

JUNIOR LEAVING, 1891.

✕ This delusive itch for slander, too common in all ranks of people, whether to gratify a little ungenerous resentment; whether oftener out of a principle of levelling, from a narrowness and poverty of soul, ever impatient of merit and superiority in others; whether from a mean ambition, or the insatiate lust of being witty (a talent in which ill-nature and malice are no ingredients);—or lastly, whether from a natural cruelty of disposition, abstracted from all views and considerations of self;—to which one, or whether to all jointly, we are indebted for this contagious malady, thus much is certain, from whatever seeds it springs, the growth and progress of it are as destructive to, as they are unbecoming, a civilized people. To pass a hard and ill-natured reflection upon an undesigning action; to invent, or which is equally bad, to propagate, a vexatious report without colour and grounds;—to plunder an innocent man of his character and good name, a jewel which perhaps he has starved himself to purchase and probably would hazard his life to secure;—to rob him at the same time of his happiness and peace of mind, perhaps his bread:—the bread, may be, of a virtuous family; and all this, as Solomon says of the madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith, “Am I not in sport?” all this out of wantonness, and oftener from worse motives,—the whole appears such a complication of badness as requires no words or warmth of fancy to aggravate.—Pride, treachery, envy, hypocrisy, malice, cruelty and self-love may have been said, in one shape or other, to have occasioned all the frauds and mischiefs that ever happened in the world; but the chances against a coincidence of them all in one person are so many, that one would have supposed the character of a common slanderer as rare and difficult a production in nature as that of a great genius, which seldom happens above once in an age.