

For the COURANT.

Short Chapters of Hints and Advise-ments on the subject of Hard Times.

BY ONE OF THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER XIV.

Missing the mark by overshooting it.

THE celebrated Dean Swift, (I quote from memory only, not having by me the record)—the celebrated Dean Swift had been so highly pleased with the conversation and deportment of a farmer's wife near Dublin, that he invited himself to dine at her house, and sent her notice of the time. The trial was rather too hard for her prudence. Elated with the idea of entertaining a guest whose company was courted by the first nobility of the realm, she dressed herself out as fine as her fingers could make her, and, in this attire, received the Dean with stately ceremony. He, in his turn, made his profound obeisance, and then instantly enquired for the farmer's wife.—“I am she; pray, sir, don't you know me?” “You! no, Madam, I wont be tricked; the farmer's wife that I am come to see is a plain woman, but you look like a Duchess.”

Her excellent sense made her understand the hint, and her excellent humour made her take it in good part. She withdrew, changed her dress, and returned in a plain robe.—“Ah, tis she,” joyfully exclaimed the Dean; “this is the very woman, the farmer's wife that I am come to see, and I expect to be quite happy in your company.”

No reflection is meant by introducing this anecdote here. Assuredly, no insinuation is intended, that females of the middle rank, whether belonging to the families of farmers, mechanics, traders, or of whatever reputable occupation else, are less worthy of esteem than the splendid daughters of wealth and fortune. So far otherwise, I do verily believe that in the living world there are not to be found a more estimable body of females, than in families of but middling circumstances. As wives, as mothers, as daughters, as sisters, no female characters have done more virtuously. Alike removed from the seductive influence of luxurious wealth, and from the blighting influence of chill and pinching poverty, not a few of them are patterns of domestic excellence.

And what is it that has made a great many of them so estimable, and of price above rubies? It is their sober virtuous habits—their modesty—their piety—their industry—their prudent economy—their faithful discharge of domestic duties—their assiduous and wisely-directed efforts, “to make well-ordered home man's best delight.” This is their honourable distinction, the gem that sheds lustre over their persons.

But when, infected with the modern heresy, they are led to believe that a close attention to household-duties is degrading to character; that their frugal, saving, industrious grand-mothers were poor-spirited creatures; and that costly attire and furniture, tilting often abroad, and receiving company at home in a style of high fashion, are what will give them honourable distinction:—when, under the influence of this fatal error, they scornfully neglect domestic occupations, run into the expensive fashions of wealth and high life, and by these means impoverish parents, husbands, and their own offspring—it is then that the crown is fallen from their heads—it is then that they lose all claim to that esteem, which a different course of conduct would have fairly entitled them to.

Blind infatuation! Their object is honourable distinction; but instead of attaining which, they provoke the laughter and mockery of all about them.