

compliance with the laughable haughtiness of the would-be great men here, of whom there are too many, gives a very pleasing archness to the general tenor of their conversation, and the lively repartee, the retort courteous, and the quips and quiddits of ingenious witticism, receive additional poignancy from the lustre of a dark and meaning eye, and the satiric playfulness of a dimpled smile. Not to condemn, not to destroy, this disposition for raillery, but to regulate it, and restrain its excess, is my object. In the first place, my dear ladies, allow me to define to you what true wit is. It is the quick and intuitive sense of whatever is ridiculous or inconsistent, combined with a fertility of imagination that induces an instantaneous comparison in the mind, between objects that are, excepting in the one point of view which then presents itself, otherwise remarkably dissimilar or incongruous. In other words wit is the perception of hidden points of resemblance between objects that in other respects are widely different from each other, and the ready expression of that perception. Intuitive wit, however, will laugh at this pompous and learned dissection of its own internal structure, and like a young beauty, whirling through a waltz, will keep time and measure, with rapid step and graceful attitude, without thinking either of the anatomy of the foot and ankle, or of the structure or philosophy of the musical instruments that animate the dance. But, as in dancing, excess fatigues, affectation distorts, and fashionable nudity disgusts, whilst by too wild or frantic motion you may tread on other people's toes; so in the exercise of your talents for wit, beware of fatiguing your companions with too constant an exhibition, avoid the distortion arising from false wit, the indelicacy of expression into which a vivid fancy will sometimes unavoidably betray those