









## PREFACE.

The following Preface is of interest for the expression of the author's own view of these works.

This volume comprises my writings on subjects chiefly of our vernacular literature. Now collected together, they offer an unity of design, and afford to the general reader and to the student of classical antiquity some initiation into our national Literature. It is presumed also, that they present materials for thinking not solely on literary topics; authors and books are not alone here treated of,—a comprehensive view of human nature necessarily enters into the subject from the diversity of the characters portrayed, through the gradations of their faculties, the influence of their tastes, and those incidents of their lives prompted by their fortunes or their passions. This present volume, with its brother "CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE," now constitute a body of reading which may awaken knowledge in minds only seeking amusement, and refresh the deeper studies of the learned by matters not unworthy of their curiosity.

The LITERARY CHARACTER has been an old favourite with many of my contemporaries departed or now living, who have found it respond to their own emotions.

THE MISCELLANIES are literary amenities, should they be found to deserve the title, constructed on that principle early adopted by me, of interspersing facts with speculation.

THE INQUIRY INTO THE LITERARY AND POLITICAL CHARACTER OF JAMES THE FIRST has surely corrected some general misconceptions, and thrown light on some obscure points in the history of that anomalous personage. It is a satisfaction to me to observe, since the publication of this tract, that while some compe-

tent judges have considered the "evidence irresistible," a material change has occurred in the tone of most writers. The subject presented an occasion to exhibit a minute picture of that age of transition in our national history.

The titles of CALAMITIES OF AUTHORS and QUARRELS OF AUTHORS do not wholly designate the works, which include a considerable portion of literary history.

Public favour has encouraged the republication of these various works, which often referred to, have long been difficult to procure. It has been deferred from time to time with the intention of giving the subjects a more enlarged investigation; but I have delayed the task till it cannot be performed. One of the Calamities of Authors falls to my lot, the delicate organ of vision with me has suffered a singular disorder,[A]—a disorder which no oculist by his touch can heal, and no physician by his experience can expound; so much remains concerning the frame of man unrevealed to man!

In the midst of my library I am as it were distant from it. My unfinished labours, frustrated designs, remain paralysed. In a joyous heat I wander no longer through the wide circuit before me. The "strucken deer" has the sad privilege to weep when he lies down, perhaps no more to course amid those far-distant woods where once he sought to range.

[Footnote A: I record my literary calamity as a warning to my sedentary brothers. When my eyes dwell on any object, or whenever they are closed, there appear on a bluish film a number of mathematical squares, which are the reflection of the fine network of the retina, succeeded by blotches which subside into printed characters, apparently forming distinct words, arranged in straight lines as in a printed book; the monosyllables are often legible. This is the process of a few seconds. It is remarkable that the usual power of the eye is not injured or diminished for distant objects, while those near are clouded over.]

Although thus compelled to refrain in a great measure from all mental labour, and incapacitated from the use of the pen and the book, these works, notwithstanding, have received many important corrections, having been read over to me with critical precision.

Amid this partial darkness I am not left without a distant hope, nor a present consolation; and to HER who has so often lent to me the light of her eyes, the intelligence of her voice, and the careful work of her hand, the author must ever owe "the debt immense" of paternal gratitude.



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