

the lady. He is in the miserable state described by Persius. He knows what is good and cannot perform it. Yet this man, if an author, from the very circumstance of feeling so bitterly that his constitution is stronger than his reason, would have made his lover in a hook all that he could not be himself in reality."

There is a sort of wit peculiar to knowledge of the world, and we usually find that writers, who are supposed to have the most exhibited that knowledge in their books, are also commonly esteemed the wittiest authors of their country—Horace, Plautus, Moliere, Le Sage, Voltaire, Cervantes, Shakspeare, Fielding, Swift;* and this is, because the essence of the most refined species of wit is truth. Even in the solemn and grave Tacitus, we come perpetually to sudden turns—striking points of sententious brilliancy, which make us smile, from the depth itself of their importance—an aphorism is always on the borders of an epigram.

It is remarkable that there is scarcely any *very popular* author of great imaginative power, in whose works we do not recognise that common sense which is knowledge of the world, and which is so generally supposed by the superficial to be in direct opposition to the imaginative faculty. When an author does not possess it eminently, he is never eminently popular, whatever be his fame. Compare Scott and Shelley, the two most *imaginative* authors of their time. The one, in his wildest flights, never loses sight of common sense—there is an affinity between him and his humblest reader; nay, the more discursive the flight, the closer that affinity becomes. We are even more wrapt with the author when he is with his spirits of the mountain and fell—with the mighty dead at Melrose, than when he is leading us through the humours of a guard room, or confiding to us the interview of lovers. But Shelley disdains common sense. Of his "Prince Athanase," we have no early comprehension—with his "Prometheus" we have no human sympathies; and the grander he becomes, the less popular we find him. Writers who do not in theory know their kind, may be admired, but they can never be popular. And when we hear men of unquestionable genius complain of not being appreciated by the herd, it is because they are not themselves skilled in the feelings of the herd. For what is knowledge of mankind, but the knowledge of their feelings, their humours, their caprices, their passions; touch these, and you gain attention—develope these, and you have conquered your audience.

Among writers of an inferior reputation we often discover a

*Let me mention two political writers of the present day—men equally remarkable for their wit and wisdom—Sidney Smith, and the Editor of the "Examiner," Mr. Fonblauque; barring, may I say it? a little affectation of pithiness—the latter writer is one of the greatest masters of that art which makes "words like sharp swords," that our age has produced. And I cannot help adding, in common with many of his admirers, an earnest hope that he may leave the world a more firm and settled monument of his great abilities, than the pages of any periodical can afford.