

the subject ? There may be in the whole a treasury of feeling and information ; but how shall each individual contribute a portion, fromed on, as imagination would suggest, by the uncongeniality of surrounding companions ? One or two attempts may indeed be made by those who have most self-possession ; but, if they are met with indifference, after this they are made no more, and the individuals resist themselves to listen and contribute to the common-places of the hour. After this tea appears ; and it would be very sad if the refined courtesies of Christian politeness and benevolent feeling, which are due to the softer sex should be withheld ; but besides this, the conversation which now confessedly becomes more animated, is too often most painfully flippant. A running fire, so to speak, is kept up between certain of the youthful party ; an incessant *ad captandum* skirmish, a catching at words ; an ascription of motives ; a wilful misunderstanding of sentiments : not those occasional and brilliant turns which the truly talented and good can give to a passing remark, embodying as they ever will, both mind and benevolence ; not those bright and stingless pleasantries which like sunbeams illumine the soul without piercing or annoying the feelings ; but an everlasting play with the drapery of conversation, until the less ingenious are wearied beyond measure, like the tortured father who tells his romping boy to play no more ; and till those who are only spectators of this wordy tournament hardly know into what tangled thicket the principals have jostled themselves. After tea comes the attraction of music ; and a great attraction it is, when not hackneyed and degraded. But the charm is frequently lost from there being too much ; every lady being required to take her turn at the instrument, from the most skilful performer with the most perfect piece, to the youngest student with the most lesson-like composition ; and every gentleman to accompany, if the music requires it, according to his ability. In a youthful company of unequal talent, persons of good taste are soon satisfied, at least within the compass of an hour ; and persons of no taste at all are at first indifferent, and then, if the performances be prolonged, become annoyed, and earnestly wish for the hour of refreshments, which sooner or later arrives, and with it very frequently the flippancy of the tea-table too ; and soon after, and without prayer to God, the party separate,—the thoughtless confirmed in their tendencies and habits, and the pious and thoughtful wounded with the conviction that the evening has been irrecoverably lost. In all this there is nothing for the heart. There may be a little for the surface of fancy, or ingenuity ; but it is not by either of these that a deep interest is taken in the purposes for which our kind friends so often call us together. To this kind of sociality, as a source of happiness, we may apply the words of the blessed Redeemer : “ He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” The writer would again disclaim the remotest intention of diminishing the enjoyments of the winter parlour : he would rather enhance them, and in Cowper’s words would say,