

Introduction.

THE sun had just completed his daily course, but his last rays, dimly flitting on the expanded sheet of water that formed the western boundary of our horizon, displayed a relief of light and shade, unrivaled in the best designations of art. The day had been warm, uncomfortably so; but a rising breeze restored the elasticity of the air, and revived the vigour of animated creation. The milk-maid sang blithely, as she poised her milk-pails. The plough-boy whistled as he drove the cattle to the watering-place. My host bustled in his farm-yard; the good lady of the house was occupied with her children, and I seated myself in the piazza, enjoying the luxury of solitude, amidst the enlivened scenes of rural peace and plenty.

I was aroused from a deep abstractive fit of meditation, by the hoarse voice of our honest neighbour Noxbury, who, with a pipe in his mouth, was sitting not three paces distance from me.

‘ Bless me!’ he cried, taking his pipe in his hand, ‘ what can thus so entirely occupy your mind? Here have I been this half hour endeavoring to attract your attention, but I could not obtain even so much as a nod of recognition.’

‘ Oh, your servant, Mr. Noxbury; I beg pardon, but my mind was indeed much occupied. My publisher has sent to me for a preface.’

‘ A preface! Why, then, you really intend publishing your manuscript?’