

this it may be answered, in the first place, that the apparent diversity is partly reducible into the blinding, or, at least, the distorting effect of passion and interest, which sometimes are powerful enough to obscure our perception, even of mathematical and historical truths, as well as of moral distinctions; and without therefore affecting the stability of either. It is thus, for example, that mercantile cupidity has blinded many a reckless adventurer to the enormous injustice of the slave-trade; that passion and interest together have transmuted revenge into a virtue; and that the robbery, which, if prosecuted only for the sake of individual gain, would have appeared to all under an aspect of most revolting selfishness, puts on the guise of patriotism, when a whole nation deliberates on the schemes, or is led by a career of daring and lofty heroism, to the spoliations of conquest. In all such cases, it is of capital importance to distinguish between the real character of any criminal action, when looked to calmly, comprehensively, and fully; and what that is in the action which the perpetrator singles out and fastens upon preference of one class of virtues by some, and of a different class by others, the exceptions from the agreement of mankind, in their systems of practical morality, will be reduced to absolute insignificance; and we shall learn to view them as no more affecting the harmony of the moral faculties, than the resemblance of the limbs and features is affected by monstrous conformations, or by the unfortunate effects of accident and disease in a very few individuals."