

they call him to his last asylum; the sterile pomp of grandeur and transitory pleasures of life touch his heart no longer: he beholds only the coffin, and the dark cemetery where repose in peace and in inglorious confusion the turbulent and haughty monarch, the peaceful and unambitious shepherd.

Such are the ideas that the timid vulgar have conceived when obscurity, veiling objects from the sight, opens the vast and boundless road to imagination. Such is the prejudice which the weakness of reason propagates, and which renders ominous the bird of night. Yet, far from being injurious, they wage war with those species of minute, destructive animals that undermine our dwellings, pillage our provisions, or ravage our gardens. As they swallow mice, rats, and dormice entire, they often regorge lumps of hair, skin, and bones, which they have not digested. They often touch, in flying, the surface of the earth, on which, in general, their prey is to be found: the flight is slow and gentle: they seem to fear to announce their approach by any noise or to disturb the silence of the night: their mournful hootings are heard only during the season of love. The greater part of them nest in the holes of trees, or in some ruined place.