

and distinct roads, constantly held the same main object in view—the instruction of mankind in all that tended to their present improvement and future happiness; and none of these great stars in the hemisphere of science, ever shone more brilliantly than when they held forth their hand to society with the *realities* as well as the decorations and amusements of human knowledge. But though the fruits of the labour of those wise and indefatigable instructors must remain as living monuments of their genius while taste exists and the sciences are cultivated, we greatly fear, that, in many respects, to use the words of Cato, “the dawn is overcast.” The men of genius of the present age are of quite a different stamp, and, if we may be permitted to venture an opinion, of a general character far inferior in value and importance. True, that we have men who prolong the current of history—who still traverse the regions of fancy, both in song and in prose—and who endeavour to instruct us in the lessons of morality and truth; but owing, either to an unaccountable vitiation in the taste of the age, or in the principles of our men of learning, a species of literature has gone abroad amongst us which is as different from the writings of the last age, as childhood is from venerable old age, or the gambol of the lambkin from the pawing of the lion. All the productions of the present day, whatever may be their merits in point of ingenuity and originality, have their foundation in such airy and unsubstantial fragments in the affairs of human life, and are so deeply tainted with party and political influence, as must render them truly ephemeral in comparison to those which preceded them. This remark will be found peculiarly applicable to some of our periodical publications; but all share alike in the justice of the conclusion, that the feelings and the labours of literary men are now ensanguined and regulated more by the voice of amusement than by the dictates of virtuous instruction—more by the tainted gale of fashion and corrupted taste than by the calm and unbiased opinions of morality and philosophy. Instead of tracing the beautiful and substantial meanders of the brook, they lie in indolent apathy upon the banks, gazing upon the bubbles which play upon its surface, and describing them with all the glow, feeling and imagery which belongs to real poetry. They build their habitations among the tender and gaudy flowrets of the field, and revel on their enervating fragrance, instead of laying their foundations on the rock of moral science, which will last for ages.

With such opinions, the judicious reader cannot be at any loss in the discovery of our sentiments, and in discerning the track which we have marked out for ourselves in the conduct of this work. He will see, that we prefer the substantial realities of a virtuous education, of prudent habits, and useful learning to the evanescent and fanciful colourings of *modern* polite literature—that we shall always respect the labours of the moralist, the historian, and the traveller before the superstructures of fancy or the brilliant meteors of wit. Agreeable to this plan, it shall form one of the most prominent parts of our labours to select and transfer into our pages, from the most estimable sources of our standard literature as well as from the most reputable periodical publications of the day, such articles as we may deem of importance, in promoting the diffusion of useful knowledge throughout this country—in keeping alive the heroic and energetic sentiments of our ancestors—their private virtues and public patriotism—and in forming, for the example of posterity, a moral,