

THE INTRODUCTION.



IT has been the general opinion of all nations, even of the most barbarous, that man does not die entirely, but that his better part subsists after the dissolution of the body; and this original notion of the soul's immortality, has induced the most learned, and most ancient nations to indulge the belief of the possibility of the visible interference of spirits, upon certain momentous and awful occasions.

There is nothing more commonly talked of than apparitions of departed spirits, of demons and ghosts. The reality of these visions passes for certain with a great number of people, while by as great a number they are laughed at, and treated as reveries and idle fears. Several respectable authors have written upon this subject, some of which are expensive and voluminous. It was deemed no unwelcome task to collect and extract from the most learned and judicious the most remarkable narratives, which prove the reality of these appearances. We have therefore treated the subject with all precision possible, and but rarely hazarded an opinion upon the matter ourselves. After giving the necessary relation most in the Author's words, and citing his name for the authority, the examination of the matter, and the manner in which they are affected, and upon what principles they may be explained, the reader is left to judge for himself whether they are natural or miraculous events.

Our superstitious ancestors may be supposed to have been full as ridiculous with regard to the belief of ghosts in general, as the present free-thinking age may be thought incredulous, in endeavouring wholly to discredit and explode them. But as men of understanding have certainly lived in all ages, there is as