nor constant, is in general rather troubleſome than agree­able to the poſſeſſors of it, who are chiefly found among the inhabitants of the Highlands of Scotland, thoſe of the Weſtern Iſſes, of the Iſle of Man, and of Ireland. It is an impreſſion made either by the mind upon the eye, or by the eye upon the mind, by which things diſtant or future are perceived, and ſeen as it they were preſent. A man on a journey far from home falls from his horſe; another, who is perhaps at work about the houſe, ſees him bleeding on the ground, commonly with a landſcape of the place where the accident befals him. Another ſeer, driving home his cattle, or wandering in idleneſs, or muſing in the ſunſhine, is ſuddenly ſurpriſed by the appearance of a bridal ceremony, or funeral proceſſion, and counts the mourners or attendants, of whom, if he knows them, he relates the names; if he knows them not, he can deſcribe the dreſſes. Things diſtant are ſeen at the inſtant when they happen.

Of things future, Johnſon ſays that he knows no rule pretended to for determining the time between the ſight and the event; but we are informed by Mr Groſe, that in general the time of accompliſhment bears ſome rela­tion to the time of the day in which the impreſſions are received. Thus viſions ſeen early in the morning (which ſeldom happens) will be much ſooner accompliſhed than thoſe appearing at noon; and thoſe ſeen at noon will take place in a much ſhorter time than thoſe happening at night; ſometimes the accompliſhment of the laſt does not fall out within a year or more.

Theſe viſions are not confined to ſolemn or important events; nor is it true, as is commonly reported, that to the ſecond light nothing is preſentcd but phantoms of evil. The future viſit of a mountebank, or piper; a plentiſul draught of fiſh; the arrival of common travel­lers; or, if poſſible, ſtill more trifling matters than theſe, are foreſeen by the ſeers. A gentleman told Dr Johnſon, that when he had once gone far from his own iſland one of his labouring ſervants predicted his return, and deſcribed the livery of his attendant, which he had never worn at home; and which had been, without any pre­vious deſign, occaſionally given him.

As many men eminent for ſcience and literature have admitted the reality of this apparently uſeleſs gift, we ſhall, without interpoſing our own opinion, give the reflections of two of the firſt characters of the age upon it, and leave our readers to form their own judgment. By Dr Beattie of Aberdeen it is thus accounted for.

The Highlands of Scotland are a pictureſque but a melancholy country. Long tracts of mountainous de­fert, covered with dark heath, and often obſcured by miſty weather; narrow valleys, thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices reſounding with the fall of tor­rents; a ſoil ſo rugged, and a climate ſo dreary, as in many parts to admit neither the amuſements of paſturage nor the labours of agriculture; the mourntul daſhing of waves along the friths and lakes that interſect the country; the portentous noiſes which every change of the wind and every increaſed diminution of

the waters is apt to raiſe in a lonely region full, of echoes and rocks and caverns; the groteſque and ghaſtly appearance of ſuch a landſcape by the light of the moon: objects like theſe diffuſe a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occaſional and ſocial merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a native in the hour of ſilence and ſolitude. If theſe people, notwithſtanding their reformation in religion, and more frequent intercourſe with ſtrangers, do ſtill retain many of their old ſuperſtitions, we need not doubt but in former times they muſt have been much more enſlaved to the horrors of imagination, when beſet with the bugbears of Popery and Paganiſm. Moſt of their ſuperſtitions are of a melancholy caſt. That of *ſecond ſight,* by which ſome are ſtill ſuppoſed to be haunt­ed, is conſidered by themſelves as a misfortune, on ac­count of the many dreadful images it is laid to obtrude upon the fancy. It is ſaid that ſome of the Alpine re­gions do likewiſe lay claim to a fort of ſecond fight. Nor is it wonderful, that perſons of a lively imagination, immured in deep ſolitude, and ſurrounded with the ſtupendous ſcenery of clouds, precipices, and torrents, ſhould dream (even when they think themſelves awake) of thoſe few ſtriking ideas with which their lonely lives are diverſified: of corpſes, funeral proceſſions, and other ſubjects of terror; or of marriages, and the arrival of ſtrangers, and ſuch like matters of more agreeable curioſity.

Let it be obſerved alſo, that the ancient Highlan­ders of Scotland had hardly any other way of ſupporting themſelves than by hunting, fiſhing, or war; profeſſions that are continually expoſed to fatal accidents. And hence, no doubt, additional horrors would often haunt their ſolitude, and a deeper gloom overſhadow the imagination even of the hardieſt native.

A ſufficient evidence can hardly be found for the re­ality of the *ſecond sight,* or at leaſt of what is commonly Underſtood by that term. A treatiſe on the ſubject was publiſhed in the year 1762, in which many tales were told of perſons whom the author believed to have been ſavoured, or haunted, with theſe illuminations; but moſt of the tales were trifling and ridiculous: and the whole work betrayed, on the part of the compiler, ſuch extreme credulity, as could not fail to prejudice many readers againſt his ſyſtem.

That any of theſe viſtonaries are apt to be ſwayed in their declarations by ſiniſter views, we will not ſay; but this may be ſaid with confidence, that none but ig­norant people pretend to be gifted in this way. And in them it may be nothing more, perhaps, than ſhort fits of ſudden ſleep or drowſineſs, attended with lively dreams, and ariſing from ſome bodily diſorder, the ef­fect of idleneſs, low ſpirits, or a gloomy imagination. For it is admitted, even by the moſt credulous High­landers, that as knowledge and induſtry are propaga­ted in their country, the ſecond ſight diſappears in pro­portion: and nobody ever laid claim to the faculty who was much employed in the intercourſe of ſocial life @@(a).

@@@(a) This, however, is denied by Johnſon, who affirms that the Iſſanders of all degrees, whether of rank or underſtanding, univerſally admit it except the miniſters, who, according to him, reject it, in conſequenee of a ſyſtem, againſt conviction. He affirms, too, that in 1773 there was in the Hebrides a ſecond-ſighted gentleman, who complained of the terrors to wſhich he was expoſed.