

that there are many gems, both in prose and verse, hidden in works, which, however much esteemed in their day, have long since ceased to be generally accessible. To gather a few of these, and to bring them again to light, was one of the objects which the compiler proposed to himself in this undertaking; but it would have been inconsistent with the light and cursory nature of his design, to have brought them forward, either in any sort of chronological order, or with any particular formality of disquisition. In fact, the colloquies with which he has prefaced the extracts were suggested by an after-thought, in order to give an air of freshness to the results of a task that necessarily excluded originality.

To accomplish this, he has therefore not scrupled to assume opinions, which he would hesitate, in many instances, to acknowledge as his own, and also to maintain paradoxes, calculated rather to excite reflection than to induce persuasion; at the same time, nothing will be found either in the one or the other, to which any objection can be reasonably made. The book has indeed been prepared for the parlour table, and is likely to afford amusement, in the intervals of business, to a class of readers who would never

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