power of custom, established by our senses and irregular appetites; these have blinded and besotted men to such a degree, that, leaving the paths of virtue, they have followed those of vice, which are apt to lead them imperceptibly

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to an old age, burthened with strange and mortal infirmities, so as to render them quite decrepid before forty, contrary to the effects of sobriety, which, before it was banished by this destructive intemperance, used to keep men sound and hearty to the age of eighty and upwards. O wretched and unhappy Italy! can't you see, that intemperance murders every year more of your subjects, than you could lose by the most cruel plague, or by fire and sword in many battles? Those truly shameful feasts, now so much in fashion, and so intolerably profuse, that no tables are large enough to hold the dishes, which renders it necessary to heap them one upon another; those feasts, I say, are so many battles; and how is it possible to live amongst such a multitude of jarring foods and disorders?

Put a stop to this abuse, for God's sake, for there is not, I am certain of it, a vice more abominable than this in the eyes of the Divine Majesty. Drive away this plague, the worst you were ever afflicted with, this new kind of death ; as you have banished that disease, which, though it formerly used to make such havock, now does little or no mischief, owing to the laudable practice of attending more to the goodness of the provisions brought to our markets. Consider, that there are means still left to banish intemperance, and such means too, that every man may have recourse to them without any external assistance. Nothing more is requisite for this purpose, than to live up to the simplicity dictated by nature, which teaches us to be content with little, to pursue the
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