

Yet, how often have I heard that selfish weakness, which flies from the sight of distress, dignified with the name of tenderness;—"My friend is, I hear, in the deepest affliction and misery;—I have not seen her;—for indeed I cannot bear such scenes,—they affect me too much!"—Those who have less sensibility, are fitter for this world;—but, for my part, I own, I am not able to support such things.—I shall not attempt to visit her till I hear she has recovered her spirits." This have I heard said, with an air of complacency; and the poor selfish creature has persuaded herself that she had finer feelings than those generous friends, who are sitting patiently in the house of mourning,—watching, in silence, the proper moment to pour in the balm of comfort;—who suppressed their own sensations, and only attended to those of the afflicted person; and whose tears flowed in secret, whilst their eyes and voice were taught to enliven the sinking heart with the appearance of cheerfulness.

That sort of tenderness, which makes us useless, may indeed be pitied and excused, if owing to natural imbecility; but, if it pretends to loveliness and excellence, it becomes truly contemptible.

The same degree of active courage is not to be expected in woman as in man; and not belonging to her nature, it is not agreeable in her: But passive courage,—patience and fortitude under sufferings,—presence of mind, and calm resignation in danger,—are surely desirable in every rational creature; especially in one professing to believe in an over-ruling Providence, in which we may at all times quietly confide, and which we may safely trust with every event that does not depend upon our own will.—Whenever you find yourself deficient in these virtues, let it be a subject of shame and humiliation,—not of vanity and self-complacency: do not fancy yourself the more amiable for that which really makes you despicable;—but content yourself with the faults and weaknesses that belong to you, without putting on more by way of ornament. With regard to tenderness, remember that compassion is best shown by an ardour to relieve,—and affection by assiduity to promote the good and happiness of the persons you love: that tears are unamiable, instead of being ornamental, when voluntarily

indulged; and can never be attractive but when they flow irresistibly, and avoid observation as much as possible. The same may be said of every other mark of passion; it attracts our sympathy, if involuntary and not designed for our notice; it offends, if we see that it is purposely indulged and intruded on our observation.

Another point, on which the heart is apt to deceive itself, is generosity. We cannot bear to suspect ourselves of base and ungenerous feelings; therefore we let them work without attending to them, or we endeavour to find out some better motive for those actions, which really flow from envy and malignity. Before you flatter yourself, that you are a generous benevolent person, take care to examine whether you are really glad of every advantage and excellence, which your friends and companions possess, though they are such as you are yourself deficient in. If your sister or friend makes a greater proficiency than yourself in any accomplishment, which you are in pursuit of, do you never wish to stop her progress, instead of trying to hasten your own?

The boundaries between virtuous emulation and vicious envy are very nice, and may be easily mistaken. The first will awaken your attention to your own defects, and excite your endeavours to improve; the last will make you repine at the improvements of others, and wish to rob them of the praise they have deserved. Do you sincerely rejoice when your sister is enjoying pleasure or commendation, though you are at the same time in disagreeable or mortifying circumstances?—Do you delight to see her approved and beloved, even by those who do not pay you equal attention?—Are you afflicted and humbled, when she is found to be in fault, though you yourself are remarkably clear from the same offence?—If your heart assures you of the affirmative to these questions, then may you think yourself a kind sister, and a generous friend: for you must observe, my dear, that scarcely any creature is so depraved as not to be capable of kind affections in some circumstances. We are all naturally benevolent, when no selfish interest interferes, and where no advantage is to be given up: we can all pity distress, when it lies complaining at our feet, and confesses our superiority and happier situation: but I have seen the sufferer himself become