

ers, and is sure never to be wrong, for he has only to wait for his master's signal and then he may attack any one safely. There is another great benefit which the toad-eater enjoys ; he has no occasion to trouble himself about the formation of any opinions on any subject whatever ; he has nothing to do but to take his master's opinion and to re-echo and corroborate that. It is a great pleasure to be saved the trouble of thinking—at least, I think it is—not that I ever did think, only I think thinking must be very troublesome. Now a toad-eater need have no opinions,—indeed, he is much safer without, for if by any accident he should lose his occupation he is in a most miserable condition, and nothing so endangers a toad-eater's situation as daring to have an opinion. It is true that a patron will often ask his opinion ; but if he have the slightest sagacity he may easily know his patron's, and that of course becomes his. There may perhaps be some little ingenuity required here, and therefore, for the benefit of those who wish to pursue the high and honourable occupation of toad-eating, I will state my own practice. He asks my opinion, say, for instance, of some bill before Parliament, of which perhaps till that moment I have not even heard the name ; but if my patron seems interested about it, I would not for the world seem to be indifferent ; so, without saying that I really know nothing about the bill, its merits or demerits, I merely shake my head and look wise, giving a certain smile, as much as to say, " Ah, all the world save you and me, are fools," " You think it will be carried ?" says he interrogatively, but yet doubtfully as to the expression of his own wish ; then I can only repeat the word " carried !" Then he says " Ay, carried." By his tone in repeating my repetition of his word, I immediately understand what is opinion is, and that of course becomes mine. Thereupon the bill becomes in my estimation the wisest or wickedest measure that can be brought before the House. Sometimes it may be necessary to back out of an opinion, because your patron may change his ; you may perhaps think that there is some difficulty in this,—no, none at all : if your master can change his mind a dozen times in an hour,