

which are little suspected to lurk in these humble retreats. His epistles to brother poets in the rank of farmers and shopkeepers in the adjoining villages, the existence of a book-society and debating-club among persons of that description, and many other incidental traits in his sketches of his youthful companions, all contribute to show that not only good sense and enlightened morality, but literature and talents for speculation, are far more generally diffused in society than is generally imagined, and that the delights and the benefits of these generous and humanizing pursuits are by no means confined to those whom leisure and affluence have courted to their enjoyment. That much of this is peculiar to Scotland, and may be properly referred to our excellent institutions for parochial education, and to the natural sobriety and prudence of our nation, may certainly be allowed ; but we have no doubt that there is a good deal of the same principle in England, and that the actual intelligence of the lower orders will be found there also very far to exceed the ordinary estimates of their superiors."

This striking passage suggests to us what we deem the main defect of much of the modern literature in which the working-classes are represented. There is no lack of a hearty sympathy on the part of the writers with the feelings of our humbler people ; but we are sensible of a feebleness of conception when they profess to grapple with their intellect. They can appreciate the hearts, but fail to estimate at the right value the heads, of those with whom they have to do. And hence pictures true but in part. The two most remarkable men who rose from among the people during the last century were Robert Burns and Benjamin Franklin ; and both have left us autobiographical sketches, in which they refer to the associates of their early days. In what terms do they speak of their capacity ? Certainly in terms very different from what the modern novelist or tale-writer would