

the word business. 'Business! business!' said she, and wept bitterly for some time, before she could proceed. 'Oh, Sir! never till this fatal hour was guilt considered as a trade by the unfortunate Emma.—Heaven and its starry host know I am spotless yet!'

I was pierced with anguish. 'Thou art spotless yet!' (said I, starting back)—and wilt thou, for a paltry fee, sell the inestimable jewel of thy innocence? If it should happen that futurity is not a dream, how wilt thou hereafter lament, that for a price too paltry to support thy sickening form one week on earth, thou hast bartered the inheritance of eternal plenty?

'Yet, oh! to starve is dreadful!—And these wretched garments, whose melancholy appearance provoked thy curiosity, are, alas! all the wealth I have. I have parted with every thing else,—I preserved these to the last—I could not bear to part with them. They were my dear mother's—In these she wept over the memory of the best of husbands, and the best of fathers. And in these—Oh, would to Heaven that I might expire, ere they should be polluted by a harlot's wearing!'

'Why then (said I, full of anguish)—why will'—

'Oh hold, in mercy! (interrupted she,) spread not the banquet of virtue before me, unless thou wilt enable me to eat.—Shew me not the horrors of the dreadful abyss, unless thou wilt snatch me from the brink.'

Unless thou wilt snatch me from the brink!
—Oh, the very cry did knock against my heart!—It was as the demand of an imperious creditor—it would not be refused.—My hand drew, by a kind of apparent instinct, to my pocket, and ere I could resolve to comfort the weeping female, nay, ere I knew that I wished to do so, I saw her clasped hands lifted to heaven with my purse between them. She fell upon her knees, and blessed me.—I had no power to raise her—I stood like a statue; but my heart was no sharer in that suspension of vital motion, which detained me unconscious of my situation. At length she started suddenly up, and quitting my tear-washed hand shrieked out the name of Morton, and disappeared.

THE RETROSPECT.

The strong vibrations of my bosom began to subside; and the wild tempest of indescribable sensations fluttered into a gale of compassion, and a breeze of self-congratulation.

In such a state the self-conceited block-head might long have remained. He who

can fancy light amidst the darkness of deception—who can be confident amidst delusion and ignorance—and can boast of discovering his own motives—or of being assured of the propriety of his conduct.—He, happy in his folly, and blest in his presumption, might feast his mind for a month on the reflection of such an action. But what reason is there in fact for congratulation? Is there any virtue in what I have done? My heart would hope so—but reason tells me it is doubtful: The impulse by which I acted seemed involuntary.—May not man be a mere machine?—and, if so, where is the merit?—nay, the object—Is it good thus to scatter favours on those who may be worthless?—favours—pshaw! dirty counters!—yet paltry, worthless as they may be, should they encourage prostitutes?—should they reward the hypocrite?—for such this woman may be—and I may be—*a bubble!*—Yet her looks did speak sincerity—they pleaded to my heart.—Looks! pho!—let dogmatic Lavater, and his conceited pupils talk of looks, and exult in pragmatic confidence; while I, shielded by my philosophy from the infection of their folly, remember that all is doubtful.

Gloomy Philosophy.—Those fine sensations which erewhile I felt—ah!—were not they of heaven?—Shall there not come a time when such sensations, elevated by purer sympathy, and excited by objects of surrounding joy, shall constitute our bliss, and prove that bliss immortal? Gaudy delusion!—sweet enchantment, stay!—ah no!—the sceptic frown hath chafed it. My soul is fettered to the gloomy present. Fogs! fogs! thick fogs retard her flagging pinions.—Shall feeble doubt taste of the enthusiast's spring?—shall she quaff the gay oblivion of her sorrows, or repose in the rosy bower of hope?—Be calm, my soul! if as thou tossest on this bed of nettles, calm may approach thy thoughts.

Oh, I was once enthusiasm's child!—How gay was then the prospect? smiling error scattered the blooms of Paradise around; and if perchance a thorn pierced my too hasty foot, I plucked it out—I chose another path, and all was bright again.

From this reflection I fell into a long train of thought, in which fancy revelled among the stores of memory, and renewed the former pastimes of my youth in all their glowing colours. And thou, Miranda! thou hadst thy share of my reflections. For still, thou once soft companion of my stolen joys—thou once sweet partner of my gay desires, still can I remember thee with pleasure.—Though thou