

caprice or uncertainty in her decisions. It is but the conduct, and not the conscience, which is in fault; and to determine whether the latter is in aught chargeable with fluctuation, we must look not to man's performance, but to his plea. Two men may differ as to the moral character of an action; but if each is resting the support of his own view on a different principle from the other, there may still be a perfect uniformity of moral sentiment between them. They own the authority of the same laws; they only disagree in the application of them. In the first place, the most vehement denouncer of a guilty commerce is at one with the most strenuous of its advocates, on the duty which each man owes to his family; and again, neither of them would venture to maintain the lawfulness of the trade, because of the miseries inflicted by it on those wretched sufferers who were its victims. The defender of this ruthless and rapacious system disowns not, in sentiment at least, however much he may disown in practice, the obligations of justice and humanity—nay, in all the palliations which he attempts of the enormity in question, he speaks of these as undoubted virtues, and renders the homage of his moral acknowledgments to them all. In the sophistry of his vindication, the principles of the ethical system are left untouched and entire. He meddles not with the virtuousness either of humanity or justice; but he tells of the humanity of slavery, and the justice of slavery. It is true, that he heeds not the representations which are given of the atrocities of his trade—that he does not attend because