

(See Suppl. No. 48.)

THE STAIR-CASE.

FRONTI NULLA FIDES.

He that derives Fears from the Frowns of a Prude; or Hopes from the Smiles of a Coquette, and the Promises of a Coartier, will, one Day or other, be convinced that he has only been making a Fool's Cap for himself.

TO know one's heart, is a much more difficult Task than most people imagine. I do not pretend to a thorough knowledge of mine; but if I am in the least acquainted with its Movements, something much superior to Curiosity induced me just now, as I came along the Gallery tapestried on one Side with the Spider's curious Web, and penciled on the other by Love-mitten Swains and jolly Bacchanatians, to attend to a Conference between two Persons in an adjoining Chamber, the Door of which was open---It was adversity trying a Friend, and I found myself, I know not how, interested in the Event.

---Why or How (*quare vel quomodo*) it is so, I leave to the Decision of Speculatists; but, torpid as my *Selfish* Feelings are, my *philanthropic* ones are very seldom asleep, especially upon Occasions of this Sort---I suppose there is some wise Reason or other for their being so, and I trouble myself no farther about the Matter. Not that I have no Curiosity neither; (I think Curiosity, well *managed*; is as clever a Hobby-Horse, as a Man would wish to mount---but give him the Reins, he is such a headstrong unruly Devil, it is good to one that, unless You are a very expert Rider indeed, he throws You into a Ditch or Slough, or some other Place, where no Man in his Senses would wish to be.) but that I never could find a Reason, or any thing like a Reason, why I should fret and teaze and harass myself to Death; or disqualify myself for those social Duties, the discharging which creates such pleasurable Sensations in the Minds of Spectators and heavenly ones in our own, by searching and re-researching into things which I cannot comprehend; or which if I could comprehend them, would not make me, in the least degree, a better or a more useful Man.

--- Knowledge, say the Learned, is immensely valuable: Misers think the same of Gold, and Beggars proclaim it in the Streets, but these poor miserables prize Gold as Americans (say the Apprehensive) are likely to prize Liberty---from the Want of it; but is not this Apprehension solely? for who are more free and more likely to continue so than Americans? Enthusiasts for Liberty, have they not, at the Expence of their Interest, entered and re-entered into Associations and Agreements, to oppose arbitrary Measures, with so much spirited Warmth and with such solemn Promises to persevere, that surely, no Nation under Heaven could ever expect to enslave them; none dare attempt it---Def-

potism herself, uncontrollable as She is, with all her State-Engines at her Heels, would shrink back at the very appearance of such *unparalleled* patriotic Virtue: And I dare not suppose that they ever will, by a mean Defection, verify a Remark some one has made upon the Instability of Man; who (saith he) resolves & re-resolves, then quietly jogs on in the old beaten Path, leaving his Resolves to execute themselves.

To suppose this will ever be applicable to them, is to anticipate an Evil, which, certainly, it is impossible should ever come to pass; & to anticipate Evils is as imprudent, in general, as it would be to attempt to decry Knowledge & Gold when such respectable Bodies have given their Suffrages, *Nemine con.* in Favor of them: And, though I am not quite mad enough to make this attempt, yet, Messrs. Micro-megaloi, and eke ye Philarguroi, though you should chaunt their Praises from June to January, or, taking in the whole year, round to June again, I insist that they may both be bought too dear, and Gold most easily so; neither is it every Kind of Knowledge that is worth a Man's having upon any terms. The Point is to be able to distinguish the *useful* and the *good*; and simple and easy as this Task may appear, it is not in the Power of every one, whether learned or unlearned, to perform it---

A Favor was asked with all that modest Diffidence natural to merit in Distress, and a little of that Confidence which an Hope of Success inspires. I saw his Situation and pitied him for it. I read in the Countenance of his Friend the Issue of his Suit...It was heard with indifference, and answered with a short Turn upon the Heel.

'SDeath, said he, to be even refused would have hurt Me, but such Contempt from a Man whose Professions of Friendship induced me to make this Application...It is intolerable.

Vibrating between Contempt and Revenge, He was silent for a Moment,...at last, said he, eyeing him with indignation, you are beneath my Relentment, and almost beneath my Contempt.....Unsusceptible as you are of generous Ideas, I blush to think I ever called You my Friend...You are incapable of being one--- Raised, undeservedly raised by Interest, from a state of Infamy, You brand every unfortunate Man with your own Crimes...but be your Crimes your Punishment, and to them I leave You; rubbing the Dust off his shoes as he turned from him.

My Heart bled for him, and as he hurried past me, will there be of any Service to You? said I, offering him a few pieces which I had put in my hand for that Purpose---he refused