

T H E

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T H E S C E P T I C .

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THE greater part of the day, succeeding to that evening of adventures which gave rise to my preceding paper, was spent in lassitude. The weather was not particularly fine to tempt me abroad; and men who have attained the summit of wisdom—that is to say, who know that nothing can be learned, have no curiosity to gratify, either by mixing with mankind, or by poring over books. And who shall then say but that *Epicurus* might be right, when he denominated *rest the greatest possible good*? At least since all mankind are but, like himself, blind gropers in the regions of conjecture, can it be worth the trouble of an effort to examine his assertion?

THE REPROOF.

In this state of mental as well as corporeal inaction, I was lolling on a couch, when the name of Mordant was announced. He was the last man in the world I could have wished to see in my present state of mind. 'Yet for what reason?' said I to myself. 'Fool! how should I know what visitor will be agreeable, or who will not? Let things take their course.' I ordered him to be shewn up stairs, and received him without changing my posture.

'I blush for you, Apathus,' said he, as soon as he had seated himself; 'you of all men in the world, to be seduced to such disgraceful aberrations from the paths of decency and rectitude, by an abandoned trumpeter—You to desert the society of your friends for the purpose of conducting to brothels and scenes of licentiousness, wretches who are abhorrent for their infamous profligacy, who are execrated for

their impiety, from the presence of their creator; and detestable, for their depredations on society, in the eyes of all good men!'

In how different a light, said I to myself, would Lewson paint these poor wretches. How would he soften these harsh lines with the mildest tints of sorrow and of commiseration! Yet adverse as the portraits would appear, each would argue and insist, with equal arrogance, that their pencils were dipped in the colours of truth; and each, with the confidence of folly, would call their respective assertions, argument and demonstration.

From this reverie I was awakened by the increased asperity and loudness of Mordant's voice. 'How infamous beyond toleration,' continued he, 'is the abandoned depravity of the day! Having thrown down all sense of shame, with what gigantic strides does Vice hasten to the zenith of her profligate dominion, when men (whose maturity of years should stimulate them to allure the youth of the age from the thoughtless career of headstrong folly, by the influence of a melliority of example) by the dissipation of their own conduct sanction those infamous practices, which are diurnally stripping mankind of its boasted dignity, and debasing it below the brute creation!'

'This reproof I heard with the passive attention of perfect indifference. Why should I take the trouble to undeceive him? Perhaps he has a pleasure in railing, or perhaps he is prompted by mere curiosity, which I have no inclination to gratify.'

'Well may you droop,' continued he,