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An Essay On The History Of Civil Society

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Sect. III. Of the Manners of Polished and Commercial Nations.

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S E C T. III.

Of the Manners of Polished and Commercial Nations.

MANKIND, when in their rude state, have a great uniformity of maners; but when civilized, they are engaged in a variety of pursuits; they tread on a larger field, and separate to a greater distance. If they be guided, however, by similar dispositions, and by like suggestions of nature, they will probably, in the end, as well as in the beginning of their progress, continue to agree in many particulars; and while communities admit, in their members, that diversity of ranks and professions which we have already described, as the consequence or the foundation of commerce, they will resemble each other in many effects of this distribution, and of other circumstances in which they nearly concur.

UNDER every form of government, statesmen endeavour to remove the dangers by which they are threatened from abroad, and the disturbances which molest them at home. By this conduct, if successful, they in a few ages gain an ascendant for their country; establish a frontier at a distance from its capital; they find, in the mutual desires of tranquillity, which come to possess mankind, and in those public establishments which tend to keep the peace of society, a respite from foreign wars, and a relief from domestic disorders. They learn to decide every contest



test without tumult, and to secure, by the authority of law, every citizen in the possession of his personal rights.

IN this condition, to which thriving nations aspire, and which they in some measure attain, mankind having laid the basis of safety, proceed to erect a superstructure suitable to their views. The consequence is various in different states; even in different orders of men of the same community; and the effect to every individual corresponds with his station. It enables the statesman and the foldier to settle the forms of their different procedure; it enables the practitioner in every profession to pursue his separate advantage; it affords the man of pleasure a time for refinement, and the speculative, leisure for literary conversation or study.

IN this scene, matters that have little reference to the active pursuits of mankind, are made subjects of inquiry, and the exercise of sentiment and reason itself becomes a profession. The songs of the bard, the harangues of the statesman and the warrior, the tradition and the story of ancient times, are considered as the models, or the earliest production, of so many arts, which it becomes the object of different professions to copy or to improve. The works of fancy, like the subjects of natural history, are distinguished into classes and species; the rules of every particular kind are distinctly collected; and the library is stored, like the warehouse, with the finished manufacture of different arts, who, with the aids of the grammarian



marian and the critic, aspire, each in his particular way, to instruct the head, or to move the heart.

EVERY nation is a motley assemblage of different characters, and contains, under any political form, some examples of that variety, which the humours, tempers, and apprehensions of men, so differently employed, are likely to furnish. Every profession has its point of honour, and its system of manners; the merchant his punctuality and fair dealing; the statesman his capacity and address; the man of society, his good-breeding and wit. Every station has a carriage, a dress, a ceremonial, by which it is distinguished, and by which it suppresses the national character under that of the rank, or of the individual.

THIS description may be applied equally to Athens and Rome, to London and Paris. The rude or the simple observer would remark the variety he saw in the dwellings and in the occupations of different men, not in the aspect of different nations. He would find, in the streets of the same city, as great a diversity, as in the territory of a separate people. He could not pierce through the cloud that was gathered before him, nor see how the tradesman, mechanic, or scholar, of one country, should differ from those of another. But the native of every province can distinguish the foreigner; and when he himself travels, is struck with the aspect of a strange country, the moment he passes the bounds of his own. The air of the person, the tone of the voice, the idiom of language,



guage, and the strain of conversation, whether pathetic or languid, gay or severe, are no longer the same.

MANY such differences may arise among polished nations, from the effects of climate, or from sources of fashion, that are still more unaccountable and obscure; but the principal distinctions on which we can rest, are derived from the part a people are obliged to act in their national capacity; from the objects placed in their view by the state; or from the constitution of government, which prescribing the terms of society to its subjects, has a great influence in forming their apprehensions and habits.

THE Roman people, destined to acquire wealth by conquest, and by the spoil of provinces; the Carthaginians, intent on the returns of merchandise, and the produce of commercial settlements, must have filled the streets of their several capitals with men of a different disposition and aspect. The Roman laid hold of his sword when he wished to be great, and the state found her armies prepared in the dwellings of her people. The Carthaginian retired to his counter on a similar project; and, when the state was alarmed, or had resolved on a war, lent of his profits to purchase an army abroad.

THE member of a republic, and the subject of a monarchy, must differ; because they have different parts assigned to them by the forms of their country: the one destined to live with his equals, or, by his personal talents and character, to contend for pre-eminence; the other,



born to a determinate station, where any pretence to equality creates a confusion, and where nought but precedence is studied. Each, when the institutions of his country are mature, may find in the laws a protection to his personal rights; but those rights themselves are differently understood, and with a different set of opinions, give rise to a different temper of mind. The republican must act in the state, to sustain his pretensions; he must join a party, in order to be safe; he must form one, in order to be great. The subject of monarchy refers to his birth for the honour he claims; he waits on a court, to shew his importance; and holds out the ensigns of dependence and favour, to gain him esteem with the public.

IF national institutions, calculated for the preservation of liberty, instead of calling upon the citizen to act for himself, and to maintain his rights, should give a security, requiring, on his part, no personal attention or effort; this seeming perfection of government might weaken the bands of society, and, upon maxims of independence, separate and estrange the different ranks it was meant to reconcile. Neither the parties formed in republics, nor the courtly assemblies which meet in monarchical governments, could take place, where the sense of a mutual dependence should cease to summon their members together. The resorts for commerce might be frequented, and mere amusement might be pursued in the croud, while the private dwelling became a retreat for reserve, averse to the trouble arising from regards and attentions, which it might be part of the political creed to believe

believe of no consequence, and a point of honour to hold in contempt.

THIS humour is not likely to grow either in republics or monarchies: it belongs more properly to a mixture of both; where the administration of justice may be better secured; where the subject is tempted to look for equality, but where he finds only independence in its place; and where he learns, from a spirit of equality, to hate the very distinctions to which, on account of their real importance, he pays a remarkable deference.

IN either of the separate forms of republic or monarchy, or in acting on the principles of either, men are obliged to court their fellow-citizens, and to employ parts and address to improve their fortunes, or even to be safe. They find in both a school for discernment and penetration; but in the one, are taught to overlook the merits of a private character, for the sake of abilities that have weight with the public; and in the other, to overlook great and respectable talents, for the sake of qualities engaging or pleasant in the scene of entertainment, and private society. They are obliged, in both, to adapt themselves with care to the fashion and manners of their country. They find no place for caprice or singular humours. The republican must be popular, and the courtier polite. The first must think himself well placed in every company; the other must chuse his resorts, and desire to be distinguished only where the society itself is esteemed. With his inferiors, he takes an air of protection;



tion; and suffers, in his turn, the same air [to be taken with himself. It did not, perhaps, require in a Spartan, who feared nothing but a failure in his duty, who loved nothing but his friend and the state, so constant a guard on himself to support his character, as it frequently does in the subject of a monarchy, to adjust his expence and his fortune to the desires of his vanity, and to appear in a rank as high as his birth, or ambition, can possibly reach.

THERE is no particular, in the mean time, in which we are more frequently unjust, than in applying to the individual the supposed character of his country; or more frequently misled, than in taking our notion of a people from the example of one, or a few of their members. It belonged to the constitution of Athens, to have produced a Cleon, and a Pericles; but all the Athenians were not, therefore, like Cleon, or Pericles. Themistocles and Aristides lived in the same age; the one advised what was profitable; the other told his country what was just.

S E C T.



S E C T. IV.

The same subject continued.

THE law of Nature, with respect to nations, is the same that it is with respect to individuals: it gives to the collective body a right to preserve themselves; to employ, undisturbed, the means of life; to retain the fruits of labour; to demand the observance of stipulations and contracts. In the case of violence, it condemns the aggressor, and establishes, on the part of the injured, the right of defence, and a claim to retribution. Its applications, however, admit of disputes, and give rise to variety in the apprehension, as well as the practice of mankind.

NATIONS have agreed universally, in distinguishing right from wrong; in exacting the reparation of injuries by consent or by force. They have always reposed, in a certain degree, on the faith of treaties; but have acted as if force were the ultimate arbiter in all their disputes, and the power to defend themselves, the surest pledge of their safety. Guided by these common apprehensions, they have differed from one another, not merely in points of form, but in points of the greatest importance, respecting the usage of war, the effects of captivity, and the rights of conquest and victory.

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WHEN a number of independent communities have been frequently involved in wars, and have had their stated alliances and oppositions, they adopt customs which they make the foundation of rules, or of laws, to be observed, or alledged, in all their mutual transactions. Even in war itself, they would follow a system, and plead for the observance of forms in their very operations for mutual destruction.

THE ancient states of Greece and Italy derived their manners in war from the nature of their republican government; those of modern Europe, from the influence of monarchy, which, by its prevalence in this part of the world, has a great effect on nations, even where it is not the form established. Upon the maxims of this government, we apprehend a distinction between the state and its members, as that between the King and the people, which renders war an operation of policy, not of popular animosity. While we strike at the public interest, we would spare the private; and we carry a respect and consideration for individuals, which often stops the issues of blood in the ardour of victory, and procures to the prisoner of war a hospitable reception in the very city which he came to destroy. These practices are so well established, that scarcely any provocation on the part of an enemy, or any exigence of service, can excuse a trespass on the supposed rules of humanity, or save the leader who commits it from becoming an object of detestation and horror.

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To this, the general practice of the Greeks and the Romans was opposite. They endeavoured to wound the state by destroying its members, by desolating its territory, and by ruining the possessions of its subjects. They granted quarter only to inflave, or to bring the prisoner to a more solemn execution; and an enemy, when disarmed, was, for the most part, either sold in the market, or killed, that he might never return to strengthen his party. When this was the issue of war, it was no wonder, that battles were fought with desperation, and that every fortress was defended to the last extremity. The game of human life went upon a high stake, and was played with a proportional zeal.

THE term *barbarian*, in this state of manners, could not be employed by the Greeks or the Romans in that sense in which we use it; to characterise a people regardless of commercial arts; profuse of their own lives, and of those of others; vehement in their attachment to one society, and implacable in their antipathy to another. This, in a great and shining part of their history, was their own character, as well as that of some other nations, whom, upon this very account, we distinguish by the appellations of *barbarous* or *rude*.

It has been observed, that those celebrated nations are indebted, for a great part of their estimation, not to the matter of their history, but to the manner in which it has been delivered, and to the capacity of their historians, and other writers. Their story has been told by men

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who knew how to draw our attention on the proceedings of the understanding and of the heart, more than on the detail of facts; and who could exhibit characters to be admired and loved, in the midst of actions which we should now universally hate or condemn. Like Homer, the model of Grecian literature, they could make us forget the horrors of a vindictive, cruel, and remorseless proceeding towards an enemy, in behalf of the strenuous conduct, the courage, and vehement affections, with which the hero maintained the cause of his friend and of his country.

OUR manners are so different, and the system upon which we regulate our apprehensions, in many things, so opposite, that no less could make us endure the practice of ancient nations. Were that practice recorded by the mere journalist, who retains only the detail of events, without throwing any light on the character of the actors; who, like the Tartar historian, tells only what blood was spilt in the field, and how many inhabitants were massacred in the city; we should never have distinguished the Greeks from their barbarous neighbours, nor have thought, that the character of civility pertained even to the Romans, till very late in their history, and in the decline of their empire.

IT would, no doubt, be pleasant to see the remarks of such a traveller as we sometimes send abroad to inspect the manners of mankind, left, unassisted by history, to collect the character of the Greeks from the state of their country,

country, or from their practice in war. " This country," he might say, " compared to ours, has an air of barrenness and defolation. I saw upon the road troops of labourers, who were employed in the fields; but nowhere the habitations of the master and the landlord. It was unsafe, I was told, to reside in the country; and the people of every district crowded into towns to find a place of defence. It is indeed impossible, that they can be more civilized, till they have established some regular government, and have courts of justice to hear their complaints. At present, every town, nay, I may say, every village, acts for itself, and the greatest disorders prevail. I was not indeed molested; for you must know, that they call themselves nations, and do all their mischief under the pretence of war.

" I do not mean to take any of the liberties of travellers, nor to vie with the celebrated author of the voyage to Lilliput; but cannot help endeavouring to communicate what I felt on hearing them speak of their territory, their armies, their revenue, treaties, and alliances. Only imagine the church-wardens and constables of Highgate or Hampstead turned statesmen and generals, and you will have a tolerable conception of this singular country. I passed through one state, where the best house in the capital would not lodge the meanest of your labourers, and where your very beggars would not chuse to dine with the King; and yet they are thought a great nation, and have no less than two kings. I saw one of them; but



“ such a potentate! he had scarcely cloaths to his back;
“ and for his Majesty’s table, he was obliged to go to the
“ eating-house with his subjects. They have not a single
“ farthing of money; and I was obliged to get food at
“ the public expence, there being none to be had in the
“ market. You will imagine, that there must have been
“ a service of plate, and great attendance, to wait up-
“ on the illustrious stranger; but my fare was a mess of
“ sorry pottage, brought me by a naked slave, who left
“ me to deal with it as I thought proper: and even this
“ I was in continual danger of having stoln from me by
“ the children, who are as vigilant to seize opportunities,
“ and as dextrous in snatching their food, as any star-
“ ved greyhound you ever saw. The misery of the
“ whole people, in short, as well as my own, while I
“ staid there, was beyond description. You would
“ think that their whole attention were to torment
“ themselves as much as they can: they are even dis-
“ pleased with one of their kings for being well liked.
“ He had made a present, while I was there, of a cow
“ to one favourite, and of a waistcoat to another*; and
“ it was publicly said, that this method of gaining
“ friends was robbing the public. My landlord told
“ me very gravely, that a man should come under no
“ obligation that might weaken the love which he owes
“ to his country; nor form any personal attachment be-
“ yond the mere habit of living with his friend, and of
“ doing him a kindness when he can.

* Plutarch, in the life of Agefilaus.



“ I asked him once, Why they did not, for their own
“ fakes, enable their kings to assume a little more state?
“ Because, says he, we intend them the happiness of li-
“ ving with men. When I found fault with their hou-
“ ses, and said in particular, that I was surpris’d they
“ did not build better churches; What would you be
“ then, says he, if you found religion in stone walls?
“ This will suffice for a sample of our conversation; and
“ sententious as it was, you may believe I did not stay
“ long to profit by it.

“ THE people of this place are not quite so stupid.
“ There is a pretty large square of a market-place, and
“ some tolerable buildings; and, I am told, they have
“ some barks and lighters employed in trade, which
“ they likewise, upon occasion, muster into a fleet, like
“ my Lord Mayor’s shew. But what pleases me most, is,
“ that I am likely to get a passage from hence, and bid
“ farewell to this wretched country. I have been at some
“ pains to observe their ceremonies of religion, and to
“ pick up curiosities. I have copied some inscriptions,
“ as you will see when you come to peruse my journal,
“ and will then judge, whether I have met with enough to
“ compensate the fatigues and bad entertainment to which
“ I have submitted. As for the people, you will believe,
“ from the specimen I have given you, that they could not
“ be very engaging company: though poor and dirty,
“ they still pretend to be proud; and a fellow who is
“ not worth a groat, is above working for his liveli-
“ hood. They come abroad barefooted, and without
“ any

“ any cover to the head, wrapt up in the coverlets
 “ under which you would imagine they had slept. They
 “ throw all off, and appear like so many naked cannibals,
 “ when they go to violent sports and exercises; at
 “ which they highly value feats of dexterity and strength.
 “ Brawny limbs, and muscular arms, the faculty of
 “ sleeping out all nights, of fasting long, and of putting
 “ up with any kind of food, are thought genteel accomplishments.
 “ They have no settled government that I could learn; sometimes
 “ the mob, and sometimes the better sort, do what they please: they meet
 “ in great crouds in the open air, and seldom agree about any thing.
 “ If a fellow has presumption enough, and a loud voice, he can make
 “ a great figure. There was a tanner here, some time ago, who, for
 “ a while, carried every thing before him. He censured so loudly
 “ what others had done, and talked so big of what might be performed,
 “ that he was sent out at last to make good his words, and to carry
 “ the enemy instead of his leather*. You will imagine, perhaps, that
 “ he was pressed for a recruit; no;---he was sent to command the
 “ army. They are indeed seldom long of one mind, except in their
 “ readiness to harass their neighbours. They go out in bodies,
 “ and rob, pillage, and murder where-ever they come.” So far
 “ may we suppose our traveller to have written; and upon a recollection
 “ of the reputation which those nations have acquired

* Thucydides, lib. 4.—Aristophanes.



at a distance, he might have added, perhaps, "That he
" could not understand how scholars, fine gentlemen,
" and even women, should combine to admire a people,
" who so little resemble themselves."

To form a judgement of the character from which they acted in the field, and in their competitions with neighbouring nations, we must observe them at home. They were bold and fearless in their civil dissensions; ready to proceed to extremities, and to carry their debates to the decision of force. Individuals stood distinguished by their personal spirit and vigour, not by the valuation of their estates, or the rank of their birth. They had a personal elevation founded on the sense of equality, not of precedence. The general of one campaign was, during the next, a private foldier, and served in the ranks. They were solicitous to acquire bodily strength; because, in the use of their weapons, battles were a trial of the foldier's strength, as well as of the leader's conduct. The remains of their statuary, shews a manly grace, an air of simplicity and ease, which being frequent in nature, were familiar to the artist. The mind, perhaps, borrowed a confidence and force, from the vigour and address of the body; their eloquence and style bore a resemblance to the carriage of the person. The understanding was chiefly cultivated in the practice of affairs. The most respectable personages were obliged to mix with the croud, and derived their degree of ascendancy, only from their conduct, their eloquence, and personal vigour. They had no forms of expression,
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to mark a ceremonious and guarded respect. Inveective proceeded to railing, and the grossest terms were often employed by the most admired and accomplished orators. Quarrelling had no rules but the immediate dictates of passion, which ended in words of reproach, in violence, and blows. They fortunately went always unarmed; and to wear a sword in times of peace, was among them the mark of a barbarian. When they took arms in the divisions of faction, the prevailing party supported itself by expelling their opponents, by proscriptions, and bloodshed. The usurper endeavoured to maintain his station by the most violent and prompt executions. He was opposed, in his turn, by conspiracies and assassinations, in which the most respectable citizens were ready to use the dagger.

SUCH was the character of their spirit, in its occasional ferments at home; and it burst commonly with a suitable violence and force, against their foreign rivals and enemies. The amiable plea of humanity was little regarded by them in the operations of war. Cities were razed, or enslaved; the captive sold, mutilated, or condemned to die.

WHEN viewed on this side, the ancient nations have but a sorry plea for esteem with the inhabitants of modern Europe, who profess to carry the civilities of peace into the practice of war; and who value the praise of indiscriminate lenity at a higher rate than even that of military prowess, or the love of their country. And yet they

they have, in other respects, merited and obtained our praise. Their ardent attachment to their country; their contempt of suffering, and of death, in its cause; their manly apprehensions of personal independence, which rendered every individual, even under tottering establishments, and imperfect laws, the guardian of freedom to his fellow-citizens; their activity of mind; in short, their penetration, the ability of their conduct, and force of their spirit, have gained them the first rank among nations.

If their animosities were great, their affections were proportionate: they, perhaps, loved, where we only pity; and were stern and inexorable, where we are not merciful, but only irresolute. After all, the merit of a man is determined by his candour and generosity to his associates, by his zeal for national objects, and by his vigour in maintaining political rights; not by moderation alone, which proceeds frequently from indifference to national and public interests, and which serves to relax the nerves on which the force of a private as well as a public character depends.

WHEN under the Macedonian and the Roman monarchies, a nation came to be considered as the estate of a prince, and the inhabitants of a province to be regarded as a lucrative property, the possession of territory, not the destruction of its people, became the object of conquest. The pacific citizen had little concern in the quarrels of sovereigns; the violence of the soldier was

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restrained



restrained by discipline. He fought, because he was taught to carry arms, and to obey: he sometimes shed unnecessary blood in the ardour of victory; but, except in the case of civil wars, had no passions to excite his animosity beyond the field and the day of battle. Leaders judged of the objects of an enterprize, and they arrested the sword when these were obtained.

IN the modern nations of Europe, where extent of territory admits of a distinction between the state and its subjects, we are accustomed to think of the individual with compassion, seldom of the public with zeal. We have improved on the laws of war, and on the lenitives which have been devised to soften its rigours; we have mingled politeness with the use of the sword; we have learned to make war under the stipulations of treaties and cartels, and trust to the faith of an enemy whose ruin we meditate. Glory is more successfully obtained by saving and protecting, than by destroying the vanquished: and the most amiable of all objects is, in appearance, attained; the employing of force, only for the obtaining of justice, and for the preservation of national rights.

THIS is, perhaps, the principal characteristic, on which, among modern nations, we bestow the epithets of *civilized* or of *polished*. But we have seen, that it did not accompany the progress of arts among the Greeks, nor keep pace with the advancement of policy, literature, and philosophy. It did not await the returns of learning and politeness among the moderns; it was found

found in early periods of our history, and distinguished, perhaps, more than at present, the manners of ages otherwise rude and undisciplined. A King of France, prisoner in the hands of his enemies, was treated, about four hundred years ago, with as much distinction and courtesy, as a crowned head, in the like circumstances, could possibly expect in this age of politeness *. The Prince of Conde, defeated and taken in the battle of Dreux, slept at night in the same bed with his enemy the Duke of Guise †.

If the moral of popular traditions, and the taste of fabulous legends, which are the production or entertainment of particular ages, are likewise sure indications of their notions and characters, we may presume, that the foundation of what is now held to be the law of war, and of nations, was laid in the manners of Europe, together with the sentiments which are expressed in the tales of chivalry, and of gallantry. Our system of war differs not more from that of the Greeks, than the favourite characters of our early romance differed from those of the Iliad, and of every ancient poem. The hero of the Greek fable, endued with superior force, courage, and address, takes every advantage of an enemy, to kill with safety to himself; and actuated by a desire of spoil, or by a principle of revenge, is never stayed in his progress by interruptions of remorse or com-

* Hume's History of England.

† Davila.



passion. Homer, who, of all poets, knew best how to exhibit the emotions of a vehement affection, seldom attempts to excite commiseration. Hector falls unpitied, and his body is insulted by every Greek.

OUR modern fable, or romance, on the contrary, generally couples an object of pity, weak, oppressed, and defenceless, with an object of admiration, brave, generous, and victorious; or sends the hero abroad in search of mere danger, and of occasions to prove his valour. Charged with the maxims of a refined courtesy, to be observed even towards an enemy; and of a scrupulous honour, which will not suffer him to take any advantages by artifice or surprise; indifferent to spoil, he contends only for renown, and employs his valour to rescue the distressed, and to protect the innocent. If victorious, he is made to rise above nature as much in his generosity and gentleness, as in his military prowess and valour.

IT may be difficult, upon stating this contrast between the system of ancient and modern fable, to assign, among nations equally rude, equally addicted to war, and equally fond of military glory, the origin of apprehensions on the point of honour, so different, and so opposite. The hero of Greek poetry proceeds on the maxims of animosity and hostile passion. His maxims in war are like those which prevail in the woods of America. They require him to be brave, but they allow him to practise against his enemy every sort of deception.

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The hero of modern romance professes a contempt of stratagem, as well as of danger, and unites in the same person, characters and dispositions seemingly opposite; ferocity with gentleness, and the love of blood with sentiments of tenderness and pity.

THE system of chivalry, when completely formed, proceeded on a marvellous respect and veneration to the fair sex, on forms of combat established, and on a supposed junction of the heroic and sanctified character. The formalities of the duel, and a kind of judicial challenge, were known among the ancient Celtic nations of Europe. The Germans, even in their native forests, paid a kind of devotion to the female sex. The Christian religion enjoined meekness and compassion to barbarous ages. These different principles combined together, may have served as the foundation of a system, in which courage was directed by religion and love, and the warlike and gentle were united together. When the characters of the hero and the saint were mixed, the mild spirit of Christianity, though often turned into venom by the bigotry of opposite parties, though it could not always subdue the ferocity of the warrior, nor suppress the admiration of courage and force, may have confirmed the apprehensions of men in what was to be held meritorious and splendid in the conduct of their quarrels.

[IN the early and traditionary history of the Greeks and the Romans, rapes were assigned as the most frequent



quent occasions of war; and the sexes were, no doubt, at all times, equally important to each other. The enthusiasm of love is most powerful in the neighbourhood of Asia and Africa; and beauty, as a possession, was probably more valued by the countrymen of Homer, than it was by those of Amadis de Gaul, or by the authors of modern gallantry. "What wonder," says the old Priam, when Helen appeared, "that nations should contend for the possession of so much beauty?" This beauty, indeed, was possessed by different lovers; a subject on which the modern hero had many refinements, and seemed to soar in the clouds. He adored at a respectful distance, and employed his valour to captivate the admiration, not to gain the possession of his mistress. A cold and unconquerable chastity was set up, as an idol to be worshipped, in the toils, the sufferings, and the combats of the hero and the lover.

THE feudal establishments, by the high rank to which they elevated certain families, no doubt greatly favoured this romantic system. Not only the lustre of a noble descent, but the stately castle beset with battlements and towers, served to inflame the imagination, and create a veneration for the daughter and the sister of gallant chiefs, whose point of honour it was to be inaccessible and chaste, and who could perceive no merit but that of the high-minded and the brave, nor be approached in any other accents than those of gentleness and respect.

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WHAT was originally singular in these apprehensions, was, by the writer of romance, turned to extravagance; and under the title of chivalry was offered a model of conduct, even in common affairs: the fortunes of nations were directed by gallantry; and human life, on its greatest occasions, became a scene of affectation and folly. Warriors went forth to realize the legends they had studied; princes and leaders of armies dedicated their most serious exploits to a real or to a fancied mistress.

BUT whatever was the origin of notions, often so lofty and so ridiculous, we cannot doubt of their lasting effects on our manners. The point of honour, the prevalence of gallantry in our conversations, and on our theatres, many of the opinions which the vulgar apply even to the conduct of war; their notion, that the leader of an army, being offered battle upon equal terms, is dishonoured by declining it, are undoubtedly remains of this antiquated system: and chivalry, uniting with the genius of our policy, has probably suggested those peculiarities in the law of nations, by which modern states are distinguished from the ancient. And if our rule in measuring degrees of politeness and civilization is to be taken from hence, or from the advancement of commercial arts, we shall be found to have greatly excelled any of the celebrated nations of antiquity.

PART

