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A Sentimental Journey Through France And Italy

Yorick, ...

London, 1768

The Sword. Rennes.

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THE SWORD.

R E N N E S.

WHEN states and empires have
 their periods of declension,
 and feel in their turns what distress
 and poverty is—I stop not to tell
 the causes which gradually brought
 the house d'E**** in Britany
 into decay. The Marquis d'E****
 had fought up against his condition
 with great firmness; wishing to pre-
 serve, and still shew to the world
 some little fragments of what his an-
 cestors had been—their indiscretions
 had put it out of his power. There
 was

was enough left for the little exigencies of *obscurity*—But he had two boys who look'd up to him for *light*—he thought they deserv'd it. He had tried his sword—it could not open the way—the *mounting* was too expensive—and simple œconomy was not a match for it—there was no resource but commerce.

In any other province in France, save Britany, this was smiting the root for ever of the little tree his pride and affection wish'd to see re-blossom—But in Britany, there being a provision for this, he avail'd himself of it; and taking an occasion when the states were assembled at Rennes,

E 4

the



the Marquis, attended with his two boys, enter'd the court ; and having pleaded the right of an ancient law of the duchy, which, though seldom claim'd, he said, was no less in force ; he took his sword from his side—Here—said he—take it ; and be trusty guardians of it, till better times put me in condition to reclaim it.

The president accepted the Marquis's sword—he stay'd a few minutes to see it deposited in the archives of his house—and departed.

The Marquis and his whole family embarked the next day for Martinico, and in about nineteen or twenty years of successful application to business,

finess, with some unlook'd for be-
quests from distant branches of his
house—return'd home to reclaim his
nobility and to support it.

It was an incident of good for-
tune which will never happen to any
traveller, but a sentimental one, that
I should be at Rennes at the very
time of this solemn requisition: I
call it solemn—it was so to me.

The Marquis enter'd the court with
his whole family: he supported his
lady—his eldest son supported his
sister, and his youngest was at the other
extreme of the line next his mother.
—he put his handkerchief to his
face twice—

—There

—There was a dead silence. When the Marquis had approach'd within six paces of the tribunal, he gave the Marchioness to his youngest son, and advancing three steps before his family—he reclaim'd his sword. His sword was given him, and the moment he got it into his hand he drew it almost out of the scabbard—'twas the shining face of a friend he had once given up—he look'd attentively along it, beginning at the hilt, as if to see whether it was the same—when observing a little rust which it had contracted near the point, he brought it near his eye, and bending his head down over it—I think I saw a tear fall upon the place: I could not be deceived by what followed.

“ I shall

“ I shall find, said he, some *other*
“ *way*, to get it off.”

When the Marquis had said this, he return'd his sword into its scabbard, made a bow to the guardians of it— and, with his wife and daughter and his two sons following him, walk'd out.

O how I envied him his feelings!

THE

