

whom the accident has befallen, that the sense of the ludicrous might be entirely overborne.

15. The two provocatives are the awkwardness of the fall and its severity. The two emotions are the mirth and the compassion. The one of these may so predominate over the other as to leave the mind under its entire and single ascendancy. A mathematician would require the point at which, by a gradual increase or diminution upon either of the two elements, they were mutually neutralized—or the transition was made from the one to the other of them. In this we may not be able to satisfy him. But all may have been sensible of an occasion, when the two were so delicately poised, that the mind positively vibrated—so as to make a sort of tremulous and intermediate play between these distinct and nearly opposite emotions. This is one of those nicer exhibitions of our nature that one feels an interest in remarking; and many perhaps may recollect the instances, when even some valued friend hath smarted pretty seriously, under some odd or ludicrous mishap in which he hath been involved, and when they have felt themselves in a state of most curious ambiguity, between the pity which they ought to feel, and the levity which they were not able to repress. The peculiarities of this midway condition are greatly aggravated, if there be so many acquaintances who share it among them, and more especially, if they meet together and talk over the subject of it—in